



**Meeting of THE RURAL ASSEMBLY Sub SIG
(incorporating SPARSE Rural Members, Rural Assembly and
Rural Services Partnership Members)**

Venue:- LGA, Smith Square, London

Date: Monday 8th April 2019

Time: 1.15 pm to 3.30 p.m.

The meeting is being held at the **LGA, 18 Smith Square, Westminster, London SW1P 3HZ.**

Visitor information and a link to the map for the venue can be found below:

[LGA Map](#)

The building is located nearest to Westminster, Pimlico, Vauxhall and St James's Park Underground stations and also Victoria, Vauxhall and Charing Cross railway stations.

- 1. Apologies for absence**
- 2. Minutes** of the last Rural Assembly meeting and RSN AGM 12th November, 2018
(Attachment A - Page 3)
- 3. Minutes** of the last Executive meeting – 14th January 2019
(Attachment B attached - Page 7)
- 4. Regional Meetings/Seminars**
 - (a) To receive and consider the minutes of the first two Regional Meetings/Seminars
(Attachments C - Page 13, D to follow)
 - (b) To note the Regional Meetings/Seminar Programme for 2019
(Attachment E - Page 19)
- 5. The 'Time For a Rural Strategy' Campaign":** Graham Biggs to report
- 6. Rural Vulnerability Day and Parliamentary Group**
 - (a) David Inman to report.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

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(b) Brian Wilson - Presentation and Discussion on the State of the Rural Services Report 2018 (see link here)

7. **RURAL VULNERABILITY AND DISADVANTAGE POSITION STATEMENT: Here is the recommended one in relation to 2019**
(Attachment F - Page 21)
8. **Budget Report**
(Attachment G - Page 27)
9. **Sounding Board Survey**
Consideration of topic
10. **Rural Services Network Annual Rural Conference**
To note the draft programme for 2019
(Attachment H - Page 33)
11. **Report on the RSP Service Groups/ Network Bodies**
 - (a) Housing
 - (b) Health (Graham Biggs)
 - (c) Crime (Graham Biggs)
 - (d) Fire (Graham Biggs/David Inman)
 - (e) Rural Services APPG (Graham Biggs)
 - (f) Rural England CIC
12. **Any Other Business**

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Note of last SPARSE Rural Special Interest Group meeting

Title: Rural Services Network Special Interest Group

AGM Meetings:

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

Date: Monday 12 November 2018

Venue: The Westminster Archives

Item	Decisions and actions
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1	Appointment of Chairman for the ensuing year (to also be the Chair of the SPARSE-Rural sub-sig)
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Nominations for the existing Chair to continue in her position were accepted without opposition.

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

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

3	Note of the Previous Meeting
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The notes of the previous meeting were agreed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

11 Membership (Constitutional Requirement)

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

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

Members noted the update.

12 Member Contributions

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

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

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

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

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

14 Rural Conference 2018

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

She highlighted the following information;

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

The RSN AGM noted the update from Kerry Booth.

15 Sounding Board Survey

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

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

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

16 Meeting Dates for 2019

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

17 Any Other Business

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

There was no other business.

Minutes of the Rural Services Network Executive held on

Monday 14th January 2019.

Venue— 63, Bayswater Road, London.

Present:-

Cllr Cecilia Motley, Chair – RSN
Cllr Robert Heseltine First Vice Chair – RSN
Revd Richard Kirlew - Sherborne Deanery Rural Chaplaincy
Cllr Trevor Thorne – Northumberland County Council
Cllr Peter Stevens – St Edmundsbury Borough Council
Cllr Jeremy Savage – South Norfolk Council
Cllr Roger Phillips - Herefordshire
Anna Price – Rural Business Group
John Birtwistle – UK Bus

Officers: - Graham Biggs (Chief Executive); David Inman (Director)

Apologies

Cllr Adam Paynter – Cornwall Council
Cllr Sue Sanderson- Cumbria County Council
Cllr Philip Sanders – West Devon Borough Council
Cllr Gill Heath – Staffordshire County Council
Cllr Kevin Beaty – District Council
Kerry Booth – RSN

A pre-meeting session involving phone conferencing took place. Superseding minute 3.3 of the last Executive meeting in this regard, it was decided it would be further tried at subsequent Executive meetings over the next year for those unable to attend.

1. **Notes of the Previous Meeting** Held on 24th September 2018. Duly considered and approved.
2. **Notes of the Main Meetings** of the AGM held on 12th November 2018 to consider any relevant items. Duly considered.
3. **To consider any items arising from the Social Care and Health Group and AGM of 12th November 2018.** Duly considered. It was decided that Hampshire CC would be asked to give a presentation of their social care initiatives to the next Group meeting.

In the case of 2 and 3 above it was recognised that the attendance list used had been incorrectly minuted and the following attendance sheet would be substituted.)

Cecilia Motley – Chair RSN
Graham Biggs – Chief Executive, RSN
David Inman – Corporate Director, RSN
Kerry Booth – Assistant Chief Executive, RSN
Revd Richard Kirlew - Diocese of Sherborne
Cllr Robert Heseltine – North Yorkshire County Council
Cllr Roger Phillips – Herefordshire Council
Cllr Trevor Thorne – Northumberland County Council
Cllr Owen Bierley – West Lindsey District Council
Cllr Rupert Reichhold – East Northamptonshire Council
Cllr Peter Stevens – St Edmundsbury Borough Council
Cllr Philip Sanders – West Devon Borough Council
Cllr Les Kew – Bath & North East Somerset Council
Cllr Jeremy Savage – South Norfolk Council
John Birtwistle – Head of Policy, UK Bus
Richard Quallington – Executive Director, ACRE
Cllr Malcolm Leeding MBE - OALC (Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils)
Cllr Mark Whittington – Lincolnshire County Council
Cllr Cameron Clark – Sevenoaks District Council
Cllr Yvonne Peacock – Richmondshire District Council
Cllr Lee Chapman – Shropshire Council
Odhran Jennings, Trusts Fundraiser – Bipolar UK
Pam Howard, Housing Services Administrator – English Rural Housing Association

4. RSN Budget 2018/19, 2019/20 The 18/19 Budget was currently still awaiting charge payments from 4 members. They were being chased. The budget was therefore £5,000 to £6,000 away from its anticipated budgetary position at this time.

5. Report to the Executive on Advertisements in the Rural Bulletin.

The meeting considered the position in relation to use of the Bulletin for advertisements. It was decided as follows:-

1. The number of advertisements run would be kept at a ceiling of two per month, ensuring that at least two issues each month would remain advertisement free.
2. Advertisements would only be run where they had a particular relevance to rural areas.
3. Advertisements would only be taken from organisations who were or who became RSP members.
4. Contracts would only be negotiated where it was clear that total editorial freedom for the Bulletin remained.

The Executive discussed the position in relation to a current approach from BT/EE which would now proceed subject to contract.

6. A Call for Evidence through the Bulletin Service.

The meeting considered a report from the Corporate Director suggesting the canvassing of a system of Calls for Information, Evidence and Action. The system envisaged a free general service available to RSN members and to listed national organisations to allow rural contacts to have a greater input into consultation exercises. Additionally a University system may be

available for those undertaking research. Here a handling fee would be requested as part of any successful grant arrangement involved.

It was envisaged the service would be operated as follows:-

- (a) By a request contained within the weekly Bulletin.*
- (b) If it related to a specific Group of people by an email out to the members of RSN who were on our records and who engaged in that particular area of activity.*
- (c) If it is an issue affecting the wider group we would email out to all in that wider grouping i.e. the Community Group or it is such an important issue that it affects everyone we would, in addition to running it in the bulletin, send out a special email to everyone receiving our service. This however, is anticipated would only happen very occasionally. In cases of this importance we would probably make these an official RSN Call for Evidence.*

The report was agreed in principle.

(A member asked that the NFU, CLA, Countryside Alliance would be included and to be approached and this was confirmed as being the case)

The Executive agreed that those elements of the service deriving income would proceed at this stage and that a report back would be brought back to the Executive as likely demand was identified from those being approached where a free service was suggested.

7. Dates and Venues for Meetings in 2019

These were agreed as per the Agenda.

Arising from this item the Executive decided to reverse their previous decision about holding a meeting of the Executive at the Conference. It was decided instead to hold that meeting as in previous years towards the end of September in London. A date for that meeting will be canvassed.

8. Provisional Settlement – Verbal Report

The Chief Executive reported.

The settlement had been very much as had been anticipated. Given that main focus was on achieving material change in the way rural areas were considered in the change to a Business Rate funded system - in consultation with the Chair - it had been decided this year we would not ask to see the Local Government Minister at this time but instead document to him the position reached and the expectations of Government in the review process.

This had been done and the document was presented to the Executive together with the formal response RSN had made to the Draft Settlement.

The Executive formally agreed the action taken.

9. Future Arrangements with Pixel Financial Management

The Executive noted that Dan Bates had secured a position with a local authority. As a consequence, he would only be available to Pixel one day a week and would not be able to do specific work on resource distributional issues for SPARSE Rural. -

Pixel would continue to do that work and would support the RSN's own employee in the development of systems to capture and present figures like comparative resources, council tax levels, reliance on council tax urban v rural going forward.

The Executive wished Dan Bates well in his new post and thanked him for all his work on behalf of the RSN over many years

10. Draft response to both Business Rates Retention (BRR) and Needs and Resources Consultation

The BRR draft response from the RSN was not available to be considered by the Executive. Once finished, it would be sent to all SPARSE member authorities for comment and to inform their own response. The Executive approved the draft response to the Needs and Resources Consultation which would be sent to members with the BRR draft referred to

11. A Rural Strategy Campaign – Verbal Report

The Chief Executive introduced this item detailing the intention behind the initiative - approved at the AGM - which was to persuade Government of the need to prepare a formal strategy which documented the situation specifically facing rural areas and set out proposals which could strategically guide the way forward over the coming years. Small changes to the text considered by the AGM had been made on rural schools and including a reference to the Government's recently published NHS 10 Year Plan

All member authorities and organisations with a rural interest would be asked to sign up to the call.

Members considered the documentation which had been drafted to date, to back such a call and proposals set out by Lexington involving their possible involvement with the proposal to run a specific campaign seeking support.

The Executive were supportive of the initiative to run a campaign and the Lexington proposals. This would be referred to at the Rural Economy Group meeting on the 28th

It was recognised by the Executive that this was a particularly ambitious and important area of work. They stressed the importance of a rural overview being taken at a time when it was clear that important areas of work were being mapped out nationally.

Rural areas comprised almost 80% of the land area of England and it was vital that a comprehensive and strategic overview was taken that was of special relevance to the communities comprising the rural areas of the country. Members also stressed their view that the rural areas were of vital importance to the entire economy of the country as a whole requiring a strategic overview to be taken at this time.

12. Regional Meetings Update

Region	Date	Subject	Venue
West Midlands	18.02.19	Rural Economy	Stafford BC confirmed
South West	21.03.19	Rural Housing	East Devon contacted
South East	29.04.19	Vulnerability	Sevenoaks confirmed

North East	15 – 17 May 2019	Sustainable Communities	Durham contacted
East Midlands	08.07.19	Rural Health & Wellbeing	David contacting Cambridgeshire
North West	07.10.19	Delivering Local Services Differently	Lancashire contacted
Yorkshire	09.12.19	Barriers to Access – Connectivity & Rural Transport	North Yorkshire contacted

These were agreed and noted.

13. Membership report update

Inevitably with the prolonged pressure on Council budgets some members were regarding involvement as a discretionary expenditure that should be reviewed and conversations were continuing with those authorities. The greatest difficulty was around Rural Assembly members where authorities with mainly urban populations but some rural areas were seeking to mainstream their activities. However the group as a whole remained at healthy numbers with around 135 authorities continuing to be involved.

14. SORS Report by Rural England

The Executive received a report on the Rural England SORS report. This report was produced every two years and covered a wide range of services. It was clear that many services in rural areas were being materially affected by the cut backs. The report would be launched at the Parliamentary Rural Vulnerability Day on the 11th of February.

15. Update on recruitment to RHCA

The joint initiative with the Centre for Rural Health and Social Care was progressing well.

Membership of the Rural Health and Care Alliance was free annually to Sparse Rural Members and to Rural Assembly members available as a £125 supplement.

Over the initial three months of recruitment 23 health orientated organisations had join the Alliance. The vast majority of these organisations would also become RSP members as a result of their membership package.

Jon Turner and Bethan Aldridge were thanked for their hard work in this area.

17. APPG Report on the Rural Context relating to meeting Adult Social Care Needs

The APPG's interim report had been sent to the Secretary of State. The APPG would meet again when the Government's Social Care Green Paper was published

18. Report on the Rural Conference 2019

Members received an update for the Rural Conference which would take place in Cheltenham on the 3rd and 4th of September.

The current working title for the conference is “Unlocking the Rural Economy: Creating Vibrant and Sustainable Rural Communities”

RSN West Midlands Regional Seminar
18th February 2019
Stafford Borough Council, Civic Centre, Riverside, Stafford
ST16 3AQ

Thank you to Stafford Borough Council for kindly hosting this event

Attendance

Name	Organisation
Cllr Cecilia Motley	RSN Chair – Shropshire Council
Graham Biggs M.B.E.	RSN
Cllr Roger Phillips	Herefordshire Council
Cllr Joan Lea	North Warwickshire Borough Council
Cllr Bryan Cross M.B.E.	Stafford Borough Council
Cllr Les Caborn	Warwickshire County Council
Cllr Angela Loughran	Stafford Borough Council
Cllr Isabella Davies	Stafford Borough Council
Dr Malcolm Rigler FRSPH, Project Volunteer	Patients Association
Cllr Gill Heath	Staffordshire County Council
Vinia Abesamis, Senior Policy & Funding Officer	Herefordshire Council
Cllr Mark Winnington	Staffordshire County Council
Cllr Peter Whittaker	Bromsgrove District Council
Suzanne Shead, Head of Localities	Bromford
Mark Parkinson, Economic Development & Planning Policy Manager	Staffordshire County Council
Alastair Sheehan, Business Development Director	HBV Supported Living
Cllr Carolyn Trowbridge	Stafford BC & Staffordshire County Council
Gareth Wilson	Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
Jeremy Lowe	The Farming Community Network (FCN)
Gordon Banks	The Farming Community Network (FCN)
Peter Hardy	The Farming Community Network (FCN)
Kerry Bolister, Assistant Director of Development	Housing Plus Group
Cllr Ann Edgeller	Staffordshire County Council
Cllr Ray Sutherland	Stafford Borough Council
Steve Brain, Programmes & Performance Manager	Worcestershire County Council
Tony Price	Trent & Dove Housing
Gareth Jones	Stafford Borough Council
Cllr Rosemary Berry	Mid Devon District Council
Chris Egen, Senior Development Officer	Warwickshire County Council
Cllr Roger Evans	Shropshire Council
Ivan Annibal	Rose Regeneration
Dr Jessica Sellick	Rose Regeneration

1. Welcome

The Chair, Cllr Roger Phillips, welcomed people to the second West Midlands Regional Meeting & Seminar.

He thanked Stafford Borough Council for their support in hosting the event.

2. Presentations

The Seminar session received presentations from Professor Anne Green, University of Birmingham and Mark Barrow, Director of Place, Shropshire Council. The links to the presentations are attached.

(a) Anne Green – Rural Employment, business and skills

Comments received after the presentation related to retirees into rural areas pushing up housing prices out of reach of local people; the need for good “step-down” affordable housing and the need for IT training/support for the more elderly population.

(b) Mark Barrow – Future Shropshire

Comments received after the presentation related to the changing nature of County & Market Towns towards “days out”/leisure/eating out; potential use of heritage buildings as libraries/health hubs etc.; the need for Councils to ensure they had the right skills and decision-making powers to address commercialisation (by the Council) and addressing market failures and the need for “evidence” to support calls for action.

3. RSP Best Practice Session

Presentation by Nigel Wilcock, Executive Director of the Institute of Economic Development on Economic Development in Rural UK

Comments received after the presentation related to Housing Targets set by Planning authorities “as soon as they were built - they were sold”; the need for flexible multi-tenure (including supported) housing needed; the role for modular housing

The Chair thanked all 3 presenters for their interesting presentations and different dimensions brought to the meeting’s attention

4. General Discussion

Graham Biggs introduced the RSN call on government for a holistic Rural Strategy which was being launched as a national campaign on 1st March. Cllr Phillips urged people to sign up to the campaign and become ambassadors for the idea by promoting to others the need to support the campaign.

The following issues were raised and discussed

(a) Involvement of Parish Council

NALC are members of RSP. We are being consulted along with NALC in terms of current spending decisions by Government. It is important for local organisations to

get on board to promote the role of place through parish/town councils at the local level. It is important to provide an integrated approach to developing strategies for rural places. RSN's job is to persuade national government that it needs a framework, breathing life into it in a rural area is important.

(b) Economic Development Connections

Links between Rural Strategy and Shared Prosperity Fund and LEPs at the local level are important. BEIS are important players in this context. Graham – we will be engaging with all Government departments post the launch of the template rural strategy on March 1st.

(c) Process

There is a plan for Stafford Borough, which has the development of the rural economy as a component. Where does this national strategy fit with this? Graham - It is a case of using this template as a document/approach to reflect upon in the production of individual corporate organisational documents.

(d) Nature of the Proposed Rural Strategy

Could it be a little more prescriptive in setting norms for people to think about in the development of their strategies – perhaps for example in the context of neighbourhood plans and the tendency to Nimbyism. Graham there is an incipient process of Nimbyism in land allocation and local planning decisions, which sometimes causes a dislocation between policy and very specific rural locations.

(e) The Rural Milieu

The economic downsides of rural economies make the attraction of key workers very challenging - a high- level strategy could be the basis on which national action could be taken to address these issues. Broadband and mobile connectivity, housing and skills are also examples in this context.

In terms of health, structural changes to the funding of health and social care have impacted negatively on the engagement of CCGs at a strategic level in wider strategic issues outside of health and care. This is a shame if we take the broad interpretation of public health as a key determinant of many aspects of rural life.

(f) Transport

Recent discussions about rural transport have helped to surface the lack of connectivity in the way rural issues are thought about and addressed.

(g) Public Health

We should not see public health as standing alone – in Shropshire it is being developed as part of a wider agenda linking it to other corporate priorities and by linking actions into the community and voluntary sector. Public Health resources are being diminished in terms of the stock of what is available for rural areas from a local government perspective.

(h) Planning

Shropshire have a single (housing) plot development policy – focused on 80% of the market value – also important for the housing to be attached to a settlement. Planning has a major impact on the effectiveness of policies like this and its drive for urban concentration is hard to resist.

(i) Economies

In terms of rural economies – we can concentrate too much on challenges and not enough on positives, this is important.

(j) Market Failure

Ivan asked about the risk appetite for local authorities to address market failure – through local action. There was general interest in this as an agenda. Delegates identified a tradition of this in the early days of local government.

(k) Business Support

Often unglamorous investment and hands on support for small businesses is an important and valuable component of local authority economic development intervention.

(l) Housing

In managing housing risk – local community support is very important. Case studies of good examples are really valuable. Transferrable good practice is really useful.

(m) Evidence

Is a key element in terms of what can be achieved – many local authorities have no resources – we need to make the case for more investment in rural areas when properly measured – provides a good investment for the nation. Austerity is not coming to an end uniformly and this creates a justification for development in rural areas. Spending review and fairer funding review are important in this context. They are important for the redistribution of the business rates.

(n) Rural Sovereign Wealth

Ivan Annibal introduced the Rural Sovereign Wealth fund idea into the discussion as a concept for maximising the value of national resources for rural communities.

5. Next Steps

Cllr Roger Phillips identified the value of keeping the lobbying agenda moving forward in terms of the issues raised today – particularly in relation to the rural strategy argument.

6. Meeting Apologies.

The following were received: -

Apologies

Name	Organisation
Cllr Simon Geraghty	Worcestershire County Council

Cllr Karen Grinsell	Solihull MBC
Cllr Polly Andrews	Herefordshire Council
Jan Sobieraj, Chief Executive	United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust
John Longdon, Chief Executive	Pub is the Hub
Cllr Lee Chapman	Shropshire Council
Cllr Dave Wright	Telford & Wrekin Council
Paul Robinson, Chief Executive	Worcestershire County Council
Ursula Lidbetter, Chief Executive	Lincolnshire Co-op
Jane Johnson, Local Director – North Midlands	Health Education England
Melissa Green, General Secretary	NFWI
Cllr Tony Jefferson	Stratford – on – Avon District Council
Kate Pym, Managing Director	Pym's Consultancy
Cllr David Harlow	Herefordshire Council
Amy Beeton	Health Education England
Caroline Shaw, Chief Executive	King's Lynn NHS Foundation Trust
Cllr Malcolm Leeding	Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils
Martin Reohorn, Director of Finance	Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue Service
Robert Gatensbury, Economic Development Manager	Stafford Borough Council
Cllr Andrea Morgan	Malvern Hills District Council
Rita Lawson BA(Hons); MIED, Chief Executive	Tees Valley Rural Action
Cllr Peter Nutting	Shropshire Council
Cllr Arnold England	Telford & Wrekin Council
James Bullion, Executive Director	Norfolk County Council
Cllr Brian Cox	South Staffordshire Council
Martyne Manning, Economic Development Officer	Stafford Borough Council
Cllr Frances Beatty MBE	Stafford Borough Council

Dr Tom Lawrence	TRL Insight
Cllr Penny-Anne O'Donnell	Stratford-on-Avon District Council

RSN Regional Seminar/ Networking Meeting Schedule

Programme for 2019 - 2020

Attachment E

The Rural Services Network provides a full Regional Seminar/Networking meeting schedule which is available free of charge to all members of the RSN, this includes the RSP and members of the Rural Health and Care Alliance.

The seminar is split into two sections:

- The morning seminar session generally includes 2 expert speakers on a key rural topic.
- The afternoon session will include a short RSP Best Practice Session and then a round table discussion/meeting where all RSN members present can come together at a regional level to look at the topic in more detail from both a national and regional focus and share ideas and best practice. This could lead to a future RSN campaign or research activity.



RURAL
SERVICES
NETWORK

Details of the seven regional seminars are listed below:

REGION - West Midlands
DATE - 18/02/19
SUBJECT - Rural Economy
VENUE - Stafford Borough Council

REGION - South West
DATE - 21/03/19
SUBJECT - Rural Housing
VENUE - East Devon

REGION - South East
DATE - 29/04/19
SUBJECT - Rural Vulnerability
VENUE - Sevenoaks District Council

REGION - North East
DATE - 23/05/19
SUBJECT - Sustainable Rural Communities
VENUE - Durham County Council

REGION - East Midlands
DATE - 08/07/19
SUBJECT - Rural Health and Wellbeing
VENUE - TBC

REGION - North West
DATE - 07/10/19
SUBJECT - Delivering local Services differently
VENUE - TBC

REGION - Yorkshire & the Humber
DATE - 9/12/19
SUBJECT - Barriers to access – connectivity and rural transport
VENUE - TBC

Two seminars on rural health are also being organised by the National Centre for Rural Health and Care and these will be open to all Sparse and Assembly RSN members and all RHCA members free of charge. Full details will be released in due course.

For more information or to book a place at any of these free events visit:

www.rsnonline.org.uk/events

or contact:

events@sparse.gov.uk

or call: 01822 851370



Rural Vulnerability and Disadvantage

Statement 2019

Context

Despite being the most urban country within the UK, almost 90% of England's land area is categorised as rural ¹. Rural areas are home to 9.5 million people (2017) or 17% of the population ². More people live in small rural towns, villages, hamlets and isolated dwellings than live in Greater London.

England's rural communities are extremely diverse economically, environmentally and socially. They include, amongst others, remote and upland communities; coastal settlements; commuter villages and former mining communities. There is no doubt about the beauty and tranquillity of many rural areas but, as the former Commission for Rural Communities said "You can't eat the view". For those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable life in rural areas can be very difficult.

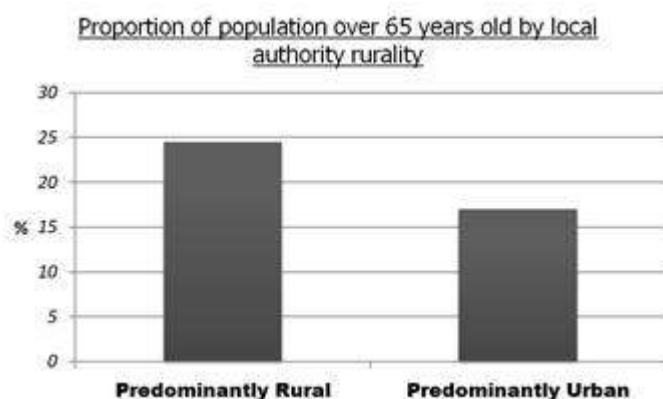
On the positive side, rural communities do often exhibit a certain strength and resilience with local authorities and the voluntary/ community sector providing much important support for those disadvantages or vulnerable. However, this is no excuse for central government's and other organisations' policies ignoring the existing and growing problems of rural residents.

How is vulnerability and disadvantage different in rural areas?

Even small rural communities typically have a wide ranging socio-economic mix of residents, with wealthy and poor households often immediate neighbours. This mix means that averaged statistics, such as average earnings, tend to disguise the real extent and severity of hidden disadvantage.

Certainly the romantic image of the 'rural idyll' is far from reality for many residents.

Another major difference between urban and rural areas is demographic. Rural areas tend to have proportionately far more people in the older age groups (24.5% are over 65 in predominantly rural areas compared to 17% in predominantly urban areas)². Rural areas also have proportionately fewer residents of working age. These differences are widening.



What are the 'rural' problems?

As identified in RSN's 'Rural Strategy' there are many issues contributing to rural vulnerability and disadvantage including difficulties in accessing facilities and services, higher cost of living, low local wages, lack of opportunity, and little political priority. These issues are interconnected in complex ways.

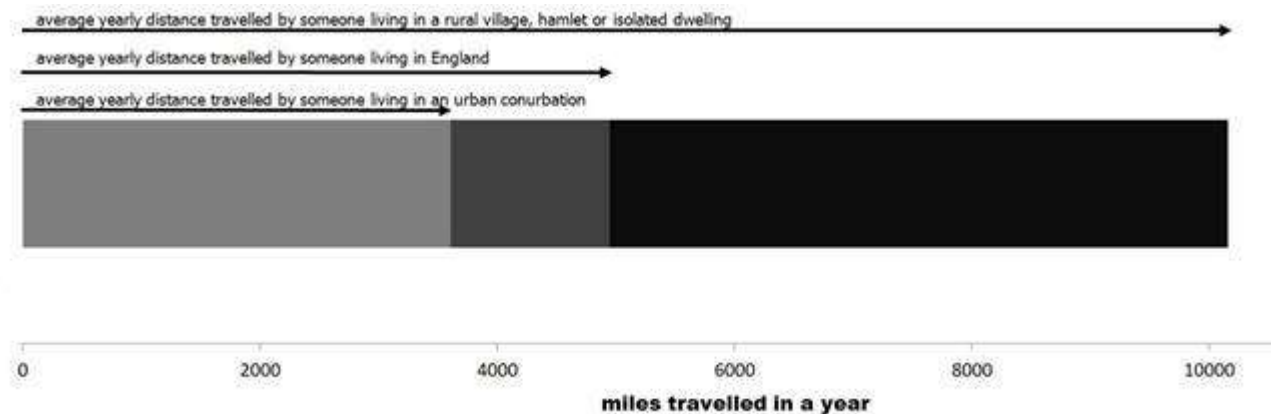
Access to services and facilities.

“Accessibility: - ‘The rural challenge’” so wrote Professor Malcolm Moseley in 1979. 40 years on the difficulties in accessing facilities and services are yet more acute.

‘Walk- to’ rural facilities such as pubs, Post Offices and shops are continuing to decline. Other facilities and services (e.g. supermarkets; hospitals; GP surgeries; job centres; youth clubs; and council offices) are centralising in urban, often out-of-centre, locations which are hard for rural residents to get to, except by private car. For example, almost 30% of rural residents live more than 30 minutes’ drive time from a major hospital. If travelling by public transport 40% live more than an hour away.

50 per cent of the rural population are living in areas that have the poorest accessibility to services (lowest 10 per cent decile) based on minimum travel times, compared with 2 per cent of the urban population.²

Unsurprisingly rural residents have to travel further. In 2015/16 people living in rural villages, hamlets and isolated dwellings travelled 10,159 miles on average, 95% further than in urban conurbations and 55% further than the average for England as a whole.²



At the same time rural public transport is continuing to contract. Between 2010-11 and 2017-18 there has been a net reduction of £172 million from supported bus services in England, a reduction of 46 per cent. In England some 290 services were reduced or withdrawn in 2017/18 alone.³ Many small rural communities have no bus service whatsoever and for others it is absolutely minimal. Such rural buses as still remain often run on radial routes to the nearest town/ city centre but other destinations are much more difficult or totally impossible to reach. Even where some limited public transport is available it very rarely runs at convenient times for accessing employment/training or attending fixed-time appointments such as doctor’s appointments. Accordingly, if you are unable to drive you are dependent upon others to access employment, post-16 education/training; shops; medical facilities; and a host of other essential activities. Community transport and taxi alternatives, whilst helpful, are not without their drawbacks, not least their unsuitability for spontaneous or urgent trips. Older people cannot use their bus passes on community buses and even the expensive option of taxis is not necessarily always available. Whether by private car or other means, the additional cost for rural households of essential travel is very significant. For example, it is not unusual for 16-18 year olds to pay in excess of £500 p.a. just to access education.

The problems of poor rural accessibility and increased travel costs also impact on those trying to provide services to customers and clients including, notably, health and social care professionals; council services; and the voluntary sector.

Rural areas generally also suffer from inferior digital services compared to urban areas. In 2018 11% of rural premises could not get a 10 Mbps fixed line connection and 24% could not get a 30 Mbps (superfast broadband) connection. The equivalent urban figures are 1% and 3% respectively. Accessing the internet is also a very significant added financial burden in areas where no free wi-fi provision is available.⁴

With mobile provision, in 2018 a basic phone call could not be made inside 33% of rural premises on all four networks. A 4G connection could not be accessed on all four networks inside 58% of rural premises. The equivalent urban figures are 3% and 17% respectively. Two particular issues experienced with mobile provision are weak signal strength within many rural premises and the extent of network coverage in open countryside.⁴

Low wages and higher costs of living

The earned average wage in rural areas compared to the urban average is almost 9% lower.⁵ Rural residents also face higher costs:

- Housing costs. In 2017, the average lower quartile house price was 8.6 times the average lower quartile earnings in predominantly rural areas. This compares with 7.4 in predominantly urban areas (excluding London).²
- Fuel costs. Rural households must, on average, spend £1,620 to achieve an adequate standard of warmth compared to £1274 for urban households³. A higher percentage of rural households are fuel poor (about 14% in villages, hamlets and isolated areas compared to 11% in urban) and the average fuel poverty gap is twice the national average.⁶
- Travel. In 2017 average weekly transport costs for households in rural hamlets and isolated dwellings was around £131.80 (£57.50 higher than for urban areas) which accounted for 15.1% of their weekly disposable income.⁷
- Higher costs of service delivery. A diverse range of services cost more in rural areas. For example recent research showed that rural Councils paid 13% more for domiciliary social care.⁸ There are many other examples e.g. the higher grocery costs in village shops and commercial delivery firms charging supplements for remoter areas.

“People in rural areas typically need to spend 10–20 per cent more on everyday requirements than those in urban areas. The more remote the area, the greater these additional costs.”
(Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2010)⁹

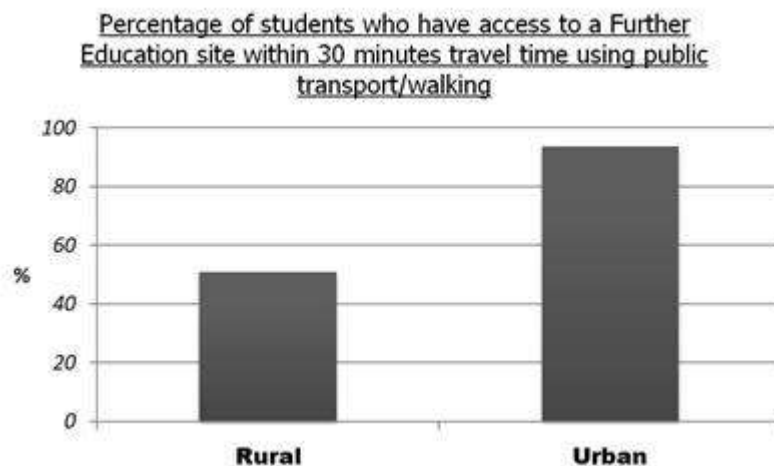
Lack of opportunity

The challenges facing rural residents can have severe consequences for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged and can adversely affect social mobility.

Educational choice and attainment. English and Maths GCSE results, using the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), show that for pupils in rural areas the attainment levels were lower for all decile bands compared with pupils in urban areas. (2016/17).²

As at 31 October 2016, 18 per cent of secondary schools in rural areas had received ‘Outstanding’ as the most recent inspection outcome, compared with 24 per cent of secondary schools in urban areas.²

Only 51% of rural students have access to a Further Education site within 30 minutes travel time using Public Transport/Walking compared to 93.6% in urban areas.²



Rural areas typically offer far fewer employment and training opportunities which particularly disadvantages people who are unable to drive. In predominantly urban areas the proportion of the working age population with NVQ Level 4 or an equivalent qualification was 44.7 per cent compared with 35.4 per cent in predominantly rural areas (2015).²

The political dimension

In Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland (and in most of Europe similarly) rural areas receive special financial attention by their Governments. In England however, that is rarely the case and indeed rural areas receive far less government financial support for their services per head of population than do their urban counterparts. This unfairness is not helped by the lack of genuine rural proofing and the inadequate provision of meaningful statistics about the realities of rural living.

Far from being confined to Central Government, this lack of rural focus (or even the most cursory consideration of rural issues) is evident in plans and actions of many service providers in both the public and private sectors. Arguably this is because disadvantaged and vulnerable people in rural areas are geographically scattered and include such a diverse mix of demographic characteristics that they are not a cohesive lobbying group and are accordingly easy to ignore.

What is the RSN doing?

As the only organisation currently examining aspects of rural vulnerability and disadvantage on a regular basis we have developed a number of initiatives: -

- The Rural Services Network holds meetings involving rural local authorities to consider the situation (alongside Rural Health and Social Care) on two occasions a year.
- The group involving non-local authority rural organisations, The Rural Services Partnership, has formed a sub- group to consider rural vulnerability issues.
- We work with the Rural England Community Interest Company to operate a Rural Vulnerability Day in Parliament early each year and the RSN also acts as the Secretariat for a Parliamentary Group Meeting of MPs and Peers.
- We promote the sharing of information and best practice.
- We support the work of the National Rural Crime Network and the National Centre of Rural Health and Care. In the latter case we jointly provide the Rural Health and Care Alliance services to its members.

Ideas for tackling Rural Vulnerability and Disadvantage

Rural Vulnerability is a collective term that applies to an array of rural circumstances and situations which is perhaps best considered in the specific contexts of particular identified problems and issues.

Given the reduction and centralisation of public services, the ageing demographics of rural areas, and the challenges facing young people, the likelihood is that an increasing proportion of the rural population will become disadvantaged and/or vulnerable in the future.

The Utility Service Regulators Ofgem, Ofwat, and Ofcom are asking power, water and telecommunications companies to do work and set up systems to give consideration to both identify and assist their vulnerable customers and the phrase is also employed by the Financial Conduct Authority. The power and water industries employ a Priority Services Register situation to allow people to inform or register their difficulties so that companies are aware of their situation. Whilst recognising the need for confidentiality of the individual in many cases it is essential for private sector companies, local authorities and the voluntary sector to collaboratively address the challenges facing rural communities. We also think that people 'on the ground' such as Parish/Town Councils, voluntary groups and possibly Church Councils could have a more defined wider role.

In summary:-

- 1. It is our view that the number of people living in rural areas and who are particularly vulnerable/ disadvantaged is increasing markedly year- on- year and that immediate action is required.**
- 2. We have an established track record of working to improve the public financing of rural areas and support for the rural economy. (We operate through a small charge system with rural local authorities and we are dependent on these arrangements to highlight these issues and to put measures in place to try to tackle them)**
- 3. RSN has the experience, track-record, and the team to work with existing and new partners to address vulnerability and disadvantage. By supporting our existing work and working with our members we can provide a collective rural voice and dedicated resources to tackle rural vulnerability and disadvantage.**

References

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7. Defra. Rural Expenditure Statistics (updated 2018).
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<https://ruralengland.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Launch-Report-Issues-Facing-Providers-Social-Care-in-Rural-England.pdf>
9. A minimum income standard for rural households, JRF 2010
<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/minimum-income-standard-rural-households>
10. Derived from analysis of Public Health Profile Indicators 2014/15 <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/>

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1								Attachment G	
2									
3		17TH MARCH, 2019							
4		RSN (INCOME & EXPENDITURE) 2018/19 AND							
5		ACTUAL TO END FEBRUARY 2019							
6		WITH ESTIMATE 2019/20					ACTUAL TO	ESTIMATE	ESTIMATE
7							END FEB 19	18/19	2019/20
8		INCOME					£	£	£
9									
10		DEBTORS FROM PREVIOUS YEAR (NET OF VAT)							
11		SPARSE/Rural Assembly held by NKDC at year end					3000	3000	
12		SPARSE Rural Assembly Outstanding NK)						0	
13		RHA - Website Contribs.					300	300	
14		RSP Subscriptions						0	
15		Coastal Communities Alliance (Gross)							
16		CCN re Bexit Roundtable					381	381	
17		SPARSE Rural/Rural Assembly					296936	300686	303459
18		Ditto Held by NKDC at Month End					3750		
19		RSN Extra £350Levy					35000	35350	
20		Extra Levy held by NKDC at month end					350		
21		RSP Existing Member Fees					14195	14195	15166
22		RSP Fee Increases from Existing Members							3631
23		RSP Assumed New Member Fees							2500
24		Commercial Partner First Group Buses					10000	10000	10000
25		Income from Rural Housing Group					7417	7417	7664
26		Income from Fire & Rescue Group					4260	4260	3865
27		FIRE GROUP LEVY RE SPARSITY EVIDENCE					6000	6000	
28		OTHER INCOME							
29		Rural Conference Income					14918		
30		Rural Conference Surplus						7709	7500

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
31							ACTUAL TO	EST	EST
32							END FEB 19	2018/19	2019/20
33							£	£	£
34		Recharges to Rural England Back Office Support £1200)					700	1400	1428
35		RE recharge re Elec NW Commission						1100	1100
36		RE recharge re Southern Water Commission						1000	1000
37		EE/Other Sponsorship					5000	5000	5000
38		Coastal Communities Alliance Gross)					3268	4358	4358
39		RHCA - Fee Income					5146	11260	6000
40		RNCA Expenditure Reimbursement					5000	5000	17766
41		RE Website Maintenance						2040	2286
42		Miscellaneous (BT)					979	979	
43		Contras					2183	3035	
44		VAT							
45		VAT Refund					3144		
46		VAT Received					15573		
47		TOTAL INCOME					437500	424470	392723
48									
49									

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
50							ACTUAL TO	EST	EST
51							END FEB 19	2018/19	2019/20
52		EXPENDITURE					£	£	£
53		VAT Paid on Goods & Services					16266		
54		VAT Paid to HMRC					160		
55		General Provision for Inflation							2200
56		NET WAGES & CONTRACTS FOR SERVICES							
57		Corporate Management			DI,GB,AD, 1 JT, 100% KB 80%		118577	132170	132170
58		Finance/Performance and Data Analysis			, DW, 100%,		21862	23844	23784
59		Communications (incl Seminars)			RoseR,RCM		32884	37121	35261
60		Administrative and Technical Support			AD3, RI, WI,WC,BA, MB 100%		40066	43106	32939
61		Research and Monitoring			BW, 100%		7025	7025	9000
62		Economic Development Service			AD5 100%		4768	5201	5201
63		Coastal Communities Contract					3696	3696	3700
64		Rural Communities Housing Group			AD2 100%		6199	6763	6763
65		Employee Deductions					25052	27813	29000
66									
67		Provision for Inflation on Contracts (2% p.a.)							2381
68		PAYE - Employers NIC (11 mths)					9349	10373	10295
69		PAYE ADMIN (Accountants)					231	252	270
70		NEST PENSIONS Employer contrib					2131	2438	3700
71		OTHER EXPENDITURE							
72		Rural Fair Shares Campaign etc.					3378	3378	5000
73		Pixell Financial Service (core Annual Service)					3500	3500	5000
74		Rural Strategy Campaign					571	775	5000
75		SPEND FROM 2018/19 VOL CONTRIBUTIONS							

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
76		Conferences/Seminars							
77		Rural Conference 2018					7209		
78		Rural Conference Drinks Reception					962	962	1000
79		Rural Conference 2019 - IN ADVANCE					250	250	
80		Regional Meetings/Seminars					1298	2145	2200
81									
82									
83									
84		Service Level Agreements							
85		Rural Housing Group (RHG)					782	782	1000
86		RHG Website Maint					1122	1224	1224
87		RE Website Maint					1870	2040	2040
88		Rural England CIC to re-charge)					1661	1661	
89		Rural Inland CIC transfer of part of First Group Support					7000	7000	7000
90		APPG/Rural Issues Group Costs					905	905	1000
91		Parlia Rural Vulnerability Group							500
92		RHCA Direct					4530	4530	
93		RHCA Share of Subscription Income							5000
94		Fire Group Expenses						712	
95		Business Expenses							
96		Website Upgrade					650	650	
97		Travel and Subsistence					22140	24000	23000
98		Print, Stat,e mail, phone & Broadband@					3614	4000	4000
99		Meeting Room Hire					1594	1972	2000
100		Website and Data Base software etc					4392	4700	4700
101		Rent of Office & Associated Costs					4405	5061	8800
102		Accountancy Fees					657	720	800
103		NKDC Services							
104		Companies House Fees					13	13	13
105		Bank Charges					84	92	90

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
106		IT Equipment & Support & Other Capital					280	1800	700
107		Insurance					744	744	800
108		Corporation Tax							300
109		Membership of Rural Coalition					250	250	250
110									
111									
112									
113									
114		ARREARS - PREVIOUS FINANCIAL YEAR							
115		Employee Deductions							2670
116		Employer NIC							1024
117		Employer Pension Contributions							230
118		Regional Meetings/Seminars					450	450	
119		Contract for Service (ADMIN)					1660	1660	
120		Communications					500	500	
121		Extra Media by RCM					963	963	
122		Rose Regeneration					2000	2000	
123		Lexington Communications Contract							1741
124		PIXELL					21958	21958	23122
125		Research Costs					11420	11420	3250
126		RSN Online arrears					4523	4523	
127		RHA website Maint					300	300	
128		Travel and Subsistence arrears					823	823	700
129		Printing, Phone and Stationery (arrears)					9	9	
130		Office Costs					286	286	11000
131		Data base etc (arrears)					433	433	
132		TOTAL EXPENDITURE					407452	418993	421818
133									
134									

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
135		TOTAL INCOME						424470	392723
136		LESS TOTAL EXP						-418993	-421818
137		DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IN YEAR INC & EXP						5477	-29095
138		ADD GEN BALANCE BROUGHT FORWARD						25875	31352
139		BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD						31352	2257
140									
141									
142									

Draft plan for National Rural Conference 2019 brought to you by RSN in association with CCRI

Creating Vibrant Communities

Tues 3rd Sept

Themes for Conference	Time	Length	Session	Subject	Speaker
	11.30-11.40	10 Mins	Welcome and Introductions		Councillor Motley
	11.40-11.50	10 Mins	Welcome from Sponsor		tbc
Overall: How do we create vibrant rural communities	11.40-12.40	1 hr	Plenary 1 – Panel	Overall Topic – How do we create vibrant rural communities	
An Affordable Place to Live	12.40-13.10	30 Mins	Plenary 2	Rural Housing	
	1310 - 1400	50 mins			
	14.00-14.45	45 Mins	Workshop 1	Rural Housing	
	14.45-15.30	45 Mins	Workshop 2	Rural Housing	
	15.30-16.00	30 mins	Summary of key issues and whole group discussion- led by Ivan		

18.30- Drinks Reception at Queens Hotel, Cheltenham

Potential for RSP exhibitors to attend Drinks Reception at end of room to facilitate networking / sharing of services

Wednesday 4th Sept

Themes for Conference	Time	Length	Session	Subject	Speaker
	9.20-9.30	10 mins	Welcome from Cllr Motley		Cllr Motley
	9.30-9.45	15 Mins	CCRI Welcome		Janet Dwyer
A Thriving Rural Economy	9.45-10.15	30 Mins	CCRI Speaking Slot	Rural Economy	Janet Dwyer
	10.15-11.00	45 mins	Plenary 1 – Key Note speaker	Rural Economy	
	11.00-11.20	20 mins	Networking with refreshments		
	11.20-12.05	45 mins	Workshop 1	Rural Economy Pixel Finance – Adrian	
	12.05-12.50	45 mins	Workshop 2	Rural Economy Institute of Economic Development	
	12.50-13.50	1 hour	Networking with lunch		
Health and Wellbeing	13.50-14.00	10 mins	Speed talk 1	Health and Wellbeing	
	14.00-14.10	10 mins	Speed Talk 2	Health and Wellbeing	
	14.10-14.25	15 mins	Q&A Speed Talks		
	14.25-14.50	25 mins	Plenary 3	Health and Wellbeing	
A place everyone can get around	14.50-15.15	25 mins	Plenary 4	Access to Services - Transport	
	15.15-15.30	30 mins	Plenary 5	Access to Services – Transport	
	15.30-16.00	30 mins	Summing up key themes of the sessions – Graham Biggs		