



**AGENDA FOR SPARSE RURAL AND RURAL SERVICE  
NETWORK  
EXECUTIVE AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE RURAL  
SERVICES PARTNERSHIP LTD MEETING**

**Venue:- Eaton Room, 18 Smith Square, Westminster,  
London SW1P 3HZ**

**Date: Monday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2018**

**Time: 11.30am to 2.30pm**

**Please note change of venue - this meeting will take place at the LGA**

The meeting is being held at the **Eaton Room, 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. Notes of the Previous Meeting**

Held on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2017 to consider any relevant items.  
(Attachment 1)

**3. Notes of the Main Meetings**

AGM held on 20th November 2017 to consider any relevant items  
(Attachment 2)

**4. To consider any items arising from the Social Care and Health Group and AGM of  
20<sup>th</sup> Nov 2017 (Attachment 3)**

**5. RSN Budget 2017/18, 2018/19 & 2019/20**

To consider the attached papers.  
(Attachment 4)

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

David Inman, Director Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ  
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**6. Considerations from the Provisional Finance Settlement 2018/19 and the Nov 2017 Budget.**

Copy of draft response on which SPARSE-Rural Member Authorities were consulted attached (Attachment 5)

**7. Taking the AGM Strategy Forward**

**8. Discussion re Brexit - Latest Position with Rural Brexit Roundtable Group**

**9. Engagement with Other Bodies:-**

- (1) National Rural crime Network
- (2) National Centre for Rural Health & Care

**10. Industrial Strategy. General Discussion**

(Attachment 6)

**11. Rural Vulnerability Day – 25<sup>th</sup> of January – Considerations for RSN**

**12. LGA Fire Conference and the Rural Fire Group**

**13. Thoughts in respect of the 2018 Conference Theme and Timetable for the Regional Meetings/Seminars**

**Suggested Conference Theme “ DOING RURAL SERVICE DELIVERY DIFFERENTLY: Learning and Making it Work for Rural Communities”**  
(Attachment 7 – Regional Meetings 2018)

**14. SPARSE Rural Sub SIG Meeting 29<sup>th</sup> January 2018**

(Attachment 8 – SPARSE Agenda)

**15. Any Other Business**

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

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## **MINUTES OF THE SPARSE RURAL AND RURAL SERVICES NETWORK EXECUTIVE AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE RURAL SERVICES PARTNERSHIP LTD MEETING, MONDAY 25<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2017 HELD AT CITY OF WESTMINSTER ARCHIVES CENTRE, 10 ST ANN'S STREET, LONDON**

**Present:** - Cllr Cecilia Motley (Chair), Revd Richard Kirew (RSP Chair - Community), Cllr Robert Heseltine (First Vice Chair), Cllr Peter Stevens (Vice Chair – East) Cllr Philip Sanders (Vice Chair – County 2), Cllr Janet Duncton (Vice Chair – South East)

**Officers:** - Graham Biggs MBE (Chief Executive), David Inman (Director) Andy Dean (Assistant Director)

- 1. Apologies:-** Georgina Fung (UK Youth), Stewart Horne (Federation of Small Businesses), John Birtwistle (First Group), Cllr Peter Thornton (Vice Chair – Without Portfolio), Cllr Kevin Beaty (Vice Chair – North), Cllr Adam Paynter (Vice Chair – South West), Cllr Derrick Haley (Vice Chair – Without Portfolio) Cllr Sue Sanderson (Vice Chair – Without Portfolio), Cllr Roger Phillips – Vice Chair Without Portfolio
- 2. Notes of Previous Executive Meeting – 12<sup>th</sup> June 2017**  
Agreed as a correct record.
- 3. Notes of Last Main SPARSE Meeting – 27<sup>th</sup> June 2017**  
Agreed as a correct record with Cllr Sander's name corrected.
- 4. Constitution of RSN Executive**

**It was reported that both Cllrs Beaty and Phillips had accepted the invitation to be members of the Executive.**

**It was agreed Cllr Gill Heath (Staffordshire) would be invited to become a Vice Chair representing Counties)**

In the light of the above it was decided the Chair would in future be 'without area or authority type' as the Chair. Cllr Roger Phillips (Herefordshire) would come on to the Executive to represent the West Midlands as the area Vice Chair and Cllr Gill Heath (Staffordshire) would be come on to be County (2) Chair.

### **5. Rural Conference**

Numbers attending had been down this year but a financial break even, or very small surplus, was anticipated. Feedback had come from 11 people to date with a 70% 'Fairly' or 'Totally' Satisfied return. There was, however, an overall feeling that more learning could be incorporated and that the Conference content had not totally married with economic development titling.

It was felt that, to promote the RSN's 'ownership' of the Conference, RSN Officers should be more involved in the day with Ivan Annibal perhaps just invited to deal with the Panel discussion item.

The need to avoid politics being overplayed in presentations in items was noted.

The separate reception event should it was felt should be continued either at the Queens Hotel or elsewhere in central Cheltenham.

It was decided that a programme for 2018 would be looked at by the Executive in January.

The Director said that, as a number of members had suggested, an approach had been made to The Big Lottery offering RSN's assistance as an organisation 'gateway' in helping the Lottery show their new innovative approach at a grass roots level. It was agreed dialogue should continue with the BIG Lottery on that basis.

#### **6. Rural Fair Share Group and the Needs Formula Review**

Graham Biggs detailed the position. Steve Double was the new Chair, taking over from James Heapey who was now a P.P.S. Conservative MPs had been asked by Steve Double to write to Conservative Leaders in their constituencies with a questionnaire on the impact of cuts in government grant. This had gone out on the 18<sup>th</sup> August. RSN had recently chased this up with the Authorities involved and hoped to also be able to compile the information fed back. Steve Double was pressing Ministers for the Transitional Relief to be extended

The Fair Share Group agreed the Needs Formula Review which was on-going was extremely important and had asked to be kept informed.

Graham circulated and commented on a work which had been commissioned from Pixel – utilising the remainder of the voluntary contributions income gained last year.

#### **7. National Rural Crime Network**

The Network had decided to take in house the administrative work the RSN had previously been undertaking under a Service Level Agreement. RSN had bid for a Publicity and PR Brief which NRCN had advertised but had not been successful on this occasion. There had been previous talk of Graham being offered a position on the NRCN Executive. If the offer came, the Executive were happy for Graham, as Chief Executive, to accept this role and RSN would meet his travelling costs involved.

#### **8. Report on Membership**

Membership was currently at 148 members but for the first time there had been a range of members wishing to leave to save money in their budgets. David Inman outlined the position:

- (a) Two Counties had withdrawn their decision to leave and the position across Shire Counties was now actually quite strong.
- (b) All other Authorities which had been looking to withdraw had now been contacted, asking for detailed discussions. The position was most difficult with regard to Rural Assembly Authorities and the Executive acknowledged, that this as the newest service was the one requiring the most work.

The Executive then considered three reports on suggested changes prepared by the Director which it was hoped may assist demonstrate the RSN's value to its members:-

After detailed discussion it was decided that as a means of greater involvement by the RSN membership to recommend to the A.G.M.

### **(1) Regional Seminars/Meetings**

- (a) The current seminar system would be replaced with six 'regional' Meeting/seminar sessions across all regions (SW,W Midlands, E Midlands, Yorkshire, North East and North West. There would however not be one in the South East as London was more accessible to events there.
- (b) Specific invites would go out to the member authorities in the area being:-
- (1) Nominated representatives on RSN (Member and Officer),
  - (2) Members representing rural wards; and
  - (3) The appropriate Portfolio Holder (dependent on discussion topic) of member Authorities in that region.
- (c) This proposal would be worked up as a detailed report to the AGM and sent by e mail to the Executive for approval

### **(2) Cabinet Portfolio Holders/Lead Members**

The Community, the Health and the Economic Development Port Folio Holders (or their representative) would each be invited to attend two specific meetings per year. The Community and the Health Portfolio Holders would be invited to the Social Care and Health Group which included Rural Vulnerability considerations and the Economic Development Port Folio Holders would be invited to a new Economic Development Sub Group. Both of these meetings would be before the Rural Assembly meeting and the Sparse Rural Meeting respectively.

This it was hoped would enable better understanding and responsiveness of the RSN to these key issues in both its Representational Role and in the sharing of Best Practice

### **(3) Specific Member Support**

- All Authorities would in future all be asked to appoint nominated Councillors for RSN meetings, Sounding Boards and hopefully the virtual Rural Parliament work as it was established.
- The 'Rural' Councillors would be identified in each member Authority and they would be invited to the Regional Meeting/Seminars and invited to be involved in one Sounding Board exercises each year.
- There would be a special briefing paper three times a year for all of the nominated Councillors.

### **(4) Fact Sheet for any Relevant Rural/Scrutiny member Authority meeting.**

In case Member Authorities want to have specific focused meetings on their rural problems, it was suggested a fact sheet for each individual member be prepared and sent out to each Member Authority once a year. An example of such a sheet would be prepared for the next Executive meeting in January to consider and if felt satisfied ratify.

## **9. Report on Subscriptions**

The principle (agreed in 2016) that member subscriptions should tally to enable the maintenance of the current intended viable operational budget produced a

membership sheet for 2018/19 with individual authority breakdowns. This was circulated and agreed in principle by the meeting. The position changed week by week however and an up to date version would be prepared for the Annual Meeting and passed over the Executive by email ahead of agenda circulation.

**10. Budget**

The current budget paper was circulated and agreed including some changes in operational practice set out in the report.

**11. Brexit Update**

Graham Biggs and Andy Dean updated the Executive both verbally and through a written paper. The BREXIT Rural Roundtable, initiated by the RSN, was meeting the following Friday

**12.** A schedule of foreseen meeting dates was circulated. It was decided to bring the 2018 AGM forward to the 12<sup>th</sup> of November to avoid clashing with the CCN Conference.

**13. Work with TRIG**

It was decided to work with this group on BREXIT and other broader matters (but not on their 'day to day' work which was considered to be specialist) where appropriate to marry well with the RSN overall agenda.

**14. Parliamentary Groups**

The Director detailed the initiative to establish Rural Action across Parliament. The Commons Rural Fair Share Group (about Rural 40 MPs) had been re-established and it was hoped to establish a similarly sized Rural Vulnerability Matters Group shortly in the New Year. A cross party Rural House of Lords Group had just been established with all 12 Lords invited accepting and this group would meet for the first time in December.

## **Note of last SPARSE Rural Special Interest Group meeting**

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**Title:** Rural Services Network Special Interest Group

**AGM Meetings:**

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

**Date:** Monday 20 November 2017

**Venue:** The Westminster Archives, London

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**Attendance**

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

<b>Item</b>	<b>Decisions and actions</b>
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**1 Apologies for absence**

The Chair, Cllr Cecilia Motley welcomed members and noted apologies.

**2 Minutes of the Previous meeting**

The minutes from the last RSN AGM held on 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2016 were received and approved.

**3 Appointment of Chairman for the ensuing year (to also be the Chair of the SPARSE-Rural sub-sig) [Present Chair Councillor Cecilia Motley]**

Nominations for the existing Chair to continue in her position were accepted.

**4 Appointment of Vice Chairmen for the ensuing year (to also be the Vice-Chairmen of the SPARSE-Rural sub-sig).**

Nominations for the current, First Vice-Chair and all other Vice-Chairs to continue in position were supported. Members expressed their gratitude for all his work having noted that Cllr Strange had recently stood down from the Group. One vacancy was reported for a unitary council vice chair representative and Cllr Rob Waltham, North Lincolnshire volunteered for the position. This was agreed by members.

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

It was agreed that both would remain the same.

**6 Next Meeting**

Members noted the date for the next RSN AGM being 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2018.

**7 Minutes of the last full meeting – 10th April 2017S**

The Minutes of the last full meeting of the group were received and approved.

**8 Minutes of the last Executive meeting – 25th September 2017**

Members noted the minutes and the attached reports on (a) future fees levels (b) the Forward Budget and (c) Regional Meetings and Seminars.

**Action:**

The minutes and the recommendations in those Minutes and the reports referred to be approved.

The Chairman invited any members who had any concerns or issues to raise in respect of any of these matters to forward them to David Inman for consideration by the Executive at its January meeting.

**9 Membership (Constitutional Requirement)**

Members noted the membership report from David Inman.

He outlined difficulties in retention and recruitment saying that membership was falling. Referring members to the benefits of being part of the Group, he stated that without its existence, rural matters would be very exposed and under-discussed. It was vital in taking forward important rural issues and the group agreed to encourage others to join and stick together.

Members noted details of the constitutional notice (being the same as required by the LGA) – but they expressed their worries that authorities see it as a discretionary service and might therefore withdraw their membership. This of course would impact themselves and their residents and therefore it was vital to hold the SIG together.

**Action:**

Members spread benefits of membership to peer councils as they see fit.

**10 Budget 2017/18 and 2018/19 (Constitutional Requirement)**

Members noted the current budget report which showed a positive balance being carried forward, despite some subscriptions still outstanding. Estimates will be taken to the January meeting for the Executive to agree and to determine the budget for following year.

**11 Brexit Rural Roundtable: Outcome from Meeting 2**

Graham Biggs outlined short-term priorities as agreed by participants at the recent Brexit Rural Roundtable discussion. It was intended that a discussion would take place with the LGA and members noted that work around the review of the previous Rural White Paper had already been commissioned. Once priorities for discussion had been set, another meeting of the roundtable will be called.

**12 RSN “So What Survey” agreed at the last meeting - Analysis Note**

Members received a presentation from Brian Wilson on the Survey of RSN local authorities to test findings in the State of Rural Services 2016 report.



He outlined the work which covered nine different service areas. (Full info and the report are available on RSN's website). LAs had been asked to respond to the findings and he summarised the results of this consultation on the report. Overall, the general agreement was to headline key findings.

Members noted the conclusions of the survey. It was clear that the impact was the greatest concern for certain groups and they agreed that local community action needed support to enable and sustain it either via grants or direct funding.

Member comments included the following:

- Some problems are being created by not supporting current services and there needs to be alternative ways of accessing these – there is too much reliance on the same volunteers;
- Young adults and transport – does it include the fact that grants for disenfranchised young people had been taken away – subsidies have also been removed;
- If there are alternatives such as online banking – we should leave these out as it is vital to prioritise the work of RSN and instead, look at situations where there is no alternative available at all.
- Provision for 6th form students in rural areas is lacking - there is not enough demand to warrant 6th forms in many areas and so those that need it are having to travel much further.

Members noted the presentation and the Chairman thanked Mr Wilson for details of his study.

**Action:**

Presentation to be made available on RSN's website.

**13 Presentation by Neil Parish MP, Chair of the EFRA Select Committee and Member of Parliament for Tiverton and Honiton on the work of the EFRA Select Committee**

The Chair welcomed Neil Parish MP, Chair of EFRA Select Committee and MP for Tiverton and Honiton.

Mr Parish outlined the work of the Select Committee, including looking at issues around Europe and putting various scenarios together to try and predict what may happen post Brexit. He acknowledged differences between figures around urban and rural areas and in particular being conscious of different needs such as farming. Members were invited to provide input for him to take forward.

Comments included:

- Had the issue of rural-proofing and rural weighting been recognised – Mr Parish MP agreed that to look into what has happened to it.
- Were any thoughts being given to overseeing environment improvement and development? The Minister acknowledged the importance of encouraging engagement with farmers and he hoped that the 25 year environment plan would work alongside farming and food.
- It was important to keep RDPE Programme type activity continuing, although Members realised that its benefits must be justified in order for this to be assured. Mr Parish stated that nothing should be taken for granted but that he

would endeavour to ensure this;

- Many market towns are struggling and for a lot of rural areas their existence is very important. Members asked whether something might be done at a national level to help them survive. Mr Parish said that he would try and incorporate this into the Select Committee's activity;
- The group mentioned that they would like to see a wider agenda to include better planning on sustainability and ways of enlisting farmers to get involved. Certainty was needed in terms of agricultural payment bills and was affecting confidence to invest;
- Difficult issues around planning permission needs addressing as current rulings interfere with developments. Mr Parish responded that strict control of the number of sites must be met to allow building with restrictions.

Cllr Motley thanked him for his time and an interesting discussion.

**Action:**

Chair to write to Neil Parish MP asking him to look into the issues raised.

## **14 Urban and Rural Dementia Challenges and Solutions**

Members then moved onto the affairs of the Rural Assembly beginning with item 14 and the Chair introduced Ian Sherriff, Academic Partnership Lead for Dementia Primary Care Group.

Members received a presentation which explored problems around dementia, noting current statistics.

Key points in the presentation included:

- Challenges around funding and increase in elderly population;
- Prevalent figures around abuse and neglect;
- Numbers of unpaid and under supported carers whose needs are not being met;
- Worrying evidence that diagnosis is occurring at a younger age;
- Research shows dementia is most severe in rural areas and that social isolation and loneliness can lead to the illness;
- Caring is key and involvement of the public.

Mr Sherriff outlined possible solutions, including the importance of integration. Members heard about how the Group collaborates with key organisations to encourage this and they noted existing systems which assist, for example using GPs and monitoring systems to ensure peoples safety.

**Action:**

Details of data and presentation are available on the RSN website.

## **15 Rural Conference 2017**

Apologies were received from Kerry Booth.

Members noted the presentation which headlined the following information:

- 71 % of attendees were from member authorities – the rest from other organisations.

- 8% of attendees were from government departments.
- Feedback included support of the location, more informal networking and interaction opportunities and more workshops; less political content as it came across as having political agendas.

Mr Biggs agreed that these comments would be addressed in order to work out the format for the next conference. Members noted that the date would follow in due course.

**Action:**

Slides to be made available on RSN's website.

**16 Sounding Board Survey**

Mr Biggs stated that the next Sounding Board Survey would be in respect of Affordable Housing issues.

**17 Meeting Dates for 2018**

Members noted meeting dates for 2018 and were informed that most of these would take place back at the LGA, 18 Smith Square. The next meeting on 29 January however will take place at Westminster Archive, Centre.

The full list of dates and venues for 2018 is as follows:-

**Schedule of RSN Executive Meeting Dates and Venues 2018**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Venue</b>
<b>Monday 15<sup>th</sup> January</b>	RSN Executive	Eaton Room, LGA, Smith Square, London
<b>Monday 5<sup>th</sup> March</b>	RSN Executive	Smith Square 1, LGA, Smith Square, London
<b>Monday 11<sup>th</sup> June</b>	RSN Executive	Eaton Room, LGA, Smith Square, London
<b>Monday 24<sup>th</sup> September</b>	RSN Executive (also RSP Ltd Board of Directors)	City of Westminster Archives Centre, London

**Schedule of Main Meeting Dates and Venues 2018**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Venue</b>
<b>Monday 29<sup>th</sup> January</b>	SPARSE Rural Sub SIG	City of Westminster Archives Centre, London
<b>Monday 9<sup>th</sup> April</b>	Rural Social Care & Health Group & Rural Assembly Sub SIG	Smith Square 1 & 2, LGA, Smith Square, London
<b>Monday 25<sup>th</sup> June</b>	SPARSE Rural Sub SIG	Smith Square 1 & 2, LGA, Smith Square, London
<b>Monday 12<sup>th</sup> November</b>	AGM meetings	City of Westminster Archives Centre, London

**18 Any Other Business**

A member suggestion that the radio programme – the Archers - be approached to include reference to rural issues as a key platform attracting many listeners.

There was no other business.

**Attendance:**

Cecilia Motley – Chair RSN  
Graham Biggs – Chief Executive, RSN  
David Inman – Corporate Director, RSN  
Andy Dean - RSN  
Cllr Les Kew – Bath & NE Somerset Council  
Cllr Peter Wilding – Chichester DC  
Paul Over – Chichester DC  
Cllr Paul Diviani – East Devon DC  
Cllr Craig Leyland – East Lindsey DC  
Cllr Wendy Bowkett – East Lindsey DC  
Pam Howard – Housing Services, English Rural Housing  
Cllr Rob Waltham – North Lincolnshire Council  
Cllr Tom Fitzpatrick – North Norfolk DC  
Cllr Robert Heseltine – North Yorkshire CC  
Cllr Yvonne Peacock – Richmondshire DC  
Jeremy Savage – South Norfolk DC  
Cllr Peter Stevens – St Edmundsbury BC  
Cllr Cameron Clark – Sevenoaks DC  
Cllr Michael Hicks – South Hams DC  
Cllr Gwilym Butler – Shropshire Council  
Frances Bedding – Head of External Funding, Suffolk CC  
Cllr Philip Sanders – West Devon BC  
Cllr Owen Brierley – West Lindsey DC  
Cllr Mrs Sheila Bibb – West Lindsey DC  
Ian Knowles – West Lindsey DC  
Ian Sherriff – Plymouth  
Lee Chapman – Shropshire Council  
Revd. Richard Kirlew – Chair RSP  
Cllr Rupert Reichhold – ENDC  
Peter Thornton – South Lakeland / Cumbria CC  
Sue Sanderson – Cumbria CC  
Malcolm Leading – Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils  
Cllr Jane Mortimer – Scarborough BC  
Cllr Lindsey Cawren – North Kesteven DC  
Cllr Derrick Haley – Mid Suffolk DC

## **Apologies for Discussion on Rural Social Care and Health Group**

Kerry Booth – Assistant Chief Executive, RSN  
Cllr Cameron Clark – Sevenoaks District Council  
Cllr Adam Paynter – Cornwall Council  
Cllr Colin Morgan – Daventry District Council  
Cllr Roy Miller – Barnsley MBC  
Tom Crowley, Chief Executive – Horsham District Council  
Ian Richardson, Chief Executive – Shropshire Rural Housing Association Ltd  
Cllr Samantha Dixon – Cheshire West and Cheshire Council  
Cllr Mrs Geraldine Carter – Calderdale MBC  
Cllr Louise Gittins – Cheshire West and Cheshire Council  
Cllr Kevin Beaty, Leader – Eden District Council  
Georgina Fung, Head of National Programmes – UK Youth  
Cllr Ian Hudspeth – Oxfordshire County Council  
Cllr Julian German – Cornwall Council  
Cllr Stephen Arnold – Ryedale District Council  
Simon Riley, Head of Finance – Harborough District Council  
Cllr Jean Wharmby, Cabinet Member for Adult Care – Derbyshire County Council  
Cllr Carol Hart, Cabinet Member for Health & Communities – Derbyshire County Council  
John Birtwistle – Head of Policy (UK Bus)  
Cllr John Barrott – Warwick District Council  
Cllr Sue Woolley, Executive Member NHS Liaison – Lincolnshire County Council  
Cllr Polly Andrews, Chairman of Adults & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee – Herefordshire Council  
Cllr Adrian Davis, Lead Member for Adults – Council of Isles of Scilly  
Cllr Adrian Hardman, Member for Adult Social Care – Worcestershire County Council  
Cllr Sally Hawken, Portfolio Holder for Children & Wellbeing – Cornwall Council  
Cllr Izzi Seccombe OBE, Health & Wellbeing Board Chair – Warwickshire County Council  
Cllr Ernie White, Lead Member for Health - Leicestershire County Council  
Cllr Les Caborn, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care & Health – Warwickshire County Council  
Cllr Dawn Payne, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Services – North Somerset Council  
Cllr Sylvia Hughes, Cabinet Member for Public Health & Wellbeing – Northamptonshire County Council  
Cllr Amanda Jupp, Cabinet Member for Adults & Health – West Sussex County Council  
Cllr Shaun Turner, Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing – Lancashire County Council  
Cllr Carol Hart, Cabinet Member for Health & Communities – Derbyshire County Council  
Cllr Andrew Leadbetter, Cabinet Member Adult Social Care & Health Services – Devon County Council  
Cllr Lawrie Stratford, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care – Oxfordshire County Council  
Cllr Paul Rone, Cabinet Member Health & Wellbeing – Herefordshire Council  
Cllr John Spence CBE, Cabinet Member for Health & Adult Social Care – Essex County Council  
Cllr Graham Gooch, Cabinet Member for Adult Services – Lancashire County Council  
Cllr Liz Fairhurst, Health & Wellbeing Board Chair – Hampshire County Council  
Elaine O’Leary, Chief Executive – Northamptonshire ACRE  
Gary Powell, Community Projects Officer – Teignbridge District Council

**Apologies for RSP AGM – 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

Ian Richardson, Chief Executive – Shropshire Rural Housing Association Ltd  
Georgina Fung, Head of National Programmes – UK Youth  
Erin Mee, Policy & Research Officer – Age UK  
Peter Shipp, Executive Chairman – EYMS Group Ltd  
Helena Cox, Senior Advisor Democratic Services – West Sussex Fire & Rescue

**Apologies List for RSN AGM – 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

Kerry Booth – Assistant Chief Executive, RSN  
Cllr Adam Paynter – Cornwall Council  
Cllr Julian German – Cornwall Council  
Cllr John Williams – Taunton Deane Borough Council  
Cllr Dr Ken Pollock – Worcestershire County Council  
Cllr Mrs Geraldine Carter – Calderdale MBC  
Cllr Michael Cooper – Boston Borough Council  
Cllr Colin Morgan – Daventry District Council  
Cllr Roy Miller – Barnsley MBC  
Tom Crowley, Chief Executive – Horsham District Council  
Ian Richardson, Chief Executive – Shropshire Rural Housing Association Ltd  
Cllr Samantha Dixon – Cheshire West and Cheshire Council  
Cllr Louise Gittins – Cheshire West and Cheshire Council  
Cllr Kevin Beaty, Leader – Eden District Council  
Georgina Fung, Head of National Programmes – UK Youth  
Cllr Ian Hudspeth – Oxfordshire County Council  
Cllr Julian German – Cornwall Council  
Cllr Stephen Arnold – Ryedale District Council  
Simon Riley, Head of Finance – Harborough District Council  
Erin Mee, Policy & Research Officer – Age UK  
Peter Shipp, Executive Chairman – EYMS Group Ltd  
Cllr John Clarke – Gedling Borough Council  
Cllr Gonzalez De Savage – Northamptonshire County Council  
Cllr John Barrott – Warwick District Council  
Cllr Tony Miller – Worcestershire County Council  
Cllr Brian Long – Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk  
Cllr Mark Whittington – Lincolnshire County Council  
Helena Cox, Senior Advisor Democratic Services – West Sussex Fire & Rescue  
Martin Flitcroft, Finance Manager – Teignbridge District Council  
Cllr Leigh Higgins – Melton Borough Council

## **Note of 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of Rural Social Care and Health Group**

**Date:** Monday 20 November 2017, 11.30am – 12.45pm  
**Venue:** City of Westminster Archives Centre, 10 St Ann's Street,  
London SW1P 2DE

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### **Attendance**

Attendance at this meeting is included within the list at **Appendix A** of the RSN Rural SIG AGM note.

### **Item Decisions and actions**

The unanimous feeling of the meeting was one of great support for the creation of this new Group which it was agreed would cover the issues of Social care, Health, Public Health and Well-Being.

It was noted that future agendas for this group, in addition to going to nominated Councillors and Portfolio Holders/Lead Members, would also go out to Directors of Public Health and Chairs of Health & Well-Being Boards

There followed a general discussion on the current major issues relating to the service areas concerned and examples of initiatives to address them. The following points were made:

- The demographics were working against Rural Authorities. For them the consequential problems were increasing twice as fast as in many urban areas.
- The additional Council Tax increase allowed for Adult Social Care was only covering about half of the growth rate of the budget. In Devon the increase had been £8m of which the increase in Council Tax had only covered £4m.
- In terms of Life Expectancy there was a marked difference (15 years) between the South and North Devon average life spans demonstrating the impact of poverty and resulting poor health.
- Serious concerns were expressed about recruitment and retention issues across the whole NHS in rural areas and in the rural social care sector.
- Individual Councils were starting their own initiatives:
  - West Linsey had set up a Health Commission.
  - A Council Loneliness scheme relating to cooking tips for beavered residents had been set in South Norfolk.
  - The Yealm Estuary (Devon) initiative involving a number of parishes on a Dementia assistance scheme.
  - Parochial initiatives around Fuel Poverty.

### **It was suggested that RSN could help considerably by setting up an Information Exchange area on RSNOnline**

- All members agreed that the catchment area applying to rural residents to get medical assistance had widened markedly while transport options had fallen back.



- There was concern that failure to have checks and present with first ill health systems because of access problems would cost the country far bigger sums of money than any savings in the long term.
- Rural Dementia was expressed as being “the equivalent of the plague of recent years”.
- Loneliness was a recognised and now accepted pathway to Dementia- it was in the national financial interest that loneliness was tackled.
- Some members felt the number of food banks in their areas had trebled.
- Many members felt Rural Fuel Poverty with its resultant health difficulties was considered to have increased significantly in their areas.
- Many members reported that Care Homes were closing in rural areas just as the need was increasing – the sustainability of the care market in rural areas was a real concern.
- The difficulty of getting people to deliver Social Care was detailed by many authorities. This it was believed was because carers had to travel long distances – unpaid in terms of the time involved - to do their job in rural areas and pay was generally low. Other seasonal minimum wage employment was an attractive alternative in the summer months.
- It was considered by some authorities that care assistances importance needed be more recognised by proper career structuring and the ability to get socially rewarded qualifications.
- Modern Technology (robotics, ‘health monitoring in the home’ etc.) could assist in the longer term in some areas but obviously they were dependent on universal super-fast broadband and mobile connectivity links that just weren’t there currently.
- That failure to achieve universal broadband stopped people being able to look things up - a clear way of avoiding loneliness.
- Digital health was likely to have increasing importance and might be a weapon against remoteness but the lack of universal broadband would prevent that throughout rural areas
- The withdrawal of bus services was creating really large social problems for many.
- There was real concern about rural ambulance services that seemed to be getting even poorer.
- Some Councillors emphasised that the difficulties did just lie with an older aging population- there was concern about the psychological health of young people in rural areas as they saw their educational opportunities being closed down by access to their preferred courses becoming impossible and the closing of youth facilities. There were also great concerns about the costs and services able to be provided in respect of Looked After Children and those with Special Needs.
- The need for more preventative measures was stressed rather than the focus on treating ill health. Despite the obvious benefits from such an approach government funding for Public Health was constantly being reduced
- There were issues to consider regarding How we tackle innovation, the sharing of best practice, the need for funding to be directed to “place” not service silos and the operation of the Better Care Fund

**The meeting continued to feel that RSN could play a very full role here, particularly in terms of recording and cataloguing of perceived problems which were becoming increasingly evident.**

**Members felt there would be a need to choose carefully over the areas where it was felt RSN could work to the greatest advantage. Although the debate had been wide ranging, important choices would have to be made to prioritise activity. It was agreed that the RSN would send out a survey questionnaire to ascertain member's suggested top priorities. This could also be used to get good practice examples from member authorities**

One suggestion was that a system of specific task orientated working groups needed to be created to supplement the two meetings a year that would work in this area.

It was agreed that the meeting in June would receive a full report from the officers and the Executive which would set out suggestions for taking forward rural work of the Social Care and Health Group.

## **NEW NATIONAL CENTRE FOR RURAL HEALTH AND CARE**

# Attachment 4

	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
2	<b>RSN (INCOME &amp; EXPENDITURE) 2017/18 AND</b>									
3	<b>ACTUAL TO END DECEMBER 2017 AND</b>									
4	<b>ESTIMATES FOR 2018/19 to 2019/20</b>									
5							<b>ACTUAL END</b>	<b>ESTIMATE</b>	<b>EST</b>	<b>EST</b>
6							<b>Dec-17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>18/19</b>	<b>19/20</b>
7	<b>INCOME</b>						<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
8										
9	<b>VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS BALANCE B/FWD</b>							<b>8500</b>		
10	<b>DEBTORS FROM PREVIOUS YEAR (NET OF VAT)</b>									
11	Rural Assembly held by NKDC at year end						2873	2873		
12	Rural Assembly Outstanding						745	745		
13	RSP Subscriptions						990	990		
14	Rural Crime Network						5918	5918		
15	Rural Health Conference						175	175		
16	Coastal Communities Alliance (Gross)							1037		
17	Subscriptions						1037			
18	SPARSE Rural/Rural Assembly						263226	278619	303730	315606
19	Ditto Held by NKDC at Month End						4938			
20	RSP						9679	10642	10483	10483
21	Commercial Partner First Group Buses						10000	10000	10000	10000
22	Subscriptions from Rural Health Group									
23	Income from Rural Housing Group						6645	7140	7390	7390
24	Income from Fire & Rescue Group						1985	2480	2480	2380
25	<b>OTHER INCOME</b>									
26	Conferences/Seminars						9427			
27	Rural Conference Income									
28	Rural Conference Surplus								4000	4000
29	Assumed additional Income Generated									5000
30	Service Level Agreements									
31	Recharges ro Rural Crime Network (5 months 17/18)						4063	4063		

	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
32										
33										
34										
35	Contras re RCN@						1895			
36	Recharges to Rural England Back Office Support £1200)						600	1200	1200	1200
37	RE recharge re Amazon Contract						3500	3500		
38	RE recharge re Elec NW Commission						1375	1375	1000	2125
39	Coastal Communities Alliance Gross)						2075	4149	4149	4149
40	Contributions to RHA Website Development/Maintenance						3100	3580		
41	Miscellaneous									
42	Contras						1039			
43	CCN Contrib to Brexit Costs							2000		
44	VAT									
45	VAT Refund						10983			
46	VAT Received						10263			
47	<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>						<b>356531</b>	<b>348986</b>	<b>344432</b>	<b>362333</b>

	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
48							<b>ACTUAL END</b>	<b>ESTIMATE</b>	<b>EST</b>	<b>EST</b>
49							<b>Dec-17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>19/20</b>
50	<b>EXPENDITURE</b>						£	£	£	£
51	VAT Paid on Goods & Services						15255			
52	General Provision for Inflation								1000	1100
53	<b>CONTRACTS FOR SERVICES</b>									
54	Corporate Management				DI,GB,AD 100% KB 40%		56535	72313	63114	63114
55	Finance/Performance and Data Analysis				, DW, 100%, KB 20%		22091	30510	30510	30510
56	Communications (incl Seminars)				RoseR,JT,,AD3 100%		5147	7529	7529	7529
57	Additional Comms Activity by RuralCity Media						3362	5763	5763	5763
58	Administrative and Technical Support				RI, WI,WC,BA,MB 100%		37976	52579	50311	50311
59	Research and Monitoring				BW, JH, 100%		6391	10238	10238	10238
60	Service Group Networking				KB40%		6324	8432	8432	8432
61	Economic Development Service				AD5 100%		3825	5100	5100	5100
62	Coastal Communities Contract						1825	3650	3650	3650
63	Rural Communities Housing Group				AD2 100%		4973	6630	6630	6630
64	Rural Transport Group				AD6 100%		1530	2040	2040	2040
65	Provision for Inflation on Contracts (2% p.a.)								2100	2120
66	<b>OTHER EXPENDITURE</b>									
67	Budget for Brexit Project						1088	7000		
68	Rural Fair Shares/Business Rates "Campaigns"									
69	Rural Fair Shares Campaign etc.						2000	9500	6500	6500
70	Pixell Financial Service (core Annual Service)						956	10500	10500	10500
71	Fair Shares and Other Campaign Media Relations							0	2500	2500
72	SPEND FROM VOLCONTRIBS (BUSINESS RATES)						3690	8500		
73	<b>Conferences/Seminars</b>									
74	Rural Conference 2017						8190			
75	Rural Conference Drinks Reception						1300	1300	1000	1000
76	Seminar Costs						680	700	700	700

	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	
77							<b>END DEC</b>	<b>ESTIMATE</b>			
78								<b>2017/18</b>			
79								<b>£</b>			
80	<b>Service Level Agreements</b>										
81	RCN -CONTRAS @						1425				
82	Rural Housing Group (RHG)						647	1000	1000	1000	
83	RHG Website Maint						245	645		1200	
84	Rural England CIC to re-charge)						365				
85	Rural Inland CIC transfer of part of First Group Support							7000	7000	7000	7000
86	APPG/Rural Issues Group Costs						462	700	500	500	
87	Parlia Rural Vulnerability Group						199	200	500	500	
88	Rural England/Vulnerability Service Contrib							3000	3000	3000	3000
89	<b>Business Expenses</b>										
90	RSN Online etc.						10554	18092	18239	18239	
91	Database Update (media contracts)										900
92	Website Upgrade						4750	5350			
93	Ongoing Website Updates										
94	Travel and Subsistence							12236	16800	17500	17500
95	Print, Stat,e mail, phone & Broadband@							3947	5000	4000	4000
96	Meeting Room Hire						2574	3000	1000	1000	
97	Website and Data Base software etc							2732	4000	4000	4000
98	Rent of Devon Office & Associated Costs							3854	8800	8800	8800
99	Accountancy Fees						563	740	800	800	
100	NKDC Services								2145	2525	2762
101	Companies House Fees							13	13	13	13
102	Bank Charges							58	90	90	90
103	IT Equipment &Support & Other Capital							1384	1400	1000	600
104	Insurance						216	600	650	650	
105	Corporation Tax										300

	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
106							<b>END DEC</b>	<b>ESTIMATE</b>		
107								<b>2017/18</b>		
108								<b>£</b>		
109	Membership of Rural Coalition							250	250	250
110	Refunds of Overpayments/ Contras@						693			
111	<b>ARREARS - PREVIOUS FINANCIAL YEAR</b>									
112	Rural Housing Alliance						792	792	1200	1200
113	Contract for Service (ADMIN)						1775	1775	1390	1390
114	Contracts for Service (CORP MAN)						1100	1100		
115	Communications						500	500		
116	Rose Regeneration						333	333		
117	Seminar Costs						71	71		
118	PIXELL						5203	5202		
119	B Wilson Arrears						3525	3525	3525	3525
120	RSN Online arrears						9874	9874		
121	Travel and Subsistence arrears						718	720	700	700
122	Printing, Phone and Stationery (arrears )									
123	Office Service Charge							5000		
124	Data base etc (arrears )						1130	1129		
125	Bank Charges							8	9	9
126	Rural England						8			
127	<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>						<b>265084</b>	<b>351138</b>	<b>295308</b>	<b>297665</b>
128	ADD FOR NEW APPOINTEE RECRUITMENT/RETENTION								46000	46000
129	ADD FOR EMPLOYERS NI								8000	8000
130	<b>TOTAL REVISED EXPENDITURE</b>							<b>351138</b>	<b>349308</b>	<b>351665</b>
131										
132										
133	<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>							<b>348986</b>	<b>344432</b>	<b>362333</b>
134	LESS TOTAL EXP							-351138	-349308	-351665

	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
135	<b>DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IN YEAR INC &amp; EXP</b>							<b>-2152</b>	<b>-4876</b>	<b>10668</b>
136	<b>ADD BALANCES BROUGHT FORWARD</b>							<b>13755</b>	<b>11603</b>	<b>6727</b>
137										
138	<b>BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD</b>							<b>11603</b>	<b>6727</b>	<b>17395</b>
139										
140										
141										



**This is the response of the Rural Services Network/SPARSE-Rural to the Government's Consultation on the Local Government Provisional Settlement for 2018/19. The Rural Services Network represents Councils servicing rural areas across England.**

## **INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS**

Before responding to the specific question, we wish to make some introductory comments which demonstrate the depth of feeling there is on the various issues across Rural England.

Early in 2016 a delegation from the Rural Services Network (RSN) met the Local Government Minister, Marcus Jones MP to discuss what were, from our perspective, disastrous proposals set out in the 2016/17 - Four Year Provisional Settlement. The government accepted the validity of our arguments as, following protests from a significant number of rural MPs, the Final Settlement was improved temporarily by the addition of Transitional Relief arrangements. However, as we said in our discussions with the Minister in 2017 the Transitional Relief arrangements were always going to be no more than a sticking plaster. The 2017/18 Provisional Settlement shows – just as we demonstrated last year - that with that Transitional Relief funding coming to an end from 2018/19, the proposals will risk crippling public services in rural areas and force local authorities to raise council tax to a significantly higher level than their urban counterparts. The Government's plans are likely to make life for people across rural England extremely difficult, hitting hardest those most in need of public services.

Cuts in grants have been difficult for all local authorities to live with over the last five years. But at least - until now (with the Transition Relief in place) - the axe has fallen reasonably equitably across both rural and urban areas. Under the original Four - Year Final Local Government Settlement rural areas are set to lose over 31% of their central Government funding, whilst urban areas will lose just circa 22%. The Provisional Settlement just announced, seeks to implement the third year of the Four - Year Settlement and, makes it even worse in 2018/19 than it was in 2017/18.

This comes after chronic underfunding of rural areas by successive governments, despite the acknowledged higher cost of providing services to remote communities and the lower than average incomes of people living in them.

The Government's Core Spending Power figures once again take for granted that rural residents will have to pay even more in council tax than their urban counterparts. That is a cynical miscalculation which, has undoubtedly contributed to the present clear disaffection between rural residents and Westminster.

In a letter to Marcus Jones MP ahead of the 2017/18 Provisional Settlement announcement, the RSN stated: "Once the Transitional Relief period has ended, rural councils at County, Unitary and District levels face an impossible task. Rural residents and businesses face a tsunami of swingeing cuts to essential front-line services. There will be no alternative." We repeat that assertion.

We pleaded then with Government to extend the Transitional arrangements through to the end of the Four - Year Settlement period - a plea which has clearly fallen on deaf ears despite the delayed programme for introducing the Fairer Funding Review proposal. **Unfair, unjust and totally unacceptable sums up our feelings.**

As alluded to above, our concerns are set against the context that for decades, under successive governments, rural areas have received substantially less government funding per head of

population for their local government services compared to urban areas. As a consequence, rural local authorities have increasingly found it necessary to rely more heavily on Council Tax income than their urban counterparts, whilst still struggling with considerably less Spending Power overall. This has inevitably had an impact on the level of services they could provide.

Thus, rural residents, who on average earn less than their urban counterparts, pay more in Council Tax but get less government grant and receive fewer services which cost those residents more to access. In addition, according to recent research, rural residents pay some £3000 more per annum for essentials than their urban counterparts.

Rural areas also have significantly larger older populations. Over the next few years, the number of older residents in shire areas is projected to rise at an average annual rate of 2.0%, compared to an English average of 1.8%, London Boroughs 1.9%, and metropolitan boroughs 1.5%.

Since 2013/14 London Boroughs (£266M), together with Surrey (£44M) and Hertfordshire (£16M), have received some £326M per year (based on 2013/14 values) more than the existing formula shows they need. This, in large part, is at the expense of rural areas. **This too is grossly unfair, and illogical. In times of austerity it is more important than ever that the funding which is available nationally from a shrinking pot, is distributed fairly.**

**Any Transitional Arrangements for the introduction of new formulae following the Fairer Funding Review must not compound the felony by protecting those authorities at the levels of grant received but should be based on the funding they should have received had the present formula been introduced without damping**

Whilst increased funding for Adult Social Care is much needed, the amounts proposed in the Provisional Settlement will, once again, hardly scratch the surface of the underlying funding crisis that these services face across England. Furthermore, the fact that much of this increase has to come from Council Tax is both wrong and blatantly unfair to rural residents. Until this long term national issue is resolved nationally its immediate impact needs to be tackled by coherent policies and realistic funding from Central Government. Council Tax is already higher in rural areas compared to urban and these proposals can only widen that gap further. In the past the Government made much of the issues facing the so call JAMS (those families Just About Managing). All of us, including JAMS, have to pay Council Tax and, especially in rural areas, these proposals will hit JAMS hard in their purses and wallets.

The Government's introduction of Improved Better Care Fund, whilst insufficient to meet the Adult Social Care crisis is, at least in principle, a step in the right direction. However, yet again, however, the Government's policy to make rural residents pay for services through Council Tax rears its head. The inclusion of the Council Tax flexibility in the IBCF calculations means that yet again rural residents are forced to contribute more to pressures which the Government is funding in urban areas. The use of the Social Care Relative Needs Formula, frozen in 2013/14, in the Better Care Fund means that social care authorities serving rural areas are not being recompensed for their significant growth in their older population -or indeed the greater costs of meeting those needs. Moreover, much of the funding raised through the social care precept has been absorbed by the introduction of the National Living Wage

**Taking these things together, it is not surprising that, yet again, more grant goes to urban areas per capita. In 2019/20, the average predominantly urban resident will attract £37.74 per head in Improved Better Care Funding, £8.20 per head more than rural residents per head (of**

**£29.54). This difference is double the amount being paid to rural authorities in Rural Services Delivery Grant.**

There is no relationship between the numbers of people requiring social care and either Council Tax or Business Rates. It is obvious that the rising costs of caring for the growing elderly population cannot be met by local taxation and must be funded per capita by central government. In rural areas there are significantly more residents aged 65+, fewer businesses required to pay business rates and Council Tax levels are already much higher than in urban areas. Thus, there is created a 'perfect storm' of rising costs and limited income in the rural areas across England.

The Government must think again on all these issues of fundamental unfairness and discrimination against rural residents. It must begin **now** to correct the current bias in funding allocations towards residents living in urban and built up areas at the expense of rural residents

## **RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION QUESTIONS**

### **Question 1: Do you agree with the methodology for allocating Revenue Support Grant in 2018-- 19?**

#### **No**

The RSN has always recognised the commitment and stability offered by a four- year finance deal. However, the RSN has also always made it clear that it would be the minimum level of funding. The funding in the 2018/19 Provisional Settlement is demonstrably insufficient to meet current and future demand for the essential services provided by local government in rural areas.

**The RSN fundamentally disagrees with the change to the methodology for calculating RSG which was introduced in the 2016/17 settlement and which has not been changed in this settlement.**

The inclusion of Council Tax in the calculation of RSG reductions has resulted in significantly higher reductions in RSG (and SFA) in rural areas than has, and will, occur in urban areas over the settlement period.

The reductions highlighted in this response were made to a starting position which was already inequitable. In 2015/16, SFA per head of population in predominantly urban areas at circa £428 was already some 43% higher than in predominantly rural areas of circa £299). By the end of the settlement period, SFA per head in predominantly urban areas will reduce by just 30.79% compared to a reduction of 41.25% in predominantly rural areas- **this is grossly unfair.**

**RSN continues to believe that the change in methodology introduced in the 2016/17 settlement and retained in this year's settlement is fundamentally unfair and should be changed.**

Indeed, the then Secretary of State, the Right Honourable Greg Clark, recognised the inequity of the formula changes and introduced the Transition Grant as well as a significant increase in Rural Services Delivery Grant. This had the impact of almost equalling the reduction in 'Government Funded Spending Power' between predominantly urban and predominantly rural - but for 2016/17 only.

In introducing Transitional Relief, the then Secretary of State told Parliament that its purpose was “to ease the change from a system based on central government grant to one in which local sources determine a council’s revenue”. Given the delays now announced in introducing a new Fairer Funding formula and Business Rates Retention (by the sector) now being 75% rather than 100% there is a clear need for the Government to consider **increasing and extending** transitional grant for the remaining two years of the four-year settlement

With Transition Grant disappearing in 2018/19 Government Funded Spending Power (which excludes Council Tax) in Predominantly Urban Areas will be £371.91 per head (down 5.76% on 2017/18). By comparison, in Predominantly Rural Areas, Government Funded Spending Power will be £249.03 per head (down 9.57% on 2017/18). Thus, there is, once again, an unacceptable widening in the gap in Government Funded Spending Power between predominantly urban and predominantly rural areas.

The impact of these changes is seen in Council Tax levels which are already significantly higher in rural areas, and are set to increase at an even greater rate due to the Government funding shortfall highlighted above.

**Council Tax per head (as reflected in the Provisional Settlement) in 2018/19 is £541.46 for Predominantly Rural Areas compared to £450.58 in Predominantly Urban Areas. The gap is a completely unfair, and unacceptable, (circa) £91 per head.**

The Provisional Settlement re-enforces the view that there appears to be a conscious policy decision by the Government that in rural areas Spending Power will be increasingly funded by council - taxpayers. **In other words, the Government is content for people in rural areas to pay more Council Tax from lower incomes and yet receive fewer services than their urban counterparts.** This is manifestly unreasonable and grossly unfair. The RSN cannot accept this position

The table below shows the relative gearing between Government Funded Spending Power and Council Tax between predominantly rural and predominantly urban areas over the four-year settlement period as a result of the inequitable changes to RSG.

<b>Percentage of Spending Power funded by Council Tax over the four-year settlement period</b>					
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Predominantly Rural	58%	62%	66%	69%	71%
Predominantly Urban	45%	49%	53%	55%	57%

**RSN believes that is inequitable that the taxpayer in rural areas, where earnings are, on average significantly lower and the costs of “essentials” significantly higher, should shoulder an ever- increasing Council Tax burden to fund local services.**

**The current crisis in funding for Adult (and Children’s) Social Care is a national problem which needs new government money – it is wrong to pass that burden on to local council tax payers.**

There is some evidence to show a correlation between the relative generosity (or otherwise) of government funding on local council tax decisions. In 2016/17, of 11 upper tier authorities that restricted Council Tax increases to less than 2%, 10 were predominantly urban and none were predominantly rural. Six London Boroughs were able to freeze Council Tax and the Greater London Authority, which enjoys the most generous changes in SFA, reduced their Council Tax by 6%!

**The RSN does not believe the Government policy of making greater reductions in Government Funded Spending Power in rural areas is either fair or sustainable and therefore, once again, calls on the Government to:**

**Either**

- **Change the formula which calculates RSG reductions to remove Council Tax from the equation so that RSG reductions are at least equal between predominately urban and predominantly rural authorities**

**Or**

- **Re-introduce and extend Transition Grant so that it fully counteracts against the Government formula for RSG reduction in rural areas**

**Question 2: Do you agree with the Government's proposal to fund the New Homes Bonus in 2018-19 with £900 million from Revenues Support Grant and any additional funding being secured from departmental budgets?**

We have no firm views with respect to question 2. However, we continue to point out that some very rural councils will find it difficult/impossible to grow their property base by more than 0.4% - from 2018/19 they will, under these proposals, get no NHB thereby increasing yet further the urban/rural funding divide.

The RSN supports the decision not to implement any of the further possible changes which the Government consulted on to the way that NHB is calculated

**Question 3: Do you agree with the Government's proposal of paying £65 million in 2018 -19 to the upper quartile of local authorities based on the super-sparsity indicator?**

RSN supports the decision to increase the funding allocated through RSDG, but in cash terms it is very small. It never made sense for RSDG to reduce by £15.5 million in 2018/19 only to increase by the same amount in 2019/20.

The extra £15.5M is still a lot less than the higher than average reductions in SFA experienced overall by Predominantly Rural authorities created by the 2015/16 decision to bring actual Council Tax into the "cuts equation"

The RSN is looking for higher weightings for sparsity to be introduced via the Fairer Funding Review. It welcomes the Government's recognition "that cost pressures associated with service delivery in rural sparse areas, such as lack of private sector providers and poor broadband coverage should be met with a more consistent package of funding over the course of this Parliament". The proposal for 2018/19 plays lip-service to this recognition.

We welcome the long-awaited recognition by the Government (as contained in the recent Technical Consultation on relative needs) “that it is possible that altering the weightings in 2013/14 may have only partially reflected the challenges faced in delivering some services in rural areas”. The RSN considers this to be actual rather than possible.

**To expect rural areas, and their elected representatives, to wait until the introduction of the Fairer Funding Review is a really big ask – especially given the increasing gap in government funded spending power and council tax between Predominantly Rural areas compared to Predominantly Urban.**

Whilst we acknowledge that the Government has increased the value of RSDG since it was introduced, we make the following observations.

- The £65m proposed for 2018/19 is a £15.5m reduction when compared with 2016/17.
- The £65m is still only about half of the amount which was lost to rural authorities to damping in 2013/14. This loss followed changes to sparsity in 2013/14, the majority of which was damped. As 2013/14 was the last year that formula funding was calculated, this damping loss has been suffered in each year since.
- The reduction in Revenue Support Grant national control total between 2015/16 and 2017/18 was 47.6%. However, as this response shows, the reduction for Predominantly Rural authorities was 56.9%. In cash terms, therefore, predominantly rural authorities have lost £167m more than they would have if they and urban authorities had suffered equal reductions to RSG. This is £102m greater loss than is being offered in RSDG in 2017/18.
- RSN has long campaigned for the RSDG to be tapered so that all rural authorities (as exemplified in the DCLG Summer 2012 Consultation) receive a contribution towards the additional cost of serving rural areas (the current system only provides funding for top quartile of super sparse authorities). We continue feel that an increase in RSDG to, at the very least, cover the losses outlined above is warranted so as to facilitate the extension of the grant to all authorities which should have benefitted from the (adopted by Government) 2012 Consultation proposals.

So, whilst RSN acknowledges the importance of RSDG, we strongly feel that given the changes to other elements of the settlement, it is imperative that the level of RSDG is significantly increased and that the qualification criteria are changed to extend some level of support to all authorities with significant levels of sparsity.

**Question 4: Do you agree with the Government’s proposal to hold back £35 million to fund the business rates safety net in 2018-19, on the basis of the methodology described in paragraph 2.6.2?**

We have no firm views with respect to question 4.

**Question 5: What are your views on the council tax referendum principles proposed by the Government for 2018 – 19?**

Like others across local government the RSN believes that council tax setting is a matter for individual local authorities which are democratically elected and offer local accountability. The RSN therefore disagrees with any referendum principles being imposed on local government.

Again, we point out that residents in rural areas are already paying above-average amounts of council tax, despite receiving fewer services.

When calculating the gap between Rural and Urban authorities, our figures exclude parish precepts, if we were to include them then the gap would be much higher between Rural and Urban. Some rural parishes have increased their precept to take into account that they now deliver some discretionary services which the Local Authority has stopped providing due to funding pressures.

RSN supports giving local authorities the ability to generate more from council tax. Local budgets are under severe pressure, particularly in rural areas where pressures on adult social care is growing sharply, and the increase in council tax yield will make a welcome contribution to these pressures. The RSN agrees with the County Councils Network that county councils should be allowed to levy the social care precept on the entire tax base in their areas (rather than just the county precept element) as would be the case if they were unitary authorities

However, the Government is placing unfair pressure on the council tax payers in rural areas. Band D council tax is higher than in many other parts of the country, particularly Inner London. By allowing all areas the same percentage increase in Band D, the divergence will only grow over time, placing increasingly greater pressure on residents in county areas. An alternative is to allow low-tax authorities the opportunity to increase Band D by more than the 3% threshold (e.g. the higher of 3% or £50) to help to redress the balance.

**The RSN is concerned about the impact Council Tax levels may have if included in the Resources Block under the Fairer Funding Review and will be monitoring this issue very closely.**

The RSN supports the decision to defer introducing controls on Parish/Town Councils

**Question 6: Do you agree with the methodology for calculating the revaluation adjustments to business rates tariff and top-up payments as outlined in paragraphs 3.5.1 to 3.5.6**

We have no firm views with respect to question 6.

**Question 7: Do you have any comments on the impact of the 2018-19 local government finance settlement on those who share a protected characteristic, and on the draft equality statement published alongside this consultation document? Please provide supporting evidence.**

We have no firm view views with respect to question 7

CLA Reaction:

<https://www.cla.org.uk/influence/all-news/cla-reaction-government's-industrial-strategy>

NFU reaction:

<https://www.nfuonline.com/news/latest-news/governments-industrial-strategy-recognises-importance-of-uk-food-production/>

New Local Government Network (NLGN) reaction:

<https://www.localgov.co.uk/Whitehall-should-invest-65m-in-health-boards-to-support-Industrial-Strategy/44289>

## Industrial Strategy

The white paper focuses on the [5 foundations of productivity](#) – ideas, people, infrastructure, business environment and places

Each foundation is supported by a range of policies designed to provide businesses with certainty and reassurance that the UK will continue to have a competitive edge.

The policies for each of the Foundations are as follows:

**Ideas** - To be the world's most innovative economy.

- Raising total research and development investment to 2.4 per cent of GDP by 2027
- Increasing the rate of R&D tax credit to 12 per cent
- Investing £725 Million in new Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund programmes to capture the value of innovation

**People** - To generate good jobs and greater earning power for all.

- Establish a technical education system that rivals the best in the world to stand alongside our world-class higher education system
- Invest an additional £406 million in maths, digital and technical education, helping to address the shortage of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) skills
- Create a new National Retraining Scheme that supports people to re-skill, beginning with a £64 million investment for digital and construction training

**Infrastructure** - A major upgrade to the UK's infrastructure.

- Increase the National Productivity Investment Fund to £31 billion, supporting investments in transport, housing and digital infrastructure
- Support electric vehicles through £400 million charging infrastructure investment and an extra £100 million to extend the plug-in car grant



- Boost our digital infrastructure with over £1 billion of public investment, including £176 million for 5G and £200 million for local areas to encourage roll out of full-fibre networks . ####Business environment
- Launch and roll-out Sector Deals – partnerships between government and industry aiming to increase sector productivity; the first Sector Deals are in life sciences, construction, artificial intelligence and the automotive sector
- Drive over £20 billion of investment in innovative and high potential businesses, including through establishing a new £2.5 billion Investment Fund, incubated in the British Business Bank
- Launch a review of the actions that could be most effective in improving productivity and growth of small and medium-sized businesses, including how to address what has been called the ‘long tail’ of lower productivity firms

**Places** - To have prosperous communities across the UK

- Agree local industrial strategies that build on local strengths and deliver on economic opportunities
- Create a new transforming cities fund that will provide £1.7 billion for intra-city transport; this will fund projects that drive productivity by improving connections within city regions
- Provide £42 million to pilot a Teacher Development Premium; this will test the impact of a £1,000 budget for high-quality professional development for teachers working in areas that have fallen behind

**Business Environment** - To be the best place to start and grow a business.

- Launch and roll-out Sector Deals – partnerships between Government and industry aiming to increase sector productivity. The first Sector Deals are in life sciences, construction, artificial intelligence and the automotive sector.
- Drive over £20 Billion of investment in innovative and high potential businesses, including through establishing a new £2.5 billion Investment Fund, incubated in the British Business Bank
- A review of what actions could be most effective in improving productivity of SMEs, including how to address the ‘long tail’ of less productive businesses.

To ensure that the government is held to account on its progress in meeting the ambitions set out in the strategy, an Independent Industrial Strategy Council will be launched in 2018 to make recommendations to government on how it measures success.

The white paper also confirms government will be pressing ahead with a series of [Sector Deals](#), with construction, life sciences, automotive and AI the first to benefit from these new strategic and long-term partnerships with government, backed by private sector co-investment. Work will continue with other sectors on transformative sector deals.

## GRAND CHALLENGES

The [Industrial Strategy](#) sets out Grand Challenges to put the UK at the forefront of the industries of the future, ensuring that the UK takes advantage of major global changes, improving people's lives and the country's productivity.

The first 4 Grand Challenges are focused on the global trends which will transform our future:

- growing the Artificial Intelligence and data driven economy
- clean growth
- future of mobility
- ageing society

### FUTURE OF MOBILITY

We will become a world leader in shaping the future of mobility.

We are on the cusp of a profound change in how we move people, goods and services around our towns, cities and countryside. This is driven by extraordinary innovation in engineering, technology and business models. Significant investments are being made in the electrification and automation of road vehicles, in the modernisation of rail services to deliver higher capacity, speed and connectivity, and in the development of autonomous aerial and marine transport. New market entrants and new business models, such as ride-hailing services, ride sharing and 'mobility as a service', are challenging our assumptions about how we travel.

These technologies can transform public transport. The UK's road and rail network could dramatically reduce carbon emissions and other pollutants, congestion could be reduced through higher-density use of road space enabled by automated vehicles, and mobility could be available when we want it, where we want it and how we want it.

**We will prepare for a future of new mobility services, increased autonomy, journey-sharing and a blurring of the distinctions between private and public transport**

The future mobility marketplace is likely to operate differently to the transport system of today. We will consult with industry and others on the government's role to support this, and publish a Future of Urban Mobility strategy within the next 12 months.

## AGEING SOCIETY

We will harness the power of innovation to help meet the needs of an ageing society.

The UK population is ageing, as it is across the industrialised world. We are living longer than ever before; we have historically lower birth rates; a large cohort of people – the so-called ‘baby boomers’ born after the Second World War – are reaching retirement. One in three children born in the UK today can expect to live until 100.

The prospect of longer lives will require people to plan their careers and retirement differently. Ageing populations will create new demands for technologies, products and services, including new care technologies, new housing models and innovative savings products for retirement. We have an obligation to help our older citizens lead independent, fulfilled lives, continuing to contribute to society.

Innovation in age-related products and services can make a significant difference to UK productivity and individuals’ wellbeing, and will find a growing global market. Ageing also presents significant challenges to the economy, including greater caring demands on those of working age and increased health and social care costs. Without action, an ageing population could reduce the size of our workforce and lead to lower productivity.

If we succeed, we will create an economy which works for everyone, regardless of age. A new generation of British businesses will be thriving in the growing global market for age-related products and services. Older people will be able to lead fuller, more independent lives, increasingly supported by smart home technologies, wearable devices and tech-enabled health and care services. British businesses will have redesigned jobs and workplaces to better use their older workers’ experience, enabling individuals to keep active and stay in work. Workers will have more flexibility to help balance their work with caring responsibilities. Younger generations will be able to plan for their longer careers with confidence.

Many countries are grappling with this challenge, most notably Japan. There are some distinctive British opportunities which build on our strengths. These include powerful health datasets in the NHS, world-leading design institutes, the artificial intelligence research community, a strong life sciences sector and the financial services industry. Making the most of these advantages could turn the ageing challenge into a global opportunity.

We will take action to extend UK leadership in four early priority areas:

**We will support new products and services for the growing global population of older people, meeting important social needs and realising the business opportunity for the UK.**

Globally, there are likely to be two billion people over the age of 60 by [205.] UK businesses must take advantage of markets created by this rise in older consumers. Doing this could also improve people’s quality of life. Through a forthcoming

Industrial Strategy 'Healthy Ageing' programme we will invest in innovation to help older people maintain their chosen lifestyle, and stay independent for longer. We will explore opportunities to work with UK businesses to encourage emerging consumer markets, and the development of innovative products and services that support people throughout their working life and into retirement. This could include new finance products or partnering with the retail tech sector to identify barriers to the development and diffusion of new products.

### **We will support sectors to adapt to a changing and ageing workforce**

As people lead longer, healthier lives, they will need to save and work for longer to ensure they have a secure retirement. With an ageing workforce and fewer people entering the labour market from education and training, employers will need a more flexible labour market that can accommodate older workers. The government will continue to build on the Fuller Working Lives Strategy and has already appointed a Business Champion specifically for older workers. This signals our commitment to work with employers to promote the benefits of older workers to employers across England – in terms of their strategic approach and practical advice.

We will also encourage industries to lead in adapting their workplaces to the requirements of an ageing workforce. To help realise the potential in the labour market, including amongst women, older workers, carers and disabled people, we will work with business to make flexible working a reality for all employees across Britain and to inform the evaluation of the Right to Request Flexible Working regulations.

### **We will leverage our health data to improve health outcomes and UK leadership in life sciences**

The NHS generates powerful datasets that could be harnessed in a safe, fair and secure manner to develop new tools to diagnose and treat illness earlier. In response to Professor Sir John Bell's life sciences be working to develop a number of regional Digital Innovation Hubs. These hubs will support the use of data for research purposes within the strict parameters set by the National Data Guardian. Health and social care are devolved but the technological challenges and benefits can be supported and seized across the UK. Through the Industrial Strategy 'Data to early diagnostics and precision medicine' programme, we will invest to continue to explore the application of data for better, more innovative health and care.

### **We will support care providers to adapt their business models to changing demands, encouraging new models of care to develop and flourish**

The government's forthcoming Green Paper on care and support in England will respond to the wide challenges facing the social care sector, setting out proposals for long-term, sustainable reform. The Industrial Strategy can play a role in supporting the care sector to adapt for the future. We will support the care sector to innovate and develop new business models, including by making better use of emerging technology through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund. We will also

encourage care businesses to access the opportunities provided by the strengthened Growth Hub network.

### **The Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund**

The Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund provides funding and support to UK businesses and researchers. The fund is part of the government's £4.7 billion increase in research and development over 4 years.

A number of areas have already been earmarked for this support or are already receiving it.

Of interest to Rural is:

#### **Healthy ageing**

By 2040, one in 8 people in the UK will be aged over 75 – an increase from one in 12 today.

Staying active, productive and independent is important to our increasing numbers of older people.

The challenge is to innovate, so older people's aspirations are met and that better, more effective care can support an independent lifestyle as they age.

In working together, the government and industry can address the challenges of ageing while capturing a growing global market.

#### **Transforming food production: from farm to fork**

The world will need [60 per cent more food by 2050](#) to allow us to feed 9 billion people, and demand for water is expected to rise by 20 per cent in the agriculture sector alone.

For this to be possible, the way we produce our food needs to be significantly more efficient and sustainable.

Using precision technologies we can make that a reality: transform food production while reducing emissions, pollution, waste and soil erosion.

Putting the UK at the forefront of this global revolution in farming will also deliver benefits to farmers, the environment and consumers, as well as creating growth, jobs and exports.

## Regional Meetings 2018

Date	Region	Town	Primary Topic being considered	Vice Chair	RSN
12.02.18	West Midlands	Stafford BC - <b>Confirmed</b>	Rural Social Care and Health	Cllr Roger Phillips - <b>confirmed</b>	Graham - confirmed
19.03.18	South West	East Devon Council	Rural Social Care and Health	Cllr Adam Paynter - <b>can't do March. Have emailed re February dates</b>	David
21.05.18	North East	Durham Council	TBD	Cllr Kevin Beaty - <b>confirmed</b>	Andy
09.07.18	East Midlands/ East Anglia	Huntingdonshire Council - <b>confirmed</b>	TBD	Cllr Peter Stevens - <b>confirmed</b>	Kerry - <b>confirmed</b>
08.10.18	North West	Lancaster Council	TBD	Cllr Peter Thornton	Andy
10.12.18	Yorkshire	Harrogate Council	TBD	Cllr Robert Heseltine - <b>confirmed</b>	Andy



**AGENDA**  
**SPARSE RURAL Sub SIG**

**Venue:- City of Westminster Archives Centre, 10 St Ann's Street, London SW1P 2DE**

**Date: Monday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2018**

**Time: 1.00 pm to 3.30 pm**

**Please note change of venue**

The meeting is being held at the City of Westminster Archives, 10 St Ann's St, Westminster, London SW1P 2DE. Visitor information and a map for the venue can be found in the links below:

[City of Westminster Archives Centre Visitor Information](#)

[City of Westminster Archives Centre Map](#)

1. Apologies for absence
2. To confirm the minutes of the last meeting (Appendix A) held on the 20th November 2017 and to discuss any matters arising.
3. To receive the minutes of the Executive Meeting held on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January (Appendix B) and to discuss any matters arising.
4. PROVISIONAL FINANCE SETTLEMENT 2018/19: To receive (and discuss if required) the RSN response to the consultation (Appendix C) [ Members were consulted on a draft response earlier this month]
5. FAIR FUNDING REVIEW: A Review of Relative Needs and Resources: DCLG Technical Consultation on Relative Need.

A link to the DCLG Consultation document is here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/fair-funding-review-a-review-of-relative-needs-and-resources>

The Consultation Questions are attached (Appendix D)

Pixel Consulting have been asked to prepare an "initial thoughts paper" (Appendix E – To Follow)

6. Any other business