

South East Rural Board Terms of Reference

1 Purpose:

The South East Rural Board (referred to as the Rural Board) will act as Rural Champions for the region and give strategic leadership on rural issues in the South East. The Rural Board will shape rural policy and make sure delivery happens. This will include a significant monitoring and communication role.

1.2 The Rural Board will also have a watchdog role, which is intended to improve accountability at all levels in the region for achievement of rural outcomes, will be through collective peer pressure within the Rural Board and within their own organisations in order to affect performance of the Rural Board and their organisations as a whole in delivering the South East Rural Action Plan.

1.3 Specific responsibilities include:

(a) Leadership

Act as Rural Champions for the region. Provide visible and proactive strategic leadership and engagement at all levels, shaping rural policy and making sure delivery happens

(b) Policy Making

Understand the needs of the South East through analysis and futures work, so as to:

- develop region-wide priorities and policies in a Rural Strategy and Action Plan
- prepare a plan of action to mainstream rural issues
- influence national policy

(c) Policy and Delivery Review

Act as Watchdog/monitor so as to:

- Understand the impact of the Rural Strategy and Action Plan; challenge what is happening; identify what is working or not; thereby improving accountability for delivery
- Prepare report to Regional/Rural Minister on the Region's performance
- Attend quarterly ministerial meeting with the Rural Forum for the South East (referred to as the Rural Forum)

(d) Communications and Networks

Achieve the above through:

- Proactively communicating rural leadership messages
- Owning and encouraging networks within business, community, regional bodies, and local government sectors
- Commissioning work from Rural Forum and others

(e) The Rural Board will agree and/ or review its terms of reference annually

2 Membership

2.1 Members will initially be chosen by the Interim Rural Board set up in October 2007 to oversee the new governance arrangements.

2.2 Members to provide a named Deputy to attend in their place if they are unable to attend.

2.3 The Rural Board will regulate its own membership to ensure that it is always fit for purpose.

3 Chair

3.1 The Rural Board will annually confirm an independent Chairman, for a maximum term of 4 years.

4 Meetings

4.1 The Rural Board secretariat, after consulting with the Chairman, will propose to the Rural Board at the beginning of the Financial Year a schedule of meetings for the coming year for approval. The Rural Board will normally hold four meetings a year.

4.2 A meeting may be called by the Chair or by any two members of the Rural Board who make such a request in writing to the Chair. In such circumstances the Chair shall arrange for the meeting requested to be held as soon as practicable.

4.3 Notice of associated meeting papers will be given to the Rural Board members by electronic mail.

4.4 Members of the Rural Board are expected to participate fully in its activities, including attending scheduled Rural Board meetings. The Rural Board will review the on-going participation of any member who does not attend Rural Board meetings on a regular basis. Failure to attend more than one meeting per year, by the member or their deputy, will trigger a review under this provision.

5 Agendas and papers:

5.1 In normal circumstances the agenda and any papers for the meeting of the Rural Board will be circulated to members of the Rural Board 10 working days in advance of the meeting. Papers will be distributed by electronic mail.

6 Quorum:

6.1 50% of Rural Board members must be present to validate a Rural Board meeting.

7 Procedure at meetings:

7.1 If the Chair is unable to be present then he/she will indicate which other member will chair the meeting.

7.2 The Chair will:

i) Preserve order and ensure that all members of the Rural Board have sufficient opportunity to express their views on all matters under discussion.

ii) Determine all matters of order and relevance.

iii) Determine whether or not a vote is required and how it is carried out.

7.3 Written comments on the agenda items submitted by a member of the Rural Board who is not present when a particular agenda item is discussed may be circulated to those members of the Rural Board who are present at the meeting and may be read out, by the Chair if he/she so chooses, at the appropriate point in the meeting.

7.4 Decisions of the Rural Board will normally be made by consensus rather than by formal vote. Failing consensus, decisions will be reached by vote.

7.5 Decisions will be taken by simple majority vote, each member of the Rural Board having a single vote. The Chair will declare whether or not a resolution has been carried or lost. The Chair will get the casting vote if voting is equal in order to move forward.

8 Minutes of meetings:

8.1 Minutes will be kept of all meetings of the Rural Board, including names and organisations of those present. The draft minutes of the meetings of the Rural Board will be circulated to attendees of each meeting by a maximum of two weeks after the meeting with a suitable deadline for comments.

9 Subgroups/ Working groups:

9.1 The Rural Board, from time to time, may establish standing or ad hoc Subgroups/Working Groups. Each group will agree its terms of reference and reporting arrangements with the Rural Board.

10 Communication

10.1 The Rural Board will communicate outcomes of Rural Board meetings and/or working groups (once finalised with attendees and chair) electronically, e.g. via e-mail to the Rural Forum members for further distribution and by publication on Rural Board members websites.

10.2 In the event of restricted information being discussed by the Rural Board, the information will not be distributed wider than the Rural Board and will be handled in an appropriate manner in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, The Data Protection Act 1998 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

10.3 The Rural Board will ensure that key messages are communicated both ways between the Rural Board, its stakeholders and local and national government.

10.4 The Rural Board Chair and members will carry out an influencing and communications role in support of the key messages.

11 Monitor and Review:

11.1 The Rural Board will bolster accountability within the region by:

a) Carrying out an annual self assessment of delivery against the South East Rural Strategy and Action Plan, capturing feedback to ensure the Rural Board agenda and membership remains fit for purpose.

b) Take collective responsibility for decisions made by the Rural Board.

c) Annually review the performance of the Rural Board and its partners against the South East Rural Action Plan, and submit a report to the South East Regional Minister and other groups as appropriate.

15 July 2008