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## Minutes

### 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.

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**Hosted: Online via Zoom**  
**Date: Monday, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022**  
**Time: 11:15am – 2:30pm**

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#### 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
Anna Price	Rural Business Group & Awards
Nik Harwood	Young Somerset
David Inman	Rural Services Network
Cllr Jeremy Savage	South Norfolk Council
Cllr Peter Stevens	West Suffolk Council
Cllr Adam Paynter	Cornwall Council
Cllr Peter Thornton	South Lakeland District Council/Cumbria Council

##### Apologies

Martin Collett	English Rural Housing Association
Cllr Robert Heseltine	North Yorkshire County Council
Cllr Roger Phillips	Herefordshire Council
Cllr Sue Sanderson	Cumbria County Council
Cllr Mark Whittington	Lincolnshire County Council

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

Held on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2021, the Executive approved the minutes. Graham Biggs highlighted the Transport Improvement Plans which have been completed. The RSN asked for copies of these from member Councils and have reviewed them. A common theme includes concerns about the capacity of rural councils to deliver the plans. It was agreed that any future funding announcements on the Transport Improvement Plans would be analysed to see a rural/urban split.

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

Report from Kerry Booth, Deputy Chief Executive on attendance, key points, policy work since the last meeting. Kerry highlighted the additional NFU Countryside COP event which was held prior to COP26 to raise issues of net zero and decarbonisation in rural communities. This event is likely to be repeated next year.

The seminar programme for 2022 has been launched with two cross cutting seminars included focusing on Older People in Rural Areas, and Younger People in Rural Areas.

The Executive noted the report.

**4. Update on Work with Local Councils.**

Verbal report from David Inman, Corporate Director.

- Rural/Market Town Group

Work has continued with the Rural/Market Town Group, converting them to paying membership following the free period of service that they previously had. The Executive agreed that those currently having free service would continue to receive free service until the end of June 2022.

- Rural Village Services Group

We haven't progressed far with this group as the smaller Local Councils are finding this time financially difficult and we plan to progress when we anticipate that we will be successful.

Rural areas still need to come together and present a combined case, and now there may be opportunities due to the benefit of hosting meetings and events online. It was agreed to review the position of this group in April in relation to timing an approach when forming this group.

**5. National Rural Conference 2022.** (Attachment 3)

Report from Kerry Booth, Assistant Chief Executive set out the overall plans for the National Rural Conference 2022.

The Executive noted the report.

**6. Local Government Provisional Finance Settlement.** (Attachment 4 & 4A)

Consultation on the Local Government Provisional Finance Settlement closes on 13<sup>th</sup> January.

Fair Funding Review will take place in 2022, albeit likely under another name!

On the 24<sup>th</sup> January we will be holding the Sparse Rural (Fair Funding) meeting where Adrian Jenkins will speak in depth about the Local Government Provisional Finance Settlement the briefing for MPs.

**Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers**

Rural Services Network

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And on the 25<sup>th</sup> January Adrian will also be presenting at the Rural Fair Share Group of MPs meeting talking to them about the campaign and briefing them on the unfairness of the Local Government Provisional Finance Settlement for rural areas as well as making a brief presentation specifically for the MPs at this meeting.

The Executive discussed the provisional settlement and Cllr Phillips suggested that thought be given to including reference to increases to the National Minimum Wage and the impact on areas with large numbers of low paid roles.

**7. Levelling Up and Devolution White Paper/UK Shared Prosperity Fund.**

No update as was due to be published before end 2021 but we are still awaiting White Paper – now due by end January 2022.

**8. Adult Social Care Reform White Paper – General Discussion.**

[Please click here to view the Rural Lens Review of Adult Social Care Reform White Paper<sup>1</sup>](#)

The Executive had a discussion on overall concerns in relation to this item, highlighting particularly:

- Workforce and Capacity of Local Social Care Departments.
- Major concerns over changes which will mean private care will need to go through the Council to be assessed against the Personal Cap – capacity of Councils to deal with this.

**9. Local Authority Experience Implementing First Homes Requirement: Survey Report.**

[Please click here to view the paper on Local Authority Experience Implementing First Homes Requirements<sup>2</sup>](#)

Martin Collett (comments received before the meeting via email with apologies) suggested we should revisit this topic in 6-9 months to gather more practical experiences on this topic and update the survey. The Executive agreed with this suggestion.

**10. Budget Report. (Attachment 5)**

Airband have agreed to sponsor the organisation for the sum of £10,000 for 2022/23 therefore this should be added to the organisation's income. This is for a package of services which includes promotion of their services and inclusion of their logo placement where relevant and other agreed activities.

**11. Report Launches – Verbal Report.**

- Rural England CIC: State of the Rural Services 2021: 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022.  
Rural England CIC is launching State of Rural Services 2021 report online this week, which will be concentrating on Pre-Omicron impact on Rural Services. First there will be a Parliamentary Launch, followed by a wider launch event with Rural England.
- Rural Health APPG Inquiry Report: 1<sup>st</sup> February 2022.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/rural-lens-review-of-adult-social-care-reform-white-paper>

<sup>2</sup> <https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/first-homes-report-december-2021.pdf>

Due to be launched on 1<sup>st</sup> February. RSN will seek to use the report and the information in it with the wider membership.

**12. Any Other Business.**

The next RSN Executive meeting will take place Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> March 2022. This is due to be in person, but the situation will be kept under review given Covid Case numbers and any restrictions.

It was noted that biodiversity is a key topic which was raised at the AGM by a member organisation and the RSN will consider how to take this forward for discussion in 2022.

Cllr Atkins recommended members visit <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/> which *“provides authoritative geographic information about the natural environment from across government. The information covers rural, urban, coastal and marine environments across Great Britain. It is presented in an interactive map which can be explored using various mapping tools that are included.”*

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