

Rural Services APPG

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Rural Services

12th November 2013, 12:30pm
Dining Room B, HoC

Agenda

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2. Matters arising from the last meeting	
3. Rural housing delivery issues, the importance of rural proofing and the impact of under occupancy deductions in rural communities	

Summary:

Rural proofing of government policy is a requirement set down in the Treasury's Green Book. This session will present information highlighting key current delivery issues in relation to housing in rural areas, in particular focusing on under-occupancy deductions to demonstrate the need for effective rural proofing of housing related policy.

Affordable housing is extremely scarce in rural communities. Smaller homes are scarcer still. Under-occupancy deductions applied under welfare reform changes mean that people affected face a stark choice – wrench themselves from their home, community and support network or face financial hardship. In July 2013 the Rural Communities Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee recognised this issue, recommending that Government make rural communities with populations of less than 3,000 exempt from these under-occupancy deductions. This would be consistent with current exemptions from Right to Buy for these communities and the threshold where the benefits of Rural Exceptions policy apply.

Format:

- The importance of rural proofing – Andy Dean, Rural Services Network
- Policy squeeze on rural affordable housing – Jo Lavis, Rural Housing Solutions
- Under-occupancy in rural areas: the policy / practice mis-match – Rural Housing Alliance
- The impact on rural providers and their tenants – Martin Collett, English Rural
- Case studies – Rural Housing Alliance
- Q & A

4. Next Meeting

17th December 2013 – HoC London 12.30pm (lunch provided)

For further details concerning this meeting please contact:

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Rural Services APPG

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Rural Services
Tuesday 8th October 2013, 8.30am – 9.30 am
Dining Room B, HoC

In attendance:

Members:

Graham Stuart MP – Chairman
Lord Dear (Vice Chair)
Lord Cameron of Dillington
Andrew Bingham
Harriett Baldwin
Neil Parish
Peter Aldous
Dr Therese Coffey
Ed Winfield – Parliamentary Assistant to Dr Therese Coffey
Jon Carroll, Parliamentary Assistant to Graham Stuart
Timothy Jenkins, Parliamentary Assistant to Neil Parish
Toby Hannam – Parliamentary Assistant to George Freeman
Hannah Daniel – Parliamentary Assistant to Mark Simmonds

Rural Services Network (RSN) (Secretariat):

David Inman – Director
Wendy Cooper - Administrator

Speakers:

Rural Cultural Forum

Dr Ian Hunter

Age UK

Alice Woudhuysen
Rachael Crisp

Also in attendance:-

Holly Sims, Calor

1. Notes of Previous Meeting

18th June 2013 were agreed as an accurate record.

2. Matters Arising from the last meeting

a. Vice Chairman – change

The Chairman announced that the new co/Vice Chair for the Group would be Sir Nick Harvey MP as Dan Rogerson MP had recently been promoted to Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) and could therefore no longer sit on the Group. Members wished him well and offered their congratulations.

b. Constituency Petitions

The Chairman confirmed that, to date, 115 petitions had been received and a date was being sought for these to be presented. A debate was to be held in the House on Thursday 10th October and Neil Benn from the Rural Services Network would brief Members in preparation.

3. Presentations

a. Rural Cultural Forum

Dr Ian Hunter the Cultural Policy Advisor for the Rural Cultural Forum (RCF) introduced The Creative Rural Communities Report which was part one of their two part Strategy, and its efforts to try and achieve a fairer share of Arts Council strategic Arts Lottery funding investment for rural communities in the future. When both parts of the report were complete, it was hoped that they would combine to present at full picture of the creative potential of rural and farming communities, including the significant contribution already being made to the national economy by the creative rural sector.

The main purpose of this first part was to stimulate and inform wider public debate around the proposal for a national rural cultural strategy and to provide a basis for further discussions between the RCF and the lead statutory agencies (DCMS, DEFRA, Arts Council England etc.,) on the feasibility of such a rural cultural strategy, and to enable other interested stakeholders and support organisations to also participate and have an input. The report noted that rural communities did not appear to have benefited in any significant way from previous Government sponsored culture led regeneration initiatives. This situation would need to change and this was therefore now one of the main aims of the RCFs 'Cultural Entitlement' campaign.

Further details can be found at:

Creative Rural Communities Report

http://www.ruralculture.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/RCS_web.pdf

Independent Study of the Rural Cultural Strategy (Holden Report)

http://www.ruralculture.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/ISRfinal_2012.pdf

b. Age UK

Alice Woudhuysen, Senior Campaigns Officer presented her report 'Later life in rural England', which is the Age UK campaign to raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities faced by older people living in rural communities in England. Rural England is ageing faster than urban England. Living in the countryside as an older person has its advantages. Yet while the 'rural idyll' holds true for some people, with fewer people and larger distances between towns and villages, living in rural England can present unique challenges for older people. The biggest challenges for older people are: transport issues, access to local shops and services, the cost of living and heating your home/fuel poverty. Other important issues include access to health and social care, broadband and loneliness and isolation. The new report presents the challenges and showcases the ways in which local Age UKs are overcoming them. Age UK would like rural MPs to visit their local Age UK/s to find out more about the services they offers older people, particularly those who are isolated.

A full copy of the report can be found at:

<http://www.ageuk.org.uk/health-wellbeing/rural/>

4. EFRA Report – Conclusions and Recommendations

David Inman from the Rural Services Network gave a brief report of the EFRA Report which could be found at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmenvfru/602/60214.htm>

The Group were satisfied with the report and now needed to decide how to take the findings forward. As yet there had been no Government response.

5. Next meeting - Tuesday 12th November 2013