

MINUTES OF THE SPARSE RURAL AND RURAL SERVICES NETWORK EXECUTIVE AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE RURAL SERVICES PARTNERSHIP LTD MEETING, TUESDAY 22nd MAY 2018 HELD AT THE SOROPTOMISTS, NO 63 BAYSWATER ROAD, LONDON

Present: - Cllr Cecilia Motley (Chair), Cllr Robert Heseltine (First Vice Chair Yorkshire), Cllr Peter Stevens (Vice Chair – East), Revd Richard Kirlaw (RSP Chair - Community),

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

Apologies: - Philip Sanders (Vice Chair – County 1), Cllr Rob Waltham (Vice Chair – Unitary), Cllr Peter Thornton (Vice Chair – Without Portfolio), John Birtwistle – Head of Policy, UK Bus, Gill Heath – Vice Chair (County 2), Stewart Horne – Federation of Small Businesses, Cllr Janet Dunton (Vice Chair – South East), Derrick Haley (Vice Chair – Without Portfolio), Cllr Adam Paynter (Vice Chair South West), Cllr Sue Sanderson (Vice Chair – Without Portfolio)

1. Notes of Previous Executive Meeting – 28th March 2018

Agreed as a correct record.

2. Notes of the Main Rural Assembly Sub SIG Meeting – 9th April 2018

Agreed as a correct record.

3. Notes of Rural Social Care and Health Group – 9th April 2018

Agreed as a correct record.

4. Membership and Response to Request for an Extra Levy

The Chief Executive explained the position over Purchase Orders and the later than usual situation in respect of despatch of invoices. Payment pattern was therefore slightly behind previous years. To date 37 Authorities have paid with 32 agreeing to pay the Research levy and five declining.

5. Meeting of Fair Share Group of MPs

This had taken place and had been reasonably successful. Graham Biggs updated the meeting.

6. Joint RSN/CCN Commission from Pixel Financial Management in Additional Evidence Required by MHCLG

MHCLG had confirmed that the rural case was one of special interest. However, in this severely contested political environment the additional cost case would have to be proved. It was accepted however, rural comparison by the RSN could only be up against rural Authorities with urban areas. . MHCLG would be consulting after the summer 2018 on the shape of the Foundation Formula, top ups, use of Council Tax in the formula, area cost adjustment and high- level transition. By spring 2019 MHCLG would publish potential indicative allocations for each authority.

Rurality/Sparsity may be employed in the area cost adjustment which Pixel felt was not necessarily favourable to the rural case and may need to be contested. Damping -Transition -may gradually be released over a 4 – 5 year period. The Department of Transport data on journey times could be used within the formula.

The Authorities being approached to work with Pixel were:
Districts - West Devon, South Hams, Selby and
Counties & Unitaries – Wokingham, North Yorkshire, Cornwall, Cumbria and
Oxfordshire.

The Pixel work – which was a joint RSN/CCN commission - would be completed by the end of July. Their work would then be shared with the rural group of MPs.

7. Fire Service Group

Graham Biggs raised the situation regarding the Fire Group. It was felt rural research work would be of real value but many of the Fire and Rescue Services had been reluctant payers sometimes. It was decided to write to the Group of 12 saying unless objection was raised by a set date, work would be commissioned and appropriate reimbursement would be sought.

8. Report on the Work of the Rural Services APPG

Graham Biggs reported on the Community Transport work which had involved the Transport Minister directly and the plans for July meetings to prepare a case for the rural aspects in response to the proposed Green Paper on future Adult Social Care Funding.

9. Rural Conference 2018 – Progress Report

The Chief Executive detailed the proposals. The programme would go live very shortly. A front line overall sponsor was being sought together with exhibitors. It was agreed that any front line sponsor would be allowed to address the Conference for a ten minute period.

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

The Chief Executive presented budget papers showing the current position. Two Authorities had sought to leave and this position could not have been anticipated. The available balance at the end of the current financial year was now very slim. The Chief Executive detailed the RSN/Rural England position and notified members that the Policy Director was now in post, looking to concentrate on obtaining more income through RSP and Rural England Supporter recruitment.

11. Rural Panel and Rural Sounding Boards Verbal Report

David Inman gave a full report. It was hoped a partnership could be established with Gloucestershire University between Rural England and the CCRI for expansion work to be carried out by the University widening the existing panel, particularly by the incorporation of more young people. Two further surveys would be undertaken in July and in the Autumn to seek to do this.

The Sounding Board work was proceeding and working arrangements with UK Youth and the Rural Business Awards Group were being sought which would allow Young Persons and a Small Business Sounding Boards to be set up.

12. Regional Meetings Update

The third meeting and seminar in the North East was due to be held later in the week following the West Midlands and South West ones. These regional events did appear to be working well and were being well received. At each event some 20 to 25 Councillors had been present.

13. LGA – Post Brexit Commission – Analysis of Responses

Eight replies had been received back and it was felt these gave an accurate snap shot of member consideration of the position. These, it was felt, would be really useful towards the preparation of a rural strategy.

14. RSN Statement on GDPR

A document in relation to GDPR was tabled and agreed by the Executive and formally adopted by the RSP Directors.

15. New News Arrangements – The Bulletins

The Executive had been considering the Group's Communication Strategy for some time and Officers had been considering previous feedback. They presented to members an option for a combined publication which would be sent out every Tuesday.

The intention was:

- (a) To prevent the current situation, where members received information frequently (at least 3 times) during the week (it was felt this might lead to some information getting lost).
- (b) That information would be strengthened because it would be able to use the details and style of the new website.
- (c) That as much information as possible was provided 'in house'. The new arrangement would go under the title of 'The Rural Bulletin' and it was hoped would provide a definitive rural product once a week that would be fully recognised across rural areas.

The Executive approved the change. Enquiries would now be made to test the going market rate for the news service being provided to the Group to ensure RSN received continued value for money.

16. Proposed New Arrangements – RSP

It was accepted that work was necessary to revitalise the RSP and thought had accordingly been given as to how the RSP could operate in a slightly wider way.

It was decided that in future the RSP would have two meetings a year (one being the AGM) concentrating on RSP issues but mainly around topics pertinent to the consideration of Rural Vulnerability and the related service implications.. These meetings would be chaired by Rev Richard Kirlew, as the current RSP Chair.

The drive would be to make Rural Vulnerability and its service and community implications a central plank of the Organisation's work at MP (Rural Vulnerability Group of MPs) RSN (Social Care and Health meetings) and at research (Rural England) level in an annual meeting of RE Supporters' consideration of the topic.

17. New Members from the North East

Cllr Trevor Thorne from Northumberland Council would be approached to see if it was possible to interest him becoming involved with the Group to ensure North East coverage on the Executive. Any formal decision would be for the AGM in November.