

Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership

Rural Enterprise Group  
Terms of Reference

March 2021

## **1. Purpose**

- 1.1. The Rural Enterprise Group (referred to as the Group hereafter) is purpose is to ensure all Dorset's residents and businesses are able to fully contribute to and benefit from its rural economy.

## **2. Objectives**

- 2.1. To work towards the delivery of the priorities within the South West Rural Productivity Commission Report.
- 2.2. To aspire to increase the economic productivity and wage levels in rural Dorset, closing the gap on Dorset's urban areas as well as the national average;
- 2.3. To Inform the EAFRD (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development) element of Dorset's ESIF (European Structural and Investment Funds) Growth Programme; and future replacement funds.
- 2.4. To Champion Dorset's LEADER programmes; and future replacement programmes
- 2.5. To support Dorset LEP to fully engage with its rural stakeholders;
- 2.6. To 'rural-proof' all Dorset LEP policies and activities;
- 2.7. To represent Dorset LEP at Defra round tables and other related meetings.

## **3. Status**

- 3.1. The Group is established as Committee to the Dorset LEP Board.
- 3.2. The Group shall be fully accountable to the Dorset LEP Board.

## **4. Membership**

### **4.1. Representation**

- 4.1.1. All business of the Group will be conducted in accordance with the Nolan Principles of Public Life (Appendix 1).
- 4.1.2. The Group will consist of up to 16 members; including 1 representative of Dorset LEP. Other members may include organisations representing rural businesses, LEADER representative, education and training representatives, those representing town and parish councils and Dorset Local Nature Partnership representation.
- 4.1.3. The Group members serve in a personal capacity (with the exception of local authority members) and will act in the interests of the Group.
- 4.1.4. The role of business sector members is to represent the views and interest of private and community/voluntary sector businesses, with reference to particular sectors, business size and geographic area, whilst always ensuring that decisions are taken in the best interests of Dorset's business community as a whole.
- 4.1.5. The role of Local Authority members is to represent in interests of citizens, whilst acting in the interests of Dorset as a whole.

- 4.1.6. The process for selecting representatives shall be determined by the Nomination & Remuneration Committee.
- 4.1.7. The Group may co-opt up to two additional people to serve as members, if there is a clear requirement for additional expertise and experience for the successful delivery of the Group's responsibilities. Co-opted members may only serve a maximum of two years.
- 4.1.8. Further attendees may be invited to Dorset REG meetings at the Chair's discretion for support and additional expertise, but will not have voting rights.

## **4.2. Chair**

- 4.2.1. The Chair shall be appointed by the Group from among its members. A Deputy Chair will be elected by the Group from amongst its members. Both positions will be subject to annual renewal.
- 4.2.2. Duties of the Chair will include:
- Leading the smooth and effective operation of the Group.
  - To ensure the Group is operating effectively and within its mandate, that budgets are appropriately applied and that proper policies and processes are in place and observed.
  - To ensure timely advice and reporting to the Dorset LEP Board relating to the work of the Group.
  - To ensure effective liaison with all constituents of the Dorset LEP and government, and to undertake activity as required according to the Dorset Rural Enterprise Priorities Paper or emerging strategies and needs.

## **4.3. Attendance**

- 4.3.1. Group members are expected to attend not less than 75% of meetings over a twelve month period.
- 4.3.2. There is no provision for Group members to be replaced by Deputies.

## **4.4. Conflict of Interest**

- 4.4.1. The Group shall ensure that all conflicts of interest are fully disclosed.
- 4.4.2. The Secretariat shall maintain a Register of Members' Interests. Members shall supply information to the Secretariat for inclusion in the register, on joining the Group, in response to any request for an update and on becoming aware of any new interest.
- 4.4.3. Should a member's interests change, s/he shall inform the Secretariat at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.4.4. Should an issue be discussed by the Group which presents a conflict of interest to a member, the member shall declare the conflict of interest, regardless of whether s/he has previously declared the interest in the Register of Members' Interests. Such declarations shall be minuted.
- 4.4.5. Members shall not vote or participate in discussions on any issues on which they have registered an interest.

## **5. Meetings**

### **5.1. Frequency**

5.1.1. Group meetings shall be held at least three times per year. A calendar of future meetings will be set for a year at a time although the minimum notice required for a meeting is two weeks, to ensure that all members are afforded the opportunity to attend.

### **5.2. Papers**

5.2.1. The agenda and papers for meetings shall be issued at least 5 working days in advance of the meeting by the Secretariat.

### **5.3. Quorum**

5.3.1. There should be a quorum of 75% members, and there must always be a majority of business sector members for a meeting to be quorate.

### **5.4. Decision Making**

5.4.1. The Group shall operate on the basis of consensus.

5.4.2. In the event that a consensus cannot be achieved on a matter requiring decision, that decision shall be taken by vote and carried if it is supported by over 50% of those present.

5.4.3. In the event of a tied decision, the Chair of the meeting will cast the deciding vote.

5.4.4. The Group will not have the power to delay or refer decisions back to Dorset LEP.

5.4.5. If a decision needs to be made outside of the meeting, decision can be sought via Written Procedure (Appendix 2). In such cases, the Secretariat shall write to each Group member requesting agreement to a specified course of action. Group members shall be given no fewer than five working days to respond to the Secretariat.

5.4.6. For a decision to be taken by Written Procedure, the number of members participating and the composition of those members must be as required for a quorate meeting. Over 50% of members responding to the request must indicate agreement to the proposal.

5.4.7. All decisions made by Written Procedure shall be ratified at the next scheduled meeting.

### **5.5. Minutes**

5.5.1. Meeting minutes shall be disseminated to members no later than ten working days following the meeting. Minutes shall remain in draft until approval by the Group at the next meeting.

5.5.2. Minutes shall be made publicly available on the Dorset LEP website. Minutes will be redacted where they contain personal information about individuals or commercially sensitive data or for good legal reason.

## **6. Performance Review**

- 6.1. The Group shall arrange for periodic reviews of its own performance and review its Terms of Reference annually to ensure it is operating at maximum effectiveness and to recommend any changes it considers necessary.

## **7. Press & Media**

- 7.1. Group members are not permitted to discuss the Dorset REG's affairs with the press or media without prior approval from the Chair. 12.2
- 7.2. In the event that members are approached by the press or media for comment on any matters relating to the Dorset REG, the matter must be referred immediately to the Chair.

## **Appendix 1: Nolan Principles of Public Life**

### **Selflessness**

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

### **Integrity**

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

### **Objectivity**

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

### **Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

### **Openness**

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

### **Honesty**

Holders of public office should be truthful.

### **Leadership**

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

## Appendix 2: Written Procedures

1. A copy of the written resolution must be sent to every member of the Group together with a statement informing the member how to signify their agreement to the resolution and the date by which the resolution must be passed if it is not to lapse.
2. A member of the Group signifies their agreement to a proposed written resolution when the Company receives from him or her an authenticated Document identifying the resolution to which it relates and indicating his or her agreement to the resolution.
3. If the Document is sent to the Company in Hard Copy Form, it is authenticated if it bears the member's signature.
4. If the Document is sent to the Company by Electronic Means, it is authenticated if it bears the member's signature or if it is from an email Address notified by the member to the Group for the purposes of receiving Documents or information by Electronic Means.
5. A written resolution is passed when the required majority of eligible members have signified their agreement to it.
6. A proposed written resolution lapses if it is not passed within 28 days beginning with the circulation date.