

## Agenda

### SPARSE Rural Services Network Special Interest Group meeting

---

Hosted: Online via Zoom  
Date: Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021  
Time: 11:00am – 12:30pm

Joining instructions and final agenda will be circulated to those who register.

---

- 1. Attendance & Apologies**
- 2. Notes from the previous SPARSE Rural meeting.** (Attachment 1)  
Held on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2021 to consider any relevant updates and approve the minutes.
- 3. Notes from the previous RSN Executive meeting.** (Attachment 2)  
Held on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021 to consider any relevant updates.
- 4. Assessing Costs Associated with Remoteness**  
Presentation by [Adrian Jenkins](#), Founder & Chief Analyst, Pixel Financial Management.<sup>1</sup>
- 5. Any Other Business.**  
The next SPARSE Rural meeting is scheduled for early in 2022. We will seek to keep members updated on the date later in the year.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://pixelfinancial.co.uk/about>

**Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers**

David Inman, Director  
Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ  
Tel: 01822 851370

[www.rsnonline.org.uk](http://www.rsnonline.org.uk) email: [david.inman@sparse.gov.uk](mailto:david.inman@sparse.gov.uk) twitter: [@rsnonline](https://twitter.com/rsnonline)

## Notes of last SPARSE Rural meeting

---

<b>Title:</b>	<b>SPARSE Rural Meeting Rural Services Network Special Interest Group</b>
<b>Date:</b>	Monday, 25 <sup>th</sup> January 2021
<b>Venue:</b>	Hosted Online via Zoom

---

### Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions
------	-----------------------

#### 1 Attendance & Apologies

Cllr Cecilia Motley (Chair, Rural Services Network and Shropshire Council) welcomed members to the meeting.

Kerry Booth (Rural Services Network) outlined the structure of the discussion which would cover the main issues concerning the Local Government Finance Provisional Settlement and SPARSE's response. Apologies taken as read.

#### 2 Notes from the previous SPARSE Rural meeting

The minutes from the previous meeting held on 12 October were approved.

Graham Biggs MBE (Chief Executive, Rural Services Network) updated the group on progress with discussion on the planning white paper and changes to the current planning system. Members noted that the Rural Services APPG has an imminent meeting with the Housing Minister to discuss rural issues.

Mr Biggs also informed members that the APPG meeting with the Digital Minister on Digital infrastructure had taken place and that agreement had been reached to send a letter from the APPG Chair to the Minister regarding confusion around rollout of digital capable broadband following the 2020 Spending Review. The minutes were approved.

#### 3 Notes from the previous RSN Executive meeting

Mr Biggs referred to recent government White Papers and Policy proposals and assured Members that these are being reviewed with the intention of providing an overall headline rural analysis.

The group noted details of DfT's call for evidence to inform a future Rural Transport

#### **Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers**

#### **Rural Services Network**

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 851370

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

Strategy. Transport Authority members have been consulted for their comments and there are already concerns that implications for rural areas of the present situation are not being considered. The Chair agreed that this continues to be an issue, given limited transport in rural areas. Members felt that this point will need to be made quite strongly in the response and reflect the importance of revitalising rural areas.

The minutes of the meeting were noted

#### **4 Provisional Settlement 2021-2022**

Members received a presentation by Graham Biggs on the Provisional Settlement for 2021/22. Slides from Pixel, which showed the rural perspective and the national position, were included to further inform the discussion.

Please note that full notes outlining what was discussed in this item are available only to [SPARSE members of the RSN](#). If you are a SPARSE member of RSN and would like to view the full notes, please email us at [admin@sparse.gov.uk](mailto:admin@sparse.gov.uk) with the title of this meeting and date and a request for full notes and presentation, and we will forward you this information.

Mr Biggs discussed inequalities around funding and allocation of spending power and outlined comparisons between predominantly rural and urban areas. Funding is massively lower for rural areas.

Members noted the composition of the provisional settlement. It was clear from the evidence that rural areas will once again be held down and will not be levelled up until there is a fair distribution of the resources Government provides to support local government services.

The Chair said that she felt the rural services delivery grant is used to placate and there is a need to demonstrate that this is a tiny amount compared to the inequity that has built up over the years.

Members were invited to comment. Cllr Motley thanked Mr Biggs and colleagues for an interesting and informative discussion.

#### **5 Any Other Business**

Members were invited to raise any other business they wished to discuss.

Cllr Yvonne Peacock referred to problems around community led housing and difficulties in getting housing funding unless you have a social letting agent.

The Secretariat referred to discussion on the subject by previous speakers and agreed to try and source a helpful contact.

Action: Kerry Booth (Rural Services Network) to provide contacts to Cllr Peacock.

**Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers**

**Rural Services Network**

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 851370

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



Cllr Motley thanked colleagues for their attendance and members were reminded to login separately for the meeting being held in the afternoon.

**Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers**

**Rural Services Network**

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 851370

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

**Appendix A****Attendance**

Cllr Philip Atkins	Staffordshire County Council
Cllr Owen Bierley	West Lindsey District Council
Graham Biggs	Rural Services Network
Kerry Booth	Rural Services Network
Louise Branford-White	Hambleton District Council
Nigel Burch	South Holland District Council
Cllr Janet Clowes	Cheshire East Council
Fatima De Abreu	Local Government Association
Cllr Marion Fitzgerald	Allerdale Borough Council
Cllr Robert Heseltine	North Yorkshire Council
Cllr David Hitchiner	Herefordshire County Council
David Inman	Rural Services Network
Toby Matthews	Norfolk County Council
Callum McKeon	Richmondshire District Council
Roger McLeod	South Oxfordshire District Council
Cllr Cecilia Motley (Chair)	Rural Services Network / Shropshire Council
Cllr Yvonne Peacock	Richmondshire District Council
Cllr Roger Phillips	Herefordshire County Council
Cllr Ken Pollock	Worcestershire County Council
Jenny Poole	Cotswold District Council
Cllr Mary Robinson	Eden District Council
Cllr Richard Sherras	Ribble Valley Borough Council
Cllr Jacky Smith	South Kesteven District Council
Russell Stone	North Kesteven District Council
Paul Sutton	Eden District Council
Cllr Virginia Taylor	Eden District Council
Cllr Peter Thornton	South Lakeland District Council
Nadine Trout	Rural Services Network
Cllr Sue Tucker	Scarborough Borough Council
Stephen Walford	Mid Devon District Council
Cllr Mark Whittington	Lincolnshire County Council
Cllr David Worden	North Devon Council
Richard Wyles	South Kesteven District Council

**Apologies**

John Birtwistle

FirstGroup plc

**Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers****Rural Services Network**

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 851370

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



Cllr Gwilym Butler  
 Martin Collett  
 Cllr James Easter  
 Cllr Richard Good  
 Helen Harris  
 Nik Harwood  
 Cllr Oliver Hemsley  
 Karen Henriksen  
 Cllr Sarah Whalley-Hoggins  
 Cllr Neil Hughes  
 Cllr Phil King  
 Peter Lappin  
 Cllr Petrina Lees  
 Cllr Chris Mapey  
 John Mullen  
 Alistair Neill  
 Jayne Pickering  
 Gary Powell  
 Cllr John Raper  
 Julia Raven  
 Cllr Louise Richardson  
 Robin Rogers  
 Cllr Janice Rose  
 Cllr Paul Skinner  
 Cllr Margaret Squires  
 Cllr Peter Stevens  
 Anthony Thomas  
 Cllr Peter Thornton  
 Cllr John Ward

Shropshire Council  
 English Rural Housing Association  
 South Norfolk Council  
 Richmondshire District Council  
 Leicestershire County Council  
 Young Somerset  
 Rutland County Council  
 Derbyshire Dales District Council  
 Stratford-Upon-Avon District Council  
 Cumbria County Council  
 Harborough District Council  
 Devon County Council  
 Uttlesford District Council  
 East Suffolk District Council  
 Breckland Council and South Holland Council  
 Herefordshire County Council  
 Wychavon District Council  
 Teignbridge District Council  
 Ryedale District Council  
 South Northamptonshire Council  
 Leicestershire County Council  
 Oxfordshire County Council  
 Northumberland County Council  
 Boston Borough Council  
 Mid Devon District Council  
 West Suffolk Council  
 Lichfield District Council  
 Cumbria County Council  
 Babergh District Council

**Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers**

**Rural Services Network**

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ  
 Tel: 01822 851370

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




---

## 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, 17<sup>th</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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.

**Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers**

Rural Services Network

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 851370

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



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, **13<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> 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 papers<sup>1</sup>](#)
- [Revitalising Rural – Press Release<sup>2</sup>](#)

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.

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

<sup>2</sup> <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](#)<sup>3</sup>

These Rural Lens documents enable us to highlight some of the key issues for rural areas that there may be from Government documents but it's 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.

---

<sup>3</sup> <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, 27<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

**Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers**

Rural Services Network

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 851370

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