



RURAL SERVICES NETWORK

**AGENDA FOR SPARSE RURAL AND RURAL SERVICE NETWORK
EXECUTIVE AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE RURAL
SERVICES PARTNERSHIP LTD MEETING**

Venue:- Mary Sumner House, 24 Tufton Street, London SW1P 3RB

Date: Monday 24th June 2013

Time: 11.30am to 2.30pm

- 1. Notes of the Previous Meeting**
7th February 2013 - Attachment 1
- 2. Budget Statement 2012/13-2013/14**
Report to follow
- 3. 2013/14 Budget Survey**
Dan Bates to report
- 4. Rural Fair Shares Campaign**
 - a. How to increase support for the campaign from MPs as well as from organisations such as the Local Government Association (LGA) and the District Councils Network (DCN).
 - b. Using the party conferences as a way to push the campaign.
 - c. Meeting with the Minister
To report on the outcomes of the meeting on 5th June 2013
 - d. Draft Action Plan – Attachment 2
- 5. Prince's Countryside Fund Bid**
Graham Biggs to report
- 6. Revised Service and Website**
Kerry Booth to Report
- 7. Unitary Group**
Update report

8. **'Rural England'---** Commissioners and general progress
David Inman to report
9. **Patron**
To report current position
10. **Progress on Service Groups**
Update report Main Meeting Minute 11 (18.03.2013) – RSP refers:
“Members expressed concerns as to whether the development of these groups could mean that RSN was spread too thinly. This point would be considered by the Executive”.
11. **Eden District Council**
Highways and street lighting – Attachment 3
12. **Any Other Business**
 - a. Public Health Funding – Rural Authorities (Cecilia Motley)
 - b. Review of rural classifications (David Inman)
Defra are currently conducting a review of the rural classifications and have asked for our early views.

We think it is useful to have the classification based on the extent of rurality of the population. There is merit in having continuity for comparative purposes, including statistical comparisons/trends over time. The current classification seems to be generally well received and widely used. We can't really see a case for a radical overhaul. It might perhaps be argued that the advent of more shire unitaries from 2009 has impacted on the classification, since larger administrative areas may be more likely to have mixed urban-rural populations, but we are not sure that justifies altering everything.

It would, though, be useful to have the current methodology applied to some of the new geographies, such as LEP areas and Clinical Commissioning Group areas.

From a financial viewpoint there is a fair degree of difference between the authorities in the Significant Rural classification. Most (but not all) of those 50-40% rural benefit from sparsity allowance more than the density allowance but the position clearly flips over as you progress down towards 25% rural. However the pattern is not uniform. Nevertheless a subdivision in Sig Rural at or around rural 40 (as in the Predominantly Rural group 50- 80 could be a possibility)?

It might be good to establish an advisory note or protocol asking for people to apply the rural classifications when considering financial allocation or other administrative changes to make certain there are no unforeseen rural consequences? This at least would very much help in rural proofing as such use would quickly establish the foreseen impact across the rural classifications.