

**MINUTES OF THE SPARSE RURAL AND RURAL SERVICES NETWORK EXECUTIVE AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE RURAL SERVICES PARTNERSHIP LTD MEETING, MONDAY 15<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2018 HELD AT THE LGA, SMITH SQUARE, LONDON**

**Present:** - Cllr Cecilia Motley (Chair), Cllr Derrick Haley (Vice Chair – Without Portfolio) Stewart Horne – Federation of Small Businesses, Cllr Peter Stevens (Vice Chair – East), Cllr Kevin Beaty (Vice Chair – North), Cllr Philip Sanders (Vice Chair – County 1), Cllr Sue Sanderson (Vice Chair – Without Portfolio), Dan Bates – Pixel Financial Management

**Officers:** - Graham Biggs MBE (Chief Executive), David Inman (Director) Andy Dean (Assistant Director)

**1. Apologies:-** Cllr Robert Heseltine (First Vice Chair Yorkshire), Cllr Janet Duncton (Vice Chair – South East), Revd Richard Kirlew (RSP Chair - Community), Cllr Rob Waltham – Vice Chair (Unitary), John Birtwistle (First Group), Cllr Gill Heath – Vice Chair (County 2), Cllr Peter Thornton (Vice Chair – Without Portfolio), Cllr Roger Philips (Vice Chair – Midlands), Georgina Fung (Youth), Cllr Adam Paynter (Vice Chair South Wwest)

**2. Notes of Previous Executive Meeting – 25th September 2017**

Agreed as a correct record.

Arising out of Minute 14 (Parliamentary Groups) it was reported that Jo Churchill MP had joined the Whips Office in the recent re-shuffle and therefore could no longer chair the APPG or host the Rural Vulnerability Day

**3. Notes of Last Main SPARSE Meeting – 20th November 2017**

Noted

**4. To consider any items arising from the Social Care and Health Group and the AGM of 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017.**

It was felt the Social Care and Health Group had been a very successful meeting. A Survey Monkey exercise would now be undertaken with members to inform the April meeting of the priorities in respect of future work.

**5. RSN Budget 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20**

A new employee, Jon Turner, would, as previously agreed by the Executive be joining RSN on the 5<sup>th</sup> April. Provision for him had been built into the estimates for 2018/19 and beyond.

Not all the charges had been paid. Some 10 Authorities remained outstanding. The adoption of a Purchase Order system by many Authorities had caused difficulties as memberships were very different to the usual financial allocation topics.

It was intended that Jon Turner would be initially asked to undertake RSP recruitment.

Members accepted the estimates. They also asked that investigation be made as to whether RSN could present a Local Plan Statistics Service at an additional cost. It was agreed that a report be brought back to the Executive in March.

## **6. Provisional Settlement 2018/19**

Graham Biggs updated members on the latest position. Members considered the draft response in detail.

The draft response as drafted was agreed by them. The Chair and Officers were due to meet the new Local Government Minister later on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

Dan Bates outlined the work Pixel were doing on behalf of the RSN in restating the values associated with the various aspects of the current needs formula.

## **7. Taking the AGM Strategy Forward.**

Members were told that the arrangements for the Regional Meetings were gradually being put together. How these meetings were intended to proceed was outlined. Peter Thornton hoped to Chair the North West meeting but if this did not prove possible, Sue Sanderson agreed to do it.

A position statement was intended to go out to all member Authorities in April. As a part of that service a data sheet for all Authorities relating to the Authority as a whole - not individual rural wards, was intended to accompany it. A draft of this would be presented to the March Executive' meeting. Given the suggestions in 5 above, it was felt two lists would now be involved (a) the one that was circulated with the Annual Report and secondly, the Local Plan statistical information that could be purchased for additional payment.

## **8. Discussions regarding Brexit – Latest Position with the Rural Brexit Roundtable Group**

Graham Biggs updated the meeting in respect of the current position that had been reached. The Roundtable group would be meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> February and a report would be made to the next Executive.

## **9. Engagement with Other Bodies**

Graham obtained the consent of the Executive that he, on behalf of the RSN, should act as a member of the Executive of the National Rural Crime Network and as a Director of the National Centre for Rural Health & Care.

## **10. Industrial Strategy**

This would be considered at the next Executive in March following the Rural Economy Group meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> January.

## **11. Rural Vulnerability Day**

David Inman detailed the RSN's objectives of this exercise namely to establish a defined Rural day in the Parliamentary calendar and to establish a group of MPs who were prepared to argue rural issues relating to "vulnerability" as they emerged.

The day appeared to be going well. Overall notified attendance was very good at some 50 people and there would be nine exhibitors. The event would be held in the Clement Atlee room at Portcullis House, one of the larger rooms at Westminster. Copies of the Agenda for the day would be circulated to the Executive.

## **12. LGA Fire Conferences and Rural Fire Group**

It was decided that a session would be held after the formal conference for rural Councillors and Chief Fire Officers attending. It would seek to rekindle the debate about the fire formula where it was felt that SPARSE Rural had a lot to offer. The event would also seek to cover the Rural Vulnerability agenda and other current rural issues.

## **13. Thoughts in Respect of 2018 Conference Theme**

The Cheltenham Ladies College might be a possible venue for the Drinks Reception this year.

It was intended that greater emphasis this year should go to the 'learning' aspect of the Conference with Kerry organising a series of workshops. The draft programme would be presented to the next Executive. The theme might be something like 'Delivering Rural Services Differently. The Opportunities for Innovation in Service Delivery across Public, Private and Community/Voluntary Sectors'.

## **14. Economic Session and SPARSE Rural SIG Meeting**

The draft Agenda, including for this new style Economic session, was discussed. The meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> January would be an important one and it was hoped that members would react similarly to the Health and Social Care meeting when a very proactive session about the shape of future Agendas had taken place.

The SPARSE meeting would need to consider how the March Executive could shape the most proactive response possible with regard to current DCLG consultation as to the content of the future needs formula.

## **15. Website**

A sheet was circulated briefing the Executive on the current position regarding the website Update

## **16. March Executive**

The following would be on the Agenda:

- (1) Report on the Communication Strategy and exploration of available options.
- (2) Industrial Strategy –
- (3) Statistics for Authorities (see 5 above)
- (4) Draft 2018 Rural Conference Programme
- (5) RSN response to the DCLG Needs and Resources Consultation which closes on 12<sup>th</sup> March