

Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

16/10/18

External Board/Outside Body

External Board/Outside Body	Action with Communities in Rural Kent
Councillor(s) represented on the Outside Body/External Board	Cllr Martin Round
Report Author	Cllr Martin Round
Date of External Board/Outside Body Meeting Attended	I attend bi-monthly/quarterly board meetings (March, May, July, and September) and sit on sub committees. I also attend frequent events and other meetings with this organisation.

Purpose of the External Board/Outside Body:

Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK) provides direct advice to Parish Councils, Village Halls and Community Groups who are primarily, but not exclusively, in rural areas. The advice covers aspects such as funding, good practice, management and compliance.

Furthermore, ACRK stimulates projects, events and community/voluntary action that aims to support jobs, housing, rural isolation and disenfranchisement, as well as other initiatives that may overcome rural disadvantage and raise awareness of rural issues to decision makers.

Update:

In my opinion it is extremely important that this organisation is supported, as KCC are withdrawing much of the support that they once provided to areas such as day care centres for the elderly, rural transport, employment support, care for the mentally frail, youth, libraries etc. Rural Kent have and will continue to develop projects and events that address that lack or gap.

Supporting Village Halls to grow and enrich their community with more effective Parish Councils is an uppermost belief of ACRK.

In the last year, ACRK have delivered or progressed 400 projects, with each one often requiring its own "ring fenced funds". These range from a "Coffee Caravan" that visits communities, engages and then empowers, a mental health and ex-offenders fitness project, and a rural housing project for the elderly, to simple advice to Parish Councils about funding opportunities. It also advises businesses, and in my own Ward alone, a number of jobs (8) have been created in the engineering and hi-tech sector as a result.

The organisation has been very dependent on KCC funding in latter years. Targets are set and not only met, but exceeded for that funding. It also bids for projects to enable further funds to be drawn into the income stream. It can be arduous and labour intensive to secure funding in a culture of reduced funding, especially at KCC. This has required certain mindset changes and directional thinking. This is work and change in progress. I thus feel that I need to continue this role personally.

The Coffee Caravan

