
Agenda

RSN AGM & Rural Assembly meeting

Hosted: Online via Zoom
Date: Monday, 15th November 2021
Time: 1:00pm – 3:30pm

RSN AGM meeting

1. **Attendance & Apologies.**
2. **RSN Constitution – Updated November 2021. (Attachment 1)**
To consider changes to the Constitution as highlighted in the attachment.
3. **Appointment of Chairman and Members of the Executive.**
Details of present members set out below.

RSN Executive Role	Title	Name	Surname	Organisation
Chair	Cllr	Cecilia	Motley	Shropshire Council
Deputy Chair (If constitutional changes approved)				
Vice Chair (Unitary)	Cllr	Robert	Waltham MBE	North Lincolnshire Council
Vice Chair (West Midlands)	Cllr	Roger	Phillips	Herefordshire Council
Vice Chair (County 1)	Vacancy			
Vice Chair (County 2)	Cllr	Philip	Atkins OBE	Staffordshire County Council
First Vice Chair (Yorkshire)	Cllr	Robert	Heseltine	North Yorkshire County Council
Vice Chair (Without Portfolio)	Cllr	Peter	Thornton	South Lakeland District Council
Vice Chair (East)	Cllr	Peter	Stevens	West Suffolk Council
Vice Chair (North)	Cllr	Mary	Robinson	Eden District Council
Vice Chair (North East)	Cllr	Trevor	Thorne	Northumberland County Council
Vice Chair (South West)	Cllr	Adam	Paynter	Cornwall Council
Vice Chair (South East)				
Vice Chair (Without Portfolio)	Cllr	Sue	Sanderson	Cumbria County Council
Vice Chair (Without Portfolio)	Cllr	Jeremy	Savage	South Norfolk District Council
Vice Chair (Without Portfolio)	Cllr	Mark	Whittington	Lincolnshire County Council South Kesteven District Council

4. **Notes from the last RSN AGM & Rural Assembly meeting. (Attachment 2)**
Held on 16th November 2020 to consider any relevant updates and approve the minutes.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

Rural Services Network
Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ
Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsonline.org.uk email: events@sparse.gov.uk twitter: [@rsnonline](https://twitter.com/rsnonline)

5. **Launch Event of Revitalising Rural: Realising the Vision.**
This event was held on the 29th March 2021 instead of the usual Rural Assembly meeting.
[Please click here to view the Event Summary.](#)¹
6. **2022 RSN Meeting Schedule.** ([Attachment 3](#))
7. **To re-affirm the decision of a 2% (inflation) increase in subscriptions for 2022/23.**
8. **Budget 2021/2022 and Estimates 2022/2023 (Constitutional requirement).**
(Attachment 4)
To consider the 2021/22 budget position and to consider approving the estimates for 2022/23 and (as is usual) to authorise the Executive to make any necessary in-year changes.

Rural Assembly meeting

9. **Notes from the previous RSN Executive meetings.** ([Attachment 5 & 6](#))
Held on 17th May and 27th September 2021 to note the minutes and to consider any relevant updates/matters arising.
10. **Annual Review of RSN Work.** ([Attachment 7](#))
Report from Kerry Booth, Deputy Chief Executive of the RSN.
11. **National Rural Conference 2021.**
Verbal report from Kerry Booth, Deputy Chief Executive of the RSN.
12. **Guest Speaker Presentations with Short Q&A's.**
 - **Robert Cogings**, Director of Housing, **Derbyshire Dales District Council**
 - **Chris Fuller**, Economic Development Officer, **Torrington Council**
13. **Discussion with Members about Key Challenges Facing Rural Areas in 2022.**
14. **Any Other Business.**
The next Rural Assembly meeting is scheduled for Monday, 11th April 2022.
The next joint RSN AGM & Rural Assembly meeting is scheduled for Monday, 14th November 2022.

¹ <https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/revitalising-rural/launch-report.pdf>



The Rural Services Network (RSN)

Special Interest Group (SIG) of the Local Government Association

Constitution

Last updated November,
2021

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Constitution

1. Title and Membership

- 1.1 The Organisation shall be known as The Rural Services Network Special Interest Group [“the Group”].
- 1.2 The Group shall be open to those English Authorities who are classified as Mainly or Largely Rural or Urban with Significant Rural Area (all including hub towns) by the Government and to previous members of the Rural Commission of the Local Government Association. Other Principal Councils which have large rural areas within their boundaries may apply to become members and their applications will be treated on their merits.
- 1.3 The Group will consist of such Principal Councils and Fire & Rescue Services in England, as The Rural Services Network desire to be and remain in membership (“Member Authority”).
- 1.4 The Group shall act in a non - political way concentrating on achieving consensus views on rural best practice and service interests. The focus of the Group is for the betterment of the rural areas of England and the people who live and work in these areas. The Group cannot and does not deal with any matters relating to disputes or potential disputes between the various tiers of local government serving these rural areas.
- 1.5 The Group meetings will not be preceded by political meetings.
- 1.6 Member authorities may be represented by a Councillor or Officer or both.
- 1.7 Those authorities who are eligible to become members of the Group as specified under 1.2 above may instead of becoming members elect to have a straight contractual relationship with the Group that is based solely on service provision and is non- representational. Under such a relationship the Group will enter into a service level agreement with the authority involved and provide financial monitoring, best practice, performance, community, rural and economic services available for a flat rate annual payment constituting 95% of the charge which would have been levied on the authority had it joined in the normal way. Authorities who elect to take this arrangement will not be formal members and will therefore not be entitled attend or vote at meetings of the Group and will not receive agendas and minutes or be involved in the representational work of the Group.
- 1.8 Whilst all membership shall be with the Group, operationally much of the work of the Group will be through three subgroups; namely SPARSE Rural; The Rural Assembly; and The Rural Fire & Rescue Services Group.
- 1.9 The Group shall have power to establish such Associate and Alliance arrangements including any necessary definitions as it considers to be appropriate the general rural interest. Such arrangements shall however require the approval of an Executive meeting of the Group (see Section 9 below).

2. Purpose of the Group

- 2.1 To be a voice for councils with a rural interest within the Local Government Association (LGA) and to influence appropriate work so that the views and rural

interests of these councils are fully considered.

- 2.2 To research, promote and lobby for the rural interests of communities served by member authorities.
- 2.3 To establish as many work areas as is feasible of collective working targeted to the benefit of individual member authorities and their communities including the sharing of best practice.

3. Objectives and Powers of the Group and ways of working

- 3.2 To provide forums in which member authorities can exchange views and initiate shared activities on issues of common interest/benefit, particularly relating to rural service delivery, rural policy generally and the rural economy.
- 3.3 To raise awareness of the contribution member authorities make to rural service and rural community issues.
- 3.4 To provide greater capacity for member authorities to contribute to and influence the national agenda by direct representation to government departments and other decision makers/opinion formers.
- 3.5 To represent, wherever possible by consensus, the interests of member authorities in national government, to Parliament, political parties, European and other international institutions and other bodies, and the LGA and other decision makers/opinion formers.
- 3.6 To organise collective working to achieve potential cost savings for member authorities.
- 3.7 To formulate sound policies and practices in respect of rural issues particularly those relating to rural services and rural communities.
- 3.8 To promote the policies of the Group to national government and other relevant organisations.
- 3.9 To develop relationships with other LGA Special Interest Groups, its People and Places Board and with other appropriate Service Boards, as may be established from time to time.
- 3.10 To do anything that is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of the objectives of the Group.
- 3.11 To promote innovation and best practice in furtherance of the achievement of greater efficiencies across member authorities.
- 3.12 The Special Interest Group (SIG) to work with other Rural Service providers and those interested in rural services (grouped together as The Rural Services Partnership Limited (RSP)); with the Rural England Community Interest Company (RE) and with the RSN's own Community Group as a section of the umbrella partnership known as The Rural Services Network - to represent rural services generally, facilitate best practice and create the strongest network possible in support of continuous improvement of services and wellbeing in general in the rural areas of England.

- 3.13 In addition to the formal subgroups (referred to in 1.7 above) the Group may, from time to time, at an Annual General Meeting decide to establish service specific or topic groups based on the Group's Priorities for Action. All members will be entitled to attend such meetings. In respect of such meetings, in addition to each member authority's normal representatives, the Portfolio Holders and Chief Officers (or their representatives) will be invited to attend.
- 3.14 Unless the Group at an Annual General Meeting decides to the contrary, each year a series of "Regional Meetings/Seminars" will be organised. Whilst all member authorities will be "allocated to a Region" their representatives will be able to attend in a different "region" if they prefer.

4. Purpose of Subgroups

- 4.1 The Group will undertake its work through the operation of a series of Subgroups.
- 4.2 These Subgroups shall be named SPARSE Rural, The Rural Assembly, The Rural Fire & Rescue Services Group.
- 4.3 The purposes of the Subgroups shall be as follows-

A. SPARSE RURAL:

This subgroup will represent the financial interests of Principal Councils classified as Predominantly Rural and those Significantly Rural authorities which stand to gain by the Group's financial representations.

To promote the financial interests of the most rural local government authorities and to make representations to Government and other relevant bodies on the allocation of funding to the most rural authorities and other publicly funded bodies serving their areas.

To establish a comprehensive networking system by electronic mail to allow members to discuss in detail rural considerations relating to the range of service areas they provide and where appropriate for these networks to also involve community representatives and non-local authority service providers to allow service issues to be viewed holistically.

To seek to facilitate collective working across authorities with a view to achieving both maintenance of rural service and the cutting of cost. This work to include financial and non-financial performance analysis and comparison of services and working through service groupings.

B. THE RURAL ASSEMBLY:

To provide to all members appropriate information on rural matters generally.

To act as a conduit on rural issues between authorities with rural areas. As well as act as a conduit to those rural areas themselves with the LGA's People and Places Board and other appropriate Service Boards, with Parliament and Government Departments and with other organisations with a rural interest.

To allow a consensus view to be established on current issues between authorities with a rural interest in order to inform the LGA's operational structures of the

position relating to rural areas in England and Wales.

To facilitate discussions between rural authorities and other bodies with an interest in issues which affect rural areas/communities/businesses in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland with a view to establishing rural best practice and inter organisational learning.

To where possible assist in establishing a rural dimension to appropriate LGA conferences.

C.THE RURAL FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES GROUP:

The Group shall be open to representatives of the Rural Fire & Rescue Authorities and to Chief Fire Officers or their nominees.

To seek to achieve maximum linkage between the operation of Fire & Rescue Services in rural areas and the communities involved.

To seek to share operational experience and best practice established through providing services in rural areas

To argue the financial case relating to the additional costs of Fire & Rescue Services operation in Mainly Rural Areas or areas that have Significant Rural Areas.

Address the Fire & Rescue Service issues which are unique or more prevalent in rural areas (for example, retained fire & rescue service operation, rural vulnerability and disadvantage issues, open countryside fires and flooding and accidents involving classified roads).

5. The Annual Meeting

- 5.1 The Group will meet at the Annual Meeting to appoint the office holders.
- 5.2 The Annual Meeting shall meet towards the end of each calendar year to approve the accounts of the Group, agree the budget of the Group, to set the annual service charges and approve the work programme. Other meetings (including where considered necessary Extraordinary Annual General Meetings) will be held as required and the meetings shall deal with such other business as may be determined by the Executive.
- 5.3 The Annual Meeting may from time to time make standing orders for the regulation of the Group's proceedings.

6. Membership of Meetings and Subgroup Meetings and Roles

- 6.1 The Meetings shall comprise the appointed representatives of the Member Authorities or Leaders of those authorities who have not made such an appointment. Elected members may be accompanied by an Officer of the Member Council. Meetings of the Rural Services Network may follow on from Group Meetings and where necessary separate votes may be taken of the Rural Services Partnership's membership. Meetings of service specific or topic groups as referred to in 3.10 above will normally meet prior to either SPARSE Rural or Rural Assembly subgroup meetings.

- 6.2 The names of members appointed by member authorities to serve at meetings and any appointed substitute appointments shall be given to the Deputy Chief Executive in writing by the Chief Executive of their Member Authority (or other officer nominated to act on their behalf) as requested. For the avoidance of doubt each member authority may appoint a substitute member to act in the place of the nominated member. To assist continuity and representation both the nominated member and the substitute member can attend meetings but only one may vote on an issues.
- 6.3 The period of office for members shall normally begin with effect from member authorities Annual Meetings in each year and shall end immediately before their Annual Meeting in the following year, provided that representatives shall cease to be eligible for membership when they cease to hold office as members of their authority or when their authority ceases to be in membership of the Group.
- 6.4 Member Authorities may appoint different members to serve on different Subgroups, but one member must be named as the representative of the Council for the purposes of Annual Meetings of the Group.

Roles within Membership Local Authorities

- 6.5 **Nominated Member** – This will be the RSNs main point of contact with the Councillors of each local authority in membership. The Nominated Member is often nominated at Councils Annual Meeting and is likely to be a member of the Cabinet or ruling party. The Nominated Member will be invited to attend meetings of the Rural Services Network, (currently held online) and will be sent information about RSN's campaigns on behalf of rural local authorities. (See substitute arrangements in clause 6.2 above.)
- 6.6 **Nominated Officer** – This will be the RSN's main point of contact with the Officers at each local authority in membership. The Nominated Officer will be copied into correspondence with the Nominated Member and will also receive invitations to meetings. They will be sent information about RSN campaigns on behalf of rural local authorities and may also be sent information about Government Consultations where the RSN is collating a rural response. We would like the Nominated Officer to distribute information across the authority as they feel appropriate. A back up contact for this role is also sought.

7. Voting at Meetings

- 7.1 Each Member Authority shall be entitled to cast one vote at all meetings on occasions when it is decided to proceed by vote and a decision is not reached by consensus (which will be usual practice).
- 7.2 In the case of an equality of votes the Chairman of the meeting shall have the casting vote.
- 7.3 A member may nominate another member being a currently serving member of any member Authority and attend a meeting on his or her behalf and exercise his or her vote(s) provided that written notice is given to the Director of the Group before the start of the meeting by the Chief Executive or other appropriate officer of the Member Authority or by the originally nominated member.

8. Office Holders

- 8.1 The Annual Meeting of the Group shall in each year appoint from amongst the members representing Member Authorities the following office holders:
- 8.1.1 A Chairman and (if considered appropriate) a Deputy Chairman;

8.1.2 Vice-Chairmen (The number of which shall be determined by the Annual Meeting making the appointment. One of the vice-chairmen shall be identified as First Vice-Chairman).

8.2 To achieve continuity of overall operation, the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the Group will also hold the same offices on the Executive and on the SPARSE Rural Subgroup.

8.3 The Rural Fire & Rescue Services Subgroup shall appoint their own Chair and Vice Chair.

8.3 Voting on all appointments shall be as follows:

Where there are more than two persons nominated for each position, and of the votes given there is not a majority in favour of one person, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote shall be taken, and so on, until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person.

8.4 The Chairmen (and in their absence The Deputy Chairman or in his/her absence Vice-Chairmen) will have the following responsibilities:

- A. To promote the Group and Subgroups as a whole;
- B. To uphold and promote the purposes of the Constitution and to interpret the Constitution where necessary;
- C. To preside over meetings so that its business can be carried out efficiently; and
- D. To ensure meetings are a forum for debate on matters of common interest.

8.5 The Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen will hold office until:

- A. The next Annual Meeting of the Group, or in the case of the Rural Assembly the Rural Unitary Councils and the Rural Fire & Rescue Services Subgroups the first meeting in any calendar year;
- B. They resign from the office; or
- C. They are no longer a Councillor; or
- D. They are removed from office by resolution; or
- E. The member authority they represent ceases to be a member of the Group.

8.6 If a Chairman ceases to be the Chairman as a result of Article 8.5 (b), (c), (d) or (e) above the Group or Subgroup shall forthwith appoint a new Chairman. Pending the appointment of a new Chairman, all powers and functions of the Chairman shall be vested respectively in the Deputy Chairman in relation to the Group, the SPARSE Rural Subgroups, the Rural Assembly Subgroup and in the Vice-Chairman of the Fire & Rescue Services Subgroup.

8.7 The Chairman of the Fire & Rescue Subgroup shall be a member of the Executive.

9. The Executive

9.1 There shall be an Executive whose purpose will be to provide strategic direction and conduct the normal day to day business of the Group apart from work delegated to the Group's Officers.

9.2 The Annual Meeting shall determine the terms of reference, delegated powers, size, and composition of the Executive and may, if felt necessary, make Standing Orders for the regulation of their proceedings.

9.3 The Executive will, where appropriate, meet with the Board of Directors of the Rural Services Partnership Limited and up to 6 further nominees of their choice, to achieve overall Rural Services Network purposes. Where it is felt necessary, separate votes will be taken when formal decisions are required to be made by the Directors of the Rural Services Partnership Ltd.

9.4 The Chairman of the Group from time to time shall be Chairman of the Executive.

9.5 The Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the Group may nominate another member being a currently nominated member of any member Authority to attend an Executive meeting on his or her behalf and exercise his or her vote(s) provided that written notice is given to the Director of the Group before the start of the meeting.

10. Responsibility for Action

10.1 In matters of local government in general or which concern all member authorities of the Subgroups, the Group and its Subgroups will speak for all its member authorities. The Group and its Subgroups, however, cannot commit their individual member authorities to any particular course of action or to support or not support any particular policy position.

11. Meetings of the Group, Subgroups and Executive

11.1 Meetings of the Group and Executive shall be held on such days and at such places (or virtually) as may be decided by the Executive.

11.2 The Corporate Director shall ensure:

- A. Not less than twenty-eight clear days before each ordinary meeting including Extra Ordinary Annual Meetings of the Group and not less than two months before the Annual Meeting there shall be posted on the Group's website, a notice stating the date, time and place of the meeting; and
- B. Not less than ten working days before the meeting send to each Member Authority by email or post an agenda specifying the business to be transacted.

12. Nominated Officers and RSN Staff

12.1 There shall be a Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and a Corporate Director of the Group appointed on such terms and conditions as the Executive may think fit, and such other staff as may be necessary for the purpose of implementing the Group's and the Subgroups aims and objectives. These staff members individually and collectively will support the working of the Group and the Subgroups.

12.2 The Group and Subgroups shall, where considered necessary, ask the Chief Executives of Member Authorities to provide advisors to support the work programme as necessary, including financial and strategic service advisers.

13. Finance

13.1 Each year the Executive shall submit for consideration to the Annual Meeting of the Group a statement of estimated expenditure for the year commencing on the following first day of April. The Executive shall have delegated authority to vary the budget within the financial year as necessary – subject to report at the next Group meeting.

- 13.2 The service charges for each year commencing on the 1st of April shall be at rates to be determined from time to time by the Group and those rates shall vary across groups, taking into consideration the running costs involved.
- 13.3 Each year the Chief Executive shall be responsible for the preparation of an Income and Expenditure Account involving jointly the Rural Services Network Special Interest Group and the Rural Services Partnership Limited, for the preparation of Company Accounts by professional tax accountants and for the submission of those accounts to the Group.
- 13.4 The income and property of the Group shall be applied solely towards the promotion of the Group's objectives.
- 13.5 The Group may invest, lend, or otherwise deal with monies not immediately required for its purposes in such manner as may be thought fit by the Executive, and may borrow or raise money in accordance with financial regulations agreed by the Annual Meeting.
- 13.6 The Group may purchase, take on lease or otherwise obtain land to provide accommodation for the use of staff, provided that if land or buildings are leased from a Member Authority this shall be on a basis that the rent paid is no more than a reasonable and proper rent in the circumstances.
- 13.7 The Chief Executive and the Director, or in their absence another appointed officer, shall be authorised to enter and execute all instruments, deeds or assurances on behalf of the Group.
- 13.8 The cost of attendance, travel and subsistence in connection with meetings of the Group and Subgroups shall be met by the member or officer's own authority. The Group itself will meet those costs in respect of members of the Executive attending Executive Meetings or otherwise representing the Group.

14. Resignation of Member Authorities

- 14.1 Any Member Authority wishing to terminate its membership shall give not less than twelve months' notice, in writing, to the Director to expire on 31 March in any year.
- 14.2 Any Member Authority shall, upon ceasing to be a member of the Group, forfeit all right to and claims upon the Group and its property and funds, and, without prejudice to Article 15, shall pay such amount representing the authority's share of responsibility towards liabilities incurred by the Group on behalf of member authorities, including payments due to contractors, during the currency of the authority's membership, such share to be calculated having regard to the proportion which the subscription paid by that authority bears to the total annual subscription of the Group from its members in total.

15. Dissolution

- 15.1 A motion for dissolution of the Group must be notified in advance as an agenda item for the Annual Meeting or an Extraordinary General Meeting.
- 15.2 A motion for dissolution shall require a formal majority of at least two-thirds of members present with at least two-thirds of such authorities represented at the meeting, or through a postal vote procedure authorised by an Annual Meeting decision under the procedures outlined in 16.1 below.

- 15.3 If the Group's funds should prove to be insufficient to discharge its liabilities Member Authorities shall contribute such additional sum as is required collectively to eliminate the deficiency pro rata to the level of their subscription.
- 15.4 In the event of a dispute between a member or former member authority and the Group as to the amount which an authority should contribute under this rule the matter shall be referred to arbitration.
- 15.5 The arbitration shall be conducted in accordance with the Arbitration Rules of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators. The Arbitrator shall be asked to determine the extent to which an authority or authorities should contribute and to determine the matter in accordance with what is fair in all the circumstances. In the event that the Arbitrator issues a determination, providing that a member or former member Authority is liable to contribute a specified sum under this Rule, the authority shall pay the monies which the Arbitrator determines it ought to pay within sixty days of the issue of the award. The Arbitrator shall be appointed by agreement of Chief Executive and Director or in default of such agreement by the President for the time being of the Law Society.

16. Amendment to the Constitution

- 16.1 The Annual Meeting (or an Extraordinary General Meeting convened for the purpose) shall have power to amend this Constitution:

16.1.1 Save that no amendments may be made to articles 13.4 or 14.1 and any purported amendments to those articles shall not be effective; and

16.1.2 Provided that a motion in favour of each such amendment shall be passed by at least two thirds of members present and voting (in person or by Proxy) and, if necessary, through the following additional procedure:

If 10% of the members signify to the Corporate Director, in writing prior to the meeting, that they wish the amendment to be put to a postal ballot of the membership. The amendment shall be carried if it receives the support of at least two thirds of the ballot papers returned.

17. Urgent Decisions

- 17.1 The Chairman in consultation with the Deputy Chairman or First Vice-Chairman may take a decision which is a matter of urgency and is not delegated to the Officers. However, the decision may only be taken:

17.1.1 if it is not practical to convene a quorate meeting of the Executive; and

17.1.2 if the Chairman of the Group agrees that the decision is a matter of urgency.

The reasons why it is not practical to convene a quorate meeting of the Executive and the consent of the Chairman to the decision being taken as a matter of urgency must be noted on the record of the decision. Following the decision, the Chairman will provide a full report to the next meeting of the Group or Executive explaining the decision, the reason for it and why the decision was treated as a matter of urgency.

Note of last SPARSE Rural Special Interest Group meeting

Title:	Rural Services Network Special Interest Group RSN AGM, followed by Rural Assembly Meeting
Date:	Monday 16 November 2020
Venue:	via Zoom

Attendance

An attendance and apologies list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note.

Item	Decisions and actions
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1	Attendance & Apologies
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Cllr Celia Motley (Chair) welcomed members to the meeting. Apologies and attendees were noted.

2	Appointment of Chairman and Members of the Executive
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Graham Biggs invited nominations to the roles of Chairman. Cllr Robert Heseltine proposed Cllr Motley to continue as Chairman as stability is vital at this time. The nomination to re-elect the current Chair was seconded by Cllr Gwilym Butler and approved by colleagues without opposition.

Cllr Motley expressed her thanks for confidence in her and referred to the issues around not being able to hold events around the country. Despite this being impossible at the current time, she assured colleagues that work has continued at pace despite restrictions and that meetings had continued in a virtual environment. She informed the group that response has been excellent – contributions and participation has increased due to a better availability and without the need to travel to collaborate. The Chair thanked the whole RSN Team for continuing to achieve a lot despite current issues.

Cllr Motley asked Cllr Robert Heseltine whether he wished to continue as first vice chair to which he accepted. Cllr Motley then proposed that the Executive members be re-appointed en-bloc and that was agreed. If additional colleagues were interested in finding out more or in joining the Executive, they should put forward their details to Graham Biggs. MBE. Janet Duncton enquired whether a replacement for SE England had been found, (it has not) and members were invited to come forward if they were interested in taking the position.

3	Notes from the last RSN AGM & Rural Assembly meeting
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The minutes from the last RSN AGM and Rural Assembly meeting were approved.

4	Notes from the previous RSN Executive meeting
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The minutes from the previous two meetings of the RSN Executive were noted.

5	Changes to Service Delivery to RSN Members 2020
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Members received an update on changes made to enable new ways of working under current restrictions. These included:

- Introduction of online meetings which have led to increased engagement of 300%;
- Seminar schedules have now been moved online – this now means that everyone can attend, no matter which region they are in. The number of seminars per year will be increased to 9. Evidence has shown that a greater number of officers are now attending;
- Additional events have been successful for example the dedicated session for Finance Officers on the Local Government Finance Settlement and also the session on the impact of the Planning White Paper;
- RSN has been part of Defra's Forum and have been able to feed into Govt discussion on key rural issues;
- A lot of work has been done with specialist regional officers to assist feedback to government and to help shape our response to the planning white paper at a national level.
- Members were reminded to ensure that each of them nominates a member to participate in RSN events;
- Work on the Bulletin has increased and is keeping members informed regularly;
- There is an intention to have individual virtual meetings with councils to discuss key issues once a year from 1st April 2021 (later where elections are being held in May 2021) in order to help RSN to understand current issues;
- Greater links with key roles in individual councils are being developed.

Comments from members included a need for consideration of issues around national parks in the Defra meetings and that they must be included in any discussion around the planning white paper. Mr Biggs confirmed that initially, the focus was looking at data on impacts around COVID-19 but that other issues were being raised with Defra to feed into Govt departments. Members were informed that they are now starting to look at medium and long-term recovery and that many concerns are still the same as before the pandemic. Issues around rural housing and rural proofing still stand and are still being pursued.

Members referred to concerns in their own areas and Defra's lack of knowledge where suggestions around farming etc. are being put forward. Mr Biggs agreed to discuss any individual problems further and invited any colleagues affected to speak to him separately so that these can be raised with Government. Members agreed that the planned individual meetings would be an opportunity to take forward work around these issues.

Mr David Inman referred to inequalities around market town establishments not being allowed to open despite supermarkets being able to. Other small businesses have also expressed concerns and he invited members to put forward suggestions.

The report was noted.

Members noted the dates of future meetings and that these would continue virtually for the foreseeable future.

7 To agree the subscriptions for 2021/22 as recommended by the Executive

Mr Biggs asked members to note the recommendations for an increase at the level of inflation provision (2.75%) next year, although future years would be a flat increase of 2% per annum. It was agreed that income via fees should match the level and the cost of work expected.

The costs were supported but members felt that the narrative needs to express the need to pay staff appropriately to take forward the work anticipated. They acknowledge the severe financial difficulties facing councils at this time and the need therefore to make clear that the increase is necessary if the work targets are to be met.

Members agreed unanimously.

8 Budget 2020/2021 and Estimates 2021/2022 (Constitutional requirement)

Mr Biggs referred to the importance of member retention. Budgets have been drawn up with the caveat that nothing changes in terms of income. He said that unfortunately, payment of subscriptions from some authorities are still outstanding and chasing them continues to be an issue. The group noted the anticipated balance for next year and were reminded of their agreement to establish properly salaried posts for Senior Officers in coming years.

Members noted and agreed the budget report.

9 RSN response to Planning White Paper and Changes to the Current Planning System

Cllr Motley referred to the Planning White Paper and invited Mr Biggs to update colleagues on recent consultations. Changes to the current planning system will have a detrimental impact on rural housing. The wider consultation had received several responses and members noted that RSN had also hosted a seminar in advance of contributing to fine-tune a response.

Colleagues also heard about recent meetings and discussions and Mr Biggs informed them that RSN are awaiting a response to the discussion on rural concerns around the white paper. Members who had contributed to the response will be updated as further information is received.

10 National Rural Conference 2020

Kerry Booth updated colleagues on the recent National Rural Conference which was held online over five days. Members received a presentation on the agenda and heard that feedback had been very good.

Members noted the range of sessions offered and numbers attending. Feedback around the sessions has been sought and secretariat will look at and consider the results around ideas for next time. Overall, although it was different, it was felt to be a huge success. The number of attendees was impressive, and ideas will be built upon for next year.

Cllr Motley praised the work done by Kerry and Marija in particular but also acknowledge input and commitment from colleagues, in order to make the conference

such a success. She reiterated the great range of items covered and the excellent feedback received. She agreed that five days was a lot in terms of the amount of work generated and said that she would support re-consideration of the format for next time with regards to length.

Members expressed how impressed they were with the event and in particularly the quality of speakers participating. This may not have been possible in a physical environment and it was a fantastic first online effort.

11 Revitalising Rural: Realising the Vision

Members received a presentation from Mr Biggs.

He provided background to the call to Government for a rural strategy and outlined the introduction of the House of Lords Select Committee on the Rural Economy. A clip from Lord Foster opening the debate in the House of Lords was included for information which discussed inequalities between rural and urban economies and additional costs incurred by rural areas.

Members noted that although the government had refused the call, it had responded by saying that a range of measures was being put in place to ensure that rural areas continue to thrive and that it would 'renew its vision for rural England'. Mr Biggs referred to mitigating circumstances which currently prevent this from happening. The RSN therefore decided to provide a document (Revitalising Rural) which reiterates and articulates how investing in rural areas can help the government and the national economy.

Members noted that the document was very high-level and that the planned seminars etc. would serve to underpin it with even more important detail. RSN were keen to raise its profile and had included an article within First Magazine for October and were seeking support and engagement with members of the House of Lords Select Committee, the APPG as well as other key organisations and decision makers in Parliament.

Mr Biggs outlined next steps and announced that a formal launch of the document was planned for February 2021. The intention is to demonstrate to government that it makes sense to engage and invest in rural areas to aid the economy. He stated that members would be consulted for case studies to inform the launch and asked members to consider highlighting the document (further to the launch) in their local media and by other available means to inform.

Cllr Cecilia Motley (Chair) agreed the importance of case studies as evidence and demonstration of the differences that can be made. The group was invited to comment.

They said:

- There will be a huge emphasis on recovery once we are past the worst of COVID-19 – there will be an appetite to grow the economy and the future of rural must be included at that time.
- Need to try and demonstrate other ways of doing things and it is vital that everyone is engaged in writing and presenting this document.
- Whilst the outcome might be economic, all these issues are interdependent on each other to create a thriving economy.

The Chair thanked Graham Biggs MBE for an insightful presentation.

12 Report from the Chair of the Rural Services APPG

Report on the Work of the APPG on Rural Services

Cllr Motley took the opportunity to welcome Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP.

Mr Dunne expressed the importance of the secretariat in evidence sharing and thanked colleagues for their contribution to discussions. He outlined recent sessions where topical issues had been raised including those around rural transportation and connectivity. It was noted that Government has made a pledge to increase delivery of broadband. However, delays in getting supply to rural areas to replace copper wiring were disappointing and there were concerns about implications to rural users if no alternative is in place, in time.

Mr Dunne referred to recent discussions on progress around the spending review and the announcement by the Chancellor that this will now only be for one year.

There will be elements of long-term projects which will need some security that they will be able to progress. He spoke about levelling up for rural areas and consequences of COVID-19 on making assumptions around costs and uncertainties when contracting - with implications on planning.

Mr Dunne added that it was helpful to have a sense of issues that the network would like to raise in the future, and that he would be happy to engage further when the group wished. Cllr Cecilia Motley (Chair) invited questions from colleagues:

- Cllr Peter Thornton asked about the emergency services broadband scheme and referred to the lack of mobile networks in Cumbria. Mr Dunne suggested the council write to the Home Office asking how they are planning to ensure connectivity in the region and the community and at what point besides that around emergency services.
- Cllr Yvonne Peacock also expressed concerns around when analogue disappears and the urgency in ensuring broadband is in place before then. Mr Dunne suggested that discussion take place with those responsible for the handover and resilience when the switchover happens. Graham Biggs MBE agreed the importance of placing this item on the agenda and said that they would look at getting BT to engage with discussions.
- Cllr Duncton raised concerns around the dated infrastructure of sewage and water works in rural areas. Mr Dunne asked members to note that he had a particular interest in this himself and had recently put the issue around infrastructure in housing development and the lack of joining up between those responsible for dealing with increase of population. He encouraged the group to look at his campaign for untreated sewage which is spilling into our rivers and to support his Bill:
<https://www.sas.org.uk/EndSewagePollution-SewageBill> .
- Cllr Richard Good outlined issues around broadband and the problems faced by schoolchildren studying remotely and accessing schoolwork. He asked whether there had been any progress on banning sky lanterns, particularly around the detrimental effects on the countryside and to cattle. Mr Dunne

assured the group that he would take away that point around pollution.

- Cllr Roger Phillips endorsed Mr Dunne's work around river pollution and the importance of keeping an eye on the Environment Bill – particularly around diffuse pollution from agriculture.
- Cllr Mary Robinson referred to the installation of fibre in her district and the compared maintenance costs of copper wiring. She referred to alternatives in accessing networks via use of the government voucher schemes and offered to inform secretariat as a way of sharing best practice. Mr Dunne agreed that there are pockets of great practice and the information should be shared. Members agreed that discrimination needs to be addressed and in particular regarding those companies whose purpose is to make a huge profit by taking advantage of the voucher scheme.
- Cllr Peter Stevens spoke about expansion of protected landscapes and the need for careful consideration around the complexities of mass tree planting. He outlined the importance of maintaining healthy trees and the consequences of not doing so. Mr Dunne recognised the need to ensure agricultural economies and viability of achieving targets. There is a determination to get to 30% by 2030 – a designation of 1 or 2 national parks would be done in the first instance which would go a long way to reaching the targets. He said that there is bound to be pressure around diversity and a need to be sensitive and well advised in terms of which trees are planted and where they come from.

Cllr Cecilia Motley (Chair) thanked Mr Dunne for a wide-ranging discussion and for responding to so many questions. Members acknowledged the valued engagement in addressing rural issues with the RSN as well as other relevant bodies such as the APPG. They spoke briefly about rural bus services and the expectation that the rural bus strategy will be announced next year.

13 Any Other Business

Graham Biggs MBE referred to the recent invitation to the RSN to provide evidence on a House of Lords COVID-19 enquiry around the impact of digitalisation. Members will be contacted with suggestions as to a response and a call to submit anything further. This will be released publicly in due course.

Cllr Peter Stevens raised concerns about the potential to reduce subscriptions due to savings from venue costs if online meetings continue. Graham Biggs MBE confirmed that feedback from members had shown a preference for virtual meetings, reminding him of the difficulties faced by colleagues in attending London meetings even when it is possible to do so. Evidence shows that both attendance and engagement has increased - which is an enormous benefit to the group. He further stated that reductions in expenditure were being applied to increase services to members.

Cllr Cecilia Motley (Chair) thanked colleagues for their attendance and contribution to the meeting and the meeting was closed.

The next Rural Assembly meeting is scheduled for Monday, 12th April 2021 and the next joint RSN AGM & Rural Assembly meeting is scheduled for Monday, 15th November 2021.

Appendix A **Attendance**

First Name	Surname	Organisation
Catriona	Adams	National Federation of Women's Institutes
Cllr Victoria	Aitken	East Riding Council
Cllr Philip	Atkins	Staffordshire County Council
Cllr Owen	Bierley	West Lindsey District Council
Graham	Biggs MBE	Rural Services Network
John	Birtwistle	FirstGroup plc
Kerry	Booth	Rural Services Network
Tony	Brown	Northumberland County Council
Cllr Lillian	Burns	National Association of Local Councils (NALC)
Cllr Gwilym	Butler	Shropshire Council
Daniel	Carey-Dawes	CPRE, the countryside charity
Cllr Ian	Carrington	North Kesteven District Council
Amy	Cobbett	NFU
Fatima	De Abreu	Local Government Association
Richard	Dowson	Raising Aspirations Empowering Change Ltd
Cllr Janet	Dunton	West Sussex County Council
Rt Hon Philip	Dunne MP	UK Parliament
Cllr John	Evans	Uttlesford District Council
Katherine	Fairclough	Cumbria County Council
David	Fisher	Lantra Awards
Cllr Marion	Fitzgerald	Allerdale Borough Council
Cllr Richard	Good	Richmondshire District Council
Cllr Roger	Habgood	Somerset West and Taunton member for Monument Ward
Cllr Michael	Harris OBE	New Forest District Council
Nik	Harwood	Young Somerset
Cllr Robert	Heseltine	North Yorkshire County Council
Cllr David	Hitchiner	Herefordshire Council
Stewart	Horne	West Devon Business Information Point
Ian	Hunter	Creative Rural Industries Consortium
Prof. Alastair	Hutchison	Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
David	Inman	Rural Services Network
Cllr Neil	Jory	West Devon Borough Council
Jackie	King	Tandridge District Council
Rev. Richard	Kirlew	Sherborne Deanery Rural Chaplaincy
Sarah	Lee	Countryside Alliance
Cllr Malcolm	Leeding	Foresthill with Hostover Parish Council
Holly	Lombardo	National Rural Touring Forum
Jo	Martin	Rural Business Network
Rich	Matthews	Rural Media
Jane	Mordue	Citizens Advice Rural Issues Group
Cllr Suzie	Morley	Mid Suffolk District Council
Cllr Cecilia	Motley (Chair)	Rural Services Network/Shropshire Council
Cllr Yvonne	Peacock	Richmondshire District Council

Amanda	Phillips	United Utilities
Cllr Roger	Phillips	Herefordshire Council
Heather	Pitchford	Health Education England
Dr. Ken	Pollock	Worcestershire County Council
Carole	Quinn	United Utilities
Julia	Raven	South Northamptonshire Council
Cllr Rupert	Reichhold	East Northamptonshire District Council
Cllr Louise	Richardson	Leicestershire County Council
Cllr Mary	Robinson	Eden District Council
Cllr Jeremy	Savage	South Norfolk District Council
Kay	Sentance	RU Here
Cllr Richard	Sherras	Ribble Valley Borough Council
Ian	Sherriff	University of Plymouth
Cllr Paul	Skinner	Boston Borough Council
Claire	Smith	Wessex Water
Cllr Peter	Stevens	West Suffolk Council
Cllr Dr Virginia	Taylor	Eden District Council
Cllr Peter	Thornton	Cumbria County Council
Cllr Sue	Tucker	Scarborough Borough Council
Cllr Simon	Walsh	Essex County Council
Cllr John	Ward	Babergh District Council
Elizabeth	Warwick	Wales & West Utilities
Cllr Mark	Winnington	Staffordshire County Council

Apologies

First Name	Last Name	Organisation
Amy	Barker	Green Energy UK
Ben	Colson	Bus Users
Katherine	Fairclough	Cumbria County Council
Cllr Julian	German	Cornwall Council
Cllr Gordon	Hook	Teignbridge District Council
Ian	Hunter	Creative Rural Industries Consortium
Gavin	Jones	Hastoe Group
Jo	Martin	Rural Business Network
Elizabeth	McNabb	Blackdown Support Group / NHS
Patricia	Miller	Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Jane	Mordue	Citizens Advice Rural Issues Group
Louise	Norris	North East Ambulance Service - NHS Foundation Trust
Amanda	Phillips	United Utilities
Heather	Pitchford	Health Education England
Gary	Powell	Teignbridge District Council
Cllr Susan	Prochak	Rother District Council
Carole	Quinn	United Utilities
Julia	Raven	South Northamptonshire Council
Cllr Sue	Sanderson	Cumbria County Council
Cllr Paul	Skinner	Boston Borough Council
Claire	Smith	Wessex Water
Cllr Anthony	Trollope-Bellew	Somerset West and Taunton District Council

Cllr Rob
Helen

Waltham MBE
Wood

North Lincolnshire Council
South East Water

RSN & RSP Meetings and Events Calendar 2022

Report from David Inman, Corporate Director

Meetings and Events

Proposed Dates	Time	Type of meeting
Monday, 10 th January	11:15am - 2:30pm	RSN Executive meeting
Monday, 24 th January	11am - 12:30pm	SPARSE Rural meeting
Monday, 24 th January	1pm - 3pm	Rural Economy Sub Group meeting
Friday, 18 th February	tbc	RMTG Officer Steering Group meeting
Friday, 18 th March	10:30am – 12 noon	RMTG Clerks Advisory Panel meeting
Monday, 21 st March	10:45am - 2:00pm	RSN Executive meeting
Monday, 28 th March	tbc	RMTG meeting
Monday, 4 th April	11am - 12:30	Rural Assembly meeting
Wednesday, 6 th April	11am - 12:30pm	Rural Social Care & Health Sub Group meeting
Monday, 25 th April	11am - 12noon	RSP Vulnerability Group
Monday, 25 th April	2:00pm - 3:30pm	RSP Partner Group meeting
Monday, 23 rd May	11:15am - 2:30pm	RSN Executive meeting
Monday, 20 th June	11am - 12:30pm	SPARSE Rural meeting (Fair Funding)
Wednesday, 22 nd June	1pm - 3pm	Rural Economy Sub Group meeting
Monday, 5 th September	11:15am - 2:30pm	RSN Executive & RSP Directors' meeting
Monday, 19 th – Friday, 23 rd September	tbc	National Rural Conference 2022
Thursday, 29 th September	tbc	RMTG Officer Steering Group meeting
Tuesday, 11 th October	4:30pm – 6pm	RMTG meeting
Wednesday, 16 th November	11am - 12:30pm	Rural Social Care & Health Sub Group meeting
Monday, 14 th November	1pm - 3:30pm	RSN AGM & Rural Assembly meeting
Wednesday, 7 th December	11am - 12noon	RSP Vulnerability Panel
Wednesday, 7 th December	2:00pm - 3:30pm	RSP Ltd (AGM)
Wednesday, 7 th December	2pm - 3:30pm	RSP Partner Group meeting

Seminars

Proposed Dates	Time	Type of meeting
Wednesday, 26 th January	1pm - 3pm	RSN Seminar: Older Population
Wednesday, 2 nd March	11am - 1pm	RSN Seminar: Young People in Rural Areas
Wednesday, 30 th March	11am - 1pm	RSN Seminar: Rural Planning
Wednesday, 27 th April	11am - 1pm	RSN Seminar: Rural Decarbonisation
Wednesday, 25 th May	11am - 1pm	RSN Seminar: Rural Digital Connectivity
Wednesday, 29 th June	11am - 1pm	RSN Seminar: Rural Affordable Housing
Wednesday, 27 th July	11am - 1pm	RSN Seminar: Rural Health & Social Care
Wednesday, 2 nd November	11am - 1pm	RSN Seminar: Rural Town Centres, High Streets & Village Hubs
Wednesday, 30 th November	11am - 1pm	RSN Seminar: Rural Economies

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers


Rural Services Network

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	A	B	C	D	E	F
1						
2						Attachment 4
3						
4		The Rural Services Partnership				
5		Budget Report				
6		2021/22 and Estimate for 2022/23				
7		As at 31st October, 2021				
8						
9		Total				
10		2020/21 ACTUAL ACCRUAL BASIS	ACTUAL AS AT 31ST OCTOBER CASH BASIS	REVISED BUDGET 2021 /22	NOTES RE 2021/22 BUDGET	2022/23 ORIGINAL ESTIMATE
11	INCOME	£	£	£	£	£
12	Miscellaneous Income					
13	Coastal communities contract income	5,644.68	2319.50	5758.00	Includes £1360 Debtor	5873
14	National rural conference	2,608.02	3650.00	3650.00		3800
15	RHCA Membership	19,279.04	10871.49	34176.00	Includes £11142 Debtors. £20216 to be invoiced 1/1/22	23034
16	RSP Membership	19,272.08	17,725.81	21409.00		23304
17	Rural England Annual Re CHARGES	7,706.00	2,692.68	6835.00		6972
18	Rural England project support	600.00		1800.00		1836
19	Rural fire and rescue	3,917.00	3,366.00	3999.00		4075
20	Rural housing group subscriptions	6,400.00	6,500.00	6850.00		5559

	A	B	C	D	E	F
21	Rural housing group website	915.00				2200
22	Rural Strategy Income	11,847.92				
23	Rural Towns Group	10,160.00	6620.00	14000.00	Includes £150.00 Debtor	20000
24	SPARSE - Rural general grant	309,918.00	270,947.00	308022.00		301250
25	Miscellaneous Income		62.50			
26	Strategic partnering arrangements	10,000.00	10000.00	10000.00		10000
27	DEBTOR FROM 2020/21 VAT REFUND			3403.96		
28	Total Income	408267.74	334754.98	419902.96		407903.00
29						
30	Cost of Sales					
31	GROSS SALARIES - PAYE	229,951.64	106,881.98	170115.00		176111
32	SUB-CONTRACTORS		38,690.26	73806.00		69118
33	Total Cost of Sales	229,951.64	145572.24	243921.00		245229
34	Gross Profit	178316.10		175982.00		162674
35	Expenses					
36	Accountancy	1763.00	791.00	1820.00		1856
37	Bank charges	102.95	63.45	105.00	Includes £7.85 Creditor	107
38	Coastal communities contract	5,724.13		4000.00		4080
39	Communications	29,169.50	16,965.00	34000.00	Includes Creditor of £3834 (Lexington)	25502
40	Databases	6,221.40	3,861.50	6180.00		6304
41	EMPLOYER Pension contributions	5,195.42	2,901.06	5019.00		5196

	A	B	C	D	E	F
42	Employer's NI contributions	10,238.18	1,285.01	11424.00		14132
43	Fair Funding Work external support	9,875.00	11,518.33	18000.00		20000
44	Insurance	1,485.78		780.00		796
45	IT Support	328.77	109.66	700.00		714
46	Legal and professional fees	1,090.42	13.00	13.00		13
47	Meeting Room Hire			500.00		510
48	Nat Centre RHC	7,631.00		7784.00		7939
49	National rural conference expenses					
50	Printing, postage stationery & phone	3,488.91	1,711.95	3750.00	Includes £69.00 Creditor	3825
51	Professional subscriptions	482.00	182.00	550.00		561
52	Rent and service charge	7,967.86	5,216.93	9986.00		
53	RSN ONLINE - Website	295.00	887.50	887.50		5906
54	Rural England Service	7,000.00	7,279.98	7000.00		7000
55	Rural housing group website expenses	167.88	76.67	175.00		
56	Rural Strategy/Rural Policy Expenses	28,613.17	4200.00	18000.00		10000
57	Travel and subsistence	-85.58	9.00	5000.00		5000
58	HOUSING	119.88		500.00		
59	Parliamentary			800.00		
60	TOTAL	126874.67	57072.04	136973.50		119441.00
61	Corporation Tax			8207.00		5384
62	Uncategorised Expenditure @ CONTRA	32.00	10,738.24			
63	Uncategorised Expense @ RHCA	510.00				
64	CAPITAL ITEMS IT EQUIPMENT	2265.00				

	A	B	C	D	E	F
65	TOTAL EXPENSES	129681.67	67810.28	145100.00		124825.00
66	Net Operating Income	48634.43		33381.96		37849.00
67	Sundry income RHCA Overpayment @	510.00				
68	Sundry Income Insurance Refund @	467.89				
69	Sundry Income @ CONTRA		11207.00			
70						
71						
72						
73	Net Income	49612.32		33381.96		37849.00
74	GENERAL FUND BALANCE B/FWD	18901.37		68513.69		54895.65
75	BALANCE	68513.69		101895.65		92744.65
76	GENERAL FUND CARRIED FWD	68513.69				
77	USE OF BALANCES			-47000.00		
78						
79	BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD			54895.65		
80						
81	RE ANNUAL CHARGES INCOME BREAKDOWN					
82						
83	Back Office					
84	Staff Costs (Incl Vuln Panels)					
85	Website					
86						
87	TOTAL					
88						

	A	B	C	D	E	F
89	RE PROJECT INCOME BREAKDOWN					
90	Toolkit					
91	Utility Vulnerability Panel					
92	SORS					
93	Unspecified					
94						
95	TOTAL					



Minutes

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

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

Hosted: Online via Zoom
Date: Monday, 17th May 2021
Time: 11:15am – 2:30pm

1. Attendance & Apologies.

Attendance:

Cllr Cecilia Motley (Chair)	Shropshire Council / Rural Services Network
Graham Biggs MBE	Rural Services Network
John Birtwistle	FirstGroup plc UK Bus Division
Cllr Peter Stevens	West Suffolk Council
Kerry Booth	Rural Services Network
Martin Collett	English Rural Housing Association
Cllr Robert Heseltine	North Yorkshire County Council
David Inman	Rural Services Network
Cllr Jeremy Savage	South Norfolk Council

Apologies:

Cllr Roger Phillips	Herefordshire Council
Nik Harwood	Young Somerset
Cllr Mary Robinson	Eden District Council
Cllr Sue Sanderson	Cumbria County Council
Cllr Peter Thornton	South Lakeland District Council

2. Notes from the previous RSN Executive meeting. (Attachment 1)

Held on 15th March 2021, these minutes were noted as a record of the meeting.

3. Summary of Previous RSN Meetings. (Attachment 2)

Report from Kerry Booth, Assistant Chief Executive on attendance, key points, policy work. The Report was noted. There was some discussion around the possible future return to face-to-face meetings. There are benefits in relation to networking by holding face to face, but online meetings enable more Officers and Members to attend and reduced budgets will also impact local authorities and organisations not having the resources to send people physically to meetings. A decision had been taken previously to hold all meetings in 2021 online.

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Action: Meetings for 2022 and beyond will be considered at the September meeting of the Executive along with the four-year budget.

4. Update on Work with Local Councils. (Attachment 3)

Report from David Inman, Corporate Director with updates on Rural/Market Town Group & Rural Village Services Group.

David Inman, Corporate Director updated the meeting on the Rural Market Town Group and the plans for the Rural Village Services Group.

He highlighted the plans to approach smaller Parish Councils to join the Rural Village Services Group.

Action: The meeting agreed that the lower level of population could be set as 1500 for this group.

5. National Rural Conference 2021.

Verbal report from Kerry Booth, Assistant Chief Executive.

Kerry updated the Executive about initial plans for the Conference 2021, focusing on 5 days, **13th-17th September 2021**. There will be one event per day focusing on the topics of Rural Economy, Rural Health and Care, Rural Housing, Rural Transport and Decarbonisation and Rural Digital Connectivity. There will also be a specific session on Young People with a panel discussion.

Martin Collett suggested preparing a brief for member organisations of key messages/social media etc for them to share during the week.

Action: Kerry to implement the briefing pack to assist with sharing messages during the conference.

6. Revitalising Rural: Realising the Vision.

Update on the campaign.

- [Please click here to access campaign papers¹](#)
- [Revitalising Rural – Press Release²](#)

Graham Biggs updated the Executive about the overall campaign and progress made to date. The documents are currently being updated following the Queens Speech and other key changes to Government policy that have been announced in recent months.

¹ <https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/revitalising-rural>

² <https://rsnonline.org.uk/government-urged-to-give-people-in-villages-the-same-opportunity-as-those-living-in-bigger-towns-and-cities>



Work is being done to consider the campaign from the perspective of young people and we will look to add depth to these with case studies.

7. Budget Reports. (Attachments 4 & 5)

Attachment 5 shows some of the variances in the budget.

Councillor Heseltine wanted to note his thanks to Graham, David and the team for all of their work this year, to keep services running while everyone is working online.

8. Rural Lens Review of National Bus Strategy & Build Back Better Strategy.

[Bus Back Better - Rural Lens](#)³

These Rural Lens documents enable us to highlight some of the key issues for rural areas that there may be from Government documents but its when we can see the details of policies that we can really see the practical implications for rural communities.

John Birtwistle provided more detail to the Executive about Bus Back Better.

Stage 1 – Local Transport Authorities declare by end of June 2021 which route they want to take:

- Enhanced Partnership Plan Option
- In House Partnership moving onto Franchise
- No action (but then no access to discretionary funding from the Government)

Stage 2 – By end of October 2021, Local Transport Authorities will need to publish a Local Bus Service Improvement Plan.

Stage 3 – From April 2022, Local Transport Authorities will need to have an Enhanced Partnership in place or be following the statutory process to decide whether to implement a franchising scheme to access the new discretionary streams of bus funding.

Key message is that there will be no funding formula. Money will be allocated from Government based on Quality and Ambition, so you need to be able to argue the case for particular options. There also need to be plans for future sustainability, for example of asking for funding to subsidise bus routes, need to have a plan for the future on what happens next with that.

Rural Lens review of Build Back Better will be published by the RSN tomorrow in the Rural Bulletin. This doesn't set out the future of LEPs or Local Industrial Strategies, so we need to watch out for updates on this.

9. Rural Coalition Response to the Government's Rural Proofing Report. (Attachment 6)

The Executive noted the report from the Rural Coalition, of which the RSN is a member.

³ <https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/bus-back-better-rural-lens>



Defra has a new Lord Minister, Lord Benyon who has replaced Lord Gardiner.

Cllr Stevens is part of a Conservative Group and will share with them the key points of the RSN overall campaign and concerns for rural areas.

10. Work by Pragmatix - Reviewing Various Recent New Funding Streams.

Verbal progress report from Graham Biggs MBE, Chief Executive.

Work aims to consider the funding streams ahead of the Shared Prosperity Fund. This work is due to be published June 2021.

11. Commissioned work from Pixel on Remoteness and Fire Funding Formula.

Verbal progress reports from Graham Biggs MBE, Chief Executive.

Adrian Jenkins has been in contact with Chief Fire Officer and has developed a discussion document about providing the service in a rural context about areas not recognised in funding formula. Adrian will attend a meeting of our Fire and Rescue group along with their Heads of Finance to share his findings and see how we could use the information.

Adrian will also be attending the SPARSE meeting in June to present some work on Remoteness to member authorities.

12. Any Other Business.

Social Care Funding Arrangements – Councillor Motley raised this item as a concern. Graham indicated that there are elements in some of the Rural Lens review for example around workforce plans for social care.

Action: Graham will contact the CCN to see if there are any joint areas, we could work on to raise awareness together for this issue.

The next RSN Executive & RSP Directors' meeting date is Monday, 27th September 2021.

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Agenda

SPARSE RURAL AND RURAL SERVICES NETWORK EXECUTIVE AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE RURAL SERVICES PARTNERSHIP LTD MEETING

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

Hosted: Online via Zoom
Date: Monday, 27th September 2021
Time: 11:15am – 2:30pm

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
Martin Collett	English Rural Housing Association
Nik Harwood	Young Somerset
Cllr Robert Heseltine	North Yorkshire County Council
David Inman	Rural Services Network
Cllr Jeremy Savage	South Norfolk Council
Anna Price	Rural Business Awards
Cllr Peter Stevens	West Suffolk Council
Cllr Peter Thornton	South Lakeland District Council/Cumbria Council
Cllr Mark Whittington	Lincolnshire County Council

Apologies:

Cllr Roger Phillips	Herefordshire Council
Cllr Mary Robinson	Eden District Council
Cllr Sue Sanderson	Cumbria County Council
Cllr Trevor Thorne	Northumberland County Council
Kayleigh Wainwright	UK Youth

2. Notes from the previous RSN Executive meeting. (Attachment 1)

Held on 17th May 2021 to consider any relevant updates and approve the minutes.

Points to note:

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

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When Transport Improvement Plans are published, RSN will look from perspective of our local authorities to see if there are areas they want to do but can't due to funding and whether we can pick up some of those issues in our campaigning

RSN will also be exploring where organisations are putting bids into recently announced competitive funds to see what people bidding for (or have felt unable to bid – if so why), and experiences of the process.

Concerns over timing for Levelling Up Funds, Round 2 – Councils are short of capacity and don't have lots of resources to regularly be preparing bids.

The Fire Group meeting takes place on Friday along with Adrian Jenkins presenting on Fire Service Finance

Social Care funding – Joint work with County Council's Network on State of Social Care in County and Rural Areas was released during the week of the conference.

Notes of the previous meeting were accepted.

3. **Summary of Previous RSN Work and Meetings.** (Attachment 2)

Report from Kerry Booth, Assistant Chief Executive on attendance, key points, policy work since the last meeting.

There was a short discussion on the areas considered, and the Executive welcomed the addition of 'Networking' elements to help inform any decision-making processes.

The Executive noted the report

4. **Update on Work with Local Councils.** (Attachment 3)

Report from David Inman, Corporate Director with updates on Rural/Market Town Group & Rural Village Services Group.

David Inman confirmed he is starting the work of approaching village groups to see if they want to join the group and our offering.

Cllr Peter Stevens - Could we do a more concise report targeted at parishes? Headlines of what we are doing.

RSN is currently doing a quarterly publication to LA Councillors, the Rural Beacon, highlighting our work, and a quarterly publication to the Rural Market Town Group. This needs to be considered along with the wider work of the RSN, whilst ensuring that those that pay the most for their membership, receive the most comprehensive level of service.

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Martin Collett - Are there any unintended consequences to this – conflict between levels of Government?

There should be no conflict of interest as RSN emphasises to member organisations that we do not get involved in disputes between levels of public services, but exist to represent the rural voice to Government and its Agencies.

Martin Collett - This is labour Intensive work are we using software for this?

The RSN has explored software although any deployment of IT solutions would depend on the number of members that we are able to gain.

Report from David Inman, Corporate Director, English Charter Market Towns and Fayres. (Attachment 3A)

The Executive noted this report and will await developments on this issue at a future meeting.

5. National Rural Conference 2021.

Verbal report from Kerry Booth, Assistant Chief Executive.

KB stated some highlight statistics from the conference week:

- Over 400 delegates attended sessions throughout the week.
- 75 Local Authorities attended sessions.
- A Government representative attended all but one session.
- 5 organisations supported or sponsored the conference.
- Feedback is currently being comprehensively analysed, but initial reports show that all members that attended would recommend the event to a colleague.

6. Uniting Rural Communities to Tackle Climate Change Event - 12th October 2021.

Kerry Booth advised the Executive of this event being hosted by the RSN.

The wider Event is being held by NFU during a week in October. Focus will be on rural areas and communities and as part of this, the RSN will be hosting an event during the week on Tues 12th October which is open to not only members but non -members too, to get our messages out as wide as possible.

Booking details will be shared with all members.

7. RSN Meetings & Events Calendar 2022. (Attachment 4)

Conference has been moved back a week, we received 200 bookings this year in the week prior to the conference so we are aiming to target greater attendance.

We will look to move the Executive date before the conference as it is a long gap between May to October.

8. 2021 LGA Annual Report Rural Services Network. (Attachment 5)

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For information completed report submitted to the LGA by Kerry Booth, Assistant Chief Executive.

Report is for information only and can serve as a useful summary of the work of the RSN.

9. Comprehensive Spending Review 2020 and 2021. (Attachment 6 & 6A)

A submission to H.M. Treasury by the Rural Services Network.

There was a discussion on the Spending Review submission, Graham Biggs highlighted it is a high-level document setting out the RSN perspective and the RSN is keen to show the funding difficulties experienced by rural areas and the lack of capacity to respond to Government initiatives/funding rounds.

The RSN is also exploring the funding available from other departments like the DfE and DfT to see the impact of funding allocations in these areas.

John Birtwistle - Bus Services Improvement Plan – open for all to bid for new pot of money £3bn starting next April for bus related actions / policies and interventions. DfT wants to see ambition in this so please bid for ambitious proposals.

The Executive agreed the approach to the Spending Review Submission.

10. Levelling Up/UK Shared Prosperity Fund. (Attachment 7)

Report from Graham Biggs MBE, Chief Executive on RSN's Policy Position.

This document brings together the work that the RSN has already done and said in a variety of documents so that we have everything on Levelling Up / UK Shared Prosperity in one place.

Report was noted by the Executive.

11. Budget Report. (Attachment 8)

With actual to 4th September 2020.

The Executive accepted the Budget Report

12. The Rural Services Partnership Ltd Full Accounts 31.03.2021. (Attachment 9)

Item for formal attention of RSP Directors only.

RSP Directors to consider approving the 2020/21 Accounts and the re-appointment of TaxAssist Ludlow as the Company's Tax Accountants.

The RSP Directors approved the Accounts and the Re-appointment of Tax Assist Ludlow as the Company's Tax Accountants.

13. Any Other Business.

The next RSN Executive meeting will take place Monday, 10th January 2022.

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14. Joint Confidential Report of the Chief Executive and Corporate Director: The RSN's Future Year's Budgets in the light of recent Unitary Re-Organisation announcements.
(Attachment 10)

The Executive considered a Joint Confidential report from the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director reviewing budget forecasts over the next four years, including the impact of unitary council proposals in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset.

The report looked at income projections and suggested amendments to some expenditure budgets in future years. Also considered were staffing issues in the light of both the Chief Executive and Corporate Director stepping back from their current roles in the period covered by the review.

The projections assumed no membership losses beyond those already known about. The projections assumed an annual provision for inflation of 2%. Both of these would need to be kept under review.

The projections were based on future meetings, seminars and the annual conference all continuing to be held on line with the exception of one face-to-face meeting each year for networking purposes. This was agreed

The suggestions in the report were agreed. As a result, the forward look budget remains positive.

The Executive agreed to consider the forward look budget twice a year in future in March/April and September/October.

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RSN Annual Review November 2021

Report from Kerry Booth, Deputy Chief Executive

Aim

To provide the Rural Services Network (RSN) Membership with an update on services provided by the RSN throughout the year to date along with key campaigns and work.



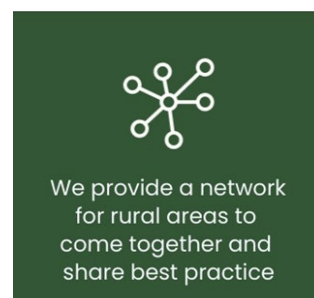
NETWORKING

Networking to share best practice

To date in 2021 we have hosted the following meetings:

RSN Seminar Programme

Access to the seminar programme is free to member organisations and we run 9 seminars a year each featuring 2-3 expert speakers with the opportunity for delegates to contribute to the debate and share experiences and good practice.



Date	Event	Subjects Covered	Attendee Total
27.01.21	Rural Education, Training and Apprenticeships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural Teach First Partnership Young People accessing employment and training Land based training and education 	47
24.02.21	Rural Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural Mobility and access Community led solutions for rural transport 	73

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RSN Campaign on Rural Transport and Access to Services 	
31.03.21	Rural Digital Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OFCOM – Changes to the telephony Network Digital Infrastructure Grand Challenge NFU Digital Survey 	57
28.04.21	Rural Decarbonisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for rural communities, heat energy from waste and hydrogen Lancaster’s City Council Net Zero Plans Cadent – Future for Gas and Decarbonising heat 	69
26.05.21	Rural Health and Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dorset NHS Trust Health Education England Young people – rural isolation, mental health and covid19 	50
30.06.21	Rural Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homes England and the delivery of affordable rural housing Delivering in partnership in Devon Affordable Rural Homes – More than Bricks 	85
28.07.21	Enabling Rural Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Value of Pubs to their communities Proposals, projects and programmes Be the Business Advice 	56
27.10.21	Rural Town Centres, and High Streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Association of Convenience Stores Challenges faced by rural sub postmasters 	113
24.11.21	Rural Economies	Not yet held at time of report writing	

RSN Meeting Programme:

We have hosted a range of meetings for our different organisations in membership throughout the year.

Date	Event	Issues covered	Attendee Total
29.03.21	Launch to membership of Revitalising Rural Campaign¹	Revitalising Rural Campaign	81
25.01.21	SPARSE Meeting	Rural Fair Funding	29
21.06.21	SPARSE Meeting	Rural Fair Funding	27
29.03.21	Rural Market Town Group (RMTG) Meeting	Impact of pandemic on Rural Market towns	40

¹ <https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/revitalising-rural/launch-report.pdf>

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12.10.21	Rural Market Town Group (RMTG) Meeting	Young People in Rural Areas Rural Transport	22
12.04.21	Rural Social Care and Health Sub Group meeting	Health White Paper	21
15.11.21	Rural Social Care and Health Sub Group meeting	Not yet held at time of report writing	
25.01.21	Rural Economy Sub Group Meeting	Social Value Engine Project Green Book Research	49
21.06.21	Rural Economy Sub Group Meeting	Towards the UK SPF Research Queens Speech proposals	50
6.12.21	Rural Services Partnership (RSP) AGM Vulnerability Group	Not yet held at time of report writing	
14.04.21	Demo of Social Value Engine (hosted by East Riding)	Social Value Engine tool and how to use it	31
10.05.21	RSN & DCMS Social Meeting	Rural Broadband	57

**Not including RSN Staff or Speakers*

The National Rural Conference 2021 took place 13-17 September online with over 425 delegates attending sessions throughout the week. Speakers included Lord Benyon, representatives from National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise (NICRE) and covered a wider range of topics including rural economy, digital connectivity, rural affordable housing, rural health and care, young people in rural areas and rural transport and access to services. Further information will be heard on this item later in the meeting.

Member Insights

We provide a range of information for our member organisations in our [Member Insights](#) section of our website.

These analysis are available at local authority level for member organisations and provide a range of statistics exploring the [Rural Economy](#), [Rural Housing](#), [Rural Health and Care](#), [Rural Travel and Transport](#) and other key areas.

Publications

- Weekly publication of the Rural Bulletin sent to over 20,000 subscribers, sharing key rural news stories and research relevant to those working in rural areas.
- Monthly publication of the Funding Digest, which sets out grants and funds available which may be of interest. This publication also highlights key Government Consultations.

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- Quarterly RSP Spotlight publication – highlighting best practice from RSP member organisations
- Quarterly Rural Economic Spotlight
- Quarterly Rural Housing Spotlight
- Quarterly Rural Beacon Members Publication
- Quarterly Rural Market Town Group publication

LARGE RURAL NETWORK



We represent a range of organisations in rural areas across England

The Rural Services Network is a membership organisation representing a wide range of organisations across the length of England.



Rural Local Authorities – we have over 110 rural local authorities in membership, working on their behalf to campaign for fair funding and rural policies that take into account the needs of rural areas.

Rural Services Partnership Membership continue to hold strong with over 200 different service providers with over a dozen new organisations joining this year representing communications providers, universities, and community enablers. The RSP membership includes Rural Housing Associations, Health Trust and National Charities and organisations. You can see the membership [at this link](#).

Rural Market Town Group – the group continues to grow in membership and has started to explore some of the key issues pertinent to rural market towns.

Rural Services Villages Group – recruitment to this group is only starting now and aims to represent villages across England.

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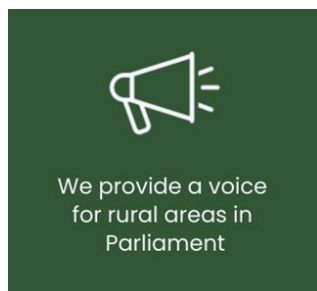
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INFLUENCING PARLIAMENT

The RSN provides the secretariat to the **Rural Housing Alliance**.

The RSN also delivers the **Rural Health and Care Alliance** working in partnership with the National Centre for Rural Health and Care.



We are the **national champion for rural services**, ensuring the 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.

This means that we work to influence parliament and the RSN provides the Secretariat for the **ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP (APPG)**, Chaired by Philip Dunne MP.

Parliamentary Meetings

Event	Who can attend	Date	Attendees Total
APPG for Rural Services Meeting	Invited MP's from APPG Group and Observers	27.01.21	16
APPG for Rural Services Meeting	Invited MP's from APPG Group and Observers	26.04.21	21
APPG for Rural Services meeting	APPG Members & Observers, Corporate Observers, House of Lords Panel & invited guests	07.07.21	15
APPG for Rural Services meeting	Invited MP's from APPG Group and Observers	15.09.21	6
Rural Vulnerability Day	RE Directors, Stakeholders & Supporters plus invited guests	24.06.2021	63

This year the group have discussed:

January Meeting – Rural Affordable Housing and MHCLG Planning Consultations – The Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP (Housing Minister) attended for the discussion on the proposed changes to the planning system and the impact of those changes in rural areas.

April Meeting – National Bus Strategy – Baroness Vere, Minister for Roads, Buses and Places was in attendance

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July – Rural Proofing - Lord Benyon Minister for DEFRA was in attendance– discussion of the Annual Rural Proofing Report by DEFRA

Sept – Joint meeting of County APPG with Rural Services APPG to discuss the Joint report on Adult Social Care in Rural and County Areas

We are also part of the [Rural Coalition](#), a group of 13 national organisations who seek to be more influential by joining in common cause. This includes ACRE, PLUNKETT, NFU, RTPI, Nat Housing Federation and others.

The RSN is represented on the **Rural Impact Forum**, a group set up by DEFRA during the pandemic and which now provides a forum for regular discussions between rural stakeholder organisations and Defra on the issues faced by rural residents, communities, and businesses, enabling open and regular dialogue.

[Rural Lens Work](#)

The Rural Lens series published by the RSN, is where we have reviewed Government strategies and plans from a rural perspective, highlighting your attention to key parts that may affect your rural communities and service delivery.

We share these Rural Lens with the Government department that produced the strategy, highlighting to Government key issues they need to consider. You can view them at the links below.

[Build Back Better High Streets](#)

[Tourism Recovery Plan](#)

[Health White Paper](#)

[Queens Speech](#)

[Build Back Better](#)

[Bus Back Better](#)

[Place Based Funds – Levelling Up, Community Renewal Funds, Towns Fund, Shared Prosperity Fund](#)

[Sustainable Warmth](#)

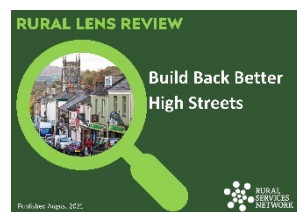
[Skills for Jobs](#)

[Ten Point Plan for Green Industrial Revolution](#)

[National Infrastructure Strategy](#)

[Comprehensive Spending Review 2020](#)

[Plan for Jobs](#)



COMMISSIONED RESEARCH

Pragmatix Research

This year the RSN has commissioned, both alone and in partnership with other organisations research into key issues for rural communities, to enable it to present evidence to Government of the impact of their policies and decision making.

[Investing in Affordable Housing](#)

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The Rural Services Network, along with CPRE and English Rural Housing commissioned research into the Economic and Fiscal case for investing in rural affordable housing to drive post-pandemic recovery

This research shows that investing in building more affordable homes in rural communities makes fiscal, societal, and economic sense, for example ten new rural homes provide a £1.4million boost to help level up disadvantaged local economies, through the creation of jobs, and the impact through the supply chain to the local area.

[Green Book Allocations](#)

Rural Services Network, Britain's Leading Edge, CPRE, the countryside charity and English Rural Housing commissioned research into the way the Treasury allocates funds through the Green Book.

There is a long way to go until rural communities see their fair share of investment as new economic research reveals government spending per person on public infrastructure is 44% higher for urban areas than it is for rural areas that include no major cities. The report, ***Towards a greener Green Book process***, produced by Pragmatix Advisory and jointly commissioned by Rural Services Network, Britain's Leading Edge, CPRE, the countryside charity and English Rural exposes how rural communities are poorly served by government's mechanisms for allocating public funds.

[UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#)

The way in which the government is allocating funds for its flagship 'Levelling Up' programme is failing to properly recognise the needs of rural communities

The report, ***Towards the UK Shared Prosperity Fund*** commissioned by the RSN, finds that prioritisation of the Levelling Up Fund has favoured non-metropolitan urban locations, especially in northern England's 'Red Wall', while many other areas of similar need are overlooked.

Large swathes of rural central and southern England, (and indeed northern rural areas) including those that received funds through previous EU-backed programmes, are now seen as a low priority.

Research with County Council Network

RSN commissioned research with the County Council Network into the [State of Social Care in Rural and County Areas](#) The study concludes that the reforms announced last week will not address the existing problems within the social care system, while making local care markets potentially unsustainable by allowing private fee payers access to council arranged care and the fee levels they pay providers.

Government Consultations

The RSN responds to a wide range of Government consultations to ensure that the rural voice is heard. The RSN consults with its membership, sometimes all and sometimes, targeted at specific interest organisations to compile a response reflective of the situation in rural areas. This year, the RSN has responded to consultations on:

- Permitted Development Rights Consultation

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- House of Lords Covid19 Committee Inquiry into the reliance on digital technology and the impact on our social and economic wellbeing
- Future of Rural Transport Call for Evidence
- Future Building Standards Consultation
- New Homes Bonus Consultation
- Department for Education Consultation on School Funding
- Inquiry into Broadband and the road to 5G
- APPG for Rural Business and the Rural Powerhouse – call for evidence into Rural Productivity
- Defra Consultation into Consistency in household and business recycling
- Warm Homes Discount Consultation
- Access to Cash Consultation
- Comprehensive Spending Review
- Health and Disability Green Paper

Members of the RSN Staff also attended various round table discussion meetings as part of the **Labour Party Round Table Rural Policy Review**.

In the News

The RSN is often quoted in the media, both local and national as the voice for rural.

[You can read more of these stories at this link.](#)

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