

**Minutes for the Rural Services Partnership AGM  
Online via Zoom  
Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2022  
2pm-3pm**

**Present:**

Lydia Allen (Policy & Advocacy Manager, The National Youth Agency) (LA)  
Jo Atkey (Deputy CEO, Devon Communities Together) (JA)  
Graham Biggs MBE (Chief Executive, Rural Services Network & Company Secretary RSP) (GB)  
John Birtwistle (Head of Policy, First Group & Director RSP) (JB)  
Kerry Booth (Chief Executive Designate, Rural Services Network) (KB)  
James Calder (Public Affairs Manager, Liquid Gas UK)  
Jo Giles (Customer Safeguarding Senior Manager, Cadent Ltd) (JG)  
Cath Gristy (Lecturer, University of Plymouth) (CG)  
Nik Harwood (Chief Executive, Young Somerset & Chair/Director RSP) (NH)  
David Inman (Corporate Director of Rural Services Network & Director RSP) (DI)  
Beth Kennedy (Customer Services Partnership Manager, Anglian Water) (BK)  
Rev Richard Kirlew (Chairman, Agricultural Chaplains Association) (RK)  
Christine Lally (County Officer, Oxfordshire Association Local Councils) (CL)  
Luke Pilot (Campaigns Officer, Age UK) (LP)  
Kate Pym (Managing Director, Pym's Consultancy Ltd) (KP)  
Nadine Trout (Assistant Chief Executive, Rural Services Network) (NT)

Bethan Aldridge (minute-taker) (BA)

**Apologies for Absence:**

Ursula Bennion, (Chief Executive, Trent & Dove Housing Ltd), Tim Bonner (Chief Executive, Countryside Alliance), Amanda Dennison (Executive Assistant, Myerscough College & University), Rachael Fullwood (CEO, Links Rural Housing Association), Christopher Graffius (Exec Director of Comms, BASC), Amy Grayson (Delivery Manager, Hull East Riding CA), Francesca Kirtley-Paine (Public Affairs Manager, Liquid Gas UK), Cllr Jeanne Lapsley (Oxfordshire ALC), Cllr Cecilia Motley (Former Chair of RSN, Director of RSP & Councillor for Shropshire Council), Michelle Nudds (Regional Director SE, BASC), Cllr Roger Phillips (Chair of RSN, newly appointed Director of RSP & Councillor for Herefordshire Council), Anna Price (Director of RSP and Director of Anna Price Strategic Marketing), James Wingerath (Youth Employment UK), Amy Worley (Countryside Jobs)

The Chair, Nik Harwood, welcomed everyone to the meeting and formally handed the AGM procedures to GB, in his role as Company Secretary.

**1. To receive and consider the Minutes of Directors Meeting held on 5th September 2022  
([Attachment 1](#))**

Noted

**2. To receive and consider the Minutes of the AGM held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021  
([Attachment 2](#))**

Approved and agreed as a true record.

**3. To approve the Company Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2022**

**[\(Attachment 3\)](#)**

NH proposed that the accounts be approved as they were and JB seconded the motion.

**Action:** These were approved and adopted with no opposition.

**4. To consider re-appointing TaxAssist of Ludlow as the Company's Tax Accountants**

NH proposed that TaxAssist, Ludlow be re-appointed and JB seconded the motion.

**Action:** This was approved and adopted with no opposition.

**5. Appointment of Directors**

GB informed the meeting that he will be stepping down as a Director and his role will be transferred to KB as the Chief Executive Designate for Rural Services Network (RSN). GB will remain as Company Secretary.

Cllr Cecilia Motley is standing down as Chair of RSN and therefore as a Director and her role will be transferred to the new Chair of RSN, Cllr Roger Phillips.

Anna Price is also standing down as Director and therefore there is a Small Business vacancy. Other vacancies are for Economy, Fire & Rescue and Health.

GB noted that he had not received any nominations. If anyone would like to stand as a Director, please contact GB or NH for a further discussion.

**Action:** The remaining Directors were re-appointed without opposition.

**6. RSP Directors to appoint Chair**

JB nominated NH, KB seconded the motion and NH was re-appointed as Chair.

**7. To receive and consider the Minutes of the Partner Group meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

**[\(Attachment 4\)](#)**

Approved and agreed as a true record.

**8. RSP Achievements for the year to date** (Link to the presentation [here](#))

Presentation by Nadine Trout, Assistant Chief Executive (RSN)

NT gave an overview of the achievements for RSP throughout the year and there are a number of links within the presentation itself to commissioned research and reports.

**9. RSP Plans for the year ahead** (Link to the presentation [here](#))

Presentation by Chair of RSP – Nik Harwood

NH outlined plans for the coming year and confirmed that the Rural Lens documents would continue as they provided a good distillation of detailed government policy. The on-line Seminar programme had been well received again with more delegates attending than before and an opportunity to build your own network.

Key issues will be the next General Election by January 2025 and trying to influence political party manifestos, reminding policy makers of the vulnerability of rural areas and making the rural voice heard.

**Action:** NH asked the membership to let RSP know if there was something they would like

considered that we are not covering currently or want to see less of.

CG asked if there could be an education focus in either a seminar and/or the Conference as she has grave concerns re how fractured Health and Education provision is. CG is very happy to be involved with this. KB added that there is room in the seminar programme to have “hot topics” and will look into this.

BK encouraged more collaborative partnership working because as a Utility company, she has great difficulty getting messages into communities on how they can support their customers with financial help and the Priorities Services Register (PSR). GB informed her that Rural England CIC, with its Research Panel, is looking at 2-3 categories of need from the PSR to find out what the real issues are for these people.

JG raised the issue of the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) switch over in 2025. KB reassured her that we sit on the BT Digital Voice Advisory Group to ensure that the impact on rural areas is understood. The switch over to telephone lines being connected through broadband was delayed earlier this year so that BT could fully take into account the impact on all residents. KB and JG to discuss further.

GB noted that a “Rural Asks” document will be produced for all main political parties. It will be a short, sharp and to-the-point document. There will also be background evidence and beneficial outcomes. We will be asking the wider membership for their input and for case studies.

**Action:** RSP needs qualitative data of people’s lived experiences i.e. what is making them vulnerable, isolated etc. Please send your [case studies](#) through.

#### **10. Future on-line meeting dates and seminars 2023**

[Link to Events page on RSN Website](#)

#### **11. Any Other Business**

**Action:** GB reminded the meeting that there are vacancies for Directors of RSP. The roles are not onerous and if anyone is interested, then please contact GB via [admin@sparse.gov.uk](mailto:admin@sparse.gov.uk)

Meeting closed at 3:05pm

#### **Date of Next meeting:**

Monday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at 11am