



**Minutes of the Yorkshire and Humber Rural Affairs Forum
held on Tuesday, 12th February 2008
at Community House, Selby**

1. Chair's Welcome – Graham Ward

- 1.1** Graham Ward welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked John Davis for suggesting using Community House as a suitable venue. He went on to explain that the main topic for this Forum was about the Sub-National Review and referred members to the RAF website for more information.
- 1.2** Graham introduced the LSP/LAA Rural Embedding item and speakers, Crispin Moor from the CRC, Helen Wright from the East Riding of Yorkshire Council and Dave Melling of Bradford Council.

2. LSP/LAA Rural Embedding

a) Crispin Moor – Commission for Rural Communities

See Crispin Moor's Presentation Attached

Crispin Moor is a Director of the CRC (Whitehall office) and he was invited to present his views to members on the importance of LAAs.

In his presentation, Crispin Moor looked at Rural England as a whole and presented some maps on population density, peripherality, city regions, settlements, district classification and shire community maps

He made it clear that the LAA will be the principal driver for achieving the priorities. There are 9 priorities in the strategic review – public transport, affordable housing, alcohol harm reduction, children and young people, community cohesion, environment, economy and enterprise, health and wellbeing and older people. The strategy identifies the priorities for York and North Yorkshire rural partnerships namely affordable housing,

access to services and opportunities, provision for cultural services, community capacity and environmental issues.

The new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) process is being developed by the Audit Commission. This will test the LAA delivery across all urban and rural communities.

Crispin Moor explained that the CRC is working with the Audit Commission on the CAA process and training people on rural proofing. They must challenge orthodoxies that do not work for the rural people.

Crispin went on to explain that Defra has agreed to fund the Rural Community Council some £10m for rural areas to carry out strategic influencing and rural proofing. The CRC is delivering a training programme to upskill the RCCs. CRC has posted briefing papers on their website www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk.

b) Helen Wright – East Riding of Yorkshire Council

See Helen Wright's Presentation Attached

Helen Wright is the Rural Policy and Partnership Manager of East Riding of Yorkshire Council and has much experience of local rural authority.

Helen believes that the key to their success is the dedication behind embedding LSPs and LAAs rurally. This has been done through the Rural Partnership Board since 1998.

She went on to explain that there must be a committee to give power to do rural proofing or it will not happen through this partnership. Working arrangements have evolved to reflect changing needs.

We must recognize the growing strength of influences of the LSP regarding structured rural partnerships.

East Yorkshire Rural Priorities are:-

LAA provide outcomes identified by LSP at priority setting event. Matched within 198 indicators set.

Endorsed by good partnerships and approved the LSP by the board.

Rural partnership involved in priority setting event and will rural proof 35 indicators.

Humber Rural Priorities:-

There is a strategic link with the City Region Development Plan and the Humber Rural Pathfinder Board where the Board will seek to ensure a fair level of service provision for rural areas in LAAs.

Graham Ward explained that there was a great resource within East Yorkshire County Council but it does need support to draw it from the outside. We need to encourage the process to continue.

c) **Dave Melling – Bradford MBC**

See Dave Melling's Notes Attached

Dave Melling is the Senior Policy Officer for Bradford Council which includes the larger districts of Silsden and Calderdale. Dave explained when in 1974 the whole council was in disarray and metropolitan district councils were created. Bradford's urban population is 400,000 and has a population of 97,000 in rural areas. From 1974 onwards many of the rural areas did not have a voice and there is a need to look at the development of city regions and how it affects people.

Dave went on to explain that their Local Strategic Partnership is well established and the creation of a Neighbourhood Improvement Partnership has given a voice for rural communities alongside urban neighbourhood programmes.

They have made sure that their parish and town councils are very much involved together with constantly reminding councilors and service providers of the issues faced by rural communities.

Dave feels that the guidance published on rural proofing LAAs and Sustainable Community Strategies is too little, too late.

Finally, Dave suggested that rural communities need to ensure that they are permanently engaged within the decision making processes.

Questions and Comments:-

Helen Wright, East Riding of Yorkshire Co lives in a rural sub region and they have a structure within the system that can be influenced and has a rural view. This is a friendly system to work on but still needs a lot of support.

Dave Melling, Bradford Council pointed out that we should be getting local involvement, our function of the RAF is to listen to the rural voice.

Dorothy Fairburn, CLA asked if Crispin agrees with Dave Melling's view in that the whole process is too late. Crispin believes that they were never too late with the timetable, official guides came out in late Autumn 2007. Although the process comes to an end in June, everyone should be working as of a new financial year on these targets. Whatever the targets are agreed, how monitored, it is very important and much is to be applied to local targets and indicators in East Yorkshire.

There will be review boards and comprehensive area assessments.

Helen Wright, East Riding of Yorkshire Co – The difficulty is that different Local Authorities and LSPs are at different stages. Need to be more overt in producing a structure of LAA to Bridlington, Goole and rural challenge.

Councillor Geraldine Carter, Calderdale Council – Officer perspective on LAA and LSP. These should be recognized as member driven. We should not forget that we have a rural advocate and rural councillors. Their job is to try and influence the LAA. There are 5 West Yorkshire Leaders to date and each district has a LAA. From her perspective she feels that Dave thinks that he is not getting the facilities to influence the LAA. Councillor Carter feels the CRC should act as an advocate on her behalf and enable them to have something to use as a scrutiny method rather than a proofing method.

Graham Ward – Do you know if there is a rural champion in Barnsley, Doncaster, York? In Wakefield, West Yorkshire the area partnership struggles to get members continuing.

Wendy Bundy, Regional Assembly – all timescales involved, initiatives and work should have been done but a lot of people in rural areas do not understand and perhaps are not interested. Wendy thinks that the government should try to make methods simpler and not put one initiative on top of another.

Helen Wright, East Riding of Yorkshire Co – We do need to have a rural champion as issues are different in areas.

George Hamilton, Yorkshire Agricultural Society – We should think about farming as it has not been getting support from other mechanisms that rural proofing have. People should want a family member to live on the farm but they cannot afford to live there. We are supporting elderly, young, unemployed but those

who are economically active are left on their own. The voice of agriculture should be involved.

Carol Renehan, NYCC – In North Yorkshire rural and farming go together but we do not see a lot of farming in rural areas in other regions. A lot of land is now becoming untidy as it is not farmed.

Mike Feist, Government Office – The message is coming out from what the speakers have said. The LAA mechanisms are going to succeed. All Local Authorities should not look at it as being too late, more a lot depends on where offices have got to in their targets and areas to implement their plan. See where you are at in your particular area.

Dave Melling, Bradford Council – The local councils should look at different groups to find out what is happening.

Graham Ward – As a Forum we need to encourage any conversation to raise profile of sparse and more sparse people.

3. Noticeboard

a) Shelagh Marshall – Affordable Housing/Taylor Review

The Government has set up an enquiry lead by Matthew Taylor MP on affordable housing. Shelagh had already briefed Graham on the issues regarding this subject. Regional Spatial Strategy allocates the number of houses in the next 10 – 15 years but there are not enough to meet demands and houses are not built quickly enough.

The Matthew Taylor review is looking into the provision of affordable housing. At a meeting on 4th February 2008 Matthew Taylor did most of the talking and was very up front on what is going to happen in the future in respect of the need to improve the delivery of affordable housing. Housing authorities have not enough trained officers and there is a shortage of sites offered for affordable housing. Spatially separated eco villages are also being planned.

Graham was at the meeting but did not get the chance to ask any questions. Responses were due in by 7th March 2008.

For more information about the Taylor Review please visit www.communities.gov.uk

b) David Gluck – Climate Change

There will be an Assembly Scrutiny meeting on climate change on Tuesday, 18th March 2008 at The Courtyard, Boothferry Road, Goole. A report is being prepared by CRC working with

Ecotec and Rural Housing Solution on the sustainable rural community a recent response to the agenda. This will provide a tool kit to enable communities to build sustainable housing. David Gluck to bring report to RAF when finished.

c) John Davis –

Within his overall work, his particular area of his Chaplaincy is to agriculture, visiting livestock markets, representing the Yorkshire and Humber Faith Forum which is made up of the 9 faiths recognized by Faith UK. The attitude towards faith is largely drawn to stereotypes. With the Faith Forum in mind, John took a period of sabbatical leave to produce a resource booklet which covers many faiths, drawn from the experiences of people from 9 faiths throughout the Yorkshire and Humber. There are a vast majority of Christians based in larger communities but people of other faiths are out there in those rural vicinities who do not see them very often. Issues on faith and of faith different to the majority can still arouse strong feelings and has the opportunity to destroy community cohesion. Booklets are available from John Davis, 120 copies have been published and is also available on a CD. Please refer to the chaplaincy website www.scadim.org.uk.

4. Market Towns Vision from Yorkshire Forward

See Rhona Pringle's Presentation Attached

Rhona Pringle is the Renaissance Market Town Manager of Yorkshire Forward and she was invited to give a presentation on Yorkshire Forward's Vision of the Future of Market Towns.

Rhona went on to explain that the existing rural market town programme will continue to March 2009. Therefore, an action plan has been agreed with Local Authority partners and a Rural Capital programme will be set up from March 2009. Basically what Yorkshire Forward did was to use real towns to development scenarios applied to fictitious places to test the outcomes of different approaches.

At the end of the report they then looked at key changes which were:-

- Governance – policy and delivery
- Governance - participative responsibility,
- Governance - individual responsibility
- Governance - town and country planning.
- Demographics – economy, climate change.

Questions and Comments:-

Graham Ward – suggest everyone get a copy of the report. Market towns are an essential part of our remit because they are our start of cities and parishes and villages live in their hinterland. Because of changes in SNR, Yorkshire Forward's involvement will become greater and we need to engage with them more.

Copy of presentation available pdf on www.rmtport.co.

Richard Wilson, Natural England – the information behind this report will be really useful to a lot of people

Helen Wright, East Riding of Yorkshire Co – supports emphasis on local and town planning and linking with community strategy. This explains about how it sits in with the new project package and how Yorkshire Forward sees links between market town programme and RDPE programme.

Rhona Pringle – What they have tried to do is separate out any investments in market towns as areas covered by Leader are areas not covered by funding. RDP and Leader tried to look at towns as service centres for rural hinterland but have not yet agreed engagement of this.

Graham Ward – there is not enough effort to engage with our local market towns in respect of local produce. We are not engaging with that population where other services are coming from.

Dorothy Fairburn, CLA – There is an emphasis of strong leadership.

Stephen Fox – Urges people to read Yorkshire Forward's Corporate Strategy –this is an important document and the way in which Yorkshire Forward will deliver the role in the future. We should be ready to take part in the consultation.

Graham Ward – RAF should make a comment on the Yorkshire Forward plan. Please pass your comments to YHRAF or to Graham Ward and he will put together a report.

5. Update on Rural Framework Review

Graham Ward sent the report by Rob Hindle around the Steering Group and it will be put on YHRAF website. Have a look at the report on the website and forward your views to Anna Knight at Government Office. Anna Knight will send around a link.

6. Chair's updates and summary

- 6.1** The Government structure that was agreed to get the rural voice into the decision making bit of the region will change as the sub national review has changed a lot of things. The assembly will disappear but will be replaced by something else. It is important as 80% of the land is rural and think back to this rural embedding bit and whether or not a Rural Board is the vehicle to do that. How do we have a regional structure that enables our voices to get through to Yorkshire Forward? How do we get through to government and present a structure but we need to be in touch with that subject.
- 6.2** Defra is in discussion with the RAF regarding our relationship with CRC and Graham Ward is talking to other chairs around the country and with the Steering Group. We need joint meetings with CRC and increase our partner relationship with them. Defra proposals are to link us more formally with the CRC.
- 6.3** The secretariat has been transferred from government office to Askham Bryan College but Anna Knight will still be responsible for doing the necessary government spec work.
- 6.4** Graham Ward thanked everyone for their time.

Next meeting Tuesday, 17th June 2008.

It was noted to ignore week commencing 7th September when considering dates for Forum meetings in September.