
Minutes

Executive Meeting of RSN Executive Board

Hosted: Online via Zoom
Date: Monday 9th January 2023
Time: 13.30-15.00
Chair: Cllr Peter Thornton, South Lakeland District Council

1. Attendance & Apologies.

Attendees: Cllr Thornton, Cllr Atkins, Cllr Savage, Martin Collett, John Birtwistle, Graham Biggs, Nadine Trout, David Inman

Apologies: Cllr Phillips, Cllr Sanderson, Cllr Motley, Cllr Heseltine, Cllr Whittington, Cllr Waltham, Cllr Robinson, Cllr Thorne, Cllr Stevens, Cllr Paynter, Kayleigh Wainwright, Nik Harwood, Kerry Booth.

2. Notes from the previous RSN Executive meeting.

[Please click here to view these minutes.](#)

These minutes were approved from the meeting of 12th December 2022.

3. Budget Report with actuals as at 31st December 2022

Graham Biggs, Chief Executive, (Appendix 1)

Graham talked through the budget report provided to the Executive and highlighted that we are still awaiting payment of some of the SPARSE grants.

Martin Collett asked whether it would be a significant risk if we did not receive all anticipated SPARSE income. Graham responded by saying it was not an unusual position for this time of year and was in line with previous years. Further chasing would be carried out to secure payment.

4. Summary of Previous RSN Work and Meetings

In Kerry Booth's absence Nadine presented a report on meetings and seminar attendance, key points, policy work since the last meeting (Appendix 2).

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

Rural Services Network

PO Box 101, Craven Arms, SY7 7AL

Tel: 01822 851370

www.rsnonline.org.uk email: events@sparse.gov.uk twitter: [@rsnonline](https://twitter.com/rsnonline)

Cllr Thornton noted attendance at events was impressive and much higher than when events were held in person.

Nadine shared a link to [upcoming events](#) and asked members whether they would welcome receiving automatic calendar invites to RSN events. Members agreed it would be useful to receive calendar invites to RSN Executive, Rural Assembly, and Sparse Rural Meetings and that they would prefer to book attendance at seminars for themselves should they be available.

Action

Calendar invites to be sent to Executive members for Executive, Assembly and Sparse meetings.

5. Verbal update on APPG meeting on Local Government Finance

Graham stated that there was nothing further to report since the December Executive at which the following documents were shared:

[A Briefing Note on the Rural Impacts of the Autumn Statement 2022](#)

[A Call for Action by Rural MPs ahead of the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2023/24](#)

Cllr Thornton asked if PMQs ever arise from the APPG. Graham replied sometimes but he would like to see more activity and is working with the APPG to achieve this.

6. Provisional Settlement for Local Government and campaigning approach for 2023 and beyond

Draft consultation response for Local Authorities and draft RSN consultation response (Appendix 3a and 3b)

Graham talked members through the stages of the Provisional Settlement Consultation process and his expectations for the final settlement and suggested to members that we use the Executive meeting in March to discuss fair funding campaign tactics going forward once the Final Settlement is known.

Cllr Peter Thornton, asked what it would cost the government to increase the Rural Service Delivery Grant in line with inflation. Graham replied that at present the RSDG is £85M as was set in 2020/21 and would need to be £96.27M in 2023/24 to reflect inflation.

Martin said the consultation responses were in a great format and easy to understand and welcomed that the RSN consultation response would be shared with opposition

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

Rural Services Network

PO Box 101, Craven Arms, SY7 7AL

Tel: 01822 851370

www.rsnonline.org.uk email: events@sparse.gov.uk twitter: [@rsnonline](https://twitter.com/rsnonline)

parties. Martin asked Graham what push back he had received in the past from civil servants and why. Graham stated there had been a mixed approach over the years, when the RSN started lobbying in 2014 the government queried RSN's methodology, they now understand the methodology but continue not to recognise that the Rural Service Delivery Grant is woefully inadequate and have delayed making any decision until a full funding review is undertaken. It is now recognised that a funding review will not take place prior to the general election, hence why arguing for an inflationary increase in RSDG for 2023/24 and calling for the present formula to be applied without damping of the 2013/14 rural gains is the logical way forward at this time.

Agreed

Executive members approved the draft consultation responses and gave Graham permission to amend the drafts prior to final submission should there be any further feedback from local authority members or further research findings which support the case for fairer rural funding.

Action

Fair Funding Campaign Strategy post the final settlement to be added to the agenda for the March Executive meeting.

7. Any Other Business.

• A Rural Manifesto

Graham stated that the Rural Coalition were considering the merits of producing a Rural Manifesto to circulate to all parties ahead of the next general election. The Executive agreed it would be prudent for the RSN to produce a Rural Manifesto concentrating on the delivery of rural services before the summer to help shape policy thinking by all the main parties as opposed to reacting to it. It was agreed that the RSN Rural Manifesto would focus on rural service delivery as opposed to wider rural issues.

Action

Add RSN Rural Manifesto as an agenda item to the March/May Executive Meeting. It was agreed time should be set aside at March Executive meeting to discuss the Manifesto further.

• May 2023 Local Government Elections

Cllr Jeremy Savage stated he would be stepping down at the 2023 elections and that it was widely felt that there could be a shift in political make up at the 2023 elections in some areas with the green party potentially gaining more seats.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

Rural Services Network

PO Box 101, Craven Arms, SY7 7AL

Tel: 01822 851370

www.rsnonline.org.uk email: events@sparse.gov.uk twitter: [@rsnonline](https://twitter.com/rsnonline)

Action

Add the May 2023 Local Government Elections as an agenda item to the March Executive to discuss a membership retention strategy in light of potential political changes.

- **Date of next meeting**

The next RSN Executive meeting will take place online on Monday 20th March 2023, 11.15am to 2.30pm.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

Rural Services Network

PO Box 101, Craven Arms, SY7 7AL

Tel: 01822 851370

www.rsnonline.org.uk email: events@sparse.gov.uk twitter: [@rsnonline](https://twitter.com/rsnonline)