



**The LGA Rural Services Network Special Interest Group
Agenda
Meeting of the SPARSE RURAL Sub SIG**

Venue:- The LGA, Smith Square, London SW1P 3HZ

Date: Monday 24th June 2019

Time: 11.00 am to 12.45 pm

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. To confirm the minutes of the last meeting of the SPARSE-Rural Sub-SIG held on the 28th January and to discuss any matters arising (*Appendix A - page 2*).
3. To receive the minutes of the Executive Meeting held on the 20th May 2019 and to discuss any matters arising (*Appendix B - page 9*).
4. Local Government Finance: 75% Business Rate Retention and Needs Formula Review. Verbal Update from Graham Biggs.
5. To consider the Lords Report on the Rural Economy Chapter – including Conclusions and Recommendations relating thereto (*Appendix C - page 15*) on:
 - Chapter 7: Delivering Essential Services at the Local Level
6. BUDGET REPORT:
(*Appendix D - page 38*)
7. Any other business

Note of last SPARSE Rural Sub Special Interest Group meeting

Title:	SPARSE Rural Sub Special Interest Group
Date:	Monday 28 January 2019
Venue:	Smith Square 1&2, Ground Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions
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1 Apologies for Absence

Cllr Cecilia Motley welcomed members to the meeting and outlined plans for the day.

Members noted the list of apologies sent. (See Appendix 1 for list of attendees).

2 Minutes of the last meeting of the SPARSE-Rural Sub-SIG held on the 12th November 2018 and to discuss any matters arising

Members confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting.
There were no matters arising.

3 To receive the minutes of the Executive Meeting held on the 14th January 2019 and to discuss any matters arising not on this agenda

Members noted the minutes of the recent meeting of the Executive.
There were no matters arising.

4 2019/20 Provisional Settlement – RSN Response

Members noted the response included within the Agenda at Appendix C and that most of it was the same as the previous year's which was only to be expected as it was the final year of the 4-year settlement period. One key change was an increase in the rural service delivery grant. The group noted that the amount is a relatively small amount of money and that from next year, it will be taken into the proposed foundation formula rather than a stand-alone amount.

The gap in spending power funded by Council Tax in rural areas is increasing year on year and there is a gap of 13%.

The Chair members that the RSN had written directly to the minister to spell out what

they are looking for in the new formula

Members responded:

- They were pleased that the threat of negative RSG has been removed;
- There are concerns about what will happen in the next financial year and there will be a need to step up representation to ensure that Rural areas receive fair treatment under the new regime.

5. Business Rate Retention Consultation – draft RSN response

Members noted the formula currently used for assessing the percentage of business rates retention by local authorities and said that the government needs to take into account the different circumstances and resources for individual businesses. It is therefore vital that due account is taken of the rate of relief according to the type of business concerned. Members agreed that a balance must be met and councils should realise the benefits to their areas of attracting visitors through added spending via tourism – even though it may not benefit the actual council directly.

Members agreed that the system does not actually differ substantially to the one used previously.

The group raised several concerns:

- Effect of the downturn of local shops and decrease in revenue – members felt that the reliability on predicting growth to fund local government services is unrealistic in the current economy. It is flawed to not think about future problems should these resources diminish;
- Children’s Services – impacts of increased numbers of children coming into care is costing local authorities more.

Members agreed the response as prepared by Pixel.

6. Needs and Resources Consultation – draft RSN response

The Group considered the draft response to the Needs and Resources Consultation which was included as Appendix D within the Agenda.

Graham Biggs (Rural Services Network) then provided a presentation on the Fair Funding Review with an overview of the proposed changes included within the Consultation.

Concerns raised were as follows:

- The whole Fair Funding review may be irrelevant if there is a change to Government;
- The removal of Deprivation from the Foundation formula was controversial across the Sector;
- There were large gaps in the information relating to adults and children’s social care;
- Actual urban areas are actually starting to take note of rural issues and to react – however, it may be too late;

- More deprived authorities will be hit using the formula;
- The new method of funding using travel time data works significantly in favour of rural, however the overall outcome will be a package and include all components. There is a danger that the combination of the Spending Review, fair funding review and business rates reform will lead to constraints on authorities and there are questions on whether these are viable and manageable.
- Uncertainty about changes to legislation and the possibility of ministerial discretion in decision making on funding. However, the formula would still be the same;
- The financial viability of authorities is very much in doubt and in danger in future years and it was agreed that government must be aware of this and must deliver in order to avoid failure.

Members noted the structure of overall funding using the Relative Needs Formula (RNF) and reduction from the current 15 service formulae on the basis on what is currently known. They looked at current arguments for deprivation and discussed the proposed change to using the Department for Transport Travel Time Data for mapping remoteness of rural areas. Mr Biggs provided the group with a breakdown of how this data is measured.

Mr Biggs went on to outline specific formulae for other services and provided details on how research for these are based. There are still major concerns about the quantum used for assessments. Members noted details of these services which include children and adult social care, highway maintenance, coastal protection and flooding, fire and rescue services amongst others. There is a lot of uncertainty and there are many services which are without separate formula. Members agreed concerns about how or whether these will be funded.

There were also worries about the imbalance of funding – particularly around costs allocation to children’s services - and the lack of consideration for other services used by more people.

Another concern was the use of population projections in assessing funding requirements. Local authorities would be unable to reassess their needs before the end of five years should the predictions be wrong. Members stated the importance of raising councils’ awareness of this.

The issue of including car parking income in resources is a balance as many rural tourist and coastal areas raise significant sums through these services. However, urban areas, especially London, raise huge amounts which would mean more funding being redistributed.

Mr Biggs summarised details of his presentation and acknowledged that the process is moving in the right direction for rural authorities but that it was important to find out how much money authorities will receive now and also by how much this funding will increase in the future. Without that information, it would be difficult to agree the Fair Funding Review.

He concluded his presentation by advising members to respond to both the RSN’s response to the Consultation, as well as in their own right as individual rural authorities

Members agreed that there is still a lot of uncertainty.

Cllr Motley thanked Mr Biggs for an informative presentation and reiterated the

importance of responding to the Local Government Finance consultations.

The deadline is 21 February 2019.

7 Members agreed the draft RSN response

The Slides are available on the RSN website and will be emailed to members immediately for information. **Action:** Nicola Busuttill

8 Budget Report

Mr Biggs provided an update on SPARSE's current financial situation.

9 Any other business

There was no other business and the meeting was closed.

Next Meeting:

The next meetings of the Rural Social Care & Health Group Rural Assembly will be held on 8 April 2019 at Local Government Association, 18 Smith Square, London.

Attendance

Organisation	Name
Graham Biggs MBE	RSN
David Inman	RSN
Cllr Cecilia Motley	RSN
Cllr Yvonne Peacock	Richmondshire District Council
Cllr Jeremy Savage	South Norfolk District Council
Cllr Cameron Clark	Sevenoaks District Council
Cllr Owen Bierley	West Lindsey District Council
Cllr Robert Heseltine	North Yorkshire County Council
Cllr Gerard Brewster	Mid Suffolk District Council
Cllr Peter Stevens	St Edmundsbury Borough Council
Cllr Gwilym Butler	Shropshire Council
Stephen Boddington	Norfolk County Council
Cllr Trevor Thorne	Northumberland County Council
Fatima de Abreu	Local Government Association

Apologies

Organisation	Name
Chris Stanton, Rural Economy Officer	Guildford Borough Council
Cllr Peter Hare-Scott	Mid Devon District Council
Revd Richard Kirlew	Sherborne Deanery Rural Chaplaincy
Cllr Philip Sanders	West Devon Borough Council
John Birtwistle, Head of Policy	UK Bus
Cllr Stephen Arnold	Ryedale District Council
Dave Heywood, Chief Executive	South Staffordshire Council
Cllr Rupert Reichhold	East Northamptonshire District Council
Cllr Peter Jackson	Northumberland Council

Cllr John Spence	Essex County Council
Cllr Jane March	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Cllr Anthony Trollope-Bellew	West Somerset District Council
Cllr Jonathan Brook	South Lakeland District Council
Sian Moore, Corporate Director & S151 Officer	Richmondshire District Council
Dr Pav Ramewal, Chief Executive	Sevenoaks District Council
Cllr Phil King	Harborough District Council
Maggie Quinn, Partnership & Locality Manager	South Staffordshire Council
James Tennant, Business Account Manager	East Northamptonshire District Council
Cherie Root, Head of Business Solutions	Braintree District Council
Cllr Louise Richardson	Leicestershire County Council
Katie Williams, Economy Skills & Culture Assistant	Cornwall Council
Cllr Brian Long	Borough of King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC
Cllr Adam Paynter	Cornwall Council
Mark Carroll, Executive Director Place & Public Health	Essex County Council
Louise Driver, Economic Growth Team Leader	Leicestershire County Council
Cllr Nigel Dixon	North Norfolk District Council
Cllr Barry Lewis	Derbyshire County Council
Cllr Graham Bull	Huntingdonshire District Council
Jo Churchill MP	Bury St Edmunds
Kate Kennally, Chief Executive	Cornwall Council
Gary Powell, Community Projects Officer	Teignbridge District Council
Dr Robert Murray, Economic Development Manager	East Devon District Council
Cllr Ian Thomas	East Devon District Council
Cllr Richard Sherras	Ribble Valley Borough Council
Cllr David Ireton	Craven District Council
Cllr Janet Clowes	Cheshire East Council
Cllr David Godfrey	Folkestone & Hythe District Council
Cllr Roger Phillips	Herefordshire Council
Cllr Rob Waltham	North Lincolnshire Council

Adele Taylor, Executive Director of Finance	Cherwell District Council
Cllr Ken Pollock	Worcestershire County Council
Cllr Stuart Lawson	Suffolk Coastal District Council
Cllr Jane Mortimer	Scarborough District Council
Cllr Wendy Bowkett	East Lindsey District Council
Cllr Peter Thornton	South Lakeland District Council
Andy Brown, Chief Operating Officer	Cornwall Council
Clive Howey, Director of Finance	Eden District Council
Ian Knowles, Director of Resources	West Lindsey District Council

**Minutes of the Rural Services Network Executive held on
Monday 20th May 2019**

Venue— 63, Bayswater Road, London.

Present:-

Cllr Cecilia Motley, Chair – RSN
 Cllr Jeremy Savage – South Norfolk Council
 Cllr Robert Heseltine - North Yorkshire County Council
 Cllr Peter Stevens - St Edmundsbury Borough Council
 Revd Richard Kirlew - Sherborne Deanery Rural Chaplaincy
 Anna Price, Director, Co-Founder – Rural Business Awards
 Cllr Peter Thornton – South Lakeland District Council
 Cllr Trevor Thorne- Northumberland Council

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

Apologies

Kerry Booth – RSN
 Cllr Rob Waltham – North Lincolnshire Council
 Cllr Mark Whittington – Lincolnshire County Council
 John Birtwistle – UK Bus
 Cllr Roger Phillips – Herefordshire Council

2. Notes of Previous Meeting 14th Jan 2019.

Agreed as an accurate minute
 Nothing Arising

3. Notes of Main Meetings

Rural Assembly 8th April 2019
 Social Care and Health Group 8th April 2019

Nothing Arising

4. Notes of RSP Partner Group Meeting and RSP Vulnerability Group Meeting 9th April 2019

These were new meetings constituted especially for RSP organisations. They had gone well and the feedback had been good.

5. Future Meetings

To avoid a clash (especially in respect of the Health and Social Care meeting) with the CCN Conference it was decided the meetings planned for the 18th and (for RSP) 19th of November 2019 would be switched to the 2nd and 3rd of December respectively.

6. Membership of the Executive and the Impact of the Election.

(A) As a result of resignations and the Election procedures etc there was now a vacancy for the South East and East area Vice Chairs. The matter would be considered by the AGM.

(B) As Member's AGMs took place if nominations altered thus affecting those serving on the Executive Group members would be updated.

(C) Martin Collett the Chief Executive of the English Rural Housing Association was interested in joining the Executive as a Director of the RSP. His CV was circulated and he was formally voted onto the Group (subject to ratification at the RSP AGM).

(D) It was decided to write out:

(a) to all new Leaders telling them about the Group and its work

(b) to all newly elected members similarly

7. Fair Funding Review and 75 percent Business Rate Retention.

A verbal report was made by Graham Biggs.

There was concern that this may be delayed because of the log jam arising from Brexit. However that would present problems of its own because of the financial impact that would have in changing financial times.

It was known that in the meantime civil servants were continuing to undertake work on a changed system.

It was decided to seek to commission work from Adrian Jenkins of Pixel with a 'Where are we Now' paper. This would be particularly aimed at new members.

It was believed the Price Waterhouse report commissioned by the CCN would be out shortly. It would be shared with members of the Executive and would be presented to the Joint County APPG & Rural Fair Share Group on 10th June

The Executive wondered if Member Authorities could try to encourage their MPs to come to this event.

8. Rural Towns.

A report suggesting setting- up a new sectional group in the RSN (as part of the RSP structures) was presented. Members considered the report with its appendices presented to them by the Corporate Director. One of the appendices listed the c750 towns (over 3,000 in built up area population) which may be candidates for such a Group.

It was felt there was now a lack of a national voice for rural towns over significant rural issues following the 'running down' of the Market Town initiatives that had taken place over previous decades.

The Countryside Commission had undertaken work when they were current on the basis that market towns were found when the local population exceeded 2,500 people.

Obviously it would be impossible to approach all these at the one time and a tranche by tranche approach would allow for RSN to build from a base of experience.

There were perhaps three forms of rural towns identified by Defra definitions/data

- (a) Hub Towns which exceeded the normal 10,000 population of traditional Market Towns but still took on that central role
- (b) Market Towns with a built up area population of between 5 and 10 thousand people
- (c) Smaller Market Towns down to 3,000 people.

Many of these towns (if they were in the area of a member authority already as a result of that membership) received Community Group involvement giving them the Bulletin weekly service plus the opportunity for panel work and this would continue.

However for a fairly small annual involvement fee the following service was suggested:-

- (a) Formation of a dedicated RSP Rural Towns Sub-Group, offering some peer-to-peer networking and discussion opportunities (either face-to-face or online).

(The suggestion to use RSP was to avoid any possible dilution of the work of the RSN SIG work which involves principal councils)

- (b) Development of a representational role, for example responding to selected public policy consultations or meeting with interested Parliamentarians. There appears to be no rural specific or market or small towns APPG.
- (c) Development of some good practice and learning material related to the key policy areas and delivery challenges or opportunities for rural/market towns.
- (d) Provision of a dedicated (quarterly?) newsletter highlighting relevant latest policy developments, showcasing interesting member practice and flagging relevant initiatives or funding opportunities (perhaps drawn from the Rural Funding Digest).
- (e) Possibly provision of some benchmark statistics about rural/market towns.
- (f) Management of occasional online surveys of the member rural/market towns, to gather comparative information about topics of particular interest to this grouping.

It was felt the best way to establish a first tranche was to randomly pick a town each from all the rural areas listed and see how many would be interested. A mixture of the three sizes of town would be selected.

It is suggested that the annual membership fee requested is £150 for Hub Towns; £130 for Market Towns and £110 for the Smaller Market Towns (all plus VAT).

RSN would ensure that there would be two specific meetings a year of this sub group with periodic opportunities for this Sub Group in RSN to present to the Rural Services

APPG as relevant issues arise which MPs representing Rural Constituencies should be made aware of/asked to make representations to Ministers about.

9. RSN Budget 2019/20

Members considered the report from The Chief Executive. The position may have been marginally improved by the decision to put back a unitary Northamptonshire.

10. Spending Review Discussions about Rural Finance based Aspirations with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and with other Rural Groups.

RSN along with other rural representative bodies had been invited to a meeting with Liz Truss the Chief Secretary to the Treasury about the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review. She had encouraged the organisation to put together a common case. Although with a group of organisations who represent different rural viewpoints this had proved possible and a constructive second meeting had now taken place.

The Minister had asked the Groups to come forward with specific proposal on Rural Housing and (working with the Department of Transport) on Rural Transport.

11. Report on the Housing Survey.

Members received for information the outcome of the survey undertaken by CCRI on behalf of Rural England on Housing Issues. The report was noted. The development of a rural panel was proving challenging.

12. Verbal Report to the Executive on Advertisements in the Rural Bulletin.

Members had asked that they be informed back about feedback from people over the introduction of limited advertising in 'The Bulletin'. EE had been running an advert for 2 months. The advert had been moved forward on the second month. No adverse comments had been received.

13. Current Staffing Issues.

(A) Secretarial Staff.

Two part-timers were leaving the Tavistock office having been offered other jobs. This gave the opportunity to seek to get a new employee involved on a five days a week rate basis. Such a position had been advertised.

(B) Possible secondment of the Policy Director for two days a week for a year.

To seek to move forward Rural England CIC (Rural Research) needed some dedicated assistance. They had been examining the options. To seek to assist Jon Turner had been offered to R.E. on a two day a week one year secondment. RSN would benefit financially.

The RE Directors were this month currently considering the position.

14. Regional Meeting Update.

A report was given. The Regional Meetings (including one introduced into the South East for the first time) continued to be well received and attendance had been good.

15. Call for a Rural Strategy Campaign.

(a) Offer to non- members in the Predominantly Rural Classification seeking to gain their support for the Call on Government for a Rural Strategy.

If the Call or a Rural Strategy was to be persuasive it was felt that support needed to increase. At the present time there were 18 authorities who stood outside the group whose areas were classified Predominately Rural. To run parallel with the Call a membership campaign needed to be mounted.

The Executive considered the matter and decided as follows.

(A) Those who it was considered gained no financial benefit from Sparse Rural activities would be requested to take up Rural Assembly membership at the going rate of £663 at this vital time.

(B) Those who were clearly receiving Sparse Rural Benefit and were received Rural Services Delivery Grant would be offered a special two year introduction rate involving both Sparse Rural and Rural Assembly membership at £1000 per annum for the two years.

(b) Lords Select Committee Report on Rural Economy. Summary and Recommendations Sections had been attached.

The Select Committee had issued a comprehensive and very persuasive report a summary of which had been circulated to the Executive. It had lived up to every expectation. A comparison survey was being undertaken to establish where the Report ran parallel with the 'Call for' backing papers and where there might be variance but undoubtedly the Select Committee Report was a tremendous boost for the Call. Undoubtedly the Select Committee work had added invaluable depth and texture to the 'Call'.

(c) Proposed Regional Roadshows

After an event which had taken place in Taunton The RSN, the Rural Coalition, ACRE and Plunkett were working together on further ones.. They were planned for the North (possibly one in North East and one in North West) , in the Midlands (possibly one in each of the West and East Midlands) and one in the South East. It was hoped that Calor would sponsor these.

(d) Working with the Rural Services APPG

The Chief Executive had discussed very fully with the Chair, Philip Dunne. He had agreed that the APPG could be used as the political springboard for this campaign. They would also take a watching brief on the Lords Report and the Government's response.

(e) Engaging with RSN/RSP Members

To date there were over 1,000 signatories to 'the Call'. However, the matter had not really been pushed yet (due to the May elections) and over the summer and autumn there would be need for the matter to be taken up with councils and other organisations on an individual basis if the petition was to be meaningfully employed.

Shropshire Council had (unanimously) passed a supportive motion and this could be offered as a template for similarly minded members

Attendance at relevant fringe events at Party Conferences was being considered

16. Any Other Business.

The 'Leading Edge Initiative'

Cornwall was seeking to establish, largely on an officer basis, a grouping that argued for those areas that did not have a significantly sized city or large town in their area. Research with consultants had produced a swathe of such authorities across England with some approximate physical inter connection. An embryo grouping of some 20 authorities was under consideration to argue and present a case to Government in comparison to the City Region case. This group wished to ensure the work of the RSN and the CCN would not be impacted upon by the initiative and would keep both organisations updated.

LORDS SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT CHAPTER 7 DELIVERING ESSENTIAL SERVICES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

CHAPTER 7: DELIVERING ESSENTIAL SERVICES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Introduction

1. The issues we have covered above make clear that a comprehensive and place-based rural strategy will need to address a range of policy challenges in a way that genuinely reflects the interests of rural economies. This chapter will address some of the other key policy areas on which we have heard evidence in the course of the inquiry. The chapter covers, transport, crime and health services, including tackling loneliness and social isolation in rural areas.
2. As with digital connectivity and housing, it is clear across these areas that—while some positive initiatives are being undertaken, and there are many examples of good practice—the absence of strategic thinking by successive governments has often led to policy failure and to rural businesses and communities suffering from inadequate support and provision compared with their urban counterparts. Each section of this chapter will summarise what we heard of the challenges and opportunities and how a rural strategy might go about addressing them. In each case there is a need for fair funding from central government that reflect the costs of rural provision and differing demographic challenges.

Rural transport

3. Witnesses told the Committee that good transport connectivity is a critical issue for rural businesses and communities, “a lifeline”⁴⁷⁹ connecting people to jobs, customers to businesses, providing access to essential services such as education, health and getting people to surrounding towns and cities.
4. Witnesses were unequivocal in their view that rural transport services are generally in a state of decline. The Campaign to Protect Rural England told us there had been “a ‘perfect storm’ of cuts to public transport and the erosion of local services in recent years”, whereby transport services had been cut while local amenities were also disappearing”.⁴⁸⁰
5. Passenger numbers on buses have declined significantly. Written evidence from the LgA set out the scale of decline, noting that passenger bus journeys outside London had fallen almost 6 per cent in the last decade and distance travelled on council-supported buses had decreased by over 50% over the same period.⁴⁸¹ Darren Shirley of the Campaign for Better Transport attributed the decline to affordability, stating that “When a service cannot cover its costs for concessionary travel for older people, and when its support is being reduced, it has to put up fares. When fares go up, you end up with that cycle of decline”.⁴⁸² It was also observed that where bus services are pared back to a minimum, they become unattractive to users because of their infrequency, and so ridership levels fall even further.⁴⁸³

479 [Q 198](#) (John Birtwistle)

480 Written evidence from CPRE ([REC0140](#))

481 Written evidence from the LgA ([REC0103](#))

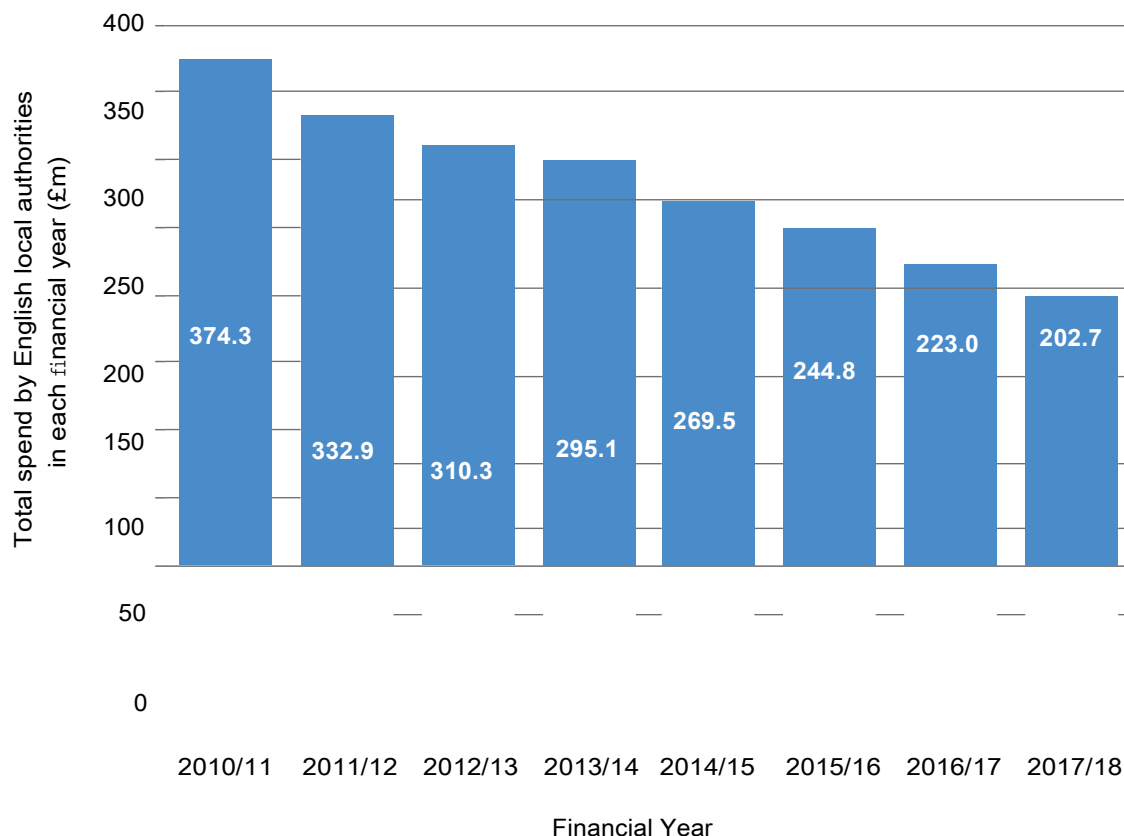
482 [Q 201](#) (Darren Shirley)

483 Written evidence from Bus Users UK ([REC0134](#))

Rural bus services

6. Ben Coulson of Bus Users UK identified three areas in which significant budget cuts had led to a decrease in funding for rural bus services: reductions in local authority expenditure, cuts to the Bus Service Operators grant since 2004, and cuts to reimbursement for free pass holders in rural areas.⁴⁸⁴ The Campaign for Better Transport noted that 3,088 bus services have been reduced, altered or withdrawn since 2010/11 and that in 2017/18 there was a net reduction of £20.2m to supported bus services⁴⁸⁵ in England.⁴⁸⁶ Witnesses cited the reduction in local authority discretionary expenditure as a key reason for the very sharp fall in supported bus services, as budget cuts combined with increased demand for statutory services⁴⁸⁷ such as social care meant that non ring-fenced provision was diverted to other critical areas. John Birtwistle, Head of Policy—UK Bus at Firstgroup plc told the Committee that “this has meant that the duty on local authorities to identify socially necessary services under the 1985 Act has not been matched by a duty to provide necessary bus services”.⁴⁸⁸ It was reported that some local authorities were no longer providing any discretionary support to local bus services.⁴⁸⁹

Figure 27: Total spend by local authorities in England on supported bus services (all sums adjusted to 2018 using RPI)



Source: Campaign for Better Transport, *Three stages to better bus services: using the Bus Services Act, July 2018*: <https://bettertransport.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdfs/bus-services-act-guidance.pdf> [accessed 15 April 2019]

484 [Q 198](#)

485 “Supported bus services are those subsidised by local authorities because they are not provided by commercial bus companies. They serve communities where no alternative route exists, meaning that any cut or alteration can often have a huge impact on residents and local economies”. Campaign for Better Transport, *Buses in Crisis, 2018*: <https://bettertransport.org.uk/buses-in-crisis-2018> [accessed 5 March 2019]

486 [Q 198](#) (Darren Shirley)

487 Statutory services are those that local authorities are required by law to provide, as opposed to discretionary services for which there is no equivalent legal obligation.

488 [Q 198](#)

489 northamptonshire and Cumbria were mentioned by John Birtwistle in oral evidence [Q 198](#).

7. To address the spiral of decline in funding, witnesses supported better allocation of funding for local buses (through ring fencing of transport budgets⁴⁹⁰) and the establishment of a clear investment strategy for buses.
8. Darren Shirley of the Campaign for Better Transport suggested that transport funding could be consolidated into a single investment pot, bringing together funds that currently exist across multiple agencies such as MHCLG, Df T and the NHS funding, in a single place to which local authorities could seek access rather than having to bid into multiple pots. He argued that this could also involve longer-term funding to enable better planning for future service provision.⁴⁹¹
9. In addition to reviewing funding allocations, witnesses also informed us that a “Total Transport” initiative may be a positive way of addressing rural transport challenges. Defra stated that the Df T has funded 37 Total Transport pilot schemes to improve rural transport and that “the schemes include integrating separate but overlapping transport services such as minibus patient collections with other types of passengers”. It argued that the initiative “has shown that taking a more holistic way of looking at what transport services already exist, and working in partnership across organisations, can help to provide alternative and better value transport solutions”.⁴⁹²
10. Darren Shirley told us that the pilot provided insights on what can be done to address rural transport challenges using an integrated approach to passenger transport, and outlined the key lessons from the scheme, including the importance of local knowledge, strong partnership relationships, flexibility and integration of provision, and an understanding of the needs of the community.⁴⁹³ He also called for a clear bus investment strategy from government, pulling together different actors, setting out policy and powers needed and tying the strategy to future funding.⁴⁹⁴
11. Demand-responsive transport was mentioned by several witnesses as an important element for future rural “total transport” solutions in some areas, given its potential to meet demands that were not previously met by traditional transport services.
12. The Community Transport Association stressed the importance of the “multi-modal” nature of transport connections in rural areas. It noted that community transport often forms the first or last mile of a journey, transporting users from rural homes to public transport stops. It argued that provision in future could focus on more ‘demand-responsive’ services, which in turn would help boost patronage of existing services.⁴⁹⁵
13. Several witnesses noted the role of technology could ensure that demand-responsive travel is more affordable to use and cost effective to operate.⁴⁹⁶ For example, ACRE noted that public and community based rural transport could benefit from better broadband connectivity and better mobile data coverage by enabling better information about the operation of services and

490 [Q 208](#) (John Birtwistle)

491 [Q 201](#)

492 Written evidence from Defra ([REC0146](#)) 493 [Q 200](#)

494 *Ibid.*

495 Written evidence from Community Transport Association ([REC0160](#))

also enabling more sophisticated demand responsive services.⁴⁹⁷ Ben Colson of Bus Users UK noted, however, that printed timetables would remain essential in many areas owing to limited availability and usage of digital technology in some rural localities.⁴⁹⁸

Community transport and Section 19 & 22 permits

14. Many witnesses noted that community transport, in its various forms, is a significant provider of transport in rural areas, either operating minibuss services or volunteer car schemes.

Figure 28: Community transport plays an important role in supporting accessibility in rural communities and their economies



Source: The TAS Partnership Ltd, ‘Cumbria CT, Holker Hall, Cumbria’: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cumbria_CT,_Holker_Hall,_Cumbria,_1st_June_2013_\(2\)_13583277443.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cumbria_CT,_Holker_Hall,_Cumbria,_1st_June_2013_(2)_13583277443.jpg) [accessed 4 April 2019] (CC BY 2.0)

15. Several witnesses raised concerns about the threat from potential changes to the use of Section 19 and 22 permits for minibuss operation, recently put forward by the Df T⁴⁹⁹, which they argued could seriously affect the sector’s ability to deliver services. These permits allow the holder to operate transport services for hire or reward without the need for a full public service vehicle (PSV) operator’s licence. The government recently consulted on reforms to guidance on the issue of such permits to ensure their compliance with EU competition law, following concerns from some private providers that some not-for-profits were effectively providing commercial services.
16. Locality noted that the proposed changes recommend a change to what should be defined as ‘non-commercial’ activity and argued that whether an organisation receives payment for delivery of transport services is not the most appropriate measure of commercial activity. It noted that community transport providers may receive payment for their services—including from

497 Supplementary written evidence from ACRE (REC0169) 498 [Q 204](#)

499 Written evidence from East Riding of Yorkshire Council (REC0034), Locality (REC0119) and Suffolk County Council (REC0113)

organisations and individuals—to cover costs of running the service rather than as a commercial activity. Locality suggested that a more appropriate application of the exemption should be based on the legal status of the organisation.⁵⁰⁰

17. In March 2019 the government published a response to its consultation on the use of Section 19 and 22 permits. It made no announcement on changes to guidance for the ‘non-commercial exemption’ for PSV licences as this was subject to legal action. It did, however, announce that a “short distance” exemption would be implemented, exempting operators from PSV licences where they are only engaged in journeys of short distances. Although there would be a set “short distance” of 10 miles specified in legislation, this could be varied on a case by case basis in areas of lower population density.⁵⁰¹

Investment in rural road networks

18. Several witnesses drew attention to the need for more investment in the maintenance of rural road networks. Herefordshire Council highlighted that dispersed populations and single carriageway road networks “place a significant burden on those travelling on the network” and that extended and variable journey times put rural communities and businesses at a disadvantage.⁵⁰²
19. Ruby Peacock of the Federation of Small Businesses told us that local transport infrastructure, in particular the need for government funding to improve the local roads network, was a high priority for small businesses.⁵⁰³
20. Horsham District Council stated that one approach being considered in their area is to promote growth of some types of businesses on key transport routes close to existing villages and towns, for example A roads. It suggested this might promote rural employment opportunities and attract investment to improve access into more rural areas.⁵⁰⁴
- 21. Public spending cuts have had a significant impact on rural transport provision and in particular rural bus use. In addition, complex funding streams and poorly integrated services mean that rural economies are often held back by transport connections that are poorer than they need to be.**
- 22. Government should undertake a full review of funding streams to rural public transport as part of a new rural strategy. The aspiration should be to develop a “single transport investment pot” that could be used to better support rural transport using a place-based approach, in collaboration with local authorities and other public bodies. Within this, Government should work with local bodies to support the expansion of demand-led services.**
- 23. Such a programme should draw upon the examples of Total Transport Pilots, which successfully sought to maximise benefits**

500 Written evidence from Locality ([REC0119](#))

501 Department for Transport, *Government response to the consultation on the use of section 19 and section 22 permits for road passenger transport in Great Britain* (March 2019): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/786482/government-response-community-transport-consultation.pdf [accessed 20 March 2019]

502 Written evidence from Herefordshire Council ([REC0092](#)) 503 [Q](#)

504 Written evidence from Horsham District Council ([REC0056](#))

from existing transport resources including pooling resources from the public sector.

- 24.** *The programme should also seek to explore the potential of community transport as a means of supporting and supplementing existing routes. In this context, Government should reconsider proposals to change guidance on eligibility of Section 19 and 22 permits issued to not-for-profit community transport providers. The introduction of a short-distance exemption is welcome, but Government must ensure that new guidance on the non-commercial exemption does not threaten the viability of community transport operators.*
- 25.** *Government should also support targeted investment in the maintenance of rural road networks in collaboration with local authorities, to identify those networks outside the major routes where investment would be most important in supporting rural economic development.*

Rural Crime

26. As in urban areas, crime can have a significant impact on rural businesses, economies and communities. We learned, however, that the impact in rural areas can be greater, not least because of the isolation of some business properties (including farms), the larger areas and distances for police to cover and a lower police funding per head of population in rural areas than urban areas.
27. There are two ways of looking at rural crime. The first is to look only at crimes that have a specific rural element. Taking this view, the Metropolitan Police classify rural crimes into four categories:
- Agricultural: covers working farms, farm machinery, buildings and small holdings;
 - Equine: covers working stables and equestrian centres including tack theft and livestock worrying;
 - Wildlife: covers hare coursing, poaching and interfering with protected species; and
 - Heritage: covers offences which harm the value of England's heritage assets and their setting, including lead theft from churches, damage to ancient monuments and illegal metal detecting.⁵⁰⁵
28. Alternatively, rural crime can be taken to include any crime committed in a rural area. In this report, we take the broader view of rural crime as any criminal activity that takes place in a rural setting.
29. The Rural Crime network Survey for 2018, which was commissioned by the national Rural Crime network, a body made up of 30 Police and Crime Commissioners, found a poor perception of policing in rural communities. The survey found that only 27 per cent of 20,000 respondents believed their local police were doing a good job. 69 per cent of farmers and rural-specific

⁵⁰⁵ Metropolitan Police, 'What is rural crime?': <https://www.met.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/rc/rural-crime/what-is-rural-crime/> [accessed 15 April 2019]

business owners have been a victim of crime over the past 12 months and 60 per cent said they were fairly or very worried about being a victim of crime in future.⁵⁰⁶

Costs of rural crime

30. The monetary impact of rural crime has worsened in recent years, with the Rural Crime network survey finding that the average cost of a crime to the victim had increased from £4,000 to £4,800 between 2015 and 2018.⁵⁰⁷ Sarah Lee of the Countryside Alliance, who also sits on the board of the national Rural Crime network, told us that the financial impact of crime on rural businesses averages about £5,000, a potentially significant amount for a small rural business, and in increase of 13 per cent since 2015.⁵⁰⁸
31. graham Biggs of the Rural Services network told us that the main economic impact from rural crimes comes from the theft of agricultural implements and machinery.⁵⁰⁹ We also heard that the full cost of rural crimes is being underestimated. By way of example, Deputy Chief Constable Craig naylor, the lead for rural crime for the national Police Chiefs' Council explained that if a harvester is stolen, the cost of the stolen harvester will be recognised through the insurance claim while the cost of a crop not being harvested goes unreported.⁵¹⁰
32. graham Biggs also told us that rural police forces are underfunded and receive less per person funding than urban counterparts.⁵¹¹ According to the national Police Chiefs' Council, on average, the 12 most rural police forces receive £100 per head of population compared to £158 for the 12 least rural forces, representing a difference of £58 (37 per cent) less funding for most rural police forces.⁵¹² Julia Mulligan, Chair of the national Rural Crime network and the Countryside Alliance also highlighted funding for rural police forces as a concern.⁵¹³
33. Concerns were also expressed over the closure of rural police stations and of some magistrates' courts that serviced rural areas. Julia Mulligan told us:

“The force I operate in has 11,000 police officers, which is down in the last five years from over 13,000. We are in a position where, with the current budget situation, we will have to cut again next year. We will be a good percentage point down from what our operating model was less than five years ago. Our demand has gone up”.⁵¹⁴

Challenges of policing in rural areas

34. As with other rural services, rural policing faces challenges of distances and sparsity. The Lord Bishop of St Albans commented on the absence of police

506 national Rural Crime network, 'national Rural Crime Survey 2018': <https://www.nationalruralcrimenetwork.net/research/internal/2018survey/> [accessed 15 April 2019]

507 *Ibid.*

508 [Q 80](#)

509 [Q 92](#)

510 [Q 220](#)

511 [Q 92](#)

512 Supplementary written evidence from the national Police Chiefs' Council ([REC0195](#))

513 [Q 221](#) and supplementary written evidence from Countryside Alliance ([REC0178](#))

514 [Q 211](#)

in rural areas, noting that “if you call the police in a remote rural area there is probably no policeman for 20 or 40 miles”.⁵¹⁵

Box 24: Farm Watch in Lincolnshire

Deputy Chief Constable Craig naylor told us about Farm Watch, a community network system modelled on along the lines of neighbourhood Watch schemes. He told us that in Lincolnshire there is a WhatsApp group for farmers to give information directly to the local police. He told us, “this works particularly well in incidents of hare coursing or people poaching on farms”. There are 200–300 people on the Lincolnshire WhatsApp group who can notify the group the instant they notice any suspicious or criminal activity on their land. When they notify the group, they are not just alerting the police, but also other local farmers and land-owners in the group.

Source: [Q 215](#)

35. A significant challenge raised by witnesses was the burden being put on rural police forces due to gaps in the provision of essential services for mental health and other acute services. Deputy Chief Constable Craig naylor explained to us:

“In a rural community, such as Lincolnshire or north Yorkshire, it can be an hour to an hour and a half drive to get from a crisis situation to a crisis bed. Very often, it is a police officer who is doing that transportation, and then sitting with a person in crisis while they are assessed and accepted into the health system. ... an awful lot of good effort and good work is done by police forces across England and Wales to minimise that demand through the employment of mental health nurses and triage cars, but this demand is significant. In 20–25 per cent of our call demand, we can be dealing with concern for welfare, missing from home and mental health issues every day of the week. When you add travelling distance and travelling time, the impact becomes significant”.⁵¹⁶

Box 25: Scotland Partnership Against Rural Crime (SPARC)

SPARC is a collaboration between nFU Mutual and Scottish police forces, promoting partnership working with rural stakeholders to reduce rural crime. Funding has gone towards training officers in the investigation and prevention of a range of rural crimes and is used to support operations to detect vehicle and livestock theft, as well as establishing new schemes to prevent dog attacks on livestock. To help deliver this initiative SPARC has worked with nFU Scotland, Scottish Land and Estates, the Crown Office and the Scottish government among others. In the three years since SPARC was established, tractor and quad thefts have fallen by almost half.

Source: Written evidence from NFU Mutual ([REC0118](#))

36. Fear and the perception of crime in rural areas was also viewed as a problem. The Countryside Alliance told us the fear of crime is having a “detrimental effect” on the quality of life of people living in rural areas and drew our attention to the Rural Crime network survey findings that 39 per cent of rural people are worried about becoming a victim of crime compared to 19

⁵¹⁵ [Q 80](#)

⁵¹⁶ [Q 211](#)

per cent nationally. Others felt that the view that the police can't or won't help was fuelling underreporting of crime, a problem which graham Biggs described as "serious".⁵¹⁷

Fly tipping

37. Fly-tipping was raised by several witnesses as a challenge in rural areas. The Lord Bishop of St Albans and Julia Mulligan both saw the fly-tipping is a serious problem in rural areas.⁵¹⁸ Sarah Lee of the Countryside Alliance called fly-tipping a "disgraceful crime".⁵¹⁹

Figure 29: Rural locations are particularly susceptible to fly-tipping, and perpetrators can be hard to detect



Source: Chris Denny, 'Flytipping, Blackacre Lane': https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flytipping,_Blackacre_Lane_-_geograph.org.uk_-_1773409.jpg [accessed 3 April 2019] (CC BY-SA 2.0)

38. In June, the government announced a review to look at ways to crackdown on Organised Crime groups who profit from waste crime. The review considered the types of crimes being committed and the perpetrators, the impacts of serious and organised waste crime on the environment, communities and the economy, and how such crimes can be tackled. The report was published in november 2018 and new financial penalties were introduced to crack down on fly-tipping in January this year. Under the new

517 [Q 92](#)

518 [Q 80](#) (Lord Bishop of St Albans) and [Q 209](#) (Julia Mulligan)

519 [Q 80](#)

penalties, any household which fails to pass their waste to a licensed carrier, and whose waste is found fly tipped, could face fines of up to £400.⁵²⁰

39. While these new initiatives are welcome, we note that two issues particularly raised by witnesses were that existing laws and penalties were not being applied and that the cost of clean-up for rubbish dumped on private property falls to the land owner.⁵²¹ When asked about Defra's efforts to address fly-tipping, the Rural Affairs Minister told us that the review and new, harsher penalties had been undertaken in response to the seriousness of the problem.⁵²²

Criminal justice and sentencing in rural areas

40. Julia Mulligan told us that weak sentences were often passed for rural crimes because the Courts Service and Crown Prosecution Service have a poor understanding of the impact of crime in rural communities and on rural victims.⁵²³ Deputy Chief Constable naylor told us of an example:

“Things such as hare coursing can have a significant impact on a farm. When people drive, run, put dogs across a field that has been sown, that crop is ruined. You can have thousands of pounds worth of crop ruined by that. We then prosecute. You go to court, you end up with a £150 fine for someone who has been doing it, and they are handed their dogs, the vehicles and everything back”.

41. Deputy Chief Constable naylor added that the sentencing guidelines can give a penalty of up to £5,000 but that the higher fines were not being issued.⁵²⁴

42. *The impact of rural crime on rural economies is a significant concern. More needs to be done by Government to better understand, track and respond to rural criminality. Initiatives such as Farm Watch and WhatsApp groups between farmers, land-owners and police forces to monitor and report on rural crime should be shared widely among rural police forces and rolled out more widely.*

43. *We welcome new measures to tackle fly-tipping and the introduction of tougher new penalties, but we would also like to see new measures introduced to ensure that farmers and land-owners do not have to pay for the cost of clean-up of rubbish that is dumped on their land.*

44. *Magistrates, Courts and the Crown Prosecution Service should be trained to better understand the scale and impact of rural crime. Reforms to sentencing guidelines should be considered, where appropriate, to widen the range of possible sentences to better reflect the seriousness of some crimes.*

Rural health services

45. We also heard a range of evidence on the challenges of providing satisfactory health care services in rural areas. As well as the common difficulties

520 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, news story: 'Fly-tipping: new financial penalties in government fight against waste crime' 7 January 2019: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/fly-tipping-new-financial-penalties-in-government-fight-against-waste-crime> [accessed 3 April 2019]

521 [Q 80](#) (Lord Bishop of St Albans) and [Q 209](#) (Julia Mulligan) 522 [Q 311](#)

523 [Q 221](#)

524 *Ibid.*

associated with any rural service delivery, health services present a specific challenge owing to the older population of rural areas. The average age of the population is nearly six years higher in rural than in urban areas (44.6 per cent to 39 per cent) and nearly a quarter of rural residents (24.5 per cent) are over 65. Statistics also indicate that the number of over-65s is increasing much more sharply in rural areas (37 per cent between 2001 and 2015) than in urban areas (17 per cent).⁵²⁵ This inevitably places a greater challenge on rural health services owing to greater incidences of chronic illness, disability and mortality.

Box 26: Forest of Dean Community Hospital

Forest Economic Partnership (FEP) informed us that as part of developing healthcare provision in the Forest of Dean district, the local nHS has been “actively involved with an Independent Citizens’ Jury” who were asked to consider the location of a proposed new community hospital for the area.

The Citizens’ Jury considered a range of information, including travel and access issues, taking into account the challenges of transporting patients living in more rural areas. Based on this assessment, the Citizens Jury recommended that the hospital be located near to the town of Cinderford, which was endorsed by the nHS. FEP stated that “this evidence-based decision will support the long term economic future of the Forest of Dean”. This provides a positive example of community involvement in future healthcare planning which helps ensure that the interests of rural residents are fully taken into account.

Source: Written evidence from Forest Economic Partnership ([RECO129](#))

Service delivery challenges

46. The Rural Services network informed us that, despite their older population, rural areas receive slightly less funding per resident under nHS allocations to Clinical Commissioning groups (CCGs). During our visit to Herefordshire, we heard from local leaders and business groups that a “one size fits all” approach to healthcare did not work for rural areas, and that the local nHS trust was in considerable debt, through inadequate funding rather than poor financial management.
47. These points were echoed in further detail by Billy Palmer of the nuffield Trust, who told us that there were two main adjustments for rurality, an emergency ambulatory care adjustment and an adjustment for “unavoidable smallness” which accounted for about an additional £45 million to predominantly rural areas. This was, however, offset by accounting for historical expenditure in the formula, which took away £46 million. As he stated, “you are at pretty much net zero. You have failed to give them any additional money”.⁵²⁶
48. Professor Richard Parish of the national Centre for Rural Health and Care also expressed concern that rural health allocations did not account for additional costs associated with seasonal labour, tourism and second home ownership. He stated that “the health services have to retain a capacity that

525 Age UK, ‘Rural Ageing (England)’, (July 2018): https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/policy-positions/housing-and-homes/ppp_rural_ageing_uk.pdf [accessed 15 April 2019]

526 [Q 278](#)

deals with the peaks as well as the troughs, so there are added costs in that as well”.⁵²⁷

49. Defra informed us that the ageing society was one of the “grand challenges” set out in the government’s Industrial Strategy and that, in studying this issue, it intended to look at specific issues in rural communities. Its research streams included ‘healthy ageing’, new products and services to support earlier diagnosis, and ‘leading-edge healthcare’, which would develop new technologies for improving quality of treatment and speed up access to new medicines.⁵²⁸
50. It was noted in a range of evidence that social care funding was a particular challenge in rural areas. Age UK informed us that the number of people with social care needs living in rural areas is predicted to reach 930,000 by 2029, requiring an additional £2.7bn a year if these needs are to be met through publicly funded social care.⁵²⁹ The Rural Services network also argued that there was a case for statutory social care provision being fully funded by central government rather than through Council Tax. It added that “this would address the current unfairness in the system and would make it easier to cope with future demand”.⁵³⁰
51. Access to services was identified as a particular challenge in evidence to us. For example, during our visit to Herefordshire, we were told that the medical centre in the village of Fownhope had approximately 5,500 registered patients of whom only around 1,000 live in the parish of Fownhope itself, with a large proportion of patients living in isolated locations. While Community Transport Schemes existed, they are not able to respond at short notice to assist all patients in need of transport, meaning many people are dependent on taxis.
52. South northamptonshire Council called for the “provision of multi-use health centres in accessible locations that enable a potential patient to get the majority of their needs met within one location rather than having to drive to another location for treatment”. As an example, it cited wellbeing centres that can be designed as dual use functions with indoor leisure facilities, “undertaking a promotional and educational aspect, encouraging prevention as well as cure”.⁵³¹
53. Community Pharmacy Wales and the Pharmaceutical Services negotiating Committee (PSnC) both advocated greater utilisation of community pharmacies to deliver healthcare needs for rural communities. PSnC drew attention to the Essential Small Pharmacies, Local Pharmaceutical Services (ESPLPS) scheme which they said sustained predominantly rural pharmacies for many years in places where they would otherwise would not have been financially viable, though they noted that this scheme closed in March 2017. The PSnC argued that to improve and maintain health services in rural areas, a credible successor to the ESPLPS scheme should be introduced, to safeguard patient access to smaller pharmacies in rural areas, with additional funding.⁵³²

527 [Q 278](#)

528 Written evidence from Defra ([REC0146](#))

529 Written evidence from Age UK ([REC0097](#))

530 Written evidence from Rural Services network ([REC0031](#))

531 Written evidence from South northamptonshire Council ([REC0094](#))

532 Written evidence from Community Pharmacy Wales ([REC0027](#)) and Pharmaceutical Services negotiating Committee ([REC0157](#))

54. We also heard evidence highlighting possible technological means to address challenges in rural healthcare provision. For example, the District Councils network stated that “the digitisation of public services offers an important opportunity to support sustainable local services in more remote district council settings and overcome the barriers of sparsity”. It added, however, that “this is dependent on the right digital infrastructure” and that “without this, the provision of essential services continues to remain at risk”.⁵³³ It also stated that while the government was planning to invest £4.2 billion in digital health, these services would be harder to use in rural areas because of poor connectivity.⁵³⁴
55. Defra stated that “the government recognises the additional challenges in providing services in rural areas”, and added that “clinical commissioning groups in predominantly rural areas in England receive 17 per cent of funding, which is in line with the proportion of the population that they cover”.⁵³⁵ We note, however, that this does not appear to take account of the additional costs of rural health provision that may require funding of a greater level per head than in urban areas.
- 56. We welcome the Government’s promise that its Industrial Strategy research into the “grand challenge” of ageing will incorporate specific issues identified in rural communities. Nonetheless, the Government’s statement that it funds clinical commissioning services to the proportion of the population that they cover indicates that it still does not understand the additional challenges and costs associated with rural service provision.**
- 57. Government must ensure that the challenges and costs of providing health services in rural areas are properly reflected in funding allocations to Clinical Commissioning Groups. This should include proper recognition of sparsity costs as well as a recognition of the ageing population of rural areas.**
- 58. The Department of Health and Social Care together with NHS England should also take further steps to improve the availability and accessibility of rural healthcare provision, including support for the development of multi-use health centres or hubs. The Government’s investment in digital health is welcome, but the success of this approach will depend on the urgency with which it addresses the rural-urban digital connectivity divide.**
- 59. Government should also take steps to improve rural pharmaceutical services. This might include reopening the Essential Small Pharmacies and Local Pharmaceutical Services (ESPLPS) scheme, which helped rural pharmacies in places where they would not otherwise have been financially viable.**

Loneliness, isolation and other mental health challenges

60. We also heard evidence on the challenges associated with tackling loneliness, isolation and associated mental health issues in rural areas. As Prof Michael Dower noted in evidence, “social isolation in loneliness ... is found in many rural areas, but often overlooked and invisible”. He added that “much is

533 Written evidence from District Councils network ([REC0126](#))

534 *Ibid.*

535 Written evidence from Defra ([REC0146](#))

already done by village communities, churches and voluntary organisations to alleviate this isolation and loneliness”, and that dependence on voluntary effort was likely to become more marked because of financial pressure on local authorities.

Box 27: The Rural Coffee Caravan

The Prince’s Countryside Fund cited the example of The Rural Coffee Caravan, a charity set up in 2003 to tackle rural loneliness. Its caravan and campervan travel around rural communities “to act as a meeting place and allow access to life-improving information in a friendly nonthreatening environment”.

Examples of its initiatives include MeetUpMondays, in which hospitality businesses are invited to tackle isolation by inviting local communities into their venue on a Monday for free food and drink and to engage in social interaction. The Fund stated that “it’s purely social, and it’s always in a commercial venue that is open most days. This makes it a very consistent offer and leads to a robust strengthening of the community”.⁵³⁶

61. Age UK noted that “loneliness is not the same as social isolation, but social isolation is a risk factor for becoming lonely”. It added that it was important for solutions to be tailored to individuals in rural environments, where older people already face more obstacles in accessing services and social activities, and “may have greater difficulties in dealing with their loneliness than those in urban environments”. It stated that voluntary sector organisations and public services in rural areas should “develop strategic partnerships to identify and reach out to isolated or lonely older people. This should include finding appropriate ways to share information to identify people who may be at risk of becoming lonely”.⁵³⁷
62. Prof Richard Parish noted that there were well-observed economic consequences to loneliness, including an increased risk of health problems ranging from high blood pressure to Alzheimer’s. He also stated that people who are lonely tend to be admitted to residential care on average earlier than others. With regard to solutions, he argued that better provision of sheltered housing was important, but that there was less of this in rural than in urban areas.⁵³⁸
63. During our visit to Herefordshire, we were told about the Compassionate Community Scheme in Fownhope, which matches people up with those who need company. The Scheme has 18 companions who make weekly or fortnightly visits based on referrals from the Medical Centre. We were told that these visits also cut down the need to visit the Centre and can reduce hospital stays as it brings people into the community, encouraging sociability and combatting isolation. While it was not difficult to get volunteers in the village, they were mostly retired people and it was much harder to get younger people to volunteer.
64. Locality stressed the role of community organisations in tackling loneliness, noting that “they offer safe and welcoming spaces and provide inclusive services, where people from different backgrounds and with different experiences of life can come together and meet their neighbours

⁵³⁶ Written evidence from The Prince’s Countryside Fund ([RECO063](#))

⁵³⁷ Written evidence from Age UK ([RECO097](#))

⁵³⁸ [Q 283](#)

... Community organisations are often adept at asset-based approaches, enabling people to see their strengths, contributions, skills and knowledge, and unlocking the potential of this for the individual and the community”.⁵³⁹

65. Dr Rashmi Shukla of Public Health England stated that PHE was “working to develop a metric for loneliness in our Public Health Outcomes Framework”. She added that “we are beginning to report on it for local areas. Once you start reporting on it, you start measuring it and you then know what you are dealing with” She also cited the example of ‘village agents’, who are used by local authorities to help connect people suffering from isolation.⁵⁴⁰
66. Defra noted that the government would be publishing a loneliness strategy, which was subsequently published in October 2018. This stated that Defra would “support community infrastructure and community action to tackle loneliness in local areas”, and that the department would also convene a rural stakeholder group to advise and support the work of government departments and help with the local communication of initiatives and good practice.⁵⁴¹ Defra also informed us that the government has announced a £20 million loneliness grant fund for charities and community groups to help isolated people and those suffering from loneliness.⁵⁴²
67. Prof Richard Parish expressed concern that there was considerable underreporting of mental health challenges in rural areas, in particular because “there is a culture of self-reliance and a more pronounced stigma in rural communities about mental health”. This was compounded by the fact that confidentiality was more easily compromised because of the closer-knit nature of rural communities when compared with their urban counterparts.
68. Prof Parish added that mental health provision was much poorer across the board in rural areas, both with regard to trained personnel and support services such as community mental health teams.⁵⁴³ This point was echoed by Billy Palmer of the nuffield Trust, who stated that there is no adjustment for the cost of mental health services in rural England.⁵⁴⁴ Professor Parish also called for a programme of mental health first aid training in rural areas to help members of the public recognise the early signs of potential mental health problems and enable early intervention.⁵⁴⁵
69. Isolation among farmers and agricultural workers was also identified as a serious mental health challenge. Dr Rashmi Shukla told us that “the report last year by the Office for national Statistics looking at a five-year period of suicides by occupation does show that agricultural workers have a higher risk of suicide”. She added that Public Health England was developing local real-time surveillance data on suicides, both to support the bereaved and to identify particular hotspots where suicide risks were higher.⁵⁴⁶

539 Written evidence from Locality ([RECo119](#))

540 [Q 283](#)

541 Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, *A connected society: A strategy for tackling loneliness: laying the foundations for change* (October 2018): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/750909/6.4882_DCMS_Loneliness_Strategy_web_Update.pdf [accessed 15 April 2019]

542 Written evidence from Defra ([RECo146](#))

543 [Q 285](#)

544 *Ibid.*

545 *Ibid.*

546 [Q 283](#)

- 70.** Isolation, loneliness and associated physical and mental health challenges are key issues in rural communities. In this context, it is particularly important that policy solutions are rurally oriented, taking account of the greater challenges of combatting isolation in sparsely populated locations.
- 71.** *The Government's loneliness strategy is to be welcomed, as is the commitment to support community infrastructure and community action to tackle loneliness in rural areas. Government must ensure that, as it implements its strategy, it continues to pay close attention to the distinctive challenges of combatting isolation and loneliness in a rural context. Government should promote and spread good practice among rural voluntary and community organisations in this regard.*
- 72.** *It is of great concern that there is no adjustment for the additional cost of providing rural mental health services in England. Government must remedy this and ensure that sufficient staff and support services are available to tackle rural mental health. It must also take wider steps to address rural mental health, such as supporting mental health first aid training schemes which will enable early intervention.*

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 7: Delivering essential services at the local level

1. Public spending cuts have had a significant impact on rural transport provision and in particular rural bus use. In addition, complex funding streams and poorly integrated services mean that rural economies are often held back by transport connections that are poorer than they need to be. (Paragraph 569)
2. government should undertake a full review of funding streams to rural public transport as part of a new rural strategy. The aspiration should be to develop a "single transport investment pot" that could be used to better support rural transport using a place-based approach, in collaboration with local authorities and other public bodies. Within this, government should work with local bodies to support the expansion of demand-led services. (Paragraph 570)
3. Such a programme should draw upon the examples of Total Transport Pilots, which successfully sought to maximise benefits from existing transport resources including pooling resources from the public sector. (Paragraph 571)
4. The programme should also seek to explore the potential of community transport as a means of supporting and supplementing existing routes. In this context, government should reconsider proposals to change guidance on eligibility of Section 19 and 22 permits issued to not-for-profit community transport providers. The introduction of a short-distance exemption is welcome, but government must ensure that new guidance on the non-commercial exemption does not threaten the viability of community

transport operators. (Paragraph 572)

5. government should also support targeted investment in the maintenance of rural road networks in collaboration with local authorities, to identify those networks outside the major routes where investment would be most important in supporting rural economic development. (Paragraph 573)

6. The impact of rural crime on rural economies is a significant concern. More needs to be done by government to better understand, track and respond to rural criminality. Initiatives such as Farm Watch and WhatsApp groups between farmers, land-owners and police forces to monitor and report on rural crime should be shared widely among rural police forces and rolled out more widely. (Paragraph 590)
7. We welcome new measures to tackle fly-tipping and the introduction of tougher new penalties, but we would also like to see new measures introduced to ensure that farmers and land-owners do not have to pay for the cost of clean-up of rubbish that is dumped on their land. (Paragraph 591)
8. Magistrates, Courts and the Crown Prosecution Service should be trained to better understand the scale and impact of rural crime. Reforms to sentencing guidelines should be considered, where appropriate, to widen the range of possible sentences to better reflect the seriousness of some crimes. (Paragraph 592)
9. We welcome the government's promise that its Industrial Strategy research into the "grand challenge" of ageing will incorporate specific issues identified in rural communities. nonetheless, the government's statement that it funds clinical commissioning services to the proportion of the population that they cover indicates that it still does not understand the additional challenges and costs associated with rural service provision. (Paragraph 604)
10. government must ensure that the challenges and costs of providing health services in rural areas are properly reflected in funding allocations to Clinical Commissioning groups. This should include proper recognition of sparsity costs as well as a recognition of the ageing population of rural areas. (Paragraph 605)
11. The Department of Health and Social Care together with nHS England should also take further steps to improve the availability and accessibility of rural healthcare provision, including support for the development of multi-use health centres or hubs. The government's investment in digital health is welcome, but the success of this approach will depend on the urgency with which it addresses the rural-urban digital connectivity divide. (Paragraph 606)
12. government should also take steps to improve rural pharmaceutical services. This might include reopening the Essential Small Pharmacies and Local Pharmaceutical Services (ESPLPS) scheme, which helped rural pharmacies in places where they would not otherwise have been financially viable. (Paragraph 607)
13. Isolation, loneliness and associated physical and mental health challenges are key issues in rural communities. In this context, it is particularly important that policy solutions are rurally oriented, taking account of the greater challenges of combatting isolation in sparsely populated locations. (Paragraph 618)
14. The government's loneliness strategy is to be welcomed, as is the commitment to support community infrastructure and community action to tackle loneliness in rural areas. government must ensure that, as it implements its strategy, it continues to pay close attention to the distinctive challenges of combatting isolation and loneliness in a rural context. government should

promote and spread good practice among rural voluntary and community organisations in this regard. (Paragraph 619)

15. It is of great concern that there is no adjustment for the additional cost of providing rural mental health services in England. government must remedy this and ensure that sufficient staff and support services are available to tackle rural mental health. It must also take wider steps to address rural mental health, such as supporting mental health first aid training schemes which will enable early intervention. (Paragraph 620)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	
1										Appendix D	
2											
3		RSN (INCOME & EXPENDITURE) 2019/20 AND									
4		ACTUAL TO END APRIL 2019									
5		INCLUDES 2018/19 ACTUAL AND REVISED ESTIMATE									
6							ACTUAL TO	ESTIMATE	ESTIMATE	ACTUAL	
7							END MARCH 19	18/19	2019/20	END APRIL 2019	
8		INCOME					£	£	£	£	
9											
10		DEBTORS FROM PREVIOUS YEAR (NET OF VAT)									
11		SPARSE/Rural Assembly held by NKDC at year end						3000	3990	3450	3450
12		SPARSE Rural Assembly Outstanding NK)							0		
13		RHA - Website Contribs.						300	300		
14		RSP Subscriptions							0	990	990
15		Coastal Communities Alliance (Gross)								1090	1090
16		CCN re Bexit Roundtable						381	381		
17		SPARSE Rural/Rural Assembly						300636	303786	306672	39327
18		Ditto Held by NKDC at Month End									
19		RSN Extra £350Levy						35350	35700		
20		Extra Levy held by NKDC at month end									
21		RSP Existing Member Fees (NET RHCA)						14195	14195	14350	6529
22		RSP Assumed New Member Fees								4000	
23		Commercial Partner First Group Buses						10000	10000	10000	
24		Income from Rural Housing Group						7417	7417	7540	4245
25		Income from Fire & Rescue Group						4260	4260	3841	2020
26		FIRE GROUP LEVY RE SPARSITY EVIDENCE						6000	6000		
27		OTHER INCOME									

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
28		Rural Conference Income					14918			
29		Rural Conference Surplus						7709	8000	
30		CCN re Joint Needs Group Project							8500	
31		Recharges to Rural England Back Office Support					1400	1400	1428	
32		RE recharge re Elec NW Commission					1100	1100	1100	
33		RE recharge re Southern Water Commission					1000	1000	1000	
34		EE/Other Sponsorship					5000	5000	5000	
35		Coastal Communities Alliance (Gross)					3268	4358	4358	
36		RHCA - Fee Income					8642	11260	6000	2898
37		RNCA Expenditure Reimbursement					5000	5000	17766	
38		RE Website Maintenance					2040	2040	2286	
39		Miscellaneous (BT)					979	979		
40		Contras - Rural England					3002	3035		1500
41		VAT								
42		VAT Refund					3144			
43		VAT Received					17181			3836
44		TOTAL INCOME					448213	428910	407371	65885
45										
46										

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	
47							ACTUAL TO	EST	EST	ACTUAL	
48							END MARCH 19	2018/19	2019/20	END APRIL 19	
49		EXPENDITURE					£	£	£	£	
50		VAT Paid on Goods & Services					17293			5096	
51		VAT Paid to HMRC					160				
52		General Provision for Inflation									
53		NET WAGES & CONTRACTS FOR SERVICES									
54		Corporate Management				DI,GB,AD, 1 JT, 100% KB 80%	132470	132170	125845	7976	
55		Finance/Performance and Data Analysis				, DW, 100%,	23844	23844	23875	1990	
56		Financial Support - Consultants							10000		
57		Communications (incl Seminars)				RoseR,RCM	35371	37121	38371	750	
58		Administrative and Technical Support				AD3, RI, WI,WC,BA, MB 100%	43123	43106	33598	3291	
59		Research and Monitoring				BW, 100%	7025	7025	9000		
60		Economic Development Service					AD5 100%	5202	5201	5196	433
61		Coastal Communities Contract						3696	3696	3700	
62		Rural Communities Housing Group				AD2 100%	6763	6763	6768	564	
63		Employee Deductions					27723	27813	31900	451	
64											
65		Provision for Inflation on Contracts (2% p.a.)									
66		PAYE - Employers NIC (11 mths)					10374	10373	8500		
67		PENSIONS Employer contrib					2362	2438	4045	337	
68		OTHER EXPENDITURE									
69		RSN/CCN Joint Needs Group Project							17000		

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
70		Rural Strategy Campaign					775	775	10000	5000
71		SPEND FROM 2018/19 VOL CONTRIBUTIONS								
72		Conferences/Seminars								
73		Rural Conference 2018					7209			
74		Rural Conference Drinks Reception					962	962	1000	
75		Rural Conference 2019 - IN ADVANCE					250	250		
76		Regional Meetings/Seminars					1946	2145	2200	
77		RSP Meetings								579
78										
79										
80		Service Level Agreements								
81		Rural Housing Group (RHG)					782	782	1000	
82		RHG Website Maint					1224	1224	1224	104
83		RE Website Maint					2040	2040	2040	173
84		Rural England CIC to re-charge) @					1661	1661		
85		Rural Inland CIC transfer of part of First Group Support					7000	7000	7000	
86		Parliamentary Groups					905	905	1500	228
87		RHCA Direct					4530	4530		
88		RHCA Share of Subscription Income							5000	
89		Fire Group Expenses					562	712		
90		Business Expenses								
91		Website Upgrade					650	650		
92		Travel and Subsistence					23685	24000	22000	2449
93		Print, Stat,e mail, phone & Broadband@					4037	4000	4000	285
94		Meeting Room Hire					1972	1972	2000	
95		Website and Data Base software etc					4965	4700	4700	540
96		Rent of Office & Associated Costs					4827	5061	8800	422
97		Accountancy Fees					972	972	1507	283
98		Companies House Fees					13	13	13	

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	
99		Bank Charges					92	92	90	7	
100		IT Support					280	1250	700		
101		Insurance					744	744	800		
102		Corporation Tax							300		
103		Membership of Rural Coalition					250	250	250		
104		CAPITAL 3x Laptops					876				
105		CONTRAS									
106		Rural England @								1569	
107											
108		ARREARS - PREVIOUS FINANCIAL YEAR									
109		Employee Deductions							2393	2393	
110		Employer NIC							1024	1024	
111		Regional Meetings/Seminars					450	450	81	81	
112		Contact for Service Corporate Management							2217	1917	
113		Contract for Service (ADMIN)					1660	1660	109	409	
114		Communications					500	500			
115		Extra Media by RCM					963	963			
116		Rose Regeneration					2000	2000	1750	1750	
117		Lexington Communications Contract							3482	3482	
118		PIXELL					21958	21958	10692	10692	
119		Research Costs					11420	11420	2100	2100	
120		RSN Online arrears					4523	4523			
121		RHA website Maint					300	300			
122		Travel and Subsistence arrears					823	823	609	609	
123		Printing, Phone and Stationery (arrears)					9	9	153	153	
124		Office Costs					286	286	9000		
125		Data base etc (arrears)					433	433			
126		TOTAL EXPENDITURE						433940	411565	427532	57137
127											

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
128										
129		TOTAL INCOME					448213	428910	407371	
130		LESS TOTAL EXP					-440818	-418443	-427532	
131		DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IN YEAR INC & EXP					7395	10467	-20161	
132		ADD GEN BALANCE BROUGHT FORWARD					25875	25875	33270	
133		BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD					33270	36342	13109	
134										
135										
136										