

Rural Services Partner Group Meeting

Tuesday 3rd December 2019

Venue – The Soroptomists, 63 Bayswater Rad, London

Present

RSN Officers Graham Biggs (GB) (Chief Executive RSN); David Inman (DI) (Corporate Director RSN); Jon Tuner (JT) (Policy Director RSN); Reverend Richard Kirlew (RK) (Chair of RSP); Andrea Ashman (Executive Director HR – East Kent Hospitals University NHS FT); Digby Chacksfield (Director Rural Enterprise East, Easton & Otley College); Gavin Jones (Head of Communications & External Affairs, Hastoe Group); Hazel Graham (Chief Executive, Cumbria Action for Sustainability); Ian Cass (Managing Director, Forum for Private Business); Martin Collett (Chief Executive, English Rural Housing Association); Nik Harwood (Chief Executive, Young Somerset); Patrick Ford (Campaigns & Policy Assistant, CPRE);

General Introduction.

The Chairman, Rev Richard Kirlew, thanked all those present for attending.

1. Apologies for Absence

Cllr Cecilia Motley (Chair of RSN); Tim Boylin (HR Director, Oxford Health NHS FT); Dr Fiona Marshall (Alzheimer's Society Senior Research Fellow); James McLean (Head of Delivery (Nursing), Health Education England); Brian Norris (Executive Director, Living Memories); Kate Robbins (Head of Customer Policy, Wessex Water); Rev'd Claire Maxim (Chief Executive, Germinate); Rita Lawson (Chief Executive, Tees Valley Rural Action); Trevor Beattie (Chief Executive, South Downs NPA); Tony Price (Programme and New Initiatives Manager, Trent & Dove Housing); John Birtwistle (Head of Policy – UK Bus, First Group); John Longden OBE (Pub is the Hub)

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 9th April 2019

DI explained the purpose of the Partner Group meeting. A non-local authority group of rural service providers, which compliments the work of the RSN. The RSN and its Partner Group is the only organisation nationally that addresses rural services issues.

Nik Harwood asked that a membership diagram should be circulated with the minutes and discussed as part of the next meeting in the Spring.

- (a) The First Bus manifesto was noted with interest.
- (b) Martin Collett (MC) suggested that the Group should note the recent transport proposals in the Julian Glover, Landscapes Review. Enquiries would be made to see if speakers on these could be arranged for the next meeting.

DI also reminded members of RSN's current call on Government for a Rural Strategy campaign and the importance of that. Members were encouraged to participate, if they have done so already, they were welcome to sign up in support of the campaign. For details, please refer to the following link: <https://www.rsonline.org.uk/time-for-a-rural-strategy>.

3. Delivering a Health and Wellbeing project – presented by Digby Chacksfield, Easton and Otley College, Norfolk.

Digby provided an interesting insight into the challenges of delivering a wellbeing and rural enterprise project for the college. The project was aimed at increasing student numbers which was proving a challenge, as the perception of land-based jobs as considered by many young people as being hard work and poorly paid. The project also aimed to reduce rural isolation and health and wellbeing. A frightening statistic was that currently in Norfolk there was on average one farming suicide a month.

The project aims to utilise the underperforming buildings on the campus. Some of the redundant offices will be used as therapy space in partnership with the local NHS Service Providers. The college also aims to provide a small allotment/green space for local residents to use outside traditional college hours, this will help improve the college's integration with its immediate community. The use of the social enterprise models will be encouraged to develop new rural enterprises. Currently there were over 30 local partners involved and they were working to deliver a project that tackles Norfolk's rural disconnect.

General Discussion

Andrea Ashman, explained that it was important when seeking health funding to go the right people in the new/emerging Integrated Care Groups for people's area. Once they have been identified it is important to make representations to them with good supporting evidence.

MC emphasised that rural degeneration was a major concern for rural communities. There was a need for career advisors in schools to encourage young people to seek employment opportunities in their rural communities. It was recognised however that this could be challenging as well-paid jobs were currently limited. The importance of stronger broadband connection in this subject area was emphasised.

4. Driving a shift to Zero Carbon in a rural area 'raising ambition, bringing about positive social, environmental and economic change and building an effective cross-sector partnership 'a presentation by Hazel Graham (HG) Chief Executive, Cumbria Action for Sustainability.

A really topical presentation which was well received by those who were present. HG emphasised that climate change is immediate and the impacts are occurring at an ever-increasing rate. She emphasised that it was not too late to turn it round but actions needed to be immediate. There is an urgent need to act locally, nationally and internationally to decarbonise. Technology was already available to reduce carbon; but transformational change was needed. Rural areas can play their part as they have high carbon footprints, for example farming, housing and transport.

HG explained that she is working alongside a number of strategic partners and has assisted in setting up the Cumbria – Climate Change Working Group, which is made up of senior decision makers and budget holders from many of Cumbria's public and private sector. The ambition is high and collectively the group is keen to establish the UK's first carbon free county.

HG, concluded that it was in her view paramount to achieve a zero carbon planet within the next decade.

To review a copy of HG's presentation, please click on the following [link](#):

General Discussion

DI requested a definition of 'carbon zero' so that RSN could include this in the minutes.

MC was keen to understand what measures that were being considered to support organisational change regarding zero carbon.

HG explained that Cumbria Action for Sustainability undertakes to provide behaviour training with both senior and general staff for organisations and businesses.

HG, suggested that the Ashden Toolkit for local authorities was well worth looking at.

<https://www.ashden.org/programmes/co-benefits>

HG, also recommended reading the NFU's vision report Achieving Net Zero: Framing's 2040 Goal.<https://www.nfuonline.com/nfu-online/business/regulation/achieving-net-zero-farmings-2040-goal>

5. A.O.B

Ian Cass, of the Forum of Private Business. Following attendance of the RSN's Rural Conference, the Forum were considering in far greater detail the urban and rural business pattern differences. Rural was now very much at the centre of many of their campaigns.

IC made a plea for help for rural pub businesses. He explained that the majority are rural tenancies and were under greater threat, as a result of significant change of ownership within the brewing industry. It could be there was change or a move away from brewing to more of an investment focus on property and development opportunities.

IC explained, that in partnership with CAMRA, they will be launching a campaign to raise their concern in the new year. GB said that RSN would support a Rural Petition.

There was no other business and the meeting was closed.

The next Rural Partner meeting will be in April 2020, date and time will be confirmed in due course.