

## Minutes of the Rural Services Network Executive held on

**Monday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2019.**

Venue— 63, Bayswater Road, London.

### **Present:-**

Cllr Cecilia Motley, Chair – RSN  
Cllr Robert Heseltine First Vice Chair – RSN  
Revd Richard Kirlew - Sherborne Deanery Rural Chaplaincy  
Cllr Trevor Thorne – Northumberland County Council  
Cllr Peter Stevens – St Edmundsbury Borough Council  
Cllr Jeremy Savage – South Norfolk Council  
Cllr Roger Phillips - Herefordshire  
Anna Price – Rural Business Group  
John Birtwistle – UK Bus

Officers: - Graham Biggs (Chief Executive); David Inman (Director)

### **Apologies**

Cllr Adam Paynter – Cornwall Council  
Cllr Sue Sanderson- Cumbria County Council  
Cllr Philip Sanders – West Devon Borough Council  
Cllr Gill Heath – Staffordshire County Council  
Cllr Kevin Beaty – District Council  
Kerry Booth – RSN

A pre-meeting session involving phone conferencing took place. Superseding minute 3.3 of the last Executive meeting in this regard, it was decided it would be further tried at subsequent Executive meetings over the next year for those unable to attend.

- 1. Notes of the Previous Meeting** Held on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2018. Duly considered and approved.
- 2. Notes of the Main Meetings** of the AGM held on 12th November 2018 to consider any relevant items. Duly considered.
- 3. To consider any items arising from the Social Care and Health Group and AGM of 12<sup>th</sup> November 2018.** Duly considered. It was decided that Hampshire CC would be asked to give a presentation of their social care initiatives to the next Group meeting.

In the case of 2 and 3 above it was recognised that the attendance list used had been incorrectly minuted and the following attendance sheet would be substituted.)

Cecilia Motley – Chair RSN  
Graham Biggs – Chief Executive, RSN  
David Inman – Corporate Director, RSN  
Kerry Booth – Assistant Chief Executive, RSN  
Revd Richard Kirlew - Diocese of Sherborne  
Cllr Robert Heseltine – North Yorkshire County Council  
Cllr Roger Phillips – Herefordshire Council  
Cllr Trevor Thorne – Northumberland County Council  
Cllr Owen Bierley – West Lindsey District Council  
Cllr Rupert Reichhold – East Northamptonshire Council  
Cllr Peter Stevens – St Edmundsbury Borough Council  
Cllr Philip Sanders – West Devon Borough Council  
Cllr Les Kew – Bath & North East Somerset Council  
Cllr Jeremy Savage – South Norfolk Council  
John Birtwistle – Head of Policy, UK Bus  
Richard Quallington – Executive Director, ACRE  
Cllr Malcolm Leeding MBE - OALC (Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils)  
Cllr Mark Whittington – Lincolnshire County Council  
Cllr Cameron Clark – Sevenoaks District Council  
Cllr Yvonne Peacock – Richmondshire District Council  
Cllr Lee Chapman – Shropshire Council  
Odhran Jennings, Trusts Fundraiser – Bipolar UK  
Pam Howard, Housing Services Administrator – English Rural Housing Association

**4. RSN Budget 2018/19, 2019/20** The 18/19 Budget was currently still awaiting charge payments from 4 members. They were being chased. The budget was therefore £5,000 to £6,000 away from its anticipated budgetary position at this time.

#### **5. Report to the Executive on Advertisements in the Rural Bulletin.**

The meeting considered the position in relation to use of the Bulletin for advertisements. It was decided as follows:-

1. The number of advertisements run would be kept at a ceiling of two per month, ensuring that at least two issues each month would remain advertisement free.
2. Advertisements would only be run where they had a particular relevance to rural areas.
3. Advertisements would only be taken from organisations who were or who became RSP members.
4. Contracts would only be negotiated where it was clear that total editorial freedom for the Bulletin remained.

The Executive discussed the position in relation to a current approach from BT/EE which would now proceed subject to contract.

#### **6. A Call for Evidence through the Bulletin Service.**

The meeting considered a report from the Corporate Director suggesting the canvassing of a system of Calls for Information, Evidence and Action. The system envisaged a free general service available to RSN members and to listed national organisations to allow rural contacts to have a greater input into consultation exercises. Additionally a University system may be

available for those undertaking research. Here a handling fee would be requested as part of any successful grant arrangement involved.

It was envisaged the service would be operated as follows:-

- (a) By a request contained within the weekly Bulletin.*
- (b) If it related to a specific Group of people by an email out to the members of RSN who were on our records and who engaged in that particular area of activity.*
- (c) If it is an issue affecting the wider group we would email out to all in that wider grouping i.e. the Community Group or it is such an important issue that it affects everyone we would, in addition to running it in the bulletin, send out a special email to everyone receiving our service. This however, is anticipated would only happen very occasionally. In cases of this importance we would probably make these an official RSN Call for Evidence.*

The report was agreed in principle.

(A member asked that the NFU, CLA, Countryside Alliance would be included and to be approached and this was confirmed as being the case)

The Executive agreed that those elements of the service deriving income would proceed at this stage and that a report back would be brought back to the Executive as likely demand was identified from those being approached where a free service was suggested.

## **7. Dates and Venues for Meetings in 2019**

These were agreed as per the Agenda.

Arising from this item the Executive decided to reverse their previous decision about holding a meeting of the Executive at the Conference. It was decided instead to hold that meeting as in previous years towards the end of September in London. A date for that meeting will be canvassed.

## **8. Provisional Settlement – Verbal Report**

The Chief Executive reported.

The settlement had been very much as had been anticipated. Given that main focus was on achieving material change in the way rural areas were considered in the change to a Business Rate funded system - in consultation with the Chair - it had been decided this year we would not ask to see the Local Government Minister at this time but instead document to him the position reached and the expectations of Government in the review process.

This had been done and the document was presented to the Executive together with the formal response RSN had made to the Draft Settlement.

The Executive formally agreed the action taken.

## **9. Future Arrangements with Pixel Financial Management**

The Executive noted that Dan Bates had secured a position with a local authority. As a consequence, he would only be available to Pixel one day a week and would not be able to do specific work on resource distributional issues for SPARSE Rural. -

Pixel would continue to do that work and would support the RSN's own employee in the development of systems to capture and present figures like comparative resources, council tax levels, reliance on council tax urban v rural going forward.

The Executive wished Dan Bates well in his new post and thanked him for all his work on behalf of the RSN over many years

## **10. Draft response to both Business Rates Retention (BRR) and Needs and Resources Consultation**

The BRR draft response from the RSN was not available to be considered by the Executive. Once finished, it would be sent to all SPARSE member authorities for comment and to inform their own response. The Executive approved the draft response to the Needs and Resources Consultation which would be sent to members with the BRR draft referred to

## **11. A Rural Strategy Campaign – Verbal Report**

The Chief Executive introduced this item detailing the intention behind the initiative - approved at the AGM - which was to persuade Government of the need to prepare a formal strategy which documented the situation specifically facing rural areas and set out proposals which could strategically guide the way forward over the coming years. Small changes to the text considered by the AGM had been made on rural schools and including a reference to the Government's recently published NHS 10 Year Plan

All member authorities and organisations with a rural interest would be asked to sign up to the call.

Members considered the documentation which had been drafted to date, to back such a call and proposals set out by Lexington involving their possible involvement with the proposal to run a specific campaign seeking support.

The Executive were supportive of the initiative to run a campaign and the Lexington proposals. This would be referred to at the Rural Economy Group meeting on the 28th

It was recognised by the Executive that this was a particularly ambitious and important area of work. They stressed the importance of a rural overview being taken at a time when it was clear that important areas of work were being mapped out nationally.

Rural areas comprised almost 80% of the land area of England and it was vital that a comprehensive and strategic overview was taken that was of special relevance to the communities comprising the rural areas of the country. Members also stressed their view that the rural areas were of vital importance to the entire economy of the country as a whole requiring a strategic overview to be taken at this time.

## **12. Regional Meetings Update**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Venue</b>
West Midlands	18.02.19	Rural Economy	Stafford BC confirmed
South West	21.03.19	Rural Housing	East Devon contacted
South East	29.04.19	Vulnerability	Sevenoaks confirmed

North East	15 – 17 May 2019	Sustainable Communities	Durham contacted
East Midlands	08.07.19	Rural Health & Wellbeing	David contacting Cambridgeshire
North West	07.10.19	Delivering Local Services Differently	Lancashire contacted
Yorkshire	09.12.19	Barriers to Access – Connectivity & Rural Transport	North Yorkshire contacted

These were agreed and noted.

### **13. Membership report update**

Inevitably with the prolonged pressure on Council budgets some members were regarding involvement as a discretionary expenditure that should be reviewed and conversations were continuing with those authorities. The greatest difficulty was around Rural Assembly members where authorities with mainly urban populations but some rural areas were seeking to mainstream their activities. However the group as a whole remained at healthy numbers with around 135 authorities continuing to be involved.

### **14. SORS Report by Rural England**

The Executive received a report on the Rural England SORS report. This report was produced every two years and covered a wide range of services. It was clear that many services in rural areas were being materially affected by the cut backs. The report would be launched at the Parliamentary Rural Vulnerability Day on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February.

### **15. Update on recruitment to RHCA**

The joint initiative with the Centre for Rural Health and Social Care was progressing well.

Membership of the Rural Health and Care Alliance was free annually to Sparse Rural Members and to Rural Assembly members available as a £125 supplement.

Over the initial three months of recruitment 23 health orientated organisations had join the Alliance. The vast majority of these organisations would also become RSP members as a result of their membership package.

Jon Turner and Bethan Aldridge were thanked for their hard work in this area.

### **17. APPG Report on the Rural Context relating to meeting Adult Social Care Needs**

The APPG's interim report had been sent to the Secretary of State. The APPG would meet again when the Government's Social Care Green Paper was published

### **18. Report on the Rural Conference 2019**

Members received an update for the Rural Conference which would take place in Cheltenham on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of September.

The current working title for the conference is “Unlocking the Rural Economy: Creating Vibrant and Sustainable Rural Communities”