

## **SPARSE Rural Special Interest Group**

### **Purpose of Report**

For decision.

### **Summary**

The SPARSE Rural Special Interest Group was set up in 1999, originally to focus on grant formula and local government finance. However over the years it has evolved a wider brief, with 122 LGA member authorities in membership and all members of the former Rural Commission entitled to Associate membership of the Group.

Following the General Assembly's decision to abolish the Rural Commission and set up the new People and Places Board, SPARSE is seeking Leadership Board's agreement to change its name to the Rural Services Network SIG and to broaden its membership to include all councils with an interest in rural affairs.

### **Recommendation**

That the Leadership Board agree the change of name from SPARSE Rural SIG to the Rural Services Network SIG and the broadening of its membership to include all councils with an interest in rural affairs.

### **Action**

Officers to action in accordance with the Board's decision.

**Contact officer:** Claire Holloway  
**Position:** Head of Corporate Governance  
**Phone no:** 020 7664 3156  
**E-mail:** [claire.holloway@local.gov.uk](mailto:claire.holloway@local.gov.uk)

## **SPARSE Rural Special Interest Group**

### **Purpose of the Group**

1. The SPARSE Rural Special Interest Group was set up in 1999, originally to focus on funding for rural authorities. However over the years its purpose has broadened and it now
  - 1.1 Acts as the voice of rural authorities in the LGA and seeks to influence the work of the Association so that the views and interests of these councils are fully considered.
  - 1.2 Researches, promotes and lobbies for the financial and non-financial interests of predominantly rural principal councils and the communities served by them.
2. Currently all councils classified as Predominantly Rural and Significantly Rural by Government are eligible for membership of SPARSE (provided that they are members of the LGA). In addition, all members of the former Rural Commission were entitled to become Associate members of the Group.

### **The Issue**

3. With the replacement of the Rural Commission by the People & Places Board, SPARSE is keen to ensure that rural interests and views continue to be harnessed to inform the work of the new Board and of the LGA. To this end, and subject to the agreement of the Leadership Board, they propose to change their name to the Rural Services Network SIG and broaden their core membership to include all rural authorities.
4. The new Rural Services Network SIG will meet three times a year in a rural forum. The SIG is seeking support from member services, who currently support three SPARSE meetings a year, for the three Forum meetings. This is in line with our offer to SIGs. In addition they propose a programme of meetings to focus on specific aspects of rural policy for which no LGA support is sought.

### **Financial Implications**

5. None - LGA Member Services currently provides support to three SPARSE SIG meetings per year.