



Yorkshire and The Humber Rural Affairs Forum
Management Group

Minutes of Meeting on 23rd March 2010 at NFU Offices, York

Present

Tony Pexton	Yorkshire and The Humber Rural Affairs Forum (Chairman)
Cllr Symon Fraser	Humber Rural Partnership / Functional Sub-Region
Chris Barnett	Humber Rural Partnership / Functional Sub-Region
Cllr Geraldine Carter	West Yorkshire Rural Partnership / Leeds Functional Sub-Region
Katy Calvert	West Yorkshire Rural Partnership / Leeds Functional Sub-Region
Cllr Peter Sowray	North Yorkshire Rural Partnership / York & North Yorkshire Functional Sub-Region
Gary Fieldling	North Yorkshire Rural Partnership / York & North Yorkshire Functional Sub-Region
Cllr Richard Walker	Sheffield Functional Sub-Region
Kelly Jevons	Local Government Yorkshire and Humber
Mike Feist	Government Office Yorkshire and The Humber
Howard Petch	Commission for Rural Communities
Steve Willis	Food and Farming Forum
Cath Lee	Federation of Small Businesses
Richard Turton	Yorkshire Forward
Helen Wright	Yorkshire and The Humber Rural Affairs Forum (Executive Manager)

Apologies

Dave Melling	West Yorkshire Rural Partnership / Leeds Functional Sub-Region
Pauline Teale	Yorkshire Forward
Peter Nottage	Natural England
Richard Ellison	National Farmers' Union
Shelagh Marshall	Social Sector
Janet Thornton	Social Sector
Graham Ward	Sustainable Development Board

Ag. It. / Min.		Action
1 / 1	<p>Welcome and Introduction</p> <p>Tony Pexton, the new Chairman of the YHRAF, and Helen Wright, the new Executive Manager, welcomed everyone to the meeting and briefly outlined their roles and the ongoing role of the RAF for the next year. The Chairman stated that because this was the first meeting of the new Management Group, much of the agenda is inevitable procedural. The RAF's purpose and objectives will, however, remain unchanged.</p>	
2 / 2	<p>Management Group - Terms of Reference</p> <p>The Terms of Reference, which had been revised in Autumn 2009, had been circulated to members prior to the meeting. Mike Feist briefly outlined the history and background of the Terms of Reference.</p> <p>The following points and issues were highlighted: <i>Pt 2 Purpose and Role of the Rural Affairs Forum</i> - meetings, relationships etc. Questions were raised about the role of the Rural Board - which had last met in Summer 2009. Comment was made that as there was now a Sustainable Development Board on which rural interests were represented, and given that that the role of the Forum has been strengthened with a new and broader Management Group, there may no longer be a need to retain the Rural Board. The need to ensure that there was sufficient influence at the right levels on all the thematic boards, in respect of rural agendas was emphasised. It was suggested that the Chairman should have further discussion with YF and LGYH to determine the way forward.</p> <p>Action: Meet with Yorkshire Forward, Local Government Yorkshire and Humber and Government Office Yorkshire and The Humber to discuss the future of the Rural Board.</p> <p><i>Pt 3 Structure and Membership</i> - The Executive Manager drew attention to points 3.1 and 3.3 and suggested that there should perhaps be a more open-door policy to membership of the RAF. There are currently three sub-groups within the structure - the Rural Practitioners' Group, the Food and Farming Forum and the Financial Sub-Committee. It was suggested that there may be other groups which could usefully be affiliated. After some discussion, it was agreed that Task and Finish Group would be established on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p><i>Pt 6 Vice Chair</i> - It was necessary to appoint a Vice-Chairman. Cllr Fraser nominated Howard Petch. Howard Petch thanked Cllr Fraser for his support but stressed that there may be others who are interested, including the previous Vice-Chairman - who had served</p>	Chairman

<p>the Forum well. The appointment of the Vice-Chairman should be made by the Chairman, following open nominations, with the support of the Management Group.</p> <p>Action: Nominations for Vice-Chairman to be submitted to the Executive Manager by the next meeting on 22nd June 2010.</p> <p><i>Pt 9 Meetings</i> - There would normally be 3 meetings per year. It was proposed by the Chairman that there should be 4 meetings of the Forum and 4 meetings of the Management Group. The Chairman also proposed that they should take place in a central location and the same location each time. It was suggested by one member that where there was a <i>theme</i> to the Forum an appropriate location should perhaps be sought. There was support for this idea. The NFU offices in York have been booked for all 2010/11 Management Group meetings. A suitable venue for Forum meetings is still being investigated.</p> <p><i>Pt 10 Communications</i> - this issue is to be considered later on the agenda but the Chairman emphasised the need to identify who is the RAF's audience.</p> <p><i>Pt 11 - Financial Resources</i> - the Executive Manager updated on funding and financial resources. There are two key sources of funding - Yorkshire Forward and Defra. There is an inherited under-spend of £25k from Yorkshire Forward and £7k from Defra for the 2009/10 financial year. It is anticipated that approx. £6.5k of Yorkshire Forward funding will be spent - primarily on salaries. Yorkshire Forward has agreed to carry over the remaining £18.5K into the 2010/11 financial year. Together with the £25K already allocated, this will make a total of £43.5k to spend in 2010/11. Further funding will be available from Yorkshire Forward in 2011/12. It is hoped that £5k of the Defra under-spend will be spent before year-end. This money cannot be carried-over. It is hoped that there will be £20k from Defra in 2010/11. The Farming and Environment Research Agency are providing Accountable Body status for the Yorkshire Forward money and East Riding of Yorkshire Council are providing support in respect of the finances generally</p> <p>Action: Yorkshire Forward to be thanked for its support in respect of funding.</p> <p><i>Annex C Pt 6.1 Chair and Vice-Chair Remuneration</i> - There is no remuneration for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman - only expenses.</p> <p>Action: Delete references to remuneration for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman from the Terms of reference.</p> <p><i>Pt 12 Monitoring and Review</i> - It was recognised that the Forum operates in a rapidly changing policy and delivery environment. It was proposed that, following the outcome of the General Election,</p>	<p>All</p> <p>Executive Manager</p> <p>Executive Manager</p>
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	<p>there should be a an agenda item at the next meeting to consider how the RAF can pro-actively respond to new government agendas.</p> <p>Action: agenda item at the next meeting to consider how the RAF can pro-actively respond to new government agendas.</p> <p>The question of substitutes was raised under this point. It was suggested that it is not normal practice for substitutes to attend the Management Group. The Chairman felt, however, that he would far rather have a substitute than no one attending. It was agreed in principle that one substitute per body could be nominated - but that it should not go any wider It was also agreed that names should be forwarded to the Executive Manager.</p> <p>Action: Forward names of substitute members for the Management Group to Executive Manager before the next meeting on 22nd June 2010.</p>	All
3 / 3	<p>Management Group - Sub-Groups including Finance</p> <p>The Executive Manager briefly reported on the position in respect of sub-groups. In the current Terms of Reference three main sub-groups are identified - the Rural Practitioners' Group, the Food and Farming Forum and the Finance Sub-Group.</p> <p><i>The Rural Practitioners' Group</i> has been on hold for some time. There was discussion about the role of the Group and around whether it fulfilled a distinctively separate function. It was recognised that it did provide an opportunity to meet with and share what other groups were doing.</p> <p><i>The Food and Farming Forum</i> - It was felt to be very positive that this Forum sits under the umbrella of the RAF. It was agreed that it would be helpful if other distinctively rural groups were similarly affiliated. In respect of the previous issue, a member noted that the Veterinary Service is represented on the Food and Farming Forum and on the Rural Practitioners' Group. Whilst it was recognised that some members may sit on one or more sub-groups, unnecessary duplication in respect of people's time should be avoided.</p> <p><i>The Finance Sub-Group</i> - In line with Yorkshire Forward's funding requirements - and the Terms of Reference - a Finance Sub-Group needs to be set-up. After discussion, it was proposed and agreed that the Finance Sub-Group should include the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman, the Executive Manager, Yorkshire Forward and Government Office Yorkshire and The Humber.</p> <p>Action: Finance Sub-Group to be set-up to include the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman and the Executive Manager.</p>	Executive Manager

	<p>Following general discussion and investigation of the options, it was agreed that the most appropriate way forward would be through the establishment of time-limited Task & Finish Groups - set-up as appropriate to address issues as they arise. This would mean that the Rural Practitioners' Group would not be continued in its present form. It was agreed that a paper would be prepared for the next meeting on Task & Finish Groups.</p> <p>Action: Paper on Task & Finish Groups to be prepared for the next meeting.</p>	Executive Manager
4 / 4	<p>Management Group - Functional Sub-Regional Rural Partnerships - Role and Linkages</p> <p>The Executive Manager and Mike Feist reported on the Sub-Regional Rural Partnerships and their relationship to the RAF. The Executive Manager pointed-out that the new RAF structures had strengthened the linkages. It was agreed to convene a meeting of representatives from the Sub-Regional Rural Partnerships to look at what this means in practice and how things can be taken forward in the most effective way. The Executive Manager offered to attend a meeting of each of the Partnerships to outline the role and work of the RAF. It was noted that there is currently no Rural Partnership in South Yorkshire. It was reported that the West Yorkshire Rural Partnership had invited an officer from Barnsley to attend one of its meetings, and it was suggested that an officer from Doncaster could be invited to the Humber Rural Partnership meeting in the future. It was agreed that the RAF would act as a catalyst in encouraging the creation of a Rural Partnership in South Yorkshire.</p> <p>Action: Meeting of lead officers from the Sub-Regional Rural Partnerships be convened to consider linkages with the Rural Affairs Forum.</p> <p>Action: Preliminary soundings to be made into the feasibility of a Rural Partnership being set-up in South Yorkshire.</p>	Executive Manager Chairman, Executive Manager
5 / 5	<p>Rural Affairs Forum - Review of Membership</p> <p>The existing RAF membership has been in place for some time - and is now out-of-date. It was suggested, for example, that all Local Authorities and all LEADER Local Action Groups should have the opportunity to be members of the Forum. There was a discussion about the importance of ensuring that the Forum retained an active membership, and that in order to achieve this there needed to be a balance of local authority representation and that of private organisations. It was felt that the membership should reflect ongoing work streams - and would therefore be fluid. There was agreement</p>	

	<p>that the membership should be revisited.</p> <p>Action: Undertake a review of the membership of the Rural Affairs Forum, ensuring that the balance of the membership reflects ongoing work streams.</p>	<p>Executive Manager</p>
<p>6 / 6</p>	<p>Rural Affairs Forum - Work Plan and Communications</p> <p>The Executive Manager briefly reported on the Draft Work Plan. Discussion followed on a range of issues including the importance of RAF input to the Yorkshire and Humber Strategy, retaining the profile of the RAF and communication generally. It was felt that communication was a very important aspect of the Work Plan. Some specific ideas were suggested including a <i>Meet the Customer</i> event and more overt engagement with parish councils - recognising that there are RAF members which work closely with parish councils.</p> <p>It was suggested and agreed that at the next meeting of the Forum on 11th May - by which time there will be a new Government - ideas be sought from members on what really matters to rural communities. It was also felt that views could be sought in respect of actions which should be happening but are not.</p> <p>A discussion followed around the balance between the RAF being cutting-edge and the need to ensure an effective influencing role ie limited resources means that it is difficult to be all things to all men. It was agreed that consultations would need to be managed carefully and that the Management Group would have a key role to play.</p> <p>Some discussion on <i>influencing</i> followed. The national meetings of the RAF Chairmen and Defra Minister provide an opportunity to identify those areas where national support is needed in order to achieve things in the Region. The Executive Manager identified three routes - Chairman to the Minister (national), rural member on the Sustainable Board (Graham Ward) to the Sustainable Board (regional) and Executive Manager to RAF members (local). Two key threads were discussed - what does / does not happen in Yorkshire and The Humber that the RAF can influence and what can the RAF not make progress on - thereby requiring national influence.</p> <p>Action: That a <i>post-it exercise</i> be undertaken at the next meeting of the Rural Affairs Forum to identify current matters of concern in rural areas and gaps in activity to address issues.</p> <p>Action: That a managed approach be taken to consultation requests and that the Management Group and Task and Finish Groups provide support.</p>	<p>Executive Manager</p> <p>Executive Manager / All</p>

7 / 7	<p>Maximising the Rural Potential in Yorkshire and the Humber - Next Steps</p> <p>The Executive Manager and Mike Feist briefly explained the background to the original Rural Framework for Yorkshire and The Humber, which was produced in 2006. Reasons for reviewing the document were outlined and details given about the principles which underpin the format of the new document. The focus is very much on the contribution which rural areas can make to the Region and how the opportunities can be safeguarded and enhanced. Discussion followed on the questions of updating and awareness-raising. Suggestions were made about other issues which could be covered, including climate change (reflecting the recent conference held at Bishop Burton College), eco-systems services, food security and tourism. It was felt that the city-region agenda should be incorporated; the point was made that <i>rural</i> needed to be a bigger part of the Leeds City-Region Strategy. It was agreed that the document needs to be updated - before December as currently programmed - and re-launched. A member raised the question of monitoring and the need to establish effectiveness as an influencing tool - particularly in respect of the Yorkshire and Humber Strategy. It was emphasised that the document is the key driver in influencing the agenda and work of the RAF. In the longer term it was felt that the document could include objectives and an Action Plan.</p> <p>Action: Maximising the Rural Potential in Yorkshire and the Humber to be updated, published and launched.</p>	Executive Manager / All
8 / 8	<p>The Yorkshire and Humber Strategy - Rural Affairs Forum Response</p> <p>Richard Turton (Yorkshire Forward) introduced a briefing paper that had been circulated to the Management Group on the Yorkshire and Humber Strategy. Discussion covered the process and timeframe for developing the Strategy, the representation of rural interests within the governance structures and the opportunities for the RAF to facilitate effective engagement in the strategy development process. It was agreed that a Task & Finish Group could provide a useful input into the development of the <i>Scoping Framework for the Integrated Appraisal</i> (the mechanism for ensuring that social, environmental and economic effects are fully considered through the Strategy), which is to be published around the beginning of April. Linkages with the Sub-Regional Rural Partnerships would be important.</p> <p>Action: Set-up a Task and Finish Group to support input by the Rural Affairs Forum to the Yorkshire and Humber Strategy.</p>	Executive Manager

9 / 9	<p>Rural Affairs Forum - Meeting on 11th May 2010 / Future Meetings</p> <p>The Chairman reported on the meeting of the Forum held in February at Bishop Burton College - when the Government's Food Strategy 2030 was considered.</p> <p>Future meetings would look at issues which are topical and fall within the <i>Maximising the Rural Potential in Yorkshire and the Humber</i> framework.</p>	
10 / 10	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>None.</p>	
11 / 11	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>22nd June 2010.</p>	