

**MINUTES OF THE SPARSE RURAL AND RURAL SERVICES NETWORK EXECUTIVE
MONDAY 15th SEPTEMBER 2014**

Present:- Cllr Cecilia Motley (Chairman), Cllr Robert Heseltine (First Vice Chair), Cllr Roger Begy, Patrick Begg (National Trust), John Birtwistle (Transport), Cllr Hilary Carrick, David Dickinson, Cllr Alex Folkes, Cllr Derrick Haley, Stewart Horne (Business), Richard Kirlew (Church in Wales - Community), Cllr Gordon Nicholson, Barbara Shaw (Community), Cllr Peter Stevens, Alan Thomas (N Kesteven), Cllr Peter Thornton, Brian Wilson (BWA), Cllr Nick Worth

Officers :- Dan Bates, Kerry Booth, Jane Hart, David Inman, Nick Payne

Apologies: Graham Biggs (Chief Executive), Cllr Lewis Strange

The Chair, Cecilia Motley, welcomed those present and formally opened the meeting.

1. Minutes of the Executive of 23rd June 2014

Cllr Roger Begy's apology be added to the minutes.

2. Minutes of the Main Meeting of 14th July 2014

These were agreed as a correct record.

3. Budget Report 2014/2015 and 2015/2016

A paper from the Chief Executive had been circulated. The paper showed a revised 14/15 balance due to Rural Assembly recruitment. The draft budget for 15/16 was presented for the first time.

4. Rural Fair Shares Campaign

(a) DCLG/DEFRA research study

A meeting of the Working Group was due to meet on Wednesday 17th September. Dan Bates was attending on behalf of Rural Services Network. A note on proceedings would be circulated to the Executive.

(b) Campaign this year

Rural MPs were hoping to meet Eric Pickles and Chris Hopkins in October. In November they planned an informal meeting in Parliament with a back bench debate planned for early December.

5. Rural Manifesto

Brian Wilson presented the current draft. Members commented on the various areas.

It was concluded:

- (a) Cross linkages should, where possible, be provided
- (b) A "direct" summary should be drafted tracing the common origins of many of the comments being made.
- (c) A draft press release should also be drafted for consideration by the main meeting.

6. Independent Commission on Local Government Finance

The paper presented to the Commission which had been set up by the People and Places Board was circulated and noted.

7. The Rural Conference

Feedback was still awaited from the e-questionnaire. However, the Executive felt the Conference had been a good day and very worthwhile.

It was felt the event had been a little cramped and it was suggested the event might be run over 1.5 days allowing individual members to decide whether they wanted to stay overnight or just attend the Conference proper. If that could be the case a fringe meeting on the evening before and an educational trip the afternoon before, staged by the host authority, might perhaps be thought about.

It was felt the event itself might benefit from:

- (a) A Chair for the day
- (b) Only one event as an alternative to lunch
- (c) As suggested, an attempt to establish some conference outcomes

Discussions would now take place with the LGA.

8. Rural Assembly

Marketing had been successful with 34 new members coming into RSN. This gave a total of some 150 authorities across England who would be involved going forward.

In terms of format for the Assembly it was recommended as follows:

- (a) An 11:15am start for Sparse Rural with lunch at 12:30pm to 12:45pm. The Assembly would start at 12:45pm and would run until 3:15pm.

This would hopefully give capacity for:

- (a) Twice a year an address by a Minister or Leading Civil Servant or an Opposition Spokesperson.
- (b) An address on a current topic
- (c) A best practice presentation twice a year.
- (d) A presentation from an RSN topic group each meeting.

9. Rural Unitary Group (item added on to Agenda at request of Cllr Begy)

Cllr Roger Begy updated the meeting. The group was primarily focusing on Finance, Transport, Health and Better Care and Broadband. Officer joint working had been particularly strong with a lot of joint working on issues as they arose.

10. Progress on Service Groups

David Inman updated the meeting.

11. Transport

A comprehensive report was given by John Birtwistle on an overview as he saw the current situation including the recent report by the Transport Select Committee. He would report to the Main meeting on 17th November together with a spokesperson on Transport from Defra.

12. Rural England

David Inman outlined the progress to date and the hoped for aspirations of the organisation's research arm. He outlined the constitution of its membership, its establishment as a Community Interest Company, its prospectus; and discussions that were planned with Calor and Business in the Community.

13. Constitution

The Constitution, as detailed at the March meeting, would go forward to the AGM for formal consideration.

15. AGM

David Inman outlined the issues that would constitutionally have to be considered.

14. Service Charges 2015-16

There had been no increase for 5 successive years. It was felt that in the interests of overall operations there ought to be a small increase this year. It would be proposed to the AGM that there be an increase of £50 to the Sparse Rural subscriptions. This equated to an increase of some 2%.

16. Schedule of Meetings

This was agreed as tabled.

17. Any Other Business

None.

The chair declared the meeting closed at 2-45 p.m.