

Extraordinary General Meeting of Sparse Rural Special Interest Group

Title:	SPARSE Rural Special Interest Group
Date:	Monday 17 March 2014
Venue:	Westminster Suite, 8th Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance:

Janice Banks (ACRE); Cllr Leslie Ken (Bath and North East Somerset); Cllr Raymond Singleton-McGuire (Boston BC); Cllr Myles Cullen (Chichester DC); Cllr Chris Knowles-Fitton (Craven DC); Cllr Hilary Carrick (Cumbria CC); Cllr Paul Diviani (East Devon DC); Cllr Ken Potter (East Devon DC); Cllr Rupert Reichhold (East Northamptonshire DC); Cllr Gordon Nicholson (Eden DC); Cllr Mary Robinson (Eden DC); Adrian Maunders (English Rural Housing Alliance); Cllr Roger Phillips (Herefordshire Council); Cllr Nick Daubney (Kings Lynn and West Norfolk BC); Cllr Lewis Strange (Lincolnshire CC); Dawn Garton (Melton BC); Michael Parker (National Farmers Union); Les Britzman (Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service); Cllr David Worden (North Devon DC); Cllr Lindsey Cawrey (North Kesteven DC); Cllr Robert Heseltine (North Yorkshire CC); Andrea DeGama (Post Office); Cllr John Blackie (Richmondshire DC); Cllr Jane Mortimer (Scarborough BC); Cllr Cameron Clark (Sevenoaks DC); Cllr Cecilia Motley (Shropshire Council); John Redmond (Shropshire Council); Cllr Madge Shinton (Shropshire Council); Cllr Jeremy Savage (South Norfolk DC); Cllr Carole Clarke (South Northamptonshire DC); William Jacobs (South Oxfordshire DC); Cllr Peter Stevens (St Edmundsbury DC); Nicola Swinnerton (Staffordshire CC); Cllr Owen Bierley (West Lindsey DC); Cllr Roger Begy (Rutland CC).

Officers: David Inman (RSN); Dan Bates (RSN); Graham Biggs (RSN).

Apologies for absence:

Barbara Shaw (Banbury CAB); Stewart Horne (BIP West Devon); Chris Fleetham (Braintree DC); Cllr Les Ford (Cheshire West & Chester Council); Revd Richard Kirlew (Church in Wales); Cllr Alex Folkes (Cornwall Council); Ian Cartwright (Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service); Cllr John Upsell (East Lindsey DC); Ruth McArthur (Exmoor National Park); Peter Shipp (EYMS Group); David Webb (Federation of Small Businesses); Derrick Haley (Mid Suffolk DC); Paul Hook (National Federation of Sub-Postmasters); Martyn Emberson (Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service); Malcolm Leaming (Oxfordshire Association of Parish Councils); Cllr Rodney Rose (Oxfordshire CC); Cllr Peter Fleming (Sevenoaks DC); Cllr Peter Thornton (South Lakeland DC); Cllr Philip Sanders (West Devon BC); Cllr Jane Scott (Wiltshire Council).

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
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1	Changes to the SPARSE Rural Special Interest Group	
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Cllr Motley welcomed all members to the Extraordinary General Meeting of Sparse Rural as a result of the LGA governance changes and invited Graham Biggs to explain the proposed changes.

Graham Biggs explained that the LGA had disbanded the Urban and Rural Commissions and replaced them with the City Regions and People & Places Board respectively. Consequently, there was concern about how rural issues would continue to be represented and, therefore, a proposal to reshape the way the RSN operates. He outlined the proposed options and recommendations as set out in the agenda papers and recommended that the constitution not be changed at this Extraordinary General Meeting, as the RSN will need to respond to any issues raised by the LGA Leadership Board on the proposed changes. It will also need to respond to issues raised by authorities that were formerly members of the Rural Commission but not of RSN.

Members discussed:

- How town and parish councils would be represented.
- Whether financial issues can and should be separated from other rural issues.
- Involving National Parks more.
- The opportunities to influence ministers.
- The future of the Rural Conference.
- The effects of this reorganisation on the Fair Share Campaign.

Members voted 23-0 in favour of the changes as drafted with one abstention.

Graham Biggs explained that the necessary constitutional changes would be put to the LGA. Any further concerns should be raised at the Executive meeting in June, and there is the opportunity to change the wording of the Constitution until the AGM in November. On the strength of the vote, the RSN will write to non-member authorities to encourage them to join, explaining what the group has achieved so far. Graham Biggs urged members to use influence with anyone they know in these authorities.