

**MINUTES OF THE SPARSE RURAL AND RURAL SERVICES NETWORK EXECUTIVE, MONDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> June, 2016 HELD AT THE LGA, SMITH SQUARE, LONDON**

**Present:-** Cllr Cecilia Motley (Chair), Cllr Robert Heseltine (First Vice Chair), Cllr Peter Stevens, (Vice Chair) Cllr Peter Thornton (Vice Chair), Cllr Janet Duncton (Observer), Cllr Derrick Haley (Vice Chair), Cllr Sue Sanderson (Observer), John Birtwistle RSP (First Group), Rev Richard Kirlew -Community (Sherborne Deanery Rural Chaplaincy)

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

**Apologies:** - Cllr Gordon Nicolson OBE, Cllr Lewis Strange, Cllr Adam Paynter, Steward Horne, Brian Wilson

**1. Notes of the Main Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2016**

Apologies from Derrick Haley and Sue Sanderson to be noted. The election for representatives for the South and for the North would be held at the next meeting in July – Councillors Janet Duncton and Sue Sanderson respectively would be recommended by the Executive. The Unitary Vice- Chair position would be considered at the AGM in November.

**2. Notes of the previous Executive held on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2016**

Accepted as a correct record.

**Buses bill**

- John Birtwistle updated the Executive on the current position of the Buses Bill. This includes four key elements: statutory Quality Partnerships, franchising, enhanced Quality Partnerships and improved provision of information.
- The bill has been through 2 readings in the House of Lords and reaches Committee stage in the House of Commons later this month. Legislation is intended to be in place by May 2017 when Manchester is due to take on additional powers to be enabled by the bill.
- There will be a full session on this topic at the RSN Rural Conference in September.

**3. To consider the revised statement as to the Financial Representational Service**

Document approved to be sent out as a position statement to all Sparse Rural member Authorities.

**4. Pixel Financial Management Report**

- (1) The Report on Business Rates was noted and accepted.
- (2) Four Briefing Notes by Brian Wilson. These were felt to be of great value. They had already been sent out to members and (by Graham Stuart) to the Rural Fair Share MPs.
- (3) The short briefing note on the needs review was duly explained and accepted..
- (4) Graham Biggs made a verbal report on the work undertaken in identifying likely top up and tariff authorities – further work was to be undertaken.

**5. LG Futures Reports**

The following were presented:-

- (a) A paper on foreseen cost drivers of Sparsity
- (b) A paper on the value of Sparsity and Density (the provision for density in the formula was some four times higher than that for sparsity)

(c) RSDG Distribution Methodology – various options had been evaluated and this work continued. The sums involved were intended to be on top of existing RSDG allowances for super sparse Authorities.

**6. DCLG/LGA Steering Group and Needs Assessment Working Group**

RSN were on the latter group. Work was ongoing from an intended new base. Consideration would also need to be given to new services that would be allocated to Local Government and the delivery cost factors that needed to be applied to them.

It was believed that the Secretary of State intended to use ex Environmental Minister Sir James Paice in a role for part of this process. A meeting (joint RSN/DCN/CCN) had taken place with him to keep him updated. It was thought the intention might be some form of political sounding board which Greg Clark may Chair himself.

**7. Working with DCN and CCN**

Graham detailed how the three Local Government groups were all seeking to work together identifying common issues where they could all commission work and lobby together.

**8. Budget Report 2015/16 and 2016/17**

This was presented and duly noted.

**9. Blue Skies Meeting**

The next Executive would be a Blue Skies meeting. It would be an all day session dedicated to establishing the necessary platform for stronger systems to operate to both identify and represent the rural voice across all English Local Authorities. The officers would prepare introductory papers for the Executive to consider and this important meeting would take place on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> September. All Executive Members were asked to attend if at all possible.

**10. Rural England CIC Update**

David Inman and Andy Dean detailed the current position setting out the role of the Stakeholders Group (30+ leading national Organisations with a rural interest plus individuals having a strong rural background) and of the Supporter Group some 30 private sector companies paying £500 per annum led by two core supporters First Bus and Calor Ltd contributing material sums of £17k between them. To undertake the full programme identified some 214 further supporters needed to be eventually identified. It was felt necessary that the group benefit for each group of companies participating needed to be identified category by category. A recent meeting of the current existing infrastructure grouping (Water Companies and Energy Companies) had been successful in this regard.

It was stressed how this group's research, networking and best practice work was of interest to Local Authorities individually but it needed to be entirely separate from RSN's representational work.

The CIC was preparing to release its first report on the Vulnerable Elderly in rural areas.

**11. Rural Health Network**

Graham Biggs detailed work undertaken by a consultant into the establishment of a "refreshed" Rural Health Network. Her report would be circulated to members of the Executive the following day. If no contrary views were received within a week the Network would proceed on the following basis.

- A free network with quarterly bulletins available to all Directors of Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Watch Groups in member areas together with others interested in rural health. It was hoped to eventually extend this service to CCGs in member areas.
- A Conference to be held in London every January seeking to achieve a break even position on budgeted overall network costs.

**12. Rural Conference 2016**

The Rural Conference 2016 would be held over a day and a half at the University of Gloucestershire on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> September. Some 20 people had currently booked at this fairly early stage. Around 50 delegates were needed for the event to break even.

13. Andy Dean reminded members of the Rural Housing Conference (this year organised on behalf of the Rural Housing Alliance by the National Housing Federation with support from the RSN rather than the RSN itself) taking place in London on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> July