
Agenda

SPARSE Rural and Rural Services Network Executive and Board of Directors of the Rural Services Partnership Ltd meeting

Incorporating SPARSE Rural members, Rural Assembly & Rural Services Partnership members.
All nominated members & officers of RSN are invited to attend this meeting.

Hosted: Online via Zoom
Date: Monday, 27th September 2021
Time: 11:15am – 2:30pm

1. Attendance & Apologies.

Attendance:

Cllr Cecilia Motley (Chair)	Shropshire Council / Rural Services Network
Cllr Philip Atkins OBE	Staffordshire County Council
Graham Biggs MBE	Rural Services Network
John Birtwistle	FirstGroup plc UK Bus
Kerry Booth	Rural Services Network
Martin Collett	English Rural Housing Association
Nik Harwood	Young Somerset
Cllr Robert Heseltine	North Yorkshire County Council
David Inman	Rural Services Network
Cllr Jeremy Savage	South Norfolk Council
Anna Price	Rural Business Awards
Cllr Peter Stevens	West Suffolk Council
Cllr Peter Thornton	South Lakeland District Council/Cumbria Council
Cllr Mark Whittington	Lincolnshire County Council

Apologies:

Cllr Roger Phillips	Herefordshire Council
Cllr Mary Robinson	Eden District Council
Cllr Sue Sanderson	Cumbria County Council
Cllr Trevor Thorne	Northumberland County Council
Kayleigh Wainwright	UK Youth

2. Notes from the previous RSN Executive meeting. (Attachment 1)

Held on 17th May 2021 to consider any relevant updates and approve the minutes.

Points to note:

When Transport Improvement Plans are published, RSN will look from perspective of our local authorities to see if there are areas they want to do but can't due to funding and whether we can pick up some of those issues in our campaigning

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RSN will also be exploring where organisations are putting bids into recently announced competitive funds to see what people bidding for (or have felt unable to bid – if so why), and experiences of the process.

Concerns over timing for Levelling Up Funds, Round 2 – Councils are short of capacity and don't have lots of resources to regularly be preparing bids.

The Fire Group meeting takes place on Friday along with Adrian Jenkins presenting on Fire Service Finance

Social Care funding – Joint work with County Council's Network on State of Social Care in County and Rural Areas was released during the week of the conference.

Notes of the previous meeting were accepted.

3. Summary of Previous RSN Work and Meetings. (Attachment 2)

Report from Kerry Booth, Assistant Chief Executive on attendance, key points, policy work since the last meeting.

There was a short discussion on the areas considered, and the Executive welcomed the addition of 'Networking' elements to help inform any decision-making processes.

The Executive noted the report

4. Update on Work with Local Councils. (Attachment 3)

Report from David Inman, Corporate Director with updates on Rural/Market Town Group & Rural Village Services Group.

David Inman confirmed he is starting the work of approaching village groups to see if they want to join the group and our offering.

Cllr Peter Stevens - Could we do a more concise report targeted at parishes? Headlines of what we are doing.

RSN is currently doing a quarterly publication to LA Councillors, the Rural Beacon, highlighting our work, and a quarterly publication to the Rural Market Town Group. This needs to be considered along with the wider work of the RSN, whilst ensuring that those that pay the most for their membership, receive the most comprehensive level of service.

Martin Collett - Are there any unintended consequences to this – conflict between levels of Government?

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Rural Services Network

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There should be no conflict of interest as RSN emphasises to member organisations that we do not get involved in disputes between levels of public services, but exist to represent the rural voice to Government and its Agencies.

Martin Collett - This is labour Intensive work are we using software for this?
The RSN has explored software although any deployment of IT solutions would depend on the number of members that we are able to gain.

Report from David Inman, Corporate Director, English Charter Market Towns and Fayres. (Attachment 3A)

The Executive noted this report and will await developments on this issue at a future meeting.

5. National Rural Conference 2021.

Verbal report from Kerry Booth, Assistant Chief Executive.

KB stated some highlight statistics from the conference week:

- Over 400 delegates attended sessions throughout the week.
- 75 Local Authorities attended sessions.
- A Government representative attended all but one session.
- 5 organisations supported or sponsored the conference.
- Feedback is currently being comprehensively analysed, but initial reports show that all members that attended would recommend the event to a colleague.

6. Uniting Rural Communities to Tackle Climate Change Event - 12th October 2021.

Kerry Booth advised the Executive of this event being hosted by the RSN.

The wider Event is being held by NFU during a week in October. Focus will be on rural areas and communities and as part of this, the RSN will be hosting an event during the week on Tues 12th October which is open to not only members but non -members too, to get our messages out as wide as possible.

Booking details will be shared with all members.

7. RSN Meetings & Events Calendar 2022. (Attachment 4)

Conference has been moved back a week, we received 200 bookings this year in the week prior to the conference so we are aiming to target greater attendance.

We will look to move the Executive date before the conference as it is a long gap between May to October.

8. 2021 LGA Annual Report Rural Services Network. (Attachment 5)

For information completed report submitted to the LGA by Kerry Booth, Assistant Chief Executive.

Report is for information only and can serve as a useful summary of the work of the RSN.

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9. **Comprehensive Spending Review 2020 and 2021.** (Attachment 6 & 6A)
A submission to H.M. Treasury by the Rural Services Network.

There was a discussion on the Spending Review submission, Graham Biggs highlighted it is a high-level document setting out the RSN perspective and the RSN is keen to show the funding difficulties experienced by rural areas and the lack of capacity to respond to Government initiatives/funding rounds.

The RSN is also exploring the funding available from other departments like the DfE and DfT to see the impact of funding allocations in these areas.

John Birtwistle - Bus Services Improvement Plan – open for all to bid for new pot of money £3bn starting next April for bus related actions / policies and interventions. DfT wants to see ambition in this so please bid for ambitious proposals.

The Executive agreed the approach to the Spending Review Submission.

10. **Levelling Up/UK Shared Prosperity Fund.** (Attachment 7)
Report from Graham Biggs MBE, Chief Executive on RSN's Policy Position.
This document brings together the work that the RSN has already done and said in a variety of documents so that we have everything on Levelling Up / UK Shared Prosperity in one place.
Report was noted by the Executive.
11. **Budget Report.** (Attachment 8)
With actual to 4th September 2020.
The Executive accepted the Budget Report
12. **The Rural Services Partnership Ltd Full Accounts 31.03.2021.** (Attachment 9)
Item for formal attention of RSP Directors only.
RSP Directors to consider approving the 2020/21 Accounts and the re-appointment of TaxAssist Ludlow as the Company's Tax Accountants.

The RSP Directors approved the Accounts and the Re-appointment of Tax Assist Ludlow as the Company's Tax Accountants.
13. **Any Other Business.**
The next RSN Executive meeting will take place Monday, 10th January 2022.
14. **Joint Confidential Report of the Chief Executive and Corporate Director: The RSN's Future Year's Budgets in the light of recent Unitary Re-Organisation announcements.** (Attachment 10)

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The Executive considered a Joint Confidential report from the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director reviewing budget forecasts over the next four years, including the impact of unitary council proposals in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset.

The report looked at income projections and suggested amendments to some expenditure budgets in future years. Also considered were staffing issues in the light of both the Chief Executive and Corporate Director stepping back from their current roles in the period covered by the review.

The projections assumed no membership losses beyond those already known about. The projections assumed an annual provision for inflation of 2%. Both of these would need to be kept under review.

The projections were based on future meetings, seminars and the annual conference all continuing to be held on line with the exception of one face-to-face meeting each year for networking purposes. This was agreed

The suggestions in the report were agreed. As a result, the forward look budget remains positive.

The Executive agreed to consider the forward look budget twice a year in future in March/April and September/October.

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