

Notes of last SPARSE Rural meeting

Title: SPARSE Rural Meeting
Rural Services Network Special Interest Group

Date: Monday, 25th January 2021

Venue: 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 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

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Rural Services Network

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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 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 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.

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

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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
Cllr Gwilym Butler	Shropshire Council
Martin Collett	English Rural Housing Association

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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

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

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