

Rural Services APPG

**All-Party Parliamentary Group on Rural Services
Tuesday 25th October 2011, Breakfast Meeting 8:30am - 10:00am
Dining Room C, HoC**

Agenda

1. **Notes of the last Meeting – AGM 29th June 2011** page 3
2. **Matters arising from the last meeting**
3. **Rural Housing Presentations**
 - a. **Martin Holland – Chief Executive, South Shropshire Housing Association**

The presentation will cover:

 - National allocations to rural housing from the HCA and why it is only 9% of the total pot.
 - The importance of keeping “exception schemes” as a local housing tool. There is some doubt about this in the NPPF consultation document.
 - The HCA’s inconsistent approach to rural housing and why in some regions small rural specialists are not allowed to bid for funds in their own right.
 - The importance of robust housing assessments.
 - The need to ensure that the use of C.I.L. does not impede the provision of affordable housing.
 - Impact of proposed welfare benefit changes and the disproportionate impact these changes will have on rural areas.
 - b. **Stuart Davies – Neighbourhood Services Director at Spectrum Housing Group**
 - The vital place of affordable housing in sustaining a balanced rural community and life
 - The barriers that face young people who want to live in rural communities
 - The affordability gap
 - Implications of the planning and housing changes will they remove the barriers
 - Practical problems and the chances of success
 - The part housing associations can play in delivering 'the Big Society'

4. Current Representations concerning the Local Government Grant Formula in Rural Areas

Remarks by Graham Biggs Chief Executive of the Rural Services Network

5. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 22nd November 2011. It will again be a breakfast meeting and will deal with Health Services in Rural Areas

Schedule of future meetings attached

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For further details concerning this meeting please contact:

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Rural Services APPG

Annual General Meeting All-Party Parliamentary Group on Rural Services

Wednesday 29th June 2011, 14:00-15:00
Committee Room 14

In attendance:

Graham Stuart MP
Lord Dear QPM
Baroness Byford DBE
Lord Cameron

1. Membership:

Please see attached list.

2. Election of Officers:

The following members were re-elected to committee positions:

Chairman: Graham Stuart MP
Vice-Chairmen: Grahame Morris MP
Dan Rogerson MP
Lord Dear QPM
Treasurer: Rory Stewart MP
Secretary: Baroness Byford DBE

There was no change to the current membership.

3. Rural Services Network – Fairer Funding

Graham Biggs, Chief Executive of the Rural Services Network, gave an outline of the current work being undertaken by the Network to identify the extent of the “Rural Premium”, this being the added cost of providing services in rural areas. A previous investigation had been undertaken in 2006 for the Network by Rita Hale into refuse collection, domiciliary care, schools (particularly primary school unit costs) and home to school transport services. This investigation identified an added cost to rural authorities in providing services in the rural parts of their area compared to the urban parts. However further research was needed to ensure a robust case. RSN had therefore instructed LGFutures to carry out a further study. Graham introduced Jude Ransinghe from LGFutures to present the findings of the investigation so far.

Jude presented the background to the investigation and the approach taken. The research commenced in February 2011 and was set in the context of the current Local Government Resource Review. A combination of analysis techniques, literature review and survey data had been used over a range of local authority services. The services considered were:

Fire Services
Waste collection/recycling
Domiciliary Care
Home to school transport
Primary Education
Visiting services e.g. housing benefit/council tax; nuisance pollution; premises inspection

Jude explained the current use of sparsity and the estimate of sparsity within the local government funding system and illustrated this for different types of authority. The key issues impacting on service delivery/costs were highlighted which included:

Relatively little supporting evidence on specific cost implications
Time to attend clients/deliver the service
Difficulty in efficiently planning time/visits
Need for larger numbers of service points
Costs of travel
Question over equality of access

These issues were considered for the services covered by the investigation.

In summary it was noted that:

Sparsity distributes low levels of funding (£742m/0.9% worth of the total indicators in f the needs block)
But, crucially important to SPARSE-Rural members – up to 5% of formula for unitary, 8% county, 27% district (£2.5m district, £13m upper tier)
Range of issues associated with rurality – need; markets; benefits take-up; health outcomes; access; technology
Travel costs; travel time; more service points
Question over equity of access/service provision
Obtaining detailed costs difficult, but increase in evidence base
Next step is to produce research report, drawing together findings

It was noted that Ministers needed to accept the existence of the “Rural Premium” and direct civil servants to achieve the objective of recognising it. It was hoped that rural MP’s and supportive Members of the House of Lords would engage ministers in this debate. It was also suggested that consideration be given to changing the terminology “rural premium” to something more relevant.

Members noted that now that the CRC had gone there was no rural voice and it was necessary to get rural MP’s on board as a group rather than working in isolation. The APPG needed to be clear what it wanted to achieve on this issue so that a specific campaign could go forward to Ministers. RSN would consider any recommendations it wished to make.

Concern was expressed at the limited attendance at the APPG meetings and consideration was to be given as to the best time and day for meetings to be held. Consideration also needed to be given to the issues discussed and the outcomes to be achieved.

It was agreed to distribute the membership list to all Members (list attached below).

Rural Services APPG Membership 2011:

Mr Nigel Adams MP (C)
Mr Peter Aldous MP (C)
Mr Richard Bacon MP (C)
Mr Russell Brown MP (L)
Rt Hon Sir Alan Beith MP (LD)
Mr Tom Blenkinsop MP (L)
Mr Steve Brine MP (C)
Mr Damian Collins MP (C)
Mr Geoffrey Cox MP (C)
Mr Tony Cunningham MP (L)
Ms Nadine Dorries MP (C)
Mr George Eustice MP (C)
Mr Graham Evans MP (C)
Mr Tim Farron MP (LD)
Mr George Freeman MP (C)
Mr Mark Garnier MP (C)
Mr Andrew George MP (LD)
Ms Helen Goodman MP (L)
Mr James Gray MP (C)
Rt Hon Sir Alan Haselhurst MP (C)
Mr Christopher Heaton-Harris MP (C)
Mr Damian Hinds MP (C)
Mr Philip Hollobone MP (C)
Mr Daniel Kawczynski MP (C)
Mr Jeremy Lefroy MP (C)
Mr Patrick Mercer OBE MP (C)
Mr Grahame Morris MP (L)
Mrs Tessa Munt MP (LD)
Mrs Caroline Nokes MP (C)
Mr Guy Opperman MP (C)
Mr Neil Parish MP (C)
Mrs Claire Perry MP (C)
Mr Simon Reevell MP (C)
Mr Dan Rogerson MP (LD)
Mr David Ruffley MP (C)
Mr Mark Simmonds MP (C)
Ms Angela Smith MP (L)
Hon Nicholas Soames MP (C)
Mr Mark Spencer MP (C)
Mr Rory Stewart MP (C)
Mr Graham Stuart MP (C)
Mr Julian Sturdy MP (C)
Mr Andrew Tyrie MP (C)
Mr Mike Weir MP (SNP)
Mr Mark Williams MP (LD)
Mr Roger Williams MP (LD)
Mr John Woodcock MP (L)
Mr Iain Wright MP (L)

Mr Tim Yeo MP (C)
Mr Nadhim Zahawi MP (C)

The Baroness Byford DBE (C)
Rt Hon the Baroness Shephard of Northwold (C)
His Grace the Duke of Montrose (C)
The Lord Crathorne (C)
The Lord Cameron of Dillington (CB)
The Lord Dear QPM (CB)
Lord Gardiner of Kimble (Con)
The Baroness Gibson of Market Rasen OBE (L)
The Lord Grantchester (L)
The Baroness Maddock (LD)
The Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer (LD)
The Lord Tyler CBE (LD)
Rt Hon the Lord Maclennan of Rogart (LD)
Rt Rev the Lord Bishop of Exeter
Rt Rev the Lord Bishop of Hereford

APPG CALENDAR 2011

APRIL

Meetings

27th – APPG – First Response Services – 2.00pm – House of Commons, London

MAY

Meetings

17th – APPG – Rural Transport – 2.00pm – House of Commons, London

JUNE

Meetings

29th - APPG – AGM – Funding Review – 2.00pm – House of Commons, London

OCTOBER

Meetings

25th – APPG – Rural Housing – 8.30am – House of Commons, London

NOVEMBER

Meetings

22nd - APPG – Rural Health – 8.30am – House of Commons, London