



# **Bilsington Parish Council**

## **Ashford, KENT**

**Report Number: BPC/26/07**

**To:** Bilsington Parish Council  
**Date:** 7 May 2026  
**Status:** Public Report

**Subject;** KENT ACRE

**SUMMARY:** This report contains information from the Interim CEO of Kent ACRE about the organisation and their aims.

**REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION:**

The Parish Council is asked to consider if it wishes to contribute.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1. To receive and note Report BPC/26/07.**
- 2. To determine if the Parish Council wishes to pledge any funds on the understanding that if the target is not met then the funds will be returned.**

Village halls sit at the heart of rural life. They are the places where people meet, stay warm, take part in activities, access support and feel part of a community. Yet many halls are under increasing pressure:- run by volunteers, facing rising costs, trying to meet growing local need with limited resources and struggling to find new trustees.

Kent ACRE [www.kentacre.org.uk](http://www.kentacre.org.uk) is the Kent member for Action with Communities in Rural England [www.acre.org.uk](http://www.acre.org.uk) . Kent ACRE strives to strengthen rural areas of Kent and Medway by making critical resources accessible at the heart of the community, fostering support and inclusion for all.

Over the past year, we have supported more than 100 halls across Kent and Medway to improve their governance, update their policies and procedures, and find funding to refurbish and improve their hall facilities. Four village halls, Cowden, Lamberhurst, Newington in Folkestone and Saltwood, were supported to win funding from DEFRA's Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Fund enabling them to complete significant refurbishment projects including renewing roofs, installing energy efficient heating systems and refurbishing kitchens and toilets.

### **However, we want to do more...**

Kent ACRE is now launching a crowdfunded programme spearheading the evolution of village halls into vibrant community hubs, ensuring essential services reach rural areas. Building on our existing expertise in governance, facilitation, community engagement and fundraising, we aim to transform these spaces into local support centres or community hubs, addressing crucial needs like mental health, domestic abuse support, employment and other vital services often unavailable outside urban centres. Partnering with NHS mental health services, the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), other agencies and various charities, we will deliver tailored aid directly to communities. We will work closely with parish councils, community wardens, and local groups to identify and prioritise services, ensuring no one is left behind.

This programme will help village halls to:

- strengthen governance, safeguarding and volunteer confidence
- expand local activities, warm spaces and social groups
- host accessible health and wellbeing support, including mental health, domestic abuse and financial advice
- build a clearer understanding of local needs through a countywide survey
- ensure halls and parish councils can better engage and support their residents

**We are writing to ask whether your council would be willing to support this work by:**

- **making a pledge to the crowdfunder or by allowing us to apply to your grant funding scheme (if you have one), and/or**

- **sharing the campaign with your residents, hall committees and local groups**

Even a modest contribution from parish and town councils sends a strong message of local commitment and helps unlock wider community support. Every pound raised goes directly into strengthening rural community infrastructure and improving access to services for the people who need them most.

Until the full target of £71,771 has been reached, any donation will take the form of a pledge only. Spacehive will hold all donations in escrow until the campaign has ended, and return all commitments to each donor if the full target has not been reached.