
Agenda

SPARSE Rural and Rural Services Network Executive and Board of Directors of the Rural Services Partnership Ltd meeting

Hosted: Online via Zoom
Date: Monday, 23rd May 2022
Time: 11:15am – 2:30pm
Chair: [Cllr Cecilia Motley](#), Rural Services Network / Shropshire Council

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
Cllr Robert Heseltine	North Yorkshire County Council
David Inman	Rural Services Network
Cllr Jeremy Savage	South Norfolk Council
Cllr Peter Stevens	West Suffolk Council
Cllr Adam Paynter	Cornwall Council
Anna Price	Rural Business Group & Awards
Cllr Trevor Thorne	Northumberland County Council
Cllr Peter Thornton	South Lakeland District Council/Cumbria Council
Nadine Trout	Rural Services Network
Cllr Mark Whittington	Lincolnshire County Council

Apologies

Martin Collett	English Rural Housing Association
Nik Harwood	Young Somerset
Cllr Sue Sanderson	Cumbria County Council

2. Appointment of Chief Executive: Chair and Vice Chair to report.

The Chairman reported that following the internal recruitment exercise agreed by the Executive in September 2021 an interview panel consisting of the chair, the Vice Chair, the RSP Chair and the current Chief Executive interviewed the only applicant.

The interview panel recommended, and the Executive unanimously agreed, that Kerry Booth (currently Deputy Chief Executive) be appointed.

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Rural Services Network

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Kerry Booth will become Chief Executive Designate from 1st June 2022 and Chief Executive from 1st April 2023. The current Chief Executive will remain with the organisation until at least 1st April 2024 in a background support role.

3. **[Notes from the previous RSN Executive meeting.](#)**

Held on 21st March 2022 to consider any relevant updates and approve the minutes.

The group approved the minutes with the following update:

APPG – it is likely that there will be one APPG on Rural Services meeting prior to the Summer Recess focusing on off gas grid properties.

4. **Summary of Previous RSN Work and Meetings. ([Attachment 1](#))**

Kerry Booth, Deputy Chief Executive gave a brief report on attendance, key points and policy work since the last Executive meeting. She highlighted how compared to last year, attendance for seminars at the first four events, has increased 30% on the same position last year which is positive for increasing reach and profile of the organisation.

In addition to the report, Kerry indicated work that had taken place with Mobile UK on their Digital Champions report and promotion of the Innovate UK scheme for net zero projects.

5. **Budget Reports.**

(a) 2021/22 Financial Year Report. ([Attachment 2](#))

(b) 2022/23 to 6th May 2022 Financial Report. ([Attachment 3](#))

The Executive noted the budget reports.

First batch of invoices have been sent out to Local Authorities and currently waiting on purchase orders from Local Authorities for the second batch to be sent out.

The Shadow Authorities for the new unitary councils in Cumbria (2), North Yorkshire and Somerset will be invited (without charge) to be RSN members until 1st April 2023

6. **Adult Social Care Reforms: Discussions with Gillian Keegan MP, Care Minister.**

Graham Biggs MBE, Chief Executive gave a verbal report on the outcomes from discussions with the care minister.

This report was sent to the Care Minister in advance of the discussion for information. ([Attachment 4](#))

There was discussion with the Minister on the Market Sustainability and fair cost of care fund guidance which had just been released. Local Authorities must submit a wide range of data to DHSC on their care markets by October 2022. Until that data is provided, it seems unlikely that any judgements on allocations will be made. It is uncertain at this stage whether the data collected will just be used in respect of Market Sustainability or whether it will influence the Social Care element of the Local Government funding formulae more generally.

7. **Levelling Up:**

(a) **Draft Pragmatix Report.** ([Attachment 5 & 5A*](#))

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Verbal report from Graham Biggs MBE, Chief Executive.

Important report for the RSN and rural areas – includes consideration of Rural as a region and clearly shows that rural needs attention to level up. There was a discussion around the statistics to include emphasis on within the Executive Summary of the report. The merits of using some statistics over others was discussed and it was agreed to use the figures on self-harm in young people, along with superfast broadband.

(b) Rural Lens Review: Levelling Up White Paper – Urban/Rural Data Analysis by Rural Services Network. ([Attachment 5B*](#))

This has been produced for our own use to understand the figures behind the report. It supplements the Pragmatix Study.

(c) Cost of Living in Rural Areas: Interim Report.

Verbal report from Graham Biggs MBE, Chief Executive.

Interim Report due next week (will be circulated to the Executive for comment) and the final report is due at the end of June.

(d) [UK Shared Prosperity Fund Prospectus: Rural Lens Review.](#)

This has been published and was included in the Rural Bulletin for members to access.

(e) Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.

Verbal Report from Graham Biggs MBE, Chief Executive.

Published after the Queens Speech, with a significantly large part of it dedicated to Planning. The Rural Lens has been drafted and we are due to consult with our Planning Authorities on some of the detail before making more detailed comment.

(f) Levelling up for Rural – Work is ongoing to produce some short documents and briefings for MPs on the key topics and the first draft on Rural Health was shared on screen with the Executive. We will continue to produce these for each of the key service topics.

* Please be aware that Attachments 5, 5A & 5B associated with this item is available only to [RSN Executive](#) members. If you are a [RSN Executive](#) member and you would like to view these attachments, please email admin@rsn.gov.uk and we will send the papers to you.

8. Bus Service Improvement Plans – Comments from Members. ([Attachment 6](#))

Nadine Trout, Member Development & Support Manager, highlighted some feedback that the RSN has had from our member authorities on those that received Bus Service Improvement Funding, and those that did not.

Points to note include:

- Not one authority got the full application amount they applied for.
- Bulk of funding was for capital as opposed to revenue projects.
- Some of the authorities that didn't receive funding have received no feedback as to why they were unsuccessful.

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Local Authorities are now undertaking network reviews as to the service available to be delivered after October when the latest round of bus recovery funding comes to an end.

9. APPG for Rural Business and the Rural Powerhouse: Analysis of this APPG's recommendations with RSN Revitalising Rural Asks. ([Attachment 7](#))

Kerry Booth, Deputy Chief Executive highlighted the recent report on the Rural Economy by the APPG for Rural Business and the Rural Powerhouse. This took evidence from several sources, including the RSN and we are quoted in the report. It has 6 main areas of recommendations, although these are not all relevant to the USP of the RSN. We have selected some of these recommendations for inclusion in our Revitalising Rural campaign as asks of Government.

The Executive agreed with the suggestions, and these will now be considered and included into the Revitalising Rural Campaign.

10. [The Queen's Speech 2022: Rural Lens Review.](#)

This is available for members to access and has been published in the Rural Bulletin.

11. Any Other Business.

The upcoming Sparse meeting and the Rural Economy meeting in June will be merged into a wider Rural Assembly meeting that all member organisations can attend. This will take place on either 21st June.

The cost to rural authorities of the proposed new waste/recycling collection requirements was raised. It was agreed to survey members.

The next RSN Executive meeting will take place online on Monday, 5th September 2022.

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