



AGENDA ITEM 17)

Dear Clerk and Councillors

Rural Services Network (RSN) is seeking to establish a Rural/Market Towns Grouping to sit within its network. The towns approached we feel all serve as the centre or market place for the rural area surrounding them. We are approaching over 200 centres in seemingly diverse rural locations across England with the intention of setting up both a more comprehensive national rural network and a separate grouping.

All councils approached we hope are acting as key service and employment centres for their surrounding rural hinterland. The town (or large village in some cases) will have a population itself of between 3,000 and 30,000. *(The vagaries of whether or not the Councils approached have adopted s245 of the Local Government Act and put the name Town in their Council's title or whether they remain under the title 'Parish' is not important from our perspective.)* If you are one of the 200 rural centres we have selected we very much wish to work with you.

RSN is an organisation seeking to establish and present the rural view as well as evidencing and sharing best practice. We are concerned that, whilst treating other home countries differently, Government is often tempted to consider English issues through an urban looking glass and too frequently consider urban facing situations without giving any particular consideration to rural areas. We would like to change that and we think the right operational networks, such as the one proposed here, will very much assist. We attach diagrams showing how the new group would work as part of our extensive and growing network.

We feel at a time of material change, there needs to be some special consideration of rural matters and therefore our current call on Government is for a Rural Strategy

<https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/time-for-a-rural-strategy>

We also feel that Government needs to return to giving special attention to rural/ market towns as shopping habits change. It is absolutely vital to the national economy that 'market' towns remain buoyant and lively places and support their wider rural hinterlands.

We wish therefore to establish as part of our development as a Network, and as part of our current Call for a Rural Strategy from Government, a Rural/Market Towns Grouping that is representative of rural and towns and markets across the many rural areas of England. These are of course spread across very many diverse areas and are also spread across 200 Local Authorities. That statistic of 200 authorities has given us our starting point for this search so that a local council representing a town or large village in each of those authorities rural area is being approached. To establish successfully a Rural/Towns Group involving a rurally based centre serving each of those 200 differing hinterlands would constitute a really forceful message that rural areas are working together at a difficult time. This is why we are sending out this invitation at this time.

As you are acting as a council at the centre of one of those 200 rural areas we have selected, we wish to work with you. We hope to progress to an even wider ring of Rural/Market Towns over time however you are getting the first opportunity to be an inaugural member..... It is time for the local councils serving as centres of rural hinterlands to once again be properly acknowledged by government for the role they play nationally.

We have to charge a small fee as that is the only way we can operate as a Network but we hope this is low enough for it not to be too much of an issue. The fee will reflect your population size.



Towns with over 10,000 population - £150 per annum



Towns with over 5,000 population but less than 10,000 - £ 130 per annum



Towns with less than 5,000 population - £110 per annum

(All subs incur VAT)

The important question is can you make a difference by joining? We think that you can. Collectively we are sure we can get rural centres across England and their challenges given considerably more recognition.

At a time of material change we think it is vital that rural areas in England are provided with a national profile. As said we are calling on the Government to undertake and fund a Rural Strategy. There has been no exercise focusing on the rural aspects of England for many decades and given the current situation relating to rural areas it is really important a strategic approach is taken. We think the establishment of this Rural /Market Towns grouping is an important element in this national call. We attach our initial report in relation to this 'Call', 'Time for a Rural Strategy' which sets out why we think Government should develop a Rural Strategy which we hope your members will find helpful.

It is intended there will be 2 Meetings of the Group each year but we also seek to work remotely so attendance is not necessary to successful inputting. As we move forward it will be for the member local councils to set the agenda and the direction. The rural agenda and emphasis here is a very different one to other membership groups currently covering town and parish matters.

We need to know where we stand by the end of November on the approaches being made. Please could you let us know whether it's a yes or a no by responding to us before that date? To assist we will send this invitation by e mail and through the post.

We very much look forward to hearing from you.

Kindest Regards

David

David Inman
Director
Rural Services Network
www.rsnonline.org.uk
01822 851370

RURAL SERVICES NETWORK



SPARSE RURAL
Part of the Rural Services Network

FAIRER & FUNDING & PERFORMANCE




RURAL ASSEMBLY
Part of the Rural Services Network

RURAL POLICY



RURAL SERVICES PARTNERSHIP LTD
Part of the Rural Services Network

NON LOCAL GOVERNMENT



RURAL MARKET TOWNS GROUP
Part of the Rural Services Network

RURAL TOWNS




PARLIAMENTARY



RURAL VULNERABILITY GROUP OF MPs



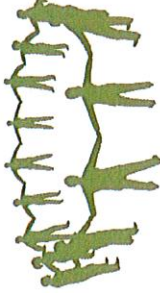
Rural Fair Share Campaign



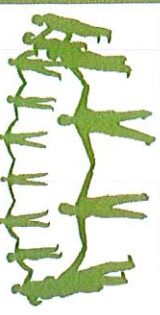
APPG ON RURAL SERVICES



HOUSE OF LORDS RURAL PANEL



COMMUNITY GROUP



PARTNER



RHCA
THE RURAL HEALTH & CARE ALLIANCE



RURAL ENGLAND
NETWORKING / RESEARCH / LEARNING



RHA
Rural Housing Alliance

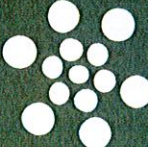
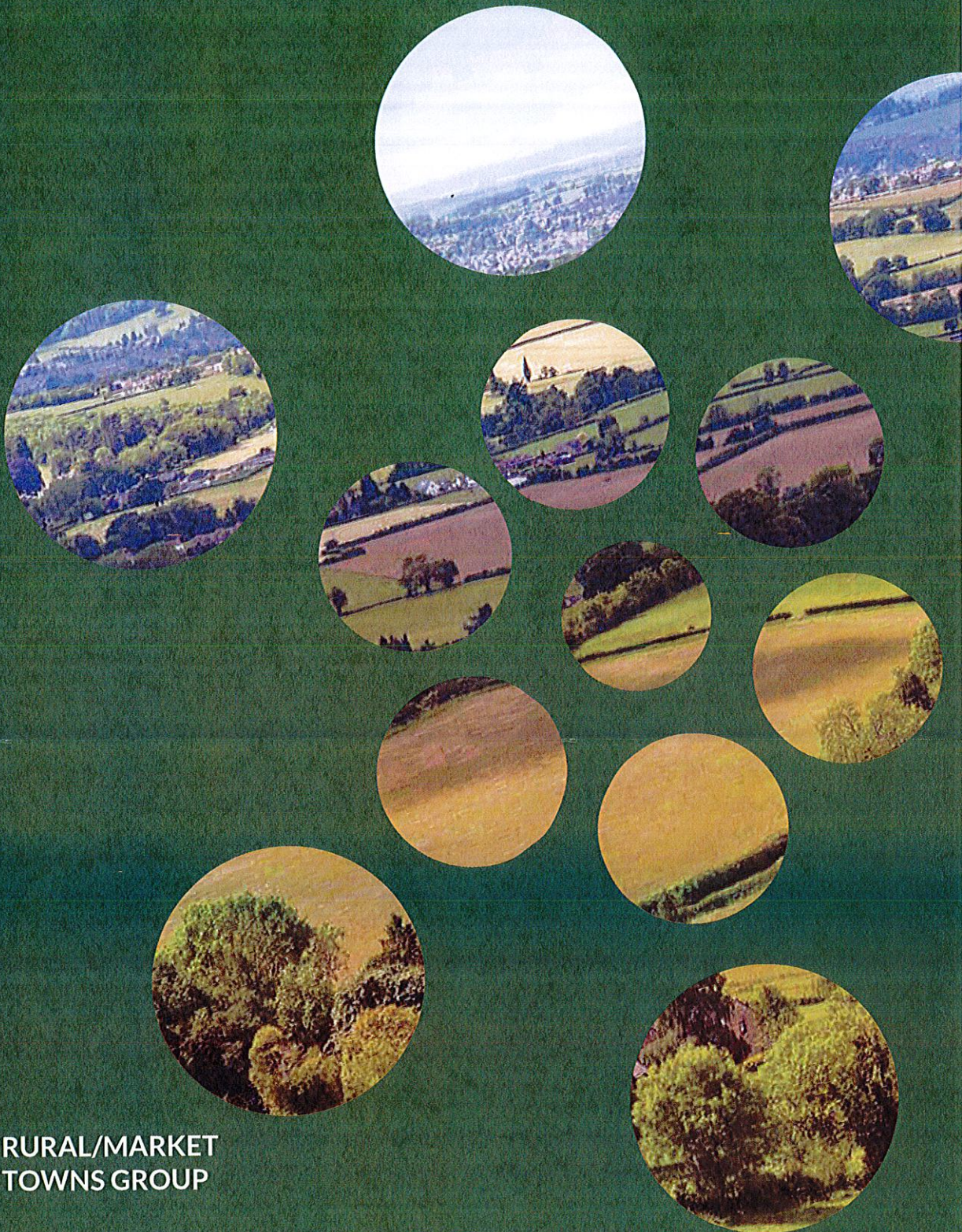
THE **RURAL COALITION**



NRCN
National Rural Crime Network

PARTNER

The Rural/Market Towns Group



RURAL/MARKET
TOWNS GROUP

A RURAL/MARKET TOWNS GROUP- A FORMAL INVITE

We are a Special Interest Group of The Local Government Association representing Rural Areas across England. Our mission is to be the national champion for rural services, ensuring that people in rural areas have a strong voice. We have 127 Principle Authority members from across England. We also have a grouping of some 170 non- local authority service providers (the RSP) and we issue a Rural Bulletin weekly to around 23,000 rural contacts across England. We also issue a monthly Funding Digest of rural grant opportunities and Government consultations. The following links show our inter connection with Parliament and how we bring our members together. We show how a Rural Market Town Grouping could fit well into our network. Our website is www.rsnonline.org.uk

What we do:

We aim to ensure rural issues are given a high profile, unfortunately we now find ourselves as the only organisation in England currently undertaking this vital work. Our network is the countries' largest rural network. We ourselves deliberately don't work from a grant or government funding base but from member subscription. We provide value for money to our members. This has allowed growth and continuity of operation together with the ability to make the rural case honestly and from within ourselves without fear of upsetting any external funding stream on which we may be dependent.

What we have achieved to date:



The first general rural parliamentary groups in history



Better finance settlements for rural authorities



Continual Pressure on Government in relation to issues ranging from broadband to rural housing and vulnerability



The creation of Rural Crime, Rural Health and Rural Research organisations

The facts:

There are many rural areas in England spun across 200 different local authorities. Only by working together can we present a cohesive approach to an urban facing government. It is easy for urban areas to gather support but more difficult for dispersed rural areas. We have to get rural messages across and backed if they are to properly be heard and acted upon.

What we want from you:

The wider our membership the stronger the rural voice- it's a simple fact. We want to establish a Rural/Market Towns Group to allow towns a conduit into our services and policies and operation. We wish to see Rural Towns given the opportunity to establish the commonalities of their case and to be able to argue for it. We charge an annual subscription which is low and affordable but it's what it can give back that we wish to be judged upon.

What we can give you back:



Formation of a dedicated Rural/Market Towns Group, offering some peer-to-peer networking and discussion opportunities (either face-to-face or online) and input into the national rural agenda. (Representation on this Group can be by Council Clerk or Member)



Development of a representational role, for example responding to selected public policy consultations or meeting with interested Parliamentarians. There is no rural or market or small towns APPG



Development of good practice and learning material related to the key policy areas and delivery challenges and opportunities for rural/market towns



Provision of a dedicated quarterly newsletter highlighting relevant latest policy developments, showcasing interesting member practice and flagging relevant initiatives or funding opportunities (perhaps drawn from the Rural Funding Digest)



Where made possible by published material - provision of some benchmark statistics about rural/market towns



Management of occasional online surveys of the member rural/market towns, to gather comparative information about topics of particular interest to this grouping and to the RSN as a whole



Free RSN community membership for your local organisations



Entry onto a bulletin calendar of the major local rural/market town events



The ability to establish and present the collective voice of rural/market towns



The ability to say what your council think about English rural issues which affect their area as and when they arise



An expectation that those views will be taken forward



Full entitlement to attend, free of charge, any of the seven regional seminars and meetings based around specialist topics held around the country annually



Involvement in the English Rural Sounding Board system



Discounted rates at the National Rural Conference every September

If you don't receive these currently you will also get:



The weekly Rural Bulletin



The monthly RSN Funding Digest

Summary:

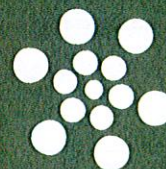
Our target is to form a Rural Market Towns Group of approximately 125 towns in 2019 and harness the argument of these rural areas. Both the town councils, people in the towns, and their surrounding hinterlands will be better placed to put their arguments across and contribute to the rural voice. We hope you can help us grow from the start!

As we exit the EU we are currently calling on government to produce a 'Rural Strategy' giving both direction and promise to rural areas. Our wish is that Rural and Market Towns should be given clear opportunities in such a Strategy. To date government has received this call somewhat negatively. It is only by working together and by establishing and pursuing common goals that your town can input into the national picture. Please back us to back your town and your area.

LET'S BRING & ARGUE THE RURAL CASE TOGETHER

If you would like further information about the Rural/Market Towns Group please contact us:

Rural Services Network
Kilworthy Park,
Tavistock, Devon
PL19 0BZ
01822 851370
www.rsonline.org.uk
david.inman@sparse.gov.uk
twitter: @rsonline



RURAL/MARKET
TOWNS GROUP