

Note of last SPARSE Rural Special Interest Group meeting

Title: Rural Services Network Special Interest Group

AGM Meetings:

- **SPARSE Rural Sub SIG**
- **Rural Services Partnership Limited**
- **Rural Services Network**

Date: Monday 12 November 2018

Venue: The Westminster Archives

Item	Decisions and actions
------	-----------------------

1 Appointment of Chairman for the ensuing year (to also be the Chair of the SPARSE-Rural sub-sig)

Nominations for the existing Chair to continue in her position were accepted without opposition.

Cecilia expressed her gratitude to SPARSE Members for their confidence in her position as Chairman and to the officers for all their efforts.

2 Apologies for absence

The Chair noted apologies for the meeting as listed on the Appendix.

3 Note of the Previous Meeting

The notes of the previous meeting were agreed.

4 Appointment of Vice Chairmen for the ensuing year (to also be the Vice-Chairmen of the SPARSE-Rural sub-sig)

It was moved that, in addition to the existing members willing to continue in office, Cllr Mark Whittington, Lincolnshire County Council, and Councillor Jeremy Savage, South Norfolk Council, be appointed as Vice-Chairmen of SPARSE for the year. This was agreed by members.

The Chairman expressed her gratitude to Cllr Robert Heseltine for his support as First Vice-Chairman.

5 IF DEEMED NECESSARY AND BENEFICIAL. To appoint a Chair and Vice Chair(s) of the RURAL ASSEMBLY SUB-SIG

It was agreed that there would not be a separate Chair for the Rural Assembly Sub-Sig.

6 CONSTITUTION: SUGGESTED CHANGES TO REFLECT EVENTS SINCE LAST REVIEWED SHOWN IN TRACKING (Attachment 2)

Graham Biggs, Chief Executive of the Rural Services Network, introduced the attachment detailing suggested changes to the constitution.

Members agreed the suggested changes to the constitution subject to the ballot procedures currently in force in the constitution.

7 NEXT MEETING: Next RSN AGM to be held on Monday 11th November 2019

Members agreed to move the date of the next RSN AGM to be held on 18 November 2019, as the previous proposed date was on Armistice day.

8 Minutes of the last full meeting – 9th April 2018

The minutes of the last full meeting, 9 April 2018, were agreed.

9 RURAL CRIME SURVEY 2018: Presentation by Julia Mulligan PCC North Yorkshire and Chair of the National Rural Crime Network

Julia Mulligan, PCC North Yorkshire and Chair of the National Rural Crime Network, gave a presentation on the Rural Crime Survey for 2018. Julia explained they had 20,252 responses, including nearly 4 thousand business owners, and that 50 per cent of responders were aged 55-75. Key findings from the responses to the survey included:

- County lines had continued to be a growing issue in rural areas.
- That the perception of policing in rural areas had worsened in recent years, an 11 per cent drop in people who think the police are doing a good job in their rural community since the 2015 survey.
- That for the most part rural communities think that crime is worsening.
- The issue of fly tipping was also raised often.
- There was a significant sense that a lot of rural crime was organised.
- That the financial impact on rural residents has gone up by 13 per cent in recent years.
- The survey results also indicated rural communities feel they are not understood.

As a result of the Rural Crime Survey, the National Rural Crime Network has proposed a number of recommendations which Julia highlighted:

- It was evident more had to be done to understand rural crime and the impact.
- More work needs to be done to counter organised crime in rural areas.
- Additional help was needed for residents around crime prevention.

- The need to ensure victims of fly tipping are not left to pay the price of others actions. This was emphasised as a major issue, as the only crime where the victim has to pay for the clear up.

In the discussion that followed, the following points were raised;

- Views were expressed that policing in rural areas had been struggling in its interactions with traveller communities.
- It was highlighted that “county lines” was now designated as a national threat and that policing was starting to get to grips with the issue, in particular the importance of police forces sharing information was emphasised.
- A view was expressed that a further look into scams would be necessary.
- A concern was raised that the changing nature of crime had been taking more police officers off the streets and focusing on online crime.
- It was emphasised rural policing was at a disadvantage and that this needed to be addressed.

The Chair thanked Julia for her presentation – a copy of Julia’s slides is attached to these minutes.

10 To approve (with or without amendment) the RSN Draft Rural Strategy Template(Presentation by Graham Biggs)

Graham Biggs outlined the RSN Draft Rural Strategy Template (copy of slides attached to these minutes) that had been developed and asked the RSN AGM to approve and agree the draft subject to some changes to reflect the recent Budget.

In the discussion that followed, the following points were raised;

- The importance of parity in the availability of mental health services between rural and urban areas.
- Including mention of the ACRE network on page 59 of the strategy was suggested.
- The importance of affordable housing in rural areas was emphasised.
- A new Affordable Housing Commission chaired by Lord Best has been established with funding from the Nationwide Foundation.

The RSN AGM was very supportive and approved and adopted the RSN Draft Rural Strategy Template , with the inclusion, as appropriate, of suggestions from RSN AGM members.

11 Membership (Constitutional Requirement)

Members noted the membership report from David Inman, Corporate Director. He raised that the number of organisations in membership was decreasing.

Graham Biggs also raised that they were looking to engage in more commercial activities in response to the decrease in income coming from membership fees.

Members noted the update.

12 Member Contributions

Graham Biggs introduced this item as a recommendation from the RSN executive. He

brought Members' attention to the schedule attached to the report which set out the current charging level for current member authorities be increased by two per cent p.a. to reflect inflationary increases in costs. This would require rescinding the existing formula in paragraph 1.2.

The RSN AGM agreed and approved the Executive's recommendations for the level of member contributions from 2019/20 onwards.

13 Budget 2018/19 and 2019/20 (Constitutional Requirement)

Members noted the current budget report and approved the estimates for 2019/20.

14 Rural Conference 2018

Kerry Booth, Assistant Chief Executive, introduced the item on the Rural Conference 2018.

She highlighted the following information;

- Feedback had been broadly positive.
- Officers had started to plan the conference for next year.
- Officers were looking to replicate the exhibitors and sponsors that were achieved this year to assist with the cost of running the event.
- In response to a query Kerry informed the AGM that the negative feedback she had received was around poor lighting, poor heating and a preference for more breaks over the course of the day.

The RSN AGM noted the update from Kerry Booth.

15 Sounding Board Survey

Kerry Booth introduced an update on the Sounding Board Survey on Access to Cash.

The survey had shown that there many concerns amongst rural residents in regards to having access to banks, ATMs and post offices and the impact of a lack of access to these services on smaller rural economies. Kerry emphasised that there continued to be real concerns for elderly and disabled rural residents. Responses were still being received and a report will be issued in due course.

The RSN AGM noted the update on the Sounding Board Survey.

16 Meeting Dates for 2019

Members noted meeting dates for 2019. Subject to the change noted earlier in the meeting

17 Any Other Business

Graham Biggs brought Members' attention to the review of designated landscapes.

There was no other business.