

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