
Agenda

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

Incorporating SPARSE Rural Members, Rural Assembly and Rural Services Partnership Members. All nominated members & officers of RSN are invited to attend this meeting.

**Hosted: Online via Zoom
Date: Monday, 28th September 2020
Time: 11:15am – 2:30 pm**

We will circulate an email with Zoom joining instructions in advance

- 1. Attendance & Apologies.**
- 2. Notes from the previous RSN Executive meeting.** (Attachment 1)
Held on 2nd July 2020 to consider any relevant updates and approve the minutes. Main issues discussed:
 - (a) Thoughts on the Future of the Network.
 - (b) Rural Strategy Campaign Progress.
 - (c) COVID-19 Related Issues.
 - (d) National Rural Conference 2020.
 - (e) Fairer Funding Review.
 - (f) Work of RSN and iEDO on LIS and rural economy opportunities.
- 3. Revitalising Rural: Realising the Vision.** (Attachments 2 & 2A)
To approve (with or without amendment) the final document and agree arrangements for the launch. NB the attachments here are the **draft Introduction** section and the **draft short Summary** document. Executive members will have seen the draft full document and the draft policy asks (both of which have been the subject of wide consultation with members over recent times). If you wish to review the chapters again, please follow the links below.

Links to individual chapters:

[Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Industrial Strategies](#)¹
[UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#)²

¹ https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/DRAFT_LEPs_and_LIS.pdf

² https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/DRAFT_UK_Shared_Prosperty_Fund.pdf

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[Further Education, Training and Apprenticeships](#)³
[Business Advice and Guidance](#)⁴
[Digital Connectivity](#)⁵
[Transport and Access to Jobs and Opportunities](#)⁶
[Accessible Health and Care Services](#)⁷
 Fair Funding (*To be Supplied later*)
[Land Use Planning System](#)⁸
[Availability of Affordable Housing](#)⁹
[Rural Town Centres and High Streets](#)¹⁰
[Sustaining Village Schools and Local Assets](#)¹¹
[Parish Councils and Community Action](#)¹²
[Managing an Older Population](#)¹³
[Sustainable Farming and Land Management](#)¹⁴
[Decarbonising Rural Communities and Economies](#)¹⁵

4. **Rural/Market Towns Group – Update.** (Attachment 3)
5. **Subs for 2020-2021.**
RSN has a standing resolution to increase annual subs by 2% a year. We are seeking to confirm this arrangement.
NB the National Pay Award 2020/2021 looks to be 2,75%.
6. **Engagement with Member Councils and Nominated Members.** (Attachment 4)
Report from Graham Biggs, Chief Executive.
7. **RSN draft response to the ‘Changes to the Current Planning System’ Consultation which closes on 1st October.**
Papers to follow closer to the date of the meeting.

³ https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/DRAFT_Further_Education_Training.pdf

⁴ https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/DRAFT_Business_Advice_and_Guidan.pdf

⁵ https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/DRAFT_Digital_Connectivity.pdf

⁶ https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/DRAFT_Transport_and_Access.pdf

⁷ https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/DRAFT_Accessible_health_and_care.pdf

⁸ https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/DRAFT_Land_Use_Planning_System.pdf

⁹ https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/DRAFT_Availability_of_Affordable.pdf

¹⁰ https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/DRAFT_Rural_Town_Centres_and_Hig.pdf

¹¹ https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/DRAFT_Sustaining_Village_Schools.pdf

¹² https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/DRAFT_Parish_Councils_and_Communi.pdf

¹³ https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/DRAFT_Managing_an_Older_Populati.pdf

¹⁴ https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/DRAFT_Sustainable_Farming_Land.pdf

¹⁵ https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/DRAFT_Decarbonising_Rural_Communi.pdf

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- 8. RSN's response to the 'Planning for the Future' consultation which has to be submitted by the end of October 2020.**
We are arranging a specific seminar for RSN members (RSN Planning White Paper meeting) on Tuesday, 20th October to consider this important White Paper. We will prepare a draft response and circulate to attendees at that meeting for consideration. We will consult Executive members by email on the draft response before submission.
- 9. To approve the RSN response to the Treasury regarding Comprehensive Spending Review.**
This has been considered by the RSN Executive members through email. This item is just to get a formal resolution of the Executive to approve the submission which had to be made by 24th September.
[Please click here to view the final submission paper sent to the Treasury](#)¹⁶
[Please click here to view Appendix with supporting information paper](#)¹⁷
- 10. A Plan for Jobs: Rural Analysis.**
To note the analysis of the Treasury Plan for Jobs from a rural perspective.
[Please click here to view attachment on A Plan for Jobs: Rural Analysis](#)¹⁸
- 11. Rural Economy Toolkit.**
To note the Rural Economy Toolkit produced by the RSN and Institute for Economic Development. This was discussed during the Rural Economy Plenary Session of the National Rural Conference 2020 and it will be put to the Rural Economy Sub-Group meeting on Monday, 12th October. The Rural Economy Toolkit will officially be "launched" at a Joint RSN/IED webinar on Monday, 19th October.
[Please click here to view the Rural Economy Toolkit](#)¹⁹
- 12. National Rural Conference 2020.**
Verbal report from Kerry Booth, Assistant Chief Executive.
- 13. Fire meeting 2021 and engagement with Fire & Rescue Services.**
- 14. RSN Meetings & Events 2021.**
 - RSN Seminar Programme 2021. (Attachment 5)
 - RSN Meeting Programme 2021 and Schedule of Dates. (Attachment 6)
- 15. RSN Budget Report. (Attachment 7)**

¹⁶ https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/FINAL_CSR_SUBMISSION_Aligned_to_.pdf

¹⁷ https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Supporting_Information_to_RSN_CS.pdf

¹⁸ https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/A_Plan_for_Jobs_Rural_Analysis.pdf

¹⁹ https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/Rural_Economy_Toolkit.pdf

- 16. RSP Full Accounts; Appointment of Tax Accountants and Appointment of RSP Ltd Chair of Directors.** (Attachment 8)
NB Only RSP directors can vote on these items.
- 17. Any Other Business.**
The next RSN Executive meeting date is Monday, 11th January 2021.

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Minutes

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

Incorporating SPARSE Rural Members, Rural Assembly and Rural Services Partnership Members. All nominated members & officers of RSN are invited to attend this meeting.

Hosted: Online via Zoom
Date: Thursday, 2nd July 2020
Time: 3.15 pm

Attendance:

Cllr Cecilia Motley (Chair)	Shropshire Council / Rural Services Network
Graham Biggs	Rural Services Network
John Birtwistle	First Group
Kerry Booth	Rural Services Network
Martin Collett	English Rural Housing Association
Nik Harwood	Young Somerset
Cllr Gill Heath	Staffordshire County Council
David Inman	Rural Services Network
Cllr Adam Paynter	Cornwall Council
Cllr Roger Phillips	Herefordshire Council
Anna Price	Rural Business Group
Cllr Mary Robinson	Eden District Council
Cllr Sue Sanderson	Cumbria County Council
Cllr Jeremy Savage	South Norfolk Council
Cllr Peter Stevens	West Suffolk Council
Cllr Trevor Thorne	Northumberland County Council
Cllr Peter Thornton	South Lakeland District Council
Nadine Trout	Rural Services Network
Cllr Mark Whittington	Lincolnshire County Council

Apologies:

Cllr Robert Heseltine	North Yorkshire County Council
Cllr Rob Waltham MBE	North Lincolnshire Council

1. **Notes from the previous RSN Executive meeting held on 16th of March 2020.**
(Attachment 1)

Agreed as a correct record.

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2. **Thoughts for the Future of the Network – report from Corporate Director.**

(Attachment 2, Attachment 2A)

A detailed paper was presented to the Executive from the RSN Corporate Director. The paper set out the current situation in relation to the Network. It set out perceived strengths and weaknesses.

The Executive agreed as follows:

Engagement with Member Councils

- (a) Strengthen the Nominated Member situation by establishing with all member authorities both a **Nominated Member and a Deputy**. If these nominees were not already on the authority's Cabinet, or Executive Arrangements, there would be a request for a Cabinet Member to also be involved - at least with the Annual Rural discussion meetings referred to in (c) below.
- (b) The establishment of an **'RSN Insider' publication** which would be sent out four or five times a year to those involved Members and to Key Officers. This would provide a full briefing on the Networks current activities.
- (c) A series of **Annual Rural Discussion Meetings** for each member authority would be introduced. These meetings would be conducted online and would involve a senior member of the RSN staff and the Nominated Member and Deputy, a Cabinet member, and at least one of the Key Officers. These meetings would seek to establish the Authority's rural views across the spectrum of the RSN's operation. This would include in respect of Fairer Funding (Sparse Rural members only), Rural Service Provision, Current RSN Campaigns, the Rural Economy and issues surrounding Rural Vulnerability and Disadvantage. Discussion would also take place at these meeting about the way in which member authorities dealt with Rural Issues and whether that had any individual special arrangements.
These Annual Rural Discussion Meetings would ensure annual input and discussion with all member authorities, facilitating RSN policy making. They would take place in addition to the current formal meetings, regional seminars, and the annual National Rural Conference in September.
- (d) There would be **annual requests to all member authorities for** specific named **'Key Liaison (Senior) Officers'** in relation to Public Relations, Democratic Services, Economic Activity, Public Health and Finance. We anticipate that this would allow some specialist work in these areas. All Management Board members, traditional cross section officer appointees and all Council Members would in the future also receive RSN service.

Towns and Parishes

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- 1) It was decided to try to recruit to the RSP Rural/Market Towns Group at least one Town within each member area - thus, hopefully, materially widening this emerging Grouping.
- 2) A system of local social & economic profile of our Principal Council's area to be established to support engagement with the Rural/Market Towns Group members in those areas.
- 3) The Executive at its next meeting will review the existing 'categories' of membership of the Rural/Market Towns Group.
- 4) The suggestion of creating an English Rural Parishes Group was not endorsed at this juncture. The issue would be considered further if the future role and responsibilities etc. of Parish Councils is set out in the Government's proposed Devolution White Paper.

Sounding Boards

Sounding Board surveys will be operated by the RSN at least twice a year focussed on Rural Strategy themes. The Sounding Boards will continue to operate at the levels of:

- Principal Councils in membership
- Parishes in RSN Community Group membership
- Rural/Market Towns Group
- Rural Small Business
- Rural Young People

3. RSN Budget Report. (Attachment 3)

The report was accepted, and new format agreed subject to the % of budget column being removed and a new column added to show variances to the original budget.

4. Rural Strategy Campaign Progress – report from Chief Executive. (Attachment 4)

The Chief Executive's report informed the Executive of the progress on implementing the agreed workplan to produce the Reinvigorating Rural: Realising the Vision document. It also outlined the proposed member consultation processes which were agreed.

The documents needed to reflect the impacts of COVID-19 set out in the papers for the next item on the Agenda.

The RSN Executive accepted that the policy asks (once determined) would form the basis of the RSN's representational work over the life of the current Parliament. The Chief Executive stressed that it was important that the document – especially in respect of the 'current policy context' and the 'policy asks' – was maintained as a 'live-document' and updated as things changed. Lobbying/representational work may

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be based on opportunities as they arise on individual topics in the various sections of the document. The budget had no expenditure in it for future financial years and that would need to be addressed.

5. COVID-19 Related Issues.

(a) Draft RSN Position Statements on various COVID-19 issues (Attachment 5)

This paper was agreed.

(b) For consideration as part of the Rural Strategy work - Assessment of Rural Issues and 'Asks' for a COVID-19 Recovery Plan (Attachment 6)

This paper was agreed for the purposes of the consultation with members referred to in Minute 5 above.

(c) General Discussion on the work of the RSN and member engagement 'during lockdown' (Attachment 7)

Kerry Booth outlined the different ways that RSN has been providing services to its members during lockdown, including online seminars, targeted surveys to feed into DEFRA on key issues such as the Rural Economy and Domestic Abuse, and an increased social media presence. The Executive noted the report.

6. National Rural Conference 2020 – report from Kerry Booth, Assistant Chief Executive. (Attachment 8)

Due to the pandemic, the National Rural Conference cannot take place in Cheltenham and is going to be moved online for this year. Kerry outlined the format for the event which will take place over the course of a week with a range of plenary and seminar sessions taking place online focusing on key issues relating to Revitalising Rural.

The Executive agreed the proposed format which they felt was a positive and exciting way forward.

7. Fairer Funding Review: Update.

The Chief Executive reminded members that due to the pandemic the Government had (again) postponed the Fair Funding/Needs and Resources Review. No new timetable had been set.

The move to 75% Business Rate Retention was now uncertain given both the impact of the pandemic and the fact that the Government is to carry out a fundamental review of Business Rates (again no timescales have been set).

Kerry Booth reported on the very successful and well attended recent Zoom Finance Seminar led by Adrian Jenkins (Pixel).

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The Chief Executive reported that he had recently commissioned a short piece of work from Pixel on the costs of 'remoteness'. Members agreed that it was important that the RSN continued to build and evidence the case for rurality costs being much more than travel time.

The Chief Executive referred to the announcement earlier that day on the government's new funding package for councils to help address COVID-19 pressures and cover lost income during the pandemic. He stated that the RSN would try to assess the impact (in terms of Council Tax and percentage of net budgets) of extra costs/lost income not covered by government support for rural areas.

8. Work of RSN and iEDO on LIS and rural economy opportunities – report from Nadine Trout, Member Development & Support Manager. (Attachment 9)

Work of RSN and iED on LIS and a proposed Rural Economy Opportunities Toolkit.

Nadine took the Executive through the proposed content of a Rural Economy Opportunities Toolkit. The Executive were supportive of the content with one member citing the importance of referencing agriculture, supply chains and Brexit in the toolkit.

It was agreed that the Rural Economy Opportunities Toolkit content be approved and the Member Development and Support Manager be tasked with launching the Toolkit in partnership with the iED (Institute of Economic Development), at the Rural Services Network National Conference in September 2020.

9. To note the Annual Report to the LGA. (Attachment 10)

This was an annual report for LGA purposes, but the Chairman commended the document saying it represented an excellent overview of the RSN's work. She asked that it be sent to members on a suitable occasion and included on the website.

10. Regional Seminars 2020 update.

North East & West Midlands Regional Seminars took place online on 19th May and 30th of June 2020 and were received well. The team will endeavour to continue organising meetings online for the foreseeable future where possible. It was agreed that face to face meetings were unlikely to be held in this calendar year.

The Chief Executive suggested, and the Executive agreed, that we would try to organise the SPARSE Rural and Rural Economy Group meetings (which were postponed earlier in the year) online via Zoom.

Event	Rescheduled Date	Format and Platform
East Midlands Regional Seminar	28.07.2020	Online via Zoom

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(Rural Skills & Education)		
National Rural Conference 2020	14 Monday 15 Tuesday 16 Wednesday 17 Thursday 18 Friday 09.2020	Online via Zoom and possibly other platforms
North West Regional Seminar (Rural Vulnerability)	05.10.2020	Online via Zoom
SPARSE Rural meeting	12.10.2020	Online via Zoom
Rural Economy Sub Group meeting	12.10.2020	Online via Zoom
Yorkshire Regional Seminar (Rural Housing)	02.11.2020	Online via Zoom
Rural Social Care & Health Sub Group	16.11.2020	Online via Zoom
RSN AGM	16.11.2020	Online via Zoom
Rural Assembly	16.11.2020	Online via Zoom

11. Any Other Business

The next RSN Executive is scheduled for Monday, 28th September 2020.

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Revitalising Rural

Realising the Vision
Introduction



RURAL
SERVICES
NETWORK

**DRAFT INTRODUCTORY SECTION
REVITALISING RURAL – REALISING THE VISION**

At the outset of 2020 the Rural Services Network commenced work on this document, to identify policies and initiatives which would help rural areas realise their potential, thereby benefitting the communities who live there and growing the rural contribution to the nation's economy. In large part, this was intended as a constructive response to the Government's 2019 commitment to expand on its strategic vision for rural England and the measures being put in place to underpin that.

"Over the coming months, the government will expand on its strategic vision and set out how, working across departments and working with stakeholders, it is putting in place a range of measures to ensure that rural areas continue to thrive."

(Government response in 2019 to the House of Lords Select Committee on the Rural Economy)

That remains a key purpose behind this document. However, no policy document can overlook the extraordinary events of 2020. Rural communities and economies have been massively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and by the restrictions that were introduced to help contain it. Although many of the restrictions have now been relaxed, there is an additional urgent need to help rural communities rebuild and to help rural economies revive.

Context for this document includes the need to close the productivity gap between rural and urban areas, not forgetting that more people live in rural areas than in Greater London. That means supporting the creation of better paid and more secure jobs in growing sectors of the economy. That, in turn, requires rural areas to have fast reliable digital connectivity, a well-trained workforce, good transport networks and tailored business support, amongst other things.

It is no coincidence that the policy topics covered by this document map onto "the four foundations of productivity", which were outlined in the Government's Industrial Strategy, those foundations being: people; infrastructure; business environment; places; and ideas. Each of these foundations needs to be addressed to revitalise rural areas and to achieve their economic potential.

The Industrial Strategy also highlighted four "grand challenges" which could transform the economic landscape. These are: artificial intelligence and data; an ageing society; the future of mobility; and clean growth. Those challenges should also shape any credible rural vision. Not least, since – compared with urban populations – rural residents are more likely to be from older age groups and rural residents must travel further to access jobs and services. Equally, rural businesses should seek to reap benefits from the tech revolution and from green growth.

The RSN views two other significant policy drivers as being critical to revitalising rural areas. First, they must be supported to contribute fully to the Government's 2050 target for the country to become net zero for greenhouse gases. Whilst this target has implications across the board, it must, in particular, shape ambitious policies for housing, transport and energy production in rural areas.

Second, rural areas must be supported to level up. Many rural places have lost out, not least in terms of employment opportunities, key service provision, transport networks and affordable housing. Too often rural areas have been overlooked by policies which targeted large urban centres. On many policy agendas, rural areas are handicapped by public funding allocations that work against them. The RSN, therefore, welcomes the Government's commitment on levelling up in rural areas.

"This government is committed to levelling up all parts of the United Kingdom, not just investing in our great towns and cities, but also our rural and coastal areas."

(‘Farming for the Future: progress report’, Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, February 2020)

In this document we look at fifteen policy themes, which we believe need tackling through measures allied to a rural vision. For each theme we outline some policy proposals which we consider would make a material difference, addressing known challenges and opportunities. These were drawn up following engagement with a wide cross-section of our members, whose knowledge derives from their experience of policy delivery at national, local and community levels. The policy themes are listed in a table, below, showing their prime links (only) to the foundations of productivity.

Revitalising Rural: policy themes		People (workforce)	Infrastructure	Business environment	Places	Ideas
1	Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Industrial Strategies					
2	UK Shared Prosperity Fund					
3	Training, Apprenticeships and Further Education					
4	Business Advice and Guidance					
5	Digital Connectivity					
6	Transport to Access Jobs and Opportunities					
7	Accessible Health and Care Services					
8	Land Use Planning System					
9	Access to Affordable Housing					
10	Rural Town High Streets					
11	Sustaining Village Schools and Other Local Assets					
12	Parish Councils and Community Action					
13	Managing an Ageing Population					
14	Sustainable Farming and Land Management					
15	Decarbonising Rural Economies and Communities					

One stand-out point from this work is the inter-connectedness of the policy themes: indeed, the inter-relationship between economic, social and environmental agendas. Rural economies are much more likely to thrive where there are also strong communities and a high quality environment. Action is therefore required across a range of issues, which both directly and indirectly have a bearing on economic recovery and growth.

An equally important principle is that central Government should develop the vision and the policy framework, along with sustained financial support to enable the intended outcomes to be achieved. However, wherever possible policy design and delivery should take place at the local and community levels. It is at those local and community levels that specific needs and circumstances will be properly understood. Rural areas across England vary significantly, so policy delivery needs careful tailoring if it is to be effective.

This Autumn the Government intends to publish its Comprehensive Spending Review, setting out Whitehall Departmental budgets and funding priorities for at least the next three financial years. The RSN now calls upon Government to ensure that rural needs from public policy are fully and fairly reflected in that Review, so that outcomes for rural areas can be proportionate. We hope that this will enable the policy suggestions in this document to be taken up, helping to realise the rural vision.

Rural Services Network

The RSN is the national champion for rural services, ensuring that people in rural areas have a strong voice. We are fighting for a fair deal for rural communities to maintain their social and economic viability for the benefit of the nation as a whole.

Our membership comprises 123 principal local authorities plus 219 other rural service providers and interest groups.

Version: 2nd September 2020

Revitalising Rural

Realising the Vision Summary



Revitalising Rural – Realising the Vision

Summary

The Rural Services Network (RSN) hopes to contribute to the delivery of the Government's 2019 commitment, to "expand on its strategic vision" for rural areas, "working across Departments and working with stakeholders".

When work commenced on this document Covid-19 was barely known about. There is, of course, now an urgent and additional need to help rural communities and rural economies to rebuild from the many and varied impacts of the pandemic and associated restrictions.

However, what must not be overlooked is that there has been a long term need to close the productivity gap between rural and urban areas. Amongst other things, that means supporting the creation of better paid and more secure jobs within growing sectors of the economy.

Pursuing this objective will support the Government's ambition to level up those places which have been left behind – a description which can apply to many rural places, not least in terms of employment opportunities, funding for public services and service provision more generally, digital connectivity, transport networks and affordable housing.

Done the right way, pursuing that objective will also help rural areas to contribute fully to the Government's target for the UK to become net zero for greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. It should include ambitious low carbon policies for housing, transport and energy in rural areas.

Throughout this document we make the case for a fairer distribution of national resources to rural areas and for more nuanced national policies that reflect rural circumstances. In the main it is the distribution of existing public resources that we focus on, rather than additional resources.

Fifteen topics are covered by this document, which the RSN would hope to see reflected in a strategic vision for rural areas. Against each are some policy asks the RSN believes would contribute significantly to rural productivity, wellbeing and sustainability. A few of those asks are highlighted below. The Comprehensive Spending Review, the results of which are due to be announced later this year, offer an opportunity to lay the financial groundwork for realising that strategic vision.,

Local Industrial Strategies: Local Enterprise Partnerships should repurpose these documents to support the economic recovery from pandemic restrictions. They must – with a fair share of allocated resources – assist small-scale rural project needs, as well as larger urban projects.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Government should create a dedicated rural funding stream of a proportionate size within the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. That should be sufficiently flexible to enable local tailoring of the scheme to meet rural needs and circumstances.

Training and Further Education: Skills Advisory Panels, which co-ordinate training, should have a representative with direct rural business experience (except in wholly urban areas). Government should fund extending the statutory free travel scheme for young people to 17-18 year olds at FE. Employment support measures in the Plan for Jobs need flexibility to be effective in rural areas.

Business support: Growth Hubs must ensure they reach rural based businesses with their guidance and advice, including the self-employed, micro-businesses and social or community enterprises. Available guidance should help rural businesses better exploit digital connectivity opportunities.

Digital connectivity: Government should now formalise its commitment to bring forward the nationwide roll out of full fibre broadband networks to 2025. It should use the CSR to speed up the flow of public funding that it has accepted is required for roll out in uncommercial rural areas.

Transport: Government must use its Better Bus Strategy to improve existing routes and restore valued routes that have been lost between rural towns. It should also expand the Rural Mobility Fund, so community transport solutions can be created to serve more smaller rural settlements.

Health and care: local health partnerships should seek to create health hubs in rural towns, providing treatments and tests which would otherwise require travel to a main hospital. The NHS Workforce Plan should specifically aim to address severe NHS staff shortages in many rural areas.

Fair funding: Government should ensure rural areas receive a proportionate share when allocating public expenditure, as a matter of equity. It should implement the findings of its Fair Funding Needs and Resources Review for local government finance, taking full account of service delivery costs in rural areas. Funding formulae used for the NHS, public health, education and training, fire and rescue, and police all need reviewing.

Land use planning: proposals to reform the planning system, designating three types of zone, are too simplistic and will not meet varying economic, social and environmental needs in rural areas. Residents and their parish councils must continue to be given a say about planning applications.

Affordable housing: Government should allow local planning authorities to require a quota of on-site affordable homes from small as well as large developments in all parishes with a population under 3,000. It should also allow them to require exception sites to offer affordable rental homes.

Rural town high streets: Government should expand its Future High Streets Fund so more places benefit. It should offer feasibility grants for small towns. Planning policies permitting change of use need careful calibration to keep buildings in productive use, but not spark a sell-off of retail space.

Village schools and halls: Government should direct a share of the capital funding pot for school modernisation to small rural schools that have lost out. Some extra funding should go to the ACRE Network, to provide expert guidance to village halls recovering from the pandemic and restrictions.

Community action: Government should review its Community Right to Buy policy, so helping more communities take on and run local services (such as village shops and pubs). Modest funding would assist wider adoption of good neighbour schemes where volunteers support vulnerable residents.

An ageing population: national planning guidance should be updated to take proper account of the Lifetime Homes Standard, so new homes suit the needs of those with mobility issues. The statutory concessionary travel scheme for older people should be adjusted to reflect rural travel options.

Sustainable farming: post-Brexit funding for farmers, through the ELM, should be set at a level which rewards good practice, contributing to the net zero target and benefiting natural capital. Government policy should also value and promote home grown food production.

Decarbonising rural areas: Government should incentivise homeowners to boost energy efficiency by creating a Net Zero Retrofit Programme. This could also address rural fuel poverty. A funded strategy is needed to expand the network of electric vehicle public charging points along rural roads.



RMTG Current Members

Report from David Inman, Corporate Director

1. At the last RSN Executive it was agreed we should look to expand the Rural/Market Towns Group further. It was agreed that because of the Covid-19 and the resulting community voluntary work that required funding, we would not seek to charge new towns and parishes joining the Group in 20-21, but normal charging would be re-introduced for 2021-2022.
2. The target set was a group of 120 by the end of 2020 and a group of 200 Towns by the end of 2021.
3. As far as possible we are trying to achieve a membership that mirrors the RSN membership with at least one Rural/Market Towns Group member targeted from each of the RSN member areas. We have sent out invitations with this as a secondary target and we currently waiting to hear from some 90 of the Councils approached.
4. The attachment shows the position reached as of 15th September 2020 with the RMTG standing at a healthy 113 members. As can be seen we still have work to do in respect of number 3 above, however.
5. The following areas do not currently have RMTG members (although there are outstanding invitations covering most of them): Barnsley, Bassetlaw, Blaby, Braintree, Chorley, Daventry, East Riding, East Hertfordshire, Hambleton, Isle of Wight, Lewes, Lichfield, North Devon, North Norfolk, Richmondshire, Ryedale, Selby, South Hams, South Staffs, Stafford, Sunderland, Tewkesbury, Vale of White Horse, Wychavon.

* RMTG members list updated on 10th September 2020, outlining all 113 RMTG members below.

* Highlighted in green are RSN members, highlighted in yellow are current RMTG members.

Region	County/Unitary	District/Borough/Metropolitan/City	RMTG Member
East Midlands		Bassetlaw District Council	
East Midlands		Blaby District Council	
East Midlands		Braintree District Council	
East Midlands		Daventry District Council	
East Midlands	Derbyshire County Council	Amber Valley Borough Council	Belper Town Council
East Midlands		Derbyshire Dales District Council	

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

Rural Services Network

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East Midlands	Essex County Council	Uttlesford District Council	Saffron Walden Town Council
East Midlands		Gedling District Council	
East Midlands	Leicestershire County Council	North West Leicestershire District Council	Ashby de la Zouch Town Council
East Midlands	Leicestershire County Council	Hinkley & Bosworth Borough Council	Earl Shilton Town Council
East Midlands	Leicestershire County Council	Harborough District Council	Lutterworth Town Council
East Midlands	Lincolnshire County Council	South Kesteven District Council	Bourne Town Council
East Midlands	Lincolnshire County Council	West Lindsey District Council	Caistor Town Council
East Midlands	Lincolnshire County Council	East Lindsey District Council	Mablethorpe and Sutton Town Council
East Midlands	Lincolnshire County Council	West Lindsey District	Market Rasen Town Council
East Midlands	Lincolnshire County Council	North Kesteven District Council	Sleaford Town Council
East Midlands		Melton District Council	
East Midlands	Northamptonshire County Council	East Northamptonshire Council	Finedon Town Council
East Midlands	Northamptonshire County Council	Kettering Borough Council	Rothwell Town Council
East Midlands		North Norfolk District Council	
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire County Council	Rushcliffe Borough Council	Bingham Town Council
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire County Council	Bassetlaw District Council	Harworth and Bircotes Town Council
East Midlands	Lincolnshire County Council	Boston Borough Council	Swineshead Parish Council
East Midlands	Rutland County Council		Uppingham Town Council
East Midlands	Rutland County Council		Oakham Town Council
East Midlands		South Norfolk District Council	
East Midlands	Cambridgeshire County Council	East Cambridgeshire District Council	Soham Town Council
East Midlands	Cambridgeshire County Council	Huntingdonshire District Council	St Ives Town Council
East Midlands	Cambridgeshire County Council	Fenland District Council	Wisbech Town Council
East Midlands		East Hertfordshire District Council	
East Midlands		South Derbyshire District Council	
East Midlands		South Holland District Council	

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East Midlands		South Northamptonshire District Council	
North East	Durham County Council		Sildon Town Council
North East	Northumberland County Council		Alnwick Town Council
North East	Northumberland County Council		Hexham Town Council
North East		Sunderland Metropolitan Borough Council	
North West	Cheshire East Council		Knutsford Town Council
North West	Cheshire West and Chester Council		Frodsham Town Council
North West		Chorley District Council	
North West	Cumbria County Council	Carlisle City Council	Brampton Parish Council
North West	Cumbria County Council	Copeland Borough Council	Cleator Moor Town Council
North West	Cumbria County Council	Borough of Barrow-in-Furness	Dalton with Newton Town Council
North West	Cumbria County Council	South Lakeland District Council	Kendal Town Council
North West	Cumbria County Council	Allerdale Borough Council	Keswick Town Council
North West	Cumbria County Council	Eden District Council	Penrith Town Council
North West	Lancashire County Council	West Lancashire Borough Council	Burscough Parish Council
North West	Lancashire County Council	Lancaster City Council	Carnforth Town Council
North West	Lancashire County Council	Ribble Valley Borough Council	Clitheroe Town Council
North West	Lancashire County Council	Ribble Valley Borough Council	Longridge Town Council
North West		Warrington Borough Council	Lymm Parish Council
North West	Lancashire County Council	Pendle Borough Council	Earby Town Council
South East	Buckinghamshire Council	Aylesbury Vale District Council	Buckingham Town Council
South East	Buckinghamshire Council	Chiltern District Council	Chalfont St Giles Parish Council
South East	Central Bedfordshire Council		Ampthill Town Council
South East	Central Bedfordshire Council		Sandy Town Council
South East	East Sussex County Council	Rother District Council	Rye Town Council
South East	East Sussex County Council	Wealden District Council	Uckfield Town Council

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South East	Hampshire County Council	Winchester City Council	New Alresford Town Council
South East	Hampshire County Council	Hart District Council	Hartley Witney Parish Council
South East	Hampshire County Council	East Hampshire District Council	Petersfield Town Council
South East	Hertfordshire County Council	St Albans City and District Council	Wheathampstead Parish Council
South East	Isle of Wight Council		
South East	Kent County Council	Tunbridge Wells District Council	Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Parish Council
South East	Kent County Council	Swale Borough Council	Faversham Town Council
South East	Kent County Council	Thanet District Council	Minster Parish Council
South East	Kent County Council	Sevenoaks District Council	Swanley Town Council
South East	Kent County Council	Ashford Borough Council	Tenterden Town Council
South East		Lewes District Council	
South East	Mid Sussex District Council	West Sussex County Council	East Grinstead Town Council
South East	Milton Keynes Council		Olney Town Council
South East		New Forest District Council	
South East	Norfolk County Council	King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council	Downham Market Town Council
South East	Norfolk County Council	Breckland Council	Thetford Town Council
South East	Oxfordshire County Council	South Oxfordshire District Council	Wallingford Town Council
South East	Suffolk County Council	West Suffolk District Council	Clare Town Council
South East	Suffolk County Council	Babergh District Council	Hadleigh Town Council
South East	Suffolk County Council	East Suffolk District Council	Saxmundham Town Council
South East	Suffolk County Council	Mid Suffolk District Council	Stowmarket Town Council
South East	Surrey County Council	Waverley Borough Council	Cranleigh Parish Council
South East	Surrey County Council	Guildford Borough Council	East Horsley Parish Council
South East	Surrey County Council	Guildford Borough Council	Normandy Parish Council
South East	Surrey County Council	Tandridge District Council	Oxted Parish Council
South East		Vale of White Horse District Council	

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South East	West Sussex County Council	Arun District Council	Arundel Town Council
South East	West Sussex County Council	Horsham District Council	West Chiltington Parish Council
South East	Kent County Council	Maidstone Borough Council	Biddenden Parish Council
South East	Buckinghamshire Council	Aylesbury Vale District Council	Wendover Parish Council
South West	Bath and North East Somerset Council		Midsomer Norton Town Council
South West	Cornwall Council		Launceston Town Council
South West	Cornwall Council		Penzance Town Council
South West	Cornwall Council		St Austell Town Council
South West	Devon County Council	Teignbridge District Council	Bovey Tracey Town Council
South West	Devon County Council	Mid Devon District Council	Crediton Town Council
South West	Devon County Council	Torridge District Council	Great Torrington Town Council
South West	Devon County Council	Torridge District Council	Holsworthy Town Council
South West	Devon County Council	East Devon District Council	Seaton Town Council
South West	Devon County Council	West Devon Borough Council	Tavistock Town Council
South West	Dorset Council		Shaftesbury Town Council
South West	Dorset Council		Sherborne Town Council
South West	Dorset Council		Verwood Town Council
South West	Gloucestershire County Council	Cotswold District Council	Cirencester Town Council
South West	Gloucestershire County Council	Stroud District Council	Stroud Town Council
South West	Gloucestershire County Council	Stroud District Council	Wotton-under-Edge Town Council
South West		North Devon District Council	
South West	North Somerset Council		Clevedon Town Council
South West	Somerset County Council	Sedgemoor District Council	Burnham on Sea and Highbridge Town Council
South West	Somerset County Council	South Somerset District Council	Chard Town Council
South West	Somerset County Council	Mendip District Council	Wells City Council
South West		Somerset West and Taunton District Council	

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South West	South Gloucestershire Council		Thornbury Town Council
South West		South Hams District Council	
South West		Tewksbury District Council	
South West	Wiltshire Council		Corsham Town Council
South West	Wiltshire Council		Marlborough Town Council
West Midlands	Herefordshire Council		Ledbury Town Council
West Midlands	Herefordshire Council		Leominster Town Council
West Midlands		Lichfield District Council	
West Midlands	Shropshire Council		Church Stretton Town Council
West Midlands	Shropshire Council		Clun Town Council
West Midlands	Staffordshire County Council	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council	Biddulph Town Council
West Midlands	Staffordshire County Council	East Staffordshire Borough Council	Uttoxeter Town Council
West Midlands		South Staffordshire District Council	
West Midlands		Stafford District Council	
West Midlands	Warwickshire County Council	Stratford-on-Avon District Council	Alcester Town Council
West Midlands		Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	Balsall Parish Council
West Midlands	Warwickshire County Council	North Warwickshire Borough Council	Atherstone Town Council
West Midlands	Worcestershire County Council	Bromsgrove District Council	Alvechurch Parish Council
West Midlands	Worcestershire County Council	Malvern Hills District Council	Tenbury Town Council
West Midlands		Wychavon District Council	
Yorkshire & Humber		Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council	
Yorkshire & Humber	East Riding of Yorkshire Council		
Yorkshire & Humber		Hambleton District Council	
Yorkshire & Humber	North Yorkshire County Council	Harrogate Borough Council	Ripon City Council
Yorkshire & Humber	North Yorkshire County Council	Craven District Council	Skipton Town Council

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Yorkshire & Humber	North Yorkshire County Council	Scarborough Borough Council	Whitby Town Council
Yorkshire & Humber		Richmondshire District Council	
Yorkshire & Humber		Ryedale District Council	
Yorkshire & Humber		Selby District Council	
Yorkshire & Humber	Wakefield Metropolitan District Council		Ackworth Parish Council
Yorkshire & Humber		Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council	Guisborough Town Council
Yorkshire & Humber		Leeds City Council	Otley Town Council
Yorkshire & Humber		Leeds City Council	Wetherby Town Council
Yorkshire & Humber	North Yorkshire County Council	Harrogate Borough Council	Knaresborough Town Council

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**Engagement with Member Councils and Nominated Members - Update
Chief Executive's Report for the
28th September 2020
Rural Services Network Executive meeting**

Introduction

- 1.1** At the last meeting, held on 2nd July, 2020) the Executive considered a report from the Corporate Director under the title "Thoughts for the Future of the Network".
- 1.2** For ease of reference I set out below the Executive Minute (No 2) relating to that item to which this Update Report relates

The Executive agreed as follows:

"Engagement with Member Councils

- (a)** Strengthen the Nominated Member situation by establishing with all member authorities both a Nominated Member and a Deputy. If these nominees were not already on the authority's Cabinet, or Executive Arrangements, there would be a request for a Cabinet Member to also be involved - at least with the Annual Rural discussion meetings referred to in (c) below.
- (b)** The establishment of an 'RSN Insider' publication which would be sent out four or five times a year to those involved Members and to Key Officers. This would provide a full briefing on the Networks current activities.
- (c)** A series of Annual Rural Discussion Meetings for each member authority would be introduced. These meetings would be conducted online and would involve a senior member of the RSN staff and the Nominated Member and Deputy, a Cabinet member, and at least one of the Key Officers. These meetings would seek to establish the Authority's rural views across the spectrum of the RSN's operation. This would include in respect of Fairer Funding (Sparse Rural members only), Rural Service Provision, Current RSN Campaigns, the Rural Economy and issues surrounding Rural Vulnerability and Disadvantage. Discussion would also take place at these meeting about the way in which member authorities dealt with Rural Issues and whether that had any individual special arrangements. These Annual Rural Discussion Meetings would ensure annual input and discussion with all member authorities, facilitating RSN

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policy making. They would take place in addition to the current formal meetings, regional seminars, and the annual National Rural Conference in September.

- (d) There would be annual requests to all member authorities for specific named 'Key Liaison (Senior) Officers' in relation to Public Relations, Democratic Services, Economic Activity, Public Health and Finance. We anticipate that this would allow some specialist work in these areas. All Management Board members, traditional cross section officer appointees and all Council Members would in the future also receive RSN service."

1.3 At the meeting we undertook to consult with the RSN Team as to the logistics of giving effect to the decisions and report back to the Executive at this meeting. Hence, this report.

Update

2.1 I am pleased to inform the Executive that the Team agrees that the proposals can be implemented and maintained from within our existing staffing resources.

2.2 What we are proposing to do, in very general terms, is as follows:

- (a) New Briefing 'Newsletter'

Call the new briefing to 'Nominated Members' something along the lines of "RURAL BEACON" with a strap line of "Exclusively for Nominated Members of the RSN" – with an appropriate graphic. This will be issued 4 or 5 times a year. It will be written as a full briefing on RSN activities with the Nominated Members/Deputies as the primary target audience. It will also be sent to the key officers in member authorities. The Annual Report to the LGA would be included in this publication.

Where we have the Nominated Member details (we already have circa 60% (but not necessarily those of deputies yet) we will produce a first issue in October/November – straight after the launch of "Revitalising Rural". We would aim to issue a second copy early 2021 – before the membership invoices go out in April 2021.

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(b) Annual Rural Discussion Meetings

In terms of these meetings, the aim would be to commence these from April 2021. Prior to that – indeed as soon as possible after this meeting – we will notify all members of the proposed arrangement and ‘invite their participation’. The priority will be those member authorities with the weakest level of engagement – but we need to be mindful of those Councils with elections in May 2021. We will prepare, for our internal use, an information “dossier” of key facts/ contacts from each member.

Whilst structured, these will be informal and “chatty” in format. RSN should do more listening than talking. We particularly need to ask if there are things that we are not doing that the Member would find useful or things that we could do differently (what do they find useful etc.). Ahead of each meeting we would send round a brief note about our services with the Agenda together with a note of planned RSN meetings and events.

It will be through a general discussion on the RSN’s priorities and current actions that we “draw-out” the Council’s views on the items set out in item (c) of the Executive Minute set out above rather than have set agenda items on each. Out of this we should seek any ‘evidence’ the Council has to support our representational work.

The RSN officer involved in the meeting would have a pro forma sheet to complete detailing relevant matters discussed and information provided. Of course, this would be shared with the authority concerned. Where points of common concern/interest are raised across these meetings we will ensure these are collated and appropriate action taken – with feedback to those raising the matter.

Graham Biggs
Chief Executive
18th August 2020

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Report for the Executive on the Rural Services Network Seminar Programme

Proposal:

That the 'regional' seminar programme becomes an online topic-based seminar programme open to all our members.

Background:

The RSN introduced an Annual Regional Meeting/Seminar programme of 7 seminars, each taking place in a different region around England with the aim of greater engagement with our member organisations. A different topic or theme has been the subject of discussion at each meeting. We recognised that not all organisations in membership were able to make the London Meetings and it was anticipated that particularly in local authorities, Officers and Members would be more able to attend locally to their base of operation which would improve engagement. In addition, it was anticipated to introduce some regional rural networking elements to discussion.

Current Situation:

The current pandemic has meant that the country has had a significant change in working arrangements and the majority of our members have been working from home with no option to travel. As a result, the format of the seminars was changed, and these have been taking place online using Zoom. As the seminars are no longer located in a physical area of the country, some members have taken the opportunity to attend a seminar not in their region, but on a topic of interest to them.

We have used the (free) services of Eventbrite to take bookings etc. and that has reduced the administrative work considerably.

Whilst this has meant that with wider attendance, the 'regional' element of discussions has not been as strong, RSN Officers attending the events previously have not noticed a particularly regional feel to discussions as often the issues affecting one rural community are similar to others.

It has been noted that online discussions are not quite as 'free flowing' as those in person during a seminar however this small point is far outweighed by the significant reduction in cost to RSN officers travelling to each of the seminars, and more importantly, the ability for a greater number of our members to attend the events.

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Online Seminar Attendance in 2020

Date	Seminar	Attendance
19 th May	North East Regional Seminar	30 Attendees
25 th June	RSN Finance Seminar	45 Attendees
30 th June	West Midlands Regional Seminar	45 Attendees
28 th July	East Midlands Regional Seminar	33 Attendees

Future way of working:

It is proposed that for the 2021 Seminar programme, the events are hosted online via Zoom and are topic-based events that are open to all members of the RSN membership (Local Authorities/RSP/RHCA/RMTG). This would remove the regional nature of events but would mean that for example a Housing Officer in any of our authorities in England could attend an event about Housing, rather than limiting it to a particular region. This will enable greater engagement across all of the RSN membership and provide more value for money from RSN membership to organisations as they are able to potentially attend all of the seminars that may interest them rather than 1 in their region each year.

Of course, the Executive at its last meeting agreed to a 'virtual' meeting once a year with our local authority members and that will give opportunity to pick up any regional issues.

Each event would be chaired by a member of the Executive.

The topics proposed for 2021 would follow the rural issues identified in the Revitalising Rural campaign and are as follows:

- Rural Housing
- Rural Transport
- Rural Digital Connectivity
- Decarbonisation
- Rural Health & Social Care
- Rural Education, Training & Apprenticeships
- Rural Business Advice
- Rural Town Centres, High Streets & Village Hubs
- Rural Economic Vibrancy & Local Enterprise Partnerships

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Proposed Timetable for Seminars 2021

Proposed Date	Seminar	Format
27 th January	RSN Seminar: Rural Education, Training & Apprenticeships	Online
24 th February	RSN Seminar: Rural Transport	Online
31 st March	RSN Seminar: Rural Digital Connectivity	Online
28 th April	RSN Seminar: Decarbonisation	Online
26 th May	RSN Seminar: Rural Health & Social Care	Online
30 th June	RSN Seminar: Rural Housing	Online
28 th July	RSN Seminar: Rural Business Advice	Online
27 th Oct	RSN Seminar: Rural Town Centres, High Streets & Village Hubs	Online
24 th Nov	RSN Seminar: Rural Economic Vibrancy & Local Enterprise Partnerships	Online

There are 9 seminars proposed throughout the year, leaving August, September and December with no seminars as these are key holiday periods and also the date of the National Rural Conference. With wider access there may be large numbers of people booking onto events, we can therefore introduce a limit of 2 people per organisation attending each event. We could also limit attendees to 75-100 and utilise the webinar function of zoom so that discussion can take place in virtual 'rooms' rather than the whole room of attendees.

This approach of a topic-based seminar is being trialled for the 5th October 2020 event focusing on Rural Vulnerability. We will be able to give a verbal report at the Executive meeting of how well this worked from a 'bookings' perspective.

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Report for the Executive on the Rural Services Network Meeting Programme

Proposal:

That the format for a selection of the Rural Services Network meetings be changed to a mixture of online and 'In Person' for 2021.

Background:

Meetings of the Rural Services Network are traditionally held in London, (except for the seminar programme), as a central point that is 'relatively' easy for delegates from around the country to attend.

However, the arrival of Covid-19 and the lockdown period in March 2020 meant that with the country working from home, meetings for 2020 have been taking place online using Zoom. This has enabled the organisation to continue to work on behalf of its member organisations, working hard to campaign for a fair deal for rural communities particularly when the Government is designing recovery packages for the country.

Current Situation:

The lockdown arrangements are easing, with more people returning to work physically from their place of work. The RSN is preparing its meeting schedule for 2021 and the dates are attached to this report.

It should be noted that we have been taking bookings for the upcoming Sparse meeting and Rural Economy Meeting and have received a significantly higher amount of bookings than we usually expect.

Although we have not yet held a meeting of Sparse or Rural Assembly Group online, as can be seen below we have received significantly higher bookings than usual indicating a greater engagement with our services.

Meeting	Number attending/booked	Number of authorities represented
January 2020 Sparse meeting attendees:	20	13
January 2020 Rural Economy Meeting attendees	41	30
October 2020 Online Sparse meeting bookings	77	50
October 2020 Online Rural Economy meeting bookings	93	68 LA Bookings representing 46 councils. Several have booked more than one representative

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The following table also gives some indication of attendance vs bookings.

Event	Bookings	Attended	% Attended from bookings	2019 bookings	% change from 2019
Finance Seminar	60	45	75%	-	-
NE Seminar	-	30	-	22	36% Increase
EM Seminar	52	33	63%	26	24% increase
WM Seminar	55	45	82%	32	40% increase

It is expected that as working habits have changed in response to the lockdown, organisations have seen the benefits in relation to online meetings in terms of time commitment and travel budgets and there will be a general shift to continue attending meetings with other organisations online.

The Executive should therefore consider two proposals as detailed below.

Option 1

All meetings with the exception of the RSN AGM are held online.
This would include the below:

Type of meeting	Format
Executive	Online
Sparse Rural	Online
RSN AGM	In Person
Rural Assembly	Online
RSP	Online
Rural Economy Group	Online
Rural Health and Social Care Group	Online
APPG	Online until further notice

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We have used the (free) services of EventBrite to take bookings for the meetings and that has reduced the administrative work considerably.

There is a separate report to the Executive on the Rural Seminar Programme and format.

It should also be noted that moving to a greater number of online meetings would result in significant reduction in costs for both RSN, in relation to staff travel, subsistence, meeting room costs and refreshments for delegates. It would also save RSN member organisations the cost of sending delegates to these meetings in terms of travel but also the 'cost' to the organisation of that person losing a day of work for travel.

Option 2

The Executive meetings and the RSP meetings are held online, and the other meetings are held in person with the clear caveat that if lockdown arrangements change, meetings would all revert to online in accordance with Government guidance. The APPG would continue online until further notice.

Type of meeting	Format
Executive	Online
Sparse Rural	In Person
RSN AGM	In Person
Rural Assembly	In Person
RSP	Online
Rural Economy Group	In Person
Rural Health and Social Care Group	In Person
APPG	Online until further notice

Eventbrite would continue to be used to take meeting bookings due to the savings in administrative work.

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RSN & RSP Timetable 2021

Proposed Date	Type of meeting
Monday, 11 th January 2021	RSN Executive meeting
Monday, 25 th January 2021	SPARSE Rural meeting
Monday, 25 th January 2021	Rural Economy meeting
February/March 2021	Rural Vulnerability Day
Monday, 15 th March 2021	RSN Executive meeting
Monday, 12 th April 2021	Rural Social Care & Health meeting
Monday, 12 th April 2021	Rural Assembly meeting
Tuesday, 27 th April 2021	RSP Vulnerability Panel
Tuesday, 27 th April 2021	RSP Partner meeting
Monday, 17 th May 2021	RSN Executive meeting
Monday, 21 st June 2021	SPARSE Rural meeting
Monday, 21 st June 2021	Rural Economy meeting
Tuesday, 7 th – Wednesday, 8 th September 2021	National Rural Conference 2021
Monday, 27 th September 2021	RSN Executive meeting
Monday, 27 th September 2021	RSP Directors' meeting
Monday, 15 th November 2021	Rural Social Care & Health meeting
Monday, 15 th November 2021	RSN AGM
Monday, 15 th November 2021	Rural Assembly meeting
Tuesday, 23 rd November 2021	RSP Vulnerability Panel
Tuesday, 23 rd November 2021	RSP AGM
Tuesday, 23 rd November 2021	RSP Partner meeting

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

Rural Services Network

Kerry Booth, Assistant Chief Executive & David Inman, Director

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsnonline.org.uk email: kerry.booth@sparse.gov.uk ; david.inman@sparse.gov.uk twitter: [@rsnonline](https://twitter.com/rsnonline)

	A	B	C	D	E
1					
2					Attachment 7
3					
4	The Rural Services Partnership Limited				
5	Budget vs. Actuals: RURAL SERVICES PARTNERSHIP - FY21 P&L				
6	April 2020 - March 2021				
7			AS AT 12TH SEPTEMBER 2020		
8		Total			
9		ACTUAL 12/08/20	REVISED BUDGET	VARIATION FROM ORIGINAL BUDGET	OVER ANNUAL BUDGET
10	INCOME	£	£	£	£
11	Coastal communities contract income	2,244.54	5,557.00		-3,312.46
12	National rural conference	1,259.00	2,430.00	2,310.00	-85
13	RHCA Membership	9,030.10	32,153.00		-23,122.90
14	RSP Membership	16,819.08	19,471.00		-2,651.92
15	Rural England Annual Re CHARGES		6,789.00		-6,789.00
16	Rural England project support		1,300.00		-1,300.00
17	Rural fire and rescue	3,296.00	3,923.00		-627
18	Rural housing group subscriptions	6,400.00	7,175.00		-775
19	Rural housing group website	2,275.00	915.00		1,360.00
20	Rural Strategy Income	6,097.92			6,097.92
21	Rural Towns Group	8,220.00	10,440.00		-2,220.00
22	Services	131.87			131.87
23	SPARSE - Rural general grant	188,607.00	301,586.00		-112,979.00
24	Strategic partnering arrangements		10,000.00		-10,000.00
25	Unapplied Cash Payment Income	-120			-120
26	Total Income	£244,260.51	£400,653.00		-£156,392.49
27	Cost of Sales				
28	Wages	74,851.10	204,110.00		-129,258.90
29	Total Cost of Sales	£74,851.10	£204,110.00		-£129,258.90
30	Gross Profit	£169,409.41	£196,543.00		-£27,133.59
31	Expenses				

	A	B	C	D	E
32	Accountancy	1,016.00	2,000.00		-984
33	Bank charges	40.3	90.00		-49.7
34	Coastal communities contract	1,870.63	5,721.00		-3,850.37
35	Communications	11,904.50	29,616.00		-17,711.50
36	Databases	3,421.22	7,000.00		-3,578.78
37	Employee Pension Costs	1,020.41	6,123.00		-5,102.59
38	EMPLOYER Pension contributions	1,658.23	4,600.00		-2,941.77
39	Employer's NI contributions	636.2	9,910.00	-1,107.00	-9,273.80
40	FAIRER FUNDING WORK	7,500.00	27,500.00		-20,000.00
41	Insurance	275	1,175.00		-900
42	IT Support	288.77	700.00		-411.23
43	Legal and professional fees	1,090.42	13.00		1,077.42
44	Meeting Room Hire		1,500.00		-1,500.00
45	Nat Centre RHC		5,700.00		-5,700.00
46	National rural conference expenses		1,500.00		-1,500.00
47	Paye	14,341.50	28,652.00	-4,348.00	-14,310.50
48	Printing, postage stationery and phone	1,609.96	4,786.00		-3,176.04
49	Professional subscriptions	182	550.00		-368
50	Rent and service charge	3,603.34	8,700.00	-1,200.00	-6,196.66
51	Rural England Service		7,000.00		-7,000.00
52	RURAL STRATEGY EXPENSES	2,350.00	20,200.00		-17,850.00
53	Travel and subsistence	-171.58	6,000.00		-6,171.58
54	HOUSING		500.00		-500
55	Parliamentary		800.00		-800
56	Total Travel and subsistence	-£171.58	£7,300.00		-£7,471.58
57		£ 52,465.32	£ 187,636.00		-£ 136,270.68
58	Corporation Tax			-£ 1,000.00	
59	Uncategorised Expenditure			-£ 2,000.00	
60	CAPITAL ITEMS IT EQUIPMENT	2,265.00	2,265.00	2,265.00	
61	Total Expenses	£ 54,730.32	£ 189,901.00	-£ 735.00	
62	Net Operating Income	£ 116,944.09	£ 6,642.00		
63	Net Income	£ 116,944.09	£ 6,642.00		

	A	B	C	D	E
64	BALANCE BROUGHT FORWARD		18,901.00		
65	BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD TO 2021/22		25543.00		
66					
67					
68	RE ANNUAL CHARGES INCOME BREAKDOWN				
69	Back Office		1457		
70	Staff Costs (Incl Vuln Panels)		3000		
71	Website		2332		
72					
73	TOTAL		6789		

**THE RURAL SERVICES PARTNERSHIP LIMITED
UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020**

The Rural Services Partnership Limited
Unaudited Financial Statements
For The Year Ended 31 March 2020

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Trading Profit and Loss Account	6—7

**The Rural Services Partnership Limited
Company Information
For The Year Ended 31 March 2020**

Directors

Mr David Inman
Mr John Birtwistle
Mrs Cecilia Motley
Mrs Anna Price
Mr Martin Collett
Mr Nicholas Harwood
Mr David Horne
Mr Graham Biggs

Secretary

Mr Graham Biggs

Company Number

06960646

Registered Office

1 Aldon View
Craven Arms
Shropshire
SY7 9EQ

Accountants

TaxAssist Accountants
114b Corve Street
Ludlow
SY8 1DJ

**The Rural Services Partnership Limited
Accountant's Report
For The Year Ended 31 March 2020**

In accordance with the engagement letter dated 27 September 2018, and in order to assist you to fulfil your duties under the Companies Act 2006, we have compiled the financial statements of the company from the accounting records and information and explanations you have given to us.

This report is made to the directors in accordance with the terms of our engagement. Our work has been undertaken to prepare for approval by the directors the financial statements that we have been engaged to compile, to report to the directors that we have done so, and to state those matters that we have agreed to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Company and the Company's directors for our work or for this report.

You have acknowledged on the balance sheet as at year ended 31 March 2020 your duty to ensure that the company has kept proper accounting records and to prepare financial statements that give a true and fair view under the Companies Act 2006. You consider that the company is exempt from the statutory requirement for an audit for the year.

We have not been instructed to carry out an audit of the financial statements. For this reason, we have not verified the accuracy or completeness of the accounting records or information and explanations you have given to us and we do not, therefore, express any opinion on the financial statements.

Date

TaxAssist Accountants

114b Corve Street
Ludlow
SY8 1DJ

The Rural Services Partnership Limited
Profit and Loss Account
For The Year Ended 31 March 2020

	2020	2019
	£	£
TURNOVER	432,343	409,584
Other income	276	-
Staff costs	(182,170)	(183,097)
Depreciation and other amounts written off assets	(1,361)	(1,708)
Other charges	(237,721)	(232,695)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
NET PROFIT/(LOSS)	<u>11,367</u>	<u>(7,916)</u>

The Rural Services Partnership Limited
Balance Sheet
As at 31 March 2020

	2020	2019
	£	£
Fixed assets	4,084	5,121
Current assets	29,590	38,799
Prepayments and accrued income	-	250
Creditors: Amounts Falling Due Within One Year	(23,073)	(46,825)
	<u>6,517</u>	<u>(7,776)</u>
NET CURRENT ASSETS (LIABILITIES)		
	<u>10,601</u>	<u>(2,655)</u>
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accruals and deferred income	(2,456)	(567)
	<u>8,145</u>	<u>(3,222)</u>
NET ASSETS/(LIABILITIES)		
	<u>8,145</u>	<u>(3,222)</u>
CAPITAL AND RESERVES		
	<u>8,145</u>	<u>(3,222)</u>

Notes

1. Average Number of Employees

Average number of employees, including directors, during the year was as follows: 14 (2019: 15)

2. General Information

The Rural Services Partnership Limited is a private company, limited by shares, incorporated in England & Wales, registered number 06960646. The registered office is 1 Aldon View, Craven Arms, Shropshire, SY7 9EQ.

The Rural Services Partnership Limited
Balance Sheet (continued)
As at 31 March 2020

For the year ending 31 March 2020 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Directors' responsibilities:

- The members have not required the company to obtain an audit in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.
- The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts.
- These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the micro-entity provisions.

On behalf of the board

Mr Graham Biggs

Director

Date

The Rural Services Partnership Limited
Trading Profit and Loss Account
For The Year Ended 31 March 2020

	2020		2019	
	£	£	£	£
TURNOVER				
Membership subscriptions		19,418		14,195
SPARSE - Rural general grant		308,690		299,396
Coastal communities contract income		3,333		4,358
Strategic partnering arrangements		10,000		10,000
Rural housing group website		1,777		-
Rural housing group subscriptions		7,540		7,912
Rural fire and rescue		3,839		4,260
Rural England re-charges		13,494		1,400
Business rates reserve research		7,000		41,350
National rural conference		20,071		14,918
Rural England project support		1,500		2,100
Rural HCA subscriptions		25,509		7,274
Advertising income		5,000		-
Rural England website maintenance		-		2,040
Brexit project		-		381
Rural strategy		5,172		-
		<u>432,343</u>		<u>409,584</u>
OTHER INCOME				
Other operating income		276		-
STAFF COSTS				
Wages and salaries	148,587		148,484	
Employers NI	10,093		9,455	
Employers pensions - defined contributions scheme	4,174		1,946	
Travel and subsistence	19,316		23,212	
	<u>182,170</u>		<u>183,097</u>	
DEPRECIATION AND OTHER AMOUNTS WRITTEN OFF ASSETS				
Depreciation	693		817	
Amortisation	668		891	
	<u>1,361</u>		<u>1,708</u>	
OTHER CHARGES				
<i>Premises expenses:</i>				
Rent and service charge	6,395		7,365	
Business rates proposals work	-		10,662	
Rural conference	8,002		8,172	
	<u>14,397</u>		<u>26,199</u>	

...CONTINUED

The Rural Services Partnership Limited
Trading Profit and Loss Account (continued)
For The Year Ended 31 March 2020

<i>General administration costs:</i>		
Finance and performance monitoring	8,000	8,878
Corporate management	91,733	87,345
Admin and tech support	1,382	2,854
Coastal communities contract	3,741	3,696
Databases	5,062	4,948
Rural England service	9,169	7,000
Rural vulnerability service	-	7,000
Rural communities housing group	6,896	7,544
Rural housing group website costs	300	300
Business rates lobbying consultancy fees	6,230	275
Insurance	440	744
RHCA set up costs	-	4,530
Rural strategy costs	14,707	775
Rural fire costs	-	562
Printing, postage and stationery	5,027	3,198
Fairer funding costs	20,310	-
Research and communications	37,227	55,099
IT support	409	280
APPG & Seminar fees	4,800	4,903
Accountancy fees	780	756
Professional fees	1,039	265
Economic development service	5,224	5,202
Subscriptions	753	250
Bank charges	92	92
Sundry expenses	3	-
	<u>223,324</u>	<u>206,496</u>
	(237,721)	(232,695)
NET PROFIT/(LOSS)	<u><u>11,367</u></u>	<u><u>(7,916)</u></u>