

Rural Forum for the South East Terms of Reference

1 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of the Rural Forum for the South East (referred to as the Rural Forum) is to provide a voice for local rural stakeholders into the region, capable of influencing the rural agenda in the South East on environmental, social and economic issues. It will provide information and intelligence to the new South East Rural Board (referred to as the Rural Board) to help the Rural Board in its policy and delivery challenge function. In addition, it is to provide a channel of communication for the Rural Board into rural delivery organisations and rural stakeholders. The Rural Forum will not be responsible for delivery of individual services.

1.2 Specific responsibilities include:

(a) **Leadership**

Act as champions for local rural mainstreaming and provide visible and proactive leadership at sub-regional and local level by capturing and articulating the voice of “grass roots” rural stakeholders.

(b) **Policy Making**

Understand the needs of the South East through local knowledge and best practice, so as to:

- develop common consensus on policy issues and advise the Rural Board in its policy-making
- review rural proofing of sub-regional/local policy and delivery, based on best practice
- Offer support for mainstreaming rural issues into LAAs

(c) **Policy and Delivery Review**

Develop common local consensus on the impact of policy and delivery so as to:

- Input into the Rural Board reviews
- Provide local evidence on the reality of rural delivery and areas needing improvement to feed into impact report for the Regional and Rural Ministers
- Attend quarterly meetings with the Rural Minister

(d) **Communications and Networks**

Achieve the above through:

- Taking back clear messages to local stakeholders from the Rural Board and vice versa, and establishing and promoting best practice examples
- Developing and maintaining direct links to Local Strategic Partnerships, LAA Boards, County Fora and Rural Community Councils
- Carrying out and/or commissioning specific work for the Rural Board and others
- Holding an annual conference

2 Membership

2.1 Membership will represent Local Strategic Partnerships, County Rural Fora, Rural Community Councils in the following way:

- (a) The Local Strategic Partnership for each County, District and Unitary area that contains rural areas as defined from time to time by DEFRA will be asked to nominate one person to the forum.
- (b) Each of the 9 County Rural Fora will be asked to nominate one person to the forum.
- (c) Each of the 8 Rural Community Councils will be asked to nominate one person to the forum.
- (d) Other members can be co-opted onto the Forum dependant upon business needs, such as specialists; delivery bodies; lobby bodies; researchers etc.
- (e) The Rural Forum may set up 'Task and Finish Groups' to undertake specific work.
- (f) Observers may attend the regular Rural Forum meetings providing sufficient notice is given to the Secretariat in advance of the meeting and there is sufficient space in the venue.

3 Meetings

3.1 Normally, meetings of the Rural Forum will be held at least twice a year.

3.2 When discussing issues, the task of the Rural Forum will be to represent all views expressed but with ideally a consensus achieved. However, the ability to represent all views and perspectives is of greater importance than consensus. Members will not be expected to take part in votes to establish the Rural Forum's position on issues.

4 Secretariat and Communication

4.1 GOSE will arrange co-ordination of secretariat support for the Rural Forum. This will include making arrangements for meetings, briefing the Chair, preparation of the agenda, reports and minutes for the meeting. Also, the secretariat will provide a contact point for people who are interested in finding out about the Rural Forum.

4.2 Papers for meetings will be circulated to members by e-mail.

4.3 Information about the Rural Forum, including agendas, minutes and an annual report will be published on the web.

4.4 The County Rural Community Councils, or equivalent, will be expected to facilitate communication between local rural stakeholder groups and Local Strategic Partnerships/Strategic Partnerships. This is required to ensure that there is a strong strategic voice for rural issues linking through from Local Strategic Partnerships to County LAAs and on to the Rural Forum and the Rural Board.

5 Chair

5.1 The Chair will be appointed by the Rural Forum at the first meeting. This appointment will be for a period of up to one year.

5.2 Thereafter the Election Procedure will be at the annual meeting. Nominations will be made to the Secretariat. The members of the Rural Forum, by a simple

majority, will elect the Chair. The Chair will be elected for a term of three years, with confirmation every year. A Chair should not normally serve for longer than two consecutive terms of three years (i.e. six years).

6 Monitor and Review

6.1 The Rural Forum will operate in an ever-changing policy and delivery environment and will therefore, on an annual basis:

6.2 Reviews its purpose and ensure that it is fit to address that purpose, including whether it continues to represent the appropriate range of constituencies.

6.3 Prepare an annual brief on activity to date, including an outline of what issues it expects to address in the coming year and a forward programme of meeting dates. Meeting dates will normally be agreed at least a year in advance.

6.4 Review the Rural Forum's own Terms of Reference.

6.5 Review membership performance when issues such as attendance and engagement with constituencies will be considered.

15 July 2008