

Report to	-	Cabinet
Date	-	4 December 2017
Report of the	-	Executive Director of Resources
Subject	-	Community Governance Review of Bexhill – Final Recommendations

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The Agenda for this meeting is being published prior to the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) being held on 27 November, at which the final recommendations in relation to the Community Governance Review of Bexhill will be considered and made to Cabinet. Herewith is the original report being considered by the OSC; the resulting recommendation and minute extract will be published as soon as possible and tabled at the Cabinet meeting; any Minority Report submitted will also be considered alongside the resulting recommendation from the OSC at this Agenda Item.

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**Service Manager: John Collins**  
**Lead Cabinet Member: Councillor Kenward**

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Report to	-	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date	-	27 November 2017
Report of the	-	Executive Director of Resources
Subject	-	Community Governance Review of Bexhill-on-Sea – Final Recommendations

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**Recommendation:** It be **RESOLVED:** That given the importance of the decision, which included the potential to establish an additional tax raising body, on a permanent basis for the residents of Bexhill-on-Sea, Cabinet be requested to refer all four options to full Council to enable a full and thorough debate without any steer or influence from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Cabinet.

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### **Introduction and Background**

1. This report sets out the background and progression of the Community Governance Review (CGR) of Bexhill-on-Sea. Due to the timing of the meetings and agenda dispatch dates, the Cabinet Agenda has already been published and therefore this Committee's recommendation will be published as soon as possible and tabled at the Cabinet meeting being held on the 4 December 2017.
2. In September 2016, Cabinet and Council agreed the process by which the Council would undertake the CGR of Bexhill-on-Sea, following receipt of a

valid petition, in accordance with the requirements of the 2007 Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

3. The Council established the Community Governance Review Steering Group (CGRSG) to lead the process. As a reminder, attached at Appendices 1 and 2 are the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the review itself and the Steering Group respectively. Under the regulations and ToR, the Council can only make recommendations as to:
  - whether or not to establish an Area Committee for Bexhill-on-Sea;
  - whether or not to establish any new parishes within Bexhill-on-Sea, the name of any new parishes and the styling (i.e. parish, community, neighbourhood or village) of any new parish;
  - whether or not any new parish should have a parish / town council (subject to the particular restrictions on recommendations in this area set out in Section 94 of the 2007 Act) and the electoral arrangements of any new parish council – including the ordinary year of election, warding and number of councillors;
  - any other recommendations for alternative forms of governance for Bexhill-on-Sea that may emerge from the review.
4. Rother District Council has conducted the review of community governance arrangements in Bexhill-on-Sea in accordance with Part 4 Chapter 3 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the 2007 Act). The Council has also had regard to the Statutory Guidance on Community Governance Reviews issued by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and undertook research with like authorities who had undertaken reviews.

### **Work undertaken by the Community Governance Review Steering Group**

5. The CGRSG met on six occasions between October 2016 and November 2017 in order to fulfill its ToR. The CGRSG agreed in November 2016 to decide on an ad hoc basis which meetings would be open to the public; since that time, every meeting that has been held of the CGRSG, has been open to the public to attend.
6. The majority of meetings have also been audio recorded and made available on the Council's website. The meeting of the CGRSG in February also provided the public with an opportunity to submit questions and ask a supplementary oral question at the meeting; in total six questions were put.
7. Members of the CGRSG, supported by other Bexhill and non Bexhill Ward Members and officers have taken a lead role in undertaking the Council's community engagement events that took place during the first and second stage consultation periods.

### **Identification of Options**

8. At the CGRSG's meeting held on 22 May, consideration was given to the outcome of the Stage 1 consultation and the following recommendations were made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC):
  - 1) recommend to Cabinet and Council that the following options be taken forward to form the basis of the Stage 2 Consultation:

- i) Option one – no change.
  - ii) Option two – the creation of one Parish Council for the whole of Bexhill (to be styled a Town Council).
  - iii) Option three – the creation of an Area Committee for Bexhill.
- 2) support the proposal to undertake a leaflet drop to every Bexhill household, promoting the Stage 2 consultation at an estimated cost of £10,000; and
- 3) provide an indication of potential functions and responsibilities that Cabinet may be prepared to devolve to an area committees structure for Bexhill and the rural areas, for the purposes of the Stage 2 consultation exercise, and without prejudice to the outcome of the consultation.
- 9. These recommendations were considered and agreed by the OSC on 12 June together with an additional, fourth option, as follows:
  - iv) Option four – the creation of three Parish Councils subdivided as Bexhill, Little Common and Sidley.
- 10. These recommendations were duly considered by Cabinet on 3 July, where it was agreed to recommend to Council that:
  - 1) Option four be amended to the creation of four Parish Councils subdivided as per the current (May 2017) East Sussex County Council boundaries (Bexhill North, South, East and West);
  - 2) the proposal to undertake a leaflet drop to every Bexhill household not be supported on cost grounds (costs had increased from an estimated £10,000 to £14,000) and in recognition of poor response / interest shown at Stage 1;
  - 3) no executive powers be given to an Area Committee for Bexhill; and
  - 4) the services of public conveniences and grounds maintenance (at the conclusion of the current contracts) be considered for devolvement to a newly created Bexhill Town Council in the first instance.
- 11. These recommendations were subsequently considered by Council on 10 July and agreed, as submitted, together with the requirement to hold a further meeting of the CGRSG to formally agree the precise nature of the Stage 2 consultation, at no additional cost to the Council. This meeting duly took place on 10 August and the consultation methods to be used, without the leaflet drop to all Bexhill households, were agreed.
- 12. At its last meeting held on 9 November 2017, the CGRSG considered the outcome of the Stage 2 public consultation exercise; attached at Appendices 3 and 4 are the report and respective minute resulting therefrom. As can be seen from Appendix 3, the Council received a considerable response to the consultation. The Consultation Officer has provided additional analyses of the results for the OSC and these are attached at Appendix 5. The Council must take into account any representations that it receives in connection with the review.

13. When developing proposals, the Council must also ensure that any proposal reflects the identities and interests of the community and are “effective” and “convenient”. Effective and convenient means that if a local council is to be recommended as a result of a community governance review, it will need to be “viable in terms of providing at least some local services” and be “easy to reach and accessible to local people”. These considerations were taken into account by the CGRSG in May when the initial options for consultation were being formulated; there would have been little point consulting on options that were not viable. Whilst this report was included in papers considered by the OSC in June this year, for ease of reference, they are included again within this bundle at Appendix 6.
14. The only option which was not considered in great detail, as it was added after the initial considerations is option 4, the creation of four Parish Councils – North, East, South and West Bexhill, based on the current (May 2017) East Sussex County Council Divisional boundaries. However, given the size of each proposed parish, each one would clearly be viable in terms of size of electorate, accessibility and ability to provide some local services. Should this option be supported as the final option, the final recommendations would set out the various recommendations required under the 2007 Act.

### **Final Recommendation**

15. Given the importance of the decision, which included the potential to establish an additional tax raising body, on a permanent basis for the residents of Bexhill-on-Sea, the majority of Members of the CGRSG felt unable to make a final recommendation and recommended instead that the final decision should be reached by full Council, following a full and thorough debate on all four options, without any steer or recommendation from the OSC or Cabinet.
16. The OSC is therefore requested to consider and debate the four options but not to make any recommendation in support of any particular option. The Council’s consultation leaflet which sets out the four options is attached at Appendix 7. The comments and the views of the OSC will be submitted to Cabinet in the usual way.
17. As a reminder, the four options consulted on, are as follows:
  - i) Option one – no change.
  - ii) Option two – the creation of one Parish Council for the whole of Bexhill (to be styled a Town Council).
  - iii) Option three – the creation of an Area Committee for Bexhill.
  - iv) Option four - the creation of four Parish Councils – North, East, South and West Bexhill, based on the current (May 2017) East Sussex County Council Divisional boundaries.

### **Minority Report**

18. In the event that a consensus view will not be reached, Members are reminded of the provision for OSC Members to submit up to one “minority report” to Cabinet from the OSC. A minority report sets out a different recommendation to that agreed by the majority of Members on the OSC, and does not necessarily mean “minority group Members”. In other words, if there

are Members on the OSC who do not agree with the recommendation being made to Cabinet, an additional report can be submitted to Cabinet setting out an alternative recommendation, which will be considered by Cabinet at the same time.

19. As explained in the introduction, due to the timing of this meeting, the Agenda for the Cabinet meeting which will consider this matter will already have been published by the time of this meeting. Any minority report would need to be submitted to Democratic Services as soon as possible and no later than Wednesday 29 November to enable publication and circulation to Cabinet Members ahead of their meeting on the 4 December.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

20. Members are invited to consider the options but in accordance with the wishes of the CGRSG refer the whole report and all four options to Cabinet and Council, without identifying a preferred final recommended option at this stage. This will enable an unfettered and thorough debate at full Council who will ultimately make the decision on this matter and the resulting final recommendation will be published after the full Council meeting on 18 December 2017.

Malcolm Johnston  
Executive Director of Resources

## **Risk Assessment Statement**

Failure to refer this matter to Cabinet will jeopardize the Council's ability to complete the Community Governance Review within the statutory 12 months' time scale.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference for the CGR
- Appendix 2 – Terms of Reference for the CGRSG
- Appendix 3 – Report to the CGRSG – Outcome of Stage 2 Consultation and Final Recommendations
- Appendix 4 – Minute extract from CGRSG Meeting
- Appendix 5 – Additional Analysis
- Appendix 6 – Report to CGRSG 22 May
- Appendix 7 – Consultation Leaflet

**Rother District Council**

**Community Governance Review – Terms of Reference**

A community governance review will be carried out by Rother District Council under the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (“the 2007 Act”). The review shall comply with the legislative requirements, have regard for the associated statutory guidance and will be conducted in accordance with these terms of reference.

The review shall be of the community governance arrangement for Bexhill-on-Sea, encompassing all nine District Electoral Wards within the local authority area of Rother District Council.

This will include consideration of the proposals put forward in the community governance petition for an Area Committee for Bexhill.

It shall have particular regard for the need to secure that community governance within the area under review:

- reflects the identities and interests of the communities in that area; and
- is effective and convenient.

When carrying out the Community Governance Review, the District Council must also take into account other existing or potential community governance arrangements.

Following the review the Community Governance Review Steering Group shall make recommendations as to:

- whether or not to establish an Area Committee for Bexhill-on-Sea;
- whether or not to establish any new parishes within Bexhill-on-Sea, the name of any new parishes and the styling (i.e. parish, community, neighbourhood or village) of any new parish;
- whether or not any new parish should have a parish / town council (subject to the particular restrictions on recommendations in this area set out in Section 94 of the 2007 Act) and the electoral arrangements of any new parish council – including the ordinary year of election, warding and number of councillors;
- any other recommendations for alternative forms of governance for Bexhill-on-Sea that may emerge from the review.

The review shall invite and take account of submissions from all interested parties.

Agree by Full Council on 26 September 2016.

## Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Review Steering Group

Aims and Origins	<p>To manage the Community Governance Review (CGR) process, under the terms of reference set by full Council.</p> <p>A CGR is required following the receipt of a valid petition calling on the Council to undertake a review; in addition, pledge made by current administration to consider options for Bexhill-on-Sea, including parishing.</p>
Scope	<p>To determine a detailed timetable and consultation programme for the CGR;</p> <p>To progress the review in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the Guidance on CGRs issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government and The Local Government Boundary Commission for England in March 2010;</p> <p>To consider all options for future community governance of the area under review (Bexhill-on-Sea), taking into account current community representation and community engagement arrangements and electorate and demographic forecasts;</p> <p>To make recommendations to Cabinet, via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC), on possible options for the stage 2 consultation;</p> <p>To recommend appropriate electoral arrangements for any parish / town council created within Bexhill-on-Sea, where necessary (including the name of any newly created parish; the number, name and boundaries of any parish wards; the number of councillors to be elected within each ward; and the ordinary year of elections); and</p> <p>To consider and make recommendations on any consequential matters arising from the review which are required to give effect to any subsequent Community Governance Order (CGO), e.g. the transfer and management or custody of property, the setting of precepts for new parishes, provision for the transfer of any functions, rights, liabilities, staff, etc.</p>
Outcomes	<p>To recommend to Cabinet, via the OSC a future form of governance for Bexhill-on-Sea (e.g. whether or not any areas should be parished or some other form of governance).</p>
Proposed Timetable	Outline of Action

5 September 2016	Cabinet makes recommendations to Council on the CGR process.
26 September 2016	Full Council approves recommendations from Cabinet, sets ToR for CGR, appoints Steering Group and agrees ToR for Steering Group. East Sussex County Council to be notified of intention to undertake review.
October – December 2016	Meetings of CGR Steering Group to consider the proposed timetable for review, consultation methods etc.
9 January - 31 March 2017 (12 weeks)	Formal publication of ToR and launch of initial public consultation (12 months' timescale starts from now), timetable for review, consultation methods etc. Invite initial submissions on Area Committee for Bexhill-on-Sea and other options, including parishing some or all of Bexhill-on-Sea. Public meetings to be held during this period.
April / May / June 2017	CGR Steering Group considers submissions and develops draft recommendations for submission to the OSC (24 April) for approval by Cabinet for the 2 <sup>nd</sup> stage consultation.
June / July (8 weeks)	Publish draft recommendations for further public consultation, including any proposed parishes and electoral arrangements*.
August / September 2017	Consider further submissions and prepare final recommendations for submission to the OSC (September 2017) and Cabinet (October 2017) for approval.
October 2017	Publish final proposals.
December 2017	Full Council makes final decision and approves the creation of Community Governance Orders (CGO), if any, in relation to any proposed parish / town councils.
Membership	9 Members – 6 Conservative, 1 Liberal Democrat, 1 Association of Independents and Councillor C.A. Clark
Quorum	4
Officer Leads	Malcolm Johnston, Executive Director of Resources John Collins, Service Manager - Corporate & HR Lisa Anderson, Democratic Services Manager

**\*Including ordinary year of election; council size; parish wards.**

Agreed by Full Council on 26 September 2016.



Report to	-	Community Governance Review Steering Group
Date	-	9 November 2017
Report of the	-	Executive Director of Resources
Subject	-	Outcome of Stage 2 Consultation and Final Recommendations

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## **Introduction**

1. We have now completed the Stage 2 consultation as part of the Community Governance Review of Bexhill-on-Sea. This report brings together the results of the consultation for the Steering Group to take into account in forming its recommendation(s) to Council, via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) and Cabinet.

## **Background**

2. At the Steering Group's last meeting held on 10 August 2017, the precise nature of the Stage 2 consultation was agreed in accordance with the full Council decision, i.e. at no additional cost to the Council (over and above that what would have been spent in progressing the consultation as already identified within the previously agreed Communications Plan, excluding the proposed leaflet drop).
3. Full Council determined on the 10 July 2017 that the Council would consult on the following four options:
  - i) Option one – no change.
  - ii) Option two – the creation of one Parish Council for the whole of Bexhill (to be styled a Town Council).
  - iii) Option three – the creation of an Area Committee for Bexhill.
  - iv) Option four - the creation of four Parish Councils – North, East, South and West Bexhill, based on the current (May 2017) East Sussex County Council Divisional boundaries.
4. As a reminder, the Community Governance Review (CGR) has been undertaken in accordance with the Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the 2007 Act) and regard given to guidance issued by the Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), together with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) in undertaking and giving effect to recommendations made in CGRs.
5. Section 93 of the 2007 Act states that whereas it is generally for the Council to determine how to undertake a community governance review, it must:
  - Consult local government electors in the area under review.
  - Consult any other body (including a local authority) which appears to have an interest in the review.
  - When developing proposals, ensure that they reflect the identities and

interests of the community and are “effective” and “convenient”. Effective and convenient means that if a local council is to be recommended as a result of a community governance review, it will need to be “viable in terms of providing at least some local services” and be “easy to reach and accessible to local people”.

- In deciding what recommendations to make, the Council must take into account any other arrangements (apart from those relating to parishes and their institutions) that have already been made or could be made.
- The Council must take into account any representations that it has received in connection with the review.

## **Stage 2 Consultation Results**

6. The CGR Stage 2 consultation was launched on 1 September and was initially due to run for six weeks, closing at 4.30pm on Friday 13 October 2017. However, on Tuesday 26 September, it was agreed that the consultation deadline be extended until 5.00pm on Tuesday 31 October to give people more time to take part and to ensure that the Council received the best response to the consultation as possible. A few minor discrepancies had also been discovered in the information provided on the website and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), which came to light as a result of the change in consultation method; the extension to the closing date also therefore provided a longer response period, once the information had been corrected on the website, in case of any confusion. Part of this also involved clarifying that under the consultation changes the Council must accept responses in any form and could not restrict responses to just on-line and the Rother District Council (RDC) produced postcard.
7. Members will be aware that in the absence of the RDC leaflet drop to all households, Democracy4Bexhill (D4B) produced their own leaflet promoting their preferred option and response postcard which was circulated to all Bexhill households – attached at Appendices A and B for information. D4B has run an extensive campaign through social media, face-to-face contact on the streets of Bexhill and visits to local schools and colleges.
8. The Consultation Officer has posted updates during the consultation period providing information on the number of responses received, together with some demographic profiling for those who had responded on-line.
9. The Council’s preferred consultation response method was on-line, via the consultation portal and members of the public who were on-line were encouraged to respond on-line, keeping printing costs and other administrative costs to a minimum. The on-line response method also enabled the Council to capture demographic data, which is not captured with any other method.
10. In order to spread the workload, it was agreed that the D4B postcard responses would be processed by the Democratic Services Team and the RDC postcard and on-line portal would be managed by the consultation officer, as like any other Council consultation. Responses were added to a database daily in order to keep on top of the workload. This resulted in three different datasets that required cleaning and merging to produce final results and hence the length of time it has taken to produce the final results of the consultation.

11. At the close of the consultation, 9,609 responses had been received; 4,680 via the Council's on-line consultation portal and the Council's response postcard and 4,929 via the D4B response postcard. Following the merger of all three datasets and cleaning (removal of duplicates / incomplete responses etc.) this figure has come down to 9,227 (151 duplicates were in both sets of data, 124 duplicates from the RDC online form and postcards and 107 were incomplete or partial names and addresses).
12. A total of 134 D4B postcard responses were rejected as they were either: duplicates (26), anonymous / illegible (13), incomplete / invalid address (74) or the preferred preference was not clear (21).
13. The headline results by preference is shown in the table below:

<b>Option</b>	<b>RDC*</b>	<b>D4B Postcard Responses</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Option 1 (no change)	275 (6.1%)	89 (1.9%)	364 (3.9%)
Option 2 (Town Council)	4,058 (90.3%)	4,573 (96.6%)	8,631 (93.5%)
Option 3 (Area Committee)	43 (1.0%)	31 (0.7%)	74 (0.8%)
Option 4 (4 Parish Councils)	119 (2.6%)	39 (0.8%)	158 (1.7%)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4,495</b>	<b>4,732</b>	<b>9,227</b>

**\*Postcard Responses and on-line combined.**

14. More detailed analysis will be provided for the OSC and Cabinet, including a detailed breakdown by residents / non-residents, by postcode area for all responders and those who responded on-line can be further broken down by age / ethnicity etc.
15. The headline figures for residents is as follows and demonstrates that the majority of responders (97.8%) are residents:

<b>Option</b>	<b>Residents</b>
Option 1 (no change)	350 (3.8%)
Option 2 (Town Council)	8,458 (93.6%)
Option 3 (Area Committee)	71 (0.8%)
Option 4 (4 Parish Councils)	153 (1.7%)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>9,032</b>

16. With regard to responders who preferred Option 4, the creation of four Parish Councils based on the current East Sussex County Council divisions, the results will be further analysed by residence within the four divisions and made available for the OSC and Cabinet meetings.
17. Responders were able to respond by a number of methods, however, in all cases they were required to provide their name and address; work addresses have not been accepted and are included within the incomplete / invalid address category above. Responders who reside outside of Bexhill but work

within Bexhill should have given their home address. This enables analysis by residents / non-residents.

18. D4B held an engagement session at Bexhill Academy, and following this, a number of postcards were returned to the Town Hall. Unfortunately, 49 responders had either put "Bexhill Academy" as their address and/or provided only a first name; these have therefore not been counted in the totals above as they are incomplete and we are not able to tell whether they are Bexhill residents or non-residents. The breakdown by each option, for information was as follows: Option 1 (1), Option 2 (45), Option 3 (2) and Option 4 (1).
19. We asked organisations to let the Council know what the impact would be of each option on their organisation and whether, in their view, there was an option that had a better impact on them and why. Unfortunately, whilst responses were received from 17 organisations, the rationale for the option given was the perceived benefits to the community as a whole, rather than their own organisation. Responses were received from Battle Town Council, Bexhill Academy, Bexhill and Battle Branch UK Independence Party, Bexhill Caring Community, Bexhill Charter Trustees, Bexhill Environmental Group, Bexhill Hospital League of Friends, the Bexhill Labour Party, Bexhill Liberal Democrats, Bexhill 100 Motoring Club, Camber Parish Council, Icklesham Parish Council, Rother Seniors Forum, Rother Voluntary Action, Rye Town Council, Sussex Community Development Association and Sussex Police. A summary of their responses are attached at Appendix C; their preferred options (if given) is not included in the results above. (The responses from Rye Town Council and the Bexhill Labour Party are attached as Appendices D and E respectively).
20. There were a number of responses received after the deadline up until the publication of this report 30 (17 D4B postcards) but these have not been accepted nor included in the final figures above.

## **Costs**

21. As Members are aware, in order to keep costs to a minimum and within available resources to handle the consultation, the Council's preferred response route was via the on-line portal and a limited number of printed materials were produced. In total, costs in relation to printed materials, postage and envelopes amounted to £1,067.00.
22. All other costs in terms of officer time and Members' time / travel supporting events and ad-hoc printing etc. have not been quantified.

## **Communications**

23. In accordance with the Communications Plan, the following activities were undertaken to promote the consultation:
  - all Bexhill Members of the Steering Group were initially supplied with 20 postcards, five laminated A4 posters for distribution / display within their Ward, 20 consultation leaflets and 20 A5 flyers; a number of Members requested additional materials throughout the consultation period and these were provided on request;
  - all other Bexhill Members were supplied with 10 postcards, five laminated A4 posters for distribution / display within their Ward, 10 consultation leaflets and 10 A5 flyers;

- A4 posters distributed to all Doctors and Dentists Surgeries, primary and secondary schools, Bexhill College, nursing homes, Bexhill Library, Little Common Library, church halls, various clubs and associations not already included on invitees list and local shops;
  - dedicated section on the website – on-line response portal;
  - press releases / regular social media tweets / weekly My Alerts messages;
  - regular updates on the number of responses received, including demographic information;
  - direct contact / mail shots / email; citizens' panel;
  - pop-up banner in CHP reception / community engagement events;
  - information packs / materials at CHP, Bexhill Library, Bexhill Museum and Bexhill Citizen's Advice Bureau;
  - direct contact to database of residents provided by D4B either by post or email (depending on preference stated) – this totalled in the region of 450;
  - Community engagement events throughout September held at the Promenade / Colonnade during the Festival of the Sea, Sainsbury's, Devonshire Square during the Anglo-French Market, the De La Warr Pavilion and Bexhill Leisure Centre; and
  - attendance at the Bexhill Town Forum meeting on Friday 22 September, at Parkhurst Hall, Parkhurst Road, Bexhill.
24. During the period from 1 September to the time of writing this media report (25 October), the Community Governance Review has been mentioned on a regular basis in the Bexhill Observer including coverage of two press releases issued by Rother District Council press office to announce the launch of the second phase (23 August 2017), to remind residents of the closing date (19 October 2017).
25. The review was also promoted a total of 28 times via the Rother Facebook and Twitter accounts achieving a total of 14,730 impressions (number of times someone saw the post) and the posts were engaged with (shared, liked, commented on) a total of 159 times.
26. A further press release was issued after the close of the consultation to make residents aware of the next steps. The Council's Marketing and Communications Account Manager will be present at the meeting to answer any questions.
27. Following the extension to the consultation deadline, Members of the Steering Group were canvassed on 4 October to see whether they wanted any further community engagement events to be scheduled during October; no additional requests were forthcoming from any Member. Media messages / posters / information was re-issued to key stakeholders / locations detailing the revised closing date.

## **Final Recommendations**

28. In accordance with the Steering Group's Terms of Reference, the Group is now required to recommend to Cabinet, via the OSC, a future form of governance for Bexhill-on-Sea (whether or not any areas should be parished or some other form of governance should be introduced).
29. The Council received 9,032 valid responses from residents to this consultation. This represents 25.8% of the electors (34,912) of Bexhill and

20.4% of the population (44,200) taken as a whole (as the consultation was open to all and responses from under 18s have been accepted).

30. Despite the efforts of the Council and D4B, the majority of electors (74.2%) / population (79.6%) did not feel sufficiently strong enough about the future governance arrangements for Bexhill-on-Sea to take part in the consultation and to express a preference for one of the options.
31. As a reminder, the Steering Group can only make recommendations on the following:
  - 1) that there be no change to the governance arrangements for Bexhill-on-Sea at the current time; **OR**
  - 2) a Parish Council be created for the whole of Bexhill (to be styled a Town Council); **OR**
  - 3) the Council introduces an Area Committee structure; **OR**
  - 4) four Parish Councils be created, subdivided as per the current (May 2017) East Sussex County Council boundaries (Bexhill North, South, East and West).
32. Members are requested to consider the outcome of the consultation and determine the final recommendations and rationale to enable officers to draft a report accordingly, to be submitted to the OSC on 27 November, Cabinet on 4 December and full Council on 18 December.
33. There is no provision for further public consultation on the final recommendations.
34. In the event that a consensus view will not be reached by the Steering Group, Members are reminded of the provision for the OSC Members to submit up to one "minority report" to Cabinet from the OSC. A minority report sets out a different recommendation to that agreed by the majority of Members on the OSC. In other words, if there are Members on the OSC who do not agree with the final recommendation being made to Cabinet, an additional report can be submitted to Cabinet setting out an alternative recommendation. Cabinet will consider both reports at the same time.

## **Conclusion**

35. This report provides the outcome of the Stage 2 consultation and Members are invited to consider this and make a final recommendation. Subject to the final recommendations approved, this meeting may conclude the work of the Steering Group.

Malcolm Johnston  
Executive Director of Resources

## Appendices

Appendix A – D4B Leaflet  
Appendix B – D4B Postcard  
Appendix C – Responses from organisations  
Appendix D – Response from Rye Town Council  
Appendix E – Bexhill Labour Party Response



## HOW TO "VOTE"

There is no lower age limit on voting and anyone who lives or works in Bexhill can vote.  
Don't miss out on this unique opportunity!

To **'VOTE'** in person, pick up a response  
postcard from the Town Hall  
or ask your local councillor

To **'VOTE'** online, search  
**"Rother Community Governance Review"**  
or visit

**www.bexhilltowncouncil.com**

Voting closes at 4:30pm on October 13th

**Need more information or want some  
assistance?**

Email D4B at **info@democracy4bexhill.com**

Or call **07917 845737 / 01424 218250**

If you are a local business, group or organisation, you can write to  
consultations@rother.gov.uk with your views or information

This leaflet was produced by Democracy4Bexhill, a non-political group of Bexhill residents. The cost of printing this leaflet has been made possible by the support of local residents and businesses. Please make their generosity worthwhile by responding and voting, and getting others in your street, block of flats, clubs and workplaces, as well as friends and neighbours, to do so too. Thank you.

This leaflet was printed by Fast Press, 44 Garsington Road, Heading, TN39 6UR, on behalf of and promoted by Democracy 4 Bexhill, 11 Brockley Road, Bexhill on Sea, TN39 3AP



## See that yellow bit?

**It's Bexhill.**

**The only place in Rother without a  
town or parish council**



**WHY YOU SHOULD  
VOTE  
FOR A TOWN COUNCIL**

### What's it all about?

Rother District Council is holding a consultation called a Community Governance Review, to ask the public if they would like Bexhill to have more local representation, and if so what form it should take.

Everyone of any age living or working in Bexhill is now being asked to express their preference in a consultative ballot, a non-binding "vote".

Democracy4Bexhill, a non-political group of Bexhill residents, has researched all the options and recommends you vote for a town council.

### What could a Bexhill Town Council do?

A town council would focus on the things that residents want to see in Bexhill. This might include looking after allotments, flower beds, public spaces, bus shelters and community centres. They could also run services, award grants, and support initiatives to provide or improve, for example:

- pavements and drop kerbs
- tourist information
- litter control
- children's play centres
- skate parks, cycle paths
- parking
- neighbourhood planning
- info services for tenants and leaseholders
- loneliness prevention
- help for independent shops
- making the town more attractive with flower baskets and upkeep
- keeping and promoting Bexhill's special historic character.

### How much would it cost?

Running a town council would cost an average of 14p per week per household. Obviously, if you want improvements in Bexhill, they may need to be paid for by an increase in council tax. However, the services the town council provides would depend entirely on what the people of Bexhill want.

The 18 town councillors would not be paid and modest premises would be found.



@Democracy4Bexhill



@D4Bexhill

### What options are Rother offering?

#### Option 1 - No change

All decisions about services provided in Bexhill would continue to be made by the 38 Rother councillors, the majority of whom are not elected by Bexhill residents and so can always out-vote the Bexhill members.

Also, we would continue to pay the Bexhill Special Expenses tax averaging at £40 per household per year without control on how it is spent.

#### Option 2 - A town council

(technically "A parish council styled as a town council")

**The best option!** Because...

- Decisions would be made by Bexhill residents, for Bexhill residents.
- Direct control of the Bexhill Special Expenses council tax, and influence on how Rother and East Sussex County Council spend their budgets in Bexhill.
- A Bexhill town council could protect services at risk! Services such as public toilets, or grants to sports clubs, charities, museums or transport for the elderly are likely to be cut in 2020 when the central government grant to Rother District Council and East Sussex County Council falls to zero.
- Control of 15% of the Community Infrastructure Levy, which developers pay Rother on infrastructure developments such as the new housing planned for Bexhill. This would rise to 25% if the Town Council develops a Neighbourhood Plan.
- New powers to provide services were given to communities and town councils in 2011. Towns up and down the country are taking this opportunity to form their own councils. Bexhill this is your moment!
- Bexhill would retain its Mayor!

#### Option 3 - An area committee

This would simply involve the current Rother councillors from Bexhill wards meeting together. Rother has made it clear that this would have no powers or responsibilities. Yet Rother also say it would cost an extra £45,000 to £90,000 per year!

#### Option 4 - Four parish councils

These would cost at least twice as much as a town council to little benefit, divide the town unfairly and create 68 new councillors! Plus Bexhill would lose its mayor.

## Let us know your preferred option

### RESIDENT 1 | RESIDENT 2

**Option 1:** no change

☐ ☐

**Option 2:** the creation of one Parish Council for the whole of Bexhill (to be styled a Town Council)

☐ ☐

**Option 3:** the creation of an Area Committee for Bexhill

☐ ☐

**Option 4:** the creation of four parish councils for North, East, South and West Bexhill

☐ ☐

#### DETAILS OF RESIDENT 1:

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Postcode:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### DETAILS OF RESIDENT 2:

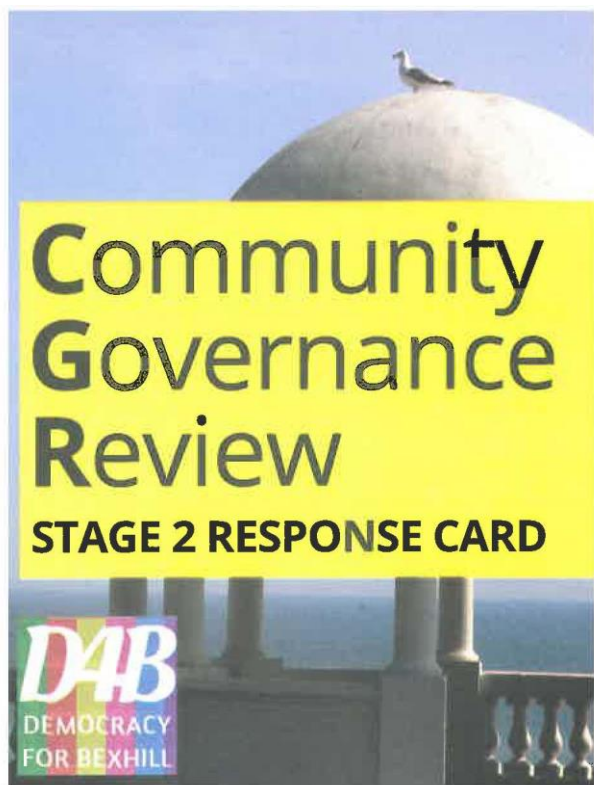
**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Postcode:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Residents can now respond and vote by any means. You can send this postcard to the address overleaf, send your views to Rother by post or email to [consultations@rother.gov.uk](mailto:consultations@rother.gov.uk) or vote online at [www.bexhilltowncouncil.com](http://www.bexhilltowncouncil.com).*

*This postcard has been produced by Democracy4Bexhill.*



**TO SEND  
BY POST  
AFFIX STAMP  
HERE**

**PLEASE RETURN THIS  
POSTCARD BY 4:30PM ON  
FRIDAY 13TH OCTOBER 2017 TO:**

Rother District Council  
Community Governance  
Review  
Town Hall  
Bexhill on Sea  
East Sussex TN39 3JX

ANONYMOUS RESPONSES WILL NOT BE  
COUNTED AND DUPLICATES WILL BE REMOVED



### **Battle Town Council**

At its recent meeting, Battle Town Council agreed to support Option 2 – Town Council for Bexhill.

### **Bexhill Academy**

On behalf of Bexhill Academy we would like to voice our support of the formation of a Bexhill Town or Parish Council to represent the views of the local Bexhill residents.  
Principal, Bexhill Academy

### **Bexhill and Battle Branch UK Independence Party**

As Agent for Bexhill and Battle Branch of the UK Independence Party, I have been asked to forward the views of the branch regarding the above.

Having considered the four options, the branch supports Option Two: the creation of one parish council for the whole of Bexhill (to be styled as a town council). We believe that the creation of a town council for Bexhill would be in the interests of improving the democratic representation of the people of Bexhill.

The other three options would, in our view, be of no benefit to the people of Bexhill.

### **Bexhill Caring Community**

I write on behalf of the charity Bexhill Caring Community and would like to make it known that we are in favour of Option Two, the creation of one town council. This is because we feel that it would help promote tourism of our town because it will consist of Bexhill councillors making changes for Bexhill residents only. We don't feel that it would be a problem paying extra in our council tax when it will benefit OUR town only. The town needs to be sorted out with parking and filling of empty shops which will only make it a better place to live and work when dealt with. The Council are too busy dealing with a wider area and if a town council of our own can help with this then surely that is a good thing. A Bexhill Town Council for Bexhill residents, it makes sense.

### **Bexhill Charter Trustees**

The Charter Trustees meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> September considered the opportunity to respond to the latest options available.

They resolved NOT to make a collective response at this stage.

### **Bexhill Environmental Group (BEG)**

The members of the Executive Committee of the Bexhill Environmental Group at their meeting on 22nd September resolved to support Option Two of the Council's shortlisted options being one parish council for the whole of Bexhill to be styled as a town council, feeling this will give extra and more local scrutiny of and control over environmental issues concerning the town.

### **Bexhill Hospital League of Friends**

Many thanks for the reminder, I as you would expect canvassed the League of Friends of Bexhill Hospital, their response was quiet simple. They told me they all had a personal interest in the subject and would comment as individuals. The general feeling from the management committee was they would support anything positive that improved the community, though they thought option 2 was probably the

most favourable but needed to know exactly what responsibilities RDC would pass over to this new body.

### **Bexhill Liberal Democrats**

Our organisation absolutely supports the only truly democratic solution: option 2 - a town council for Bexhill.

### **Bexhill 100 Motoring Club**

I am responding to your email (dated 2 October 2017) on behalf of Chairman, Roger Gillett, and our Committee, following a recent Committee meeting during which the content of your email has been discussed.

As representatives of a group of individuals with a common interest in motoring we are not in a position to comment about local politics other than to say that we have been extremely happy with the situation to date, which enables us to promote Bexhill in a positive light and raise monies each year for local charitable causes. We hope to maintain the same good relationship with any future governing body.

We have circulated a copy of your email to our membership and will forward you any responses which we receive before your deadline of 31 October.

Secretary, Bexhill 100 Motoring Club

### **Camber Parish Council**

Camber Parish Council considered their response at their September meeting of full Council to the Bexhill Community Governance Review and unanimously agreed that they **do not** support option 3 Area Committees. They feel that this option would have an impact on Camber Parish and cannot support this option. They do not have objections to the other options.

### **Icklesham Parish Council**

Icklesham Parish Council considered the options for the future governance of Bexhill. In the collective opinion of the council options 2 and 4, the creation of a parish (2) or parishes (4) are the most appropriate.

### **Rother Seniors Forum**

We do not see the need to increase governance and thereby costs in any way at this time of cut backs in many other areas of government.

On this basis we recommend no change to current arrangements.

### **Rother Voluntary Action**

The RVA Board have considered the invitation to participate but feel this is an issue for individuals not organisations and so in this instance will not be submitting a response. We are however happy to ensure that the process receives wide coverage to enable local people to participate.

### **Sussex Community Development Association**

As a community business that operates in Bexhill, we are writing to give our support to Option 2 of the governance review – that is a Town Council for Bexhill.

Having provided services to vulnerable adults in Bexhill for over two years now we are impressed by the community spirit and generosity of local people.

We note the democratic deficit and oddity that has resulted in Bexhill, the largest town in Rother with over 50% of the population of Rother having no town council. This contrasts with smaller towns such as Battle and Rye who both have Town Councils.

We contend that a town council would enable the growth of civic pride in Bexhill, and enable local people to take back control and vote for a local council that will truly represent their interests.

Centre Manager  
Sussex Community Development Association

**Sussex Police**

From a police point of view we of course will work with whatever is decided. Sidley is very different from Little Common which in turn is different from the Town Centre. It might be a challenge to have one Town Council when the needs are so different.

## **RYE TOWN COUNCIL RESPONSE TO STAGE 2 OF THE BEXHILL COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW CONSULTATION**

Whilst acknowledging that the decision on whether to create a town council lies properly with Bexhillians, Rye Town Council has, for many years, supported the parishing of Bexhill (Option 2) – and this remains the case.

### **Options 1, 3 and 4**

These are unsatisfactory for the reasons following:

#### **Option 1 (No change)**

Largely as a result of the involvement of local organisations seeking to increase participation in the consultations and/or encouraging residents to support a local council for the town, the Governance Review has been well publicised. By the time this consultation has concluded a much higher proportion of Bexhillians will be aware that, unlike all the other villages and towns in Rother (save for East Guldeford), they do not have their own local council – that is, they currently have no dedicated corporate body to identify, meet or champion their particular interests. What is so special about Bexhill that it does not merit its own council?

Some may argue that there is presently no democratic deficit in Bexhill because its Ward Members represent the interests of Bexhillians. This may be so but, ultimately, Bexhill Members have to take into account what is in the best interests of their authority and the district – and this may not always coincide with the interests of their own Ward constituents.

Currently, the Bexhill Special Expense (cost of local services that would normally be provided by a town/parish council) - and Bexhill Charter Trustee costs – are approved by a council (RDC) with a majority of Members representing wards outside Bexhill.

‘No change’ will do nothing to address the suspicions/assertions heard in Bexhill that Rural Rother benefits disproportionately from RDC’s resources because it has more Ward Members – as well as the view conveyed by some in Rural Rother that they should not be compelled to fund ‘Bexhill’s Pavilion and seafront’.

It is likely that the vast majority of those responding to Stage 2 of the consultation are supporting Option 2 (a Town Council for Bexhill) and that expectations have been – and are being - raised. There is clearly a demand from a significant number of Bexhillians for some form of meaningful change and if their desires are thwarted it is unlikely that they will abandon their efforts to secure greater local autonomy.

#### **Option 3 (Bexhill Area Committee)**

This option was rendered pointless after Rother District Council (RDC) decided that any such committee would have no delegated powers. The option will receive minimal public support because the area committee would be nothing more than a mechanism for raising concerns and exchanging information. Such a vehicle exists already in the guise of the Bexhill Town Forum.

#### **Option 4 (Four Parish Councils)**

The original option - the creation of three parish councils subdivided as Bexhill, Little Common and Sidley - has also been fatally undermined by RDC's decision to arbitrarily replace it with parishes based on the Bexhill County Divisions – styling them as North, South, East and West Bexhill. Parish councils are more likely to flourish if their boundaries are based not on 'administrative convenience' but 'natural communities' that residents identify with.

#### **Option 2 (Town Council for Bexhill)**

The introduction of 'first tier democracy' in Bexhill is likely to stimulate community engagement, strengthen local identity and improve responsiveness to local need.

A number of organisations have attempted to estimate the cost of a Bexhill Town Council.

In the first instance, a town council could be established relatively cheaply – perhaps by employing a part-time Town Clerk, part-time Assistant/Mayor's Secretary, renting an office, insurance, admin expenses, election costs, subscriptions, hiring meeting rooms etc. This could cost a Bexhill Band D Tax Payer as little as £7-£8pa.

Costs would obviously increase if services were transferred from RDC (not guaranteed) and/or the Town Council identified unmet needs and – with the backing of its parishioners – introduced new/supplementary services or facilities.

Some of the services/facilities that a Bexhill Town Council could provide/fund without relying on them being transferred from another authority include:

- Tourist information services
- Street furniture
- Social housing (assuming it has the General Power of Competence)
- Town Stewards/Wardens
- A youth council
- Adoption of red telephone kiosks
- A Town Crier
- Adverse weather response
- Joint highways improvement schemes
- Business and employment support
- Community transport
- Crime prevention

Any serving Bexhill Ward member concerned that a town council could diminish the value of their District Council role should note that they would be free to stand for election to the new statutory body – and it is not unusual for District Councillors to sit also on their own local parish/town council.

Serving a population of 41,000, a Bexhill Town Council would be well-placed to identify unmet needs and ascertain where existing services might be falling short – and then to address these deficiencies creatively and appropriately.

Rye Town Council commends the adoption of Option 2.

Richard Farhall  
Rye Town Clerk  
on behalf of Rye Town Council

**Bexhill Labour Party****Response to Phase 2 of Rother District Council's Community Governance Review for Bexhill on sea****Bexhill Labour Party's preferred option of a Town Council for Bexhill**

We believe that establishing a Town Council for Bexhill is the most appropriate future governance arrangement for Bexhill.

- A Bexhill Town Council could build on and sustain the community spirit that supports existing voluntary activity like Shining Lights and the Bexhill Caring Community.
- It could act as a catalyst for community regeneration with a special focus on economic regeneration in Sidley and Central Ward as well as the polling district of St Stephen's ward that straddles London Road. We know that the community feel for example, that Bexhill Town Centre is looking worn and shabby and a Town Council is more likely to bring partners together (statutory and non-statutory) to effect change.
- It could, via the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan that specifies where additional development should or should not take place, provide local solutions to mitigate the negative effects on the communities of Little Common and Pebsham from intensive development and increased traffic.

Because we do not know what issues will exist when a Town Council is to be established we do not think it is sensible to specify in detail how the council should be established. However, Bexhill Labour Party believes that there are a number of principles that should apply. These are that:

- A Town Council should replace the current Charter Trustees
- Bexhill Town Councillors should elect a Mayor who would chair the Town Council and have a casting vote.
- Meetings of the Town Council should be held in community venues and rotate between Sidley, Little Common, Pebsham and Bexhill Town Centre in the same way Bexhill Town Forum meetings currently operate. Benefits outweigh any additional costs.

We understand that there will be additional costs of setting up and running an additional tier of local government. However, we estimate these to be minimal and are outweighed by the benefits of having a local council that fits with the natural community of Bexhill. The gain in civic pride and having a council Bexhill people can identify with outweighs any additional costs that Rother estimate at £100,000 per annum or 12 pence per week for each band D household.

Currently Bexhill residents contribute towards special expenses of £650,000 to provide the following services:

- Bexhill Parks (the largest outlay),
- Bexhill Allotments,
- The Christmas Lighting,
- A contribution towards Bexhill Museum,
- Bus Shelters
- The expenses of the Bexhill Town Forum.

The management of these services and grants could reasonably be transferred to a Bexhill Town Council.

A Bexhill Town Council could also adopt a Neighbourhood Plan that can set out policies for the location of houses, shops, and offices, or set design standards for new development. The Localism Act (2011) introduced several new rights and powers to allow local communities to shape new development, including the provision to prepare a 'Neighbourhood Plan' for their area. A Bexhill Town Council could adopt a Neighbourhood Plan for the town that would allow Bexhill residents to have more influence on planning matters. Rother's website sets out those Town and Parish Councils that have adopted Neighbourhood Plans as: Sedlescombe, Salehurst and Robertsbridge, Ticehurst, Fairlight, Crowhurst, Burwash and Etchingham Parish Councils and Rye and Battle Town Councils.

#### Costs of a Town Council

We do not agree with those that say the on-going costs of running a Town Council would be prohibitive. A very thorough assessment by D4B (Democracy for Bexhill) estimates the cost at £126,000 or 15 pence per band D household in the first year, including the cost of running an election, renting a shop as well as equipping it with IT and furniture.

D4B have obtained quotes for renting a town centre shop as well as putting together a modest staffing budget on the advice of the SSALC (Sussex and Surrey Associations of Local Councils Ltd.) to cover the cost of a Town Clerk working 30 hours per week and a part-time assistant. The administrative function of a Town Council need not be housed in plush offices nor is there a need for the Town Council to own and run its own car. Town Councillors do not normally receive an allowance as opposed to Rother District Councillors who can claim an allowance. There would be the additional costs of running separate elections however, if these were run on the same day as Rother District Council elections then the costs could be shared with Rother.

#### Other Financial considerations

The government has introduced a new tax on developers known as the Community Infrastructure Levy. As Developers complete new projects, a levy at a rate set by Rother District Council becomes payable. However, a Town or Parish Council automatically receives 15% of this levy for spending on infrastructure. This rises to 25% if a Neighbourhood Plan is in place (see previous page 3). 54% of Rother's planned housing development is within the boundaries of Bexhill. But Rother Council is lawfully able to spend this revenue anywhere within Rother.

We have already set out that one of the benefits of a Bexhill Town Council is to mitigate the adverse effects in Little Common and Pebsham of extensive house building projects. The infrastructure could be paid for through the Community Infrastructure Levy which would be guaranteed to be spent in Bexhill and on priorities determined by Councillors accountable solely to the Bexhill electorate.

For Further information please contact Christine Bayliss  
Campaign Coordinator Bexhill Branch of Bexhill and Battle Labour Party  
October 2017

**COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW STEERING GROUP**

Thursday 9 November 2017



Minutes of the Community Governance Review Steering Group held at the Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea on Thursday 9 November 2017 at 9:30am.

**Members of the Steering Group Present:**

Councillors Lord Ampthill, C.A. Clark, S.H. Earl (substitute), S.D. Elford, Mrs J.M. Hughes, G.P. Johnson, M.J. Kenward, Mrs S.M. Prochak and M.R. Watson (substitute).

**Independent Chairman:** Mr Robin Patten.

**Other Members Present:** Councillor J.J. Carroll, K.P. Dixon (in part), Mrs D.C. Earl-Williams and I.G.F. Jenkins.

**Officers Present:**

Malcolm Johnston	-	Executive Director of Resources
John Collins	-	Service Manager – Corporate and Human Resources
Lisa Cooper	-	Democratic Services Manager
Joanne Wright	-	Consultation Officer
Hollie Farley	-	Marketing and Communications Account Manager
Louise Cook	-	Democratic Services Officers

Also Present: 42 members of the public.

**CGR17/15. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology had been received from Councillor Oliver. It was noted that Councillor Earl was present as a substitute for Councillor Oliver and that Councillor Watson was present as a substitute for Councillor Carroll.

**CGR17/16. DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS**

Members were reminded to disclose any new interests that had not previously been disclosed. No additional disclosures were made.

**CGR17/17. MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising from the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 August.



## **CGR17/18. OUTCOME OF STAGE 2 CONSULTATION AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members considered the report of the Executive Director of Resources that set out the results of Stage 2 of the Community Governance Review consultation to enable the Steering Group to form its recommendations to Council via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) and Cabinet.

The consultation had been carried out in accordance with the full Council decision i.e. at no additional cost to the Council (over and above that what would have been spent in progressing the consultation as already identified within the previously agreed Communications Plan, excluding the proposed leaflet drop). The following four options were consulted on:

- i. Option one – no change.
- ii. Option two – the creation of one parish council for the whole of Bexhill (to be styled a Town Council).
- iii. Option three – the creation of an Area Committee for Bexhill.
- iv. Option four - the creation of four parish councils – North, East, South and West Bexhill, based on the current (May 2017) East Sussex County Council Divisional boundaries.

The consultation was launched on 1 September and was initially due to run for six weeks closing on 13 October. However on 26 September, it was decided that the consultation deadline would be extended to 31 October to enable more time for participation to ensure the best response to the consultation as possible.

The detailed Communications Plan was followed which included distribution of postcards and posters to elected Members, regular promotions through social media and press releases, community engagement events, attendance at the Bexhill Town Forum, direct contact / mail shots / email; citizens' panel, dedicated section on the Council's website and information packs/posters at community facilities. In addition the consultation was mentioned in the local newspaper on a number of occasions, not only in press releases but through various articles and letters.

During the consultation, updates were posted online that provided information on the number of responses received, together with some demographic profiling for those who responded via the Councils' preferred consultation method, the online portal. Unfortunately the demographic information was not available for those who responded through other means.

During the consultation, Democracy for Bexhill (D4B) ran an extensive campaign and had produced its own leaflet promoting its preferred option to "vote" for a town council and distributed its own version of the response postcard to all Bexhill households.

At the close of the consultation, 9,227 valid responses had been received; 4,495 via the Council's on-line consultation portal and the Council's response postcard and 4,732 via the D4B response postcard. 97.8% of responses were from residents. A number of responses from organisations in the District had also been received and these were appended to the report for Members' consideration.

Members noted that further, more detailed analysis would be provided to the OSC and Cabinet including a more detailed breakdown by residents/non-residents, Ward and postcode area. Further analysis on age and ethnicity would also be possible for the responses that were received online.

Given the importance of the decision, which included the potential to establish an additional tax raising body, on a permanent basis for the residents of Bexhill-on-Sea, Councillor Kenward proposed, seconded by Councillor Mrs Hughes that all four options be put forward to the OSC, Cabinet and full Council to enable a full and thorough debate without any steer or influence from the OSC or Cabinet.

Due to the large response to the consultation and the overwhelming support of responders for a Town Council, Councillor Earl proposed an amendment to the Motion, seconded by Councillor Mrs Prochak that only Option 2 (the creation of one parish council for Bexhill to be styled a Town Council) be put forward as a recommendation to the OSC for its decision and subsequent recommendation to Cabinet and full Council.

The amendment to the original Motion, that only Option 2 (a town council), be recommended to the OSC and subsequently referred to Cabinet and full Council was **LOST**.

A vote on the substantive Motion was taken and it was **CARRIED**.

**RESOLVED:** That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be requested to refer all four options to Cabinet and full Council to enable a full and thorough debate on all the Options.

#### **CGR17/19. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman thanked Members for taking part in the Steering Group and extended his gratitude to officers, particularly Lisa Cooper, Joanne Wright and the Democratic Services team for their hard work and support to the Steering Group and consultation process.

#### **CGR17/20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Depending on the outcome of the Community Governance Review and final recommendation agreed by full Council, there may or may not be a need for any further meetings; Members would be contacted, should additional meetings be required.

#### **CHAIRMAN**

The meeting closed at 10:06am  
cb171204 – CGR Final Recommendations

170911ljc/lec

## Bexhill Community Governance Review 2017

### Responses by Bexhill Ward

1. Appendix 5 includes an analysis of the responses by ward in Bexhill-on-Sea, in alphabetical order by the name of the ward. All calculations have been based on all residents. Calculations by adult respondents only can be requested.
2. In Bexhill, an average of 1,004 people responded in each of the nine wards. An average of 20% of all residents (all ages) responded in each ward. If distributed evenly, each ward should account for approximately 11% of the Bexhill respondents.

### Central Bexhill

3. An above average number of responses came from the Central Bexhill ward compared to other Bexhill wards. This ward has the highest population of any other ward (6,024), except St Stephens (6,060) so we would expect more responses. Responses from Central Bexhill account for a significant 14% of the responses to the consultation (all respondents). At 1,316 respondents it is the second highest response from an individual ward.
4. Just greater than one in five or 22% of residents (all ages) responded to this consultation.
5. Just under 93% of respondents selected option two (town council). Just over 5% of respondents preferred option one (no change). Less than 1% of respondents preferred either option three or option four.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Total
Number	71	1223	12	10	1,316
Percentage	5.4	92.9	0.9	0.8	

### Collington

6. Collington had the highest level of response for any ward. There were 1,371 complete responses, which is 15% of all responses to the consultation.
7. Nearly one in three or 32% of residents responded to this consultation. This is the largest sample of residents for any ward.
8. Just under 95% of respondents preferred option two (town council). Three percent of respondents supported option one (no change). Note that this is a lower amount than for Central ward but when taking into account the margins of error (2% for Central and 2% for Collington) there is no significant statistical difference. In third place was option four (four parishes), which was selected by 1.5% of respondents. Option three (area committee) was selected by half a percent of respondents.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Total
Number	44	1300	7	20	1,371
Percentage	3.2%	94.8%	0.5%	1.5%	

## Kewhurst

9. Responses from Kewhurst were slightly above the average for a Bexhill ward. There were 1,093 complete responses, which is 12% of all responses to the consultation.
10. Twenty three percent of Kewhurst residents responded to this consultation.
11. Ninety five percent of respondents preferred option two (town council). Just under 4% of respondents preferred option one (no change). In third place was option four (four parishes), which was selected by just under 1% of respondents. Option three (area committee) was preferred by 0.4% of respondents.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Total
Number	41	1038	4	10	1,093
Percentage	3.8	95	0.4%	0.9%	

## Old Town (Bexhill)

12. Responses from the Old Town were well below the average for a Bexhill ward. There were 587 valid responses and this is 6% of the overall response.
13. Just fewer than 15% of Old Town's population responded to this consultation. This ward had the lowest response rate of any ward in Bexhill.
14. Just under 94% of respondents preferred option two (town council). Just under 4% of respondents preferred option one (no change). In third place was option four that was selected by 1.5% of respondents. Option three was preferred by less than 1% of the respondents.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Total
Number	23	550	5	9	587
Percentage	3.9	93.7	0.85	1.5	

## Sackville

15. We had 1,000 valid responses from Sackville ward. This is nearly the average for a Bexhill ward. It is 11% of the overall response.
16. More than one in five (22%) of Sackville residents responded to this consultation.
17. Analysis by 1,000 respondents makes calculations very straight forward. Ninety three point five per cent of respondents preferred option two (town council), 3.5% preferred option one (no change) and 2.2% preferred option four (four parishes). The least preferred option was option three, at under 1%.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Total
Number	35	935	8	22	1,000
Percentage	3.5%	93.5%	0.8%	2.2%	

## Sidley

18. There were only 720 responses from Sidney ward. It is well below the average for a Bexhill ward and is only 8% of the responses.
19. Sixteen per cent of Sidney residents responded to this consultation.
20. The most selected option was option two (town council) for nine out of ten respondents or 91%. This is followed by option four (four parishes) at just under 5% and it seems that residents in Sidney ward were slightly more interested in option four than other wards. In third place for preference was option one (no change) at 3.5% and last is option three (area committee) at half a per cent.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Total
Number	25	656	4	35	720
Percentage	3.5%	91.1%	0.56%	4.9%	

## St Marks

21. We had 1,197 valid responses from St Marks ward. This is above the average for a Bexhill ward and is 13% of the overall response.
22. Nearly one quarter of St Marks ward residents or 24% responded to this consultation.
23. Just under 95% of respondents preferred option two (town council). The second highest preference was option one for three per cent of respondents. This was followed by option four at just over 1% and option three at 1%, which follows the pattern of preference for most wards.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Total
Number	37	1,132	12	16	1,197
Percentage	3.1%	94.6%	1%	1.3%	

## St Michaels

24. The response from St Michaels ward was 807. This is below the average response rate for a Bexhill ward. Responses from St Michaels were 9% of the total.
25. The ward response rate was 17% of residents, just below average.
26. The highest preference was for option two (town council) by just under 93% of respondents. In second place is option one (no change) at just under 5% of respondents. Option four (four parishes) is in third place and selected by 2% of respondents. Last is option three, selected by less than 1% of respondents.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Total
Number	39	747	5	16	807
Percentage	4.8%	92.6%	0.6%	2%	

## St Stephens

27. We had 940 responses from St Stephens ward. This is a little below average for a Bexhill ward. It is 10% of the overall response.
28. Only 15.5% of St Stephens' residents responded to this consultation. This is the second lowest response rate from a ward, following Old Town at the lowest.
29. Analysis finds that just over 93% of respondents selected option two as their preference. This is followed by just under 4% selecting option one. In equal third place are option three and option four, which were both selected by 1.5% of the respondents as their preferred option.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Total
Number	36	876	14	14	940
Percentage	3.8%	93.1%	1.5%	1.5%	

**Rother District Council**

Report to	-	Community Governance Review Steering Group
Date	-	22 May 2017
Report of the	-	Executive Director of Resources
Subject	-	Possible Options to take forward to Stage 2 consultation

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**Introduction**

1. This report identifies the possible options to take forward for the Stage 2 consultation which is due to take place for eight weeks between 11 July and 1 September 2017. The Steering Group is requested to consider the options set out within this report and make recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting due to be held on Monday 12 June.
2. Whilst there has been a good response rate compared to other Council consultations, it is noted that 928 responses is still a relatively small number compared to current electorate of Bexhill-on-Sea of around 35,066 (2.6%). However, under section 93 of the Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act, the Council has a legal duty and an obligation to take these responses into consideration when making decisions regarding the second stage consultation.

**Possible Options**

3. Taking into consideration the feedback received from the first stage consultation, as detailed in the previous report, the following three options have emerged as those that Members may wish to recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to take forward for the Stage 2 consultation:
  - **Option one – no change and retain the status quo**
  - **Option two – the creation of one Parish Council for the whole of Bexhill (to be styled a Town Council)**
  - **Option three – the creation of an Area Committee for Bexhill**

**Option one – no change and retain the status quo**

4. Whilst it is unwise to make assumptions about the view of the silent majority of non-respondents either for or against change, in the absence of a resounding response for change, the first option that should be considered is that there be no change and the status quo remain. The following paragraphs provide information on some of the issues that have been discussed by respondents as reasons for change and will form part of the information provided for the Stage 2 consultation documents.

**Council Size**

5. As some Members may recall, during 2015/16, RDC was subject to a Boundary Review, undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE). The first part of the review concerned itself with Council size – i.e the number of Councillors; following consultation,

both RDC and the LGBCE were satisfied that the number of Councillors required to fulfil the functions and responsibilities of RDC was 38, with 20 Members representing the rural wards and 18 Members representing Bexhill-on-Sea wards.

6. The second part of the review concerned itself with the warding pattern to ensure electoral equality for the projected electorate – so that each councillor across RDC represented roughly the same number of voters; for RDC this meant 2,027 electors per councillor, with a tolerance of  $\pm 10\%$ . Within the nine Bexhill wards, the variance ranged from  $-5\%$  in Bexhill Central to  $+10\%$  in Sidley. This means that the Members elected to Bexhill Central ward represent  $5\%$  less electors and Sidley Members represent  $10\%$  more electors than all other Members across RDC.
7. As explained above, the current allocation of Members between the rural areas and Bexhill-on-Sea has recently been put to the test by the LGBCE, was subject to public consultation, and provides equality of representation across RDC; the suggestion that the balance of rural / Bexhill-on-Sea Members is unjust and skewed in favour of the rural community, is not correct when looking at the District, as a whole.
8. The 18 Bexhill-on-Sea Members are democratically elected and accountable to the residents of their ward to represent the views and interests of residents to RDC. The overriding duty of *all* 38 Councillors is to the whole community of Rother, but they have a special duty to their constituents, including those who did not vote for them. All formal decision-making Council meetings are open to the public (unless confidential information is to be considered) and the public can attend and see how their local ward Members participate in meetings and represent their views.

#### Council Tax

9. No change would see the continuation with the current governance arrangements for Bexhill-on-Sea with Rother District Council (RDC) delivering services directly to the residents of Bexhill-on-Sea. Bexhill residents would continue to pay Council Tax direct to RDC for all their district provided services. For 2017/18 this was set at £211.16 per annum for a Band D property, which includes Bexhill Special Expenses of £664,990 to fund the following services specific to Bexhill: Bexhill Parks, Bexhill Allotments; Christmas Lighting; Bexhill Museum; Bus Shelters and the Bexhill Town Forum.
10. At present, should RDC wish to set a Council Tax over  $2\%$  or £5 whichever is the greatest, RDC would have to hold a referendum at considerable expense. This Government “cap” provides some guarantee for Bexhill residents and maintains increases to an acceptable level.
11. Currently, Parish and Town Councils (P&TCs) are not bound by the same legislation and are able to put their own local pre-cept up by any percentage / amount without the need for a local referendum. This year a number of precepts were subject to large increases; RDC has no powers to question excessive increases and has no jurisdiction over P&TCs; RDC is only permitted to collect and pass on what it is requested to do so, by the P&TCs.
12. This option would also see the retention of the existing Bexhill-on-Sea Charter Trustees who were established following the local government re-



organisation in 1974 to preserve the historic identity of the town by carrying out ceremonial functions only, usually by the Mayor. The Charter Trustees precept for 2017/18 is £12,830 and costs for a Band D property 79p per household, per year.

13. The Charter Trustees comprise all 18 Bexhill-on-Sea ward Members; their role cannot be expanded and therefore are unable to take on services / responsibilities from RDC.

#### Neighbourhood Planning

14. The absence of a Bexhill Town Council does not preclude Bexhill-on-Sea developing and producing a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) and benefitting from the advantages that go with a NP, once in place. The District Council may determine that any strategic development (i.e. those serving a wider area) would be dealt with outside of the scope of a NP.
15. In non-parished areas, a NP may be prepared by a duly constituted 'neighbourhood forum'. Any such forum must have at least 21 members and be open to new members; the community group would have to apply to RDC who would have to agree whether it met the right standards. If RDC decided that the community group did meet the right standards, the group could call itself a 'neighbourhood forum'; this is simply the technical term for groups which have been granted the legal power to do neighbourhood planning in a particular area. A 'neighbourhood forum' may be established to prepare a plan for a particular part of the town, such as Sidley or Little Common, for example. As for the parish councils preparing NPs, CIL receipts should be used to support development in the area.

#### **Option two – the creation of one Parish Council for the whole of Bexhill (to be styled a Town Council)**

16. The Statutory Guidance states that in order to be “effective” and “convenient” the size of a Parish Council (PC) is relevant. To be effective, a PC needs to have a large enough electorate to make the possibility of providing at least a “minimum” of services viable (bearing in mind that the costs of such delivery would be divided amongst the PC’s “tax base”). In order to be convenient, electors need to be able to access the “assets” of the PC (e.g. the PC offices, allotments, etc).
17. The Statutory Guidance also notes that there are no ideal sizes for a PC. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England LGBCE prefers PCs to be based upon “natural communities” and to reflect people’s expressed choices. In practice, P&TCs vary enormously in size, activities and circumstances, representing populations ranging from less than 100 (small rural hamlets) to up to 70,000 (Weston-Super-Mare Town Council). Most of them are small: around 80% represent populations of less than 2,500. Where a Community Governance Review (CGR) recommends the creation of a parish, it is a legal requirement that it must also recommend that a PC is created if it contains an electorate of 1,000 or more, which would clearly apply in this case.
18. The Statutory Guidance concludes that the general rule should be that a parish is based upon “an area which reflects community identity and

interest” rather than any rigid “rule” as to the population or electorate. It goes on to say:

“There may be cases where larger parishes would best suit the needs of the area. These might include places where the division of a cohesive area, such as a Charter Trustee town... would not reflect the sense of community that needs to lie behind all parishes; or places where there are no recognisable smaller communities”.

19. However, as reported to the previous meeting of the Steering Group, the Statutory Guidance goes on to say:

“Proposals to create a parish or parish council covering all or part of a charter trustee area need to be judged in particular against the following considerations:

- The effect on the historic cohesiveness of the area;
- What are the other community interests in the area? Is there a demonstrable sense of community identity encompassing the charter trustee area? Are there smaller areas within it which have a demonstrable community identity and which would be viable as administrative units?

20. The following table shows the 2015 *electorate* for the nine Bexhill-on-Sea District Wards, which demonstrates that there are potentially a number of communities, based on current wards (which is acknowledged are not necessarily distinct communities), which could be viable as administrative units:

Existing Bexhill District Wards	2015 Electorate
Central	3,813
Collington	3,724
Kewhurst	3,856
Old Town Bexhill	2,982
Sackville	3,732
Sidley	3,980
St Marks	3,802
St Michaels	3,794
St Stephens	3,724
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>33,407</b>

21. However, save for a very few comments in relation to smaller discrete communities within Bexhill-on-Sea, for example Little Common and Sidley, there has not been a great call to see PCs established within smaller communities, most of which in theory, could be viable administrative units.
22. If the Steering Group is minded to recommend the creation of a single PC for the whole of Bexhill-on-Sea, it will also need to make a recommendation as to the number of parish Councillors to serve on it. There are no specific rules as to the number of Councillors that should serve on a parish council, except for the statutory requirement that there be a minimum of five.

23. There is no provision in legislation that each parish councillor should represent the same number of electors. However, the LGBCE believes it is in the interests of effective and convenient local government, for voters and Councillors, to have equal levels of representation between parish wards as far as practicable.
24. Equality of representation allows for Councillors to adequately and fairly represent the interests of residents. Therefore, using the district level warding arrangement that will come into force with effect from May 2019, having recently been put to the test by the LGBCE's Boundary Review in terms of equality of representation at district level, seems the logical size and distribution to adopt at this stage, should a PC be created.
25. For administrative and financial purposes should a new PC be created, it would take effect from 1 April 2019. Elections would take place in May 2019 falling into line with the ordinary year of election of councillors for local elections (District, Town and Parish Council elections), and be held every four years thereafter.
26. In comparison to other similar sized PCs, if a PC was created for Bexhill-on-Sea, given the size of the population, it is recommended that the number of parish Councillors should reflect the current number of district Councillors, i.e. 18.
27. A number of respondents gave examples of parish and town councils and recommended that the Steering Group look at these as examples of the size / cost and responsibilities of parish and town councils; these are shown at Appendix A. Additional examples, not suggested by respondents, of town councils of similar size to Bexhill are also provided for comparison at the end of the Appendix.
28. A further consideration is the warding of any proposed PC. The legal requirement in considering whether or not a PC should be warded is whether:
  - The number or distribution of the local government electors for the parish would make a single election of Councillors impracticable or inconvenient, or,
  - It is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented.
29. These requirements would be satisfied by a recommendation that a Bexhill-on-Sea PC retains the proposed 2019 nine district ward boundaries, otherwise there would be a single election of 18 Councillors. This would almost certainly be impractical and inconvenient to manage in terms of elections and the discrete communities within Bexhill-on-Sea would no doubt wish to have separate representation due to differing needs and aspirations.
30. Unless there are compelling reasons for doing so (in terms of community identities and interests), it is suggested that the Steering Group may wish to retain the current district-level ward boundaries and names.
31. The name of a PC refers to the geographical name or location – e.g. Bexhill-on-Sea. The “style” relates to the descriptions town council, parish council,

community council, neighbourhood council and village council. Under the 2007 Act, if the principal council recommends the creation of a PC, it must recommend both the name and style to be used.

32. It is suggested that the name and style of any new PC would form part of the second stage consultation. There are few rules governing the style to be adopted, and the Government recognises that the preferred style is likely to flow from the character and tradition of the area under review. It is recommended therefore that the name and style be “Bexhill Town Council” as has been called for in many representations.
33. It has been stated above that one important consideration is the viability of any new PC, and that such considerations include financial viability in terms of possible service delivery. It is therefore suggested that provided this meeting of the Steering Group recommends the options to take forward for the second stage consultation, the Council's Financial Services department is tasked to support the development of the initial precept likely to be levied in 2019/20 by the new Bexhill Town Council (BTC), as detailed below. This information would need to feature in the consultation documents.
34. Although some indicative work on costings has been undertaken in the past, it is impossible to assess the exact financial implications for the residents of Bexhill-on-Sea, as it would depend upon the nature and extent of functions (if any) transferred to the new BTC from RDC. Finance would however certainly be required for:
  - The cost of elections as Town Councillors would need to be elected. (The Charter Trustees would not automatically be the Town Councillors). A person could stand for the BTC and not RDC and vice versa.
  - The cost of purchasing or renting office accommodation.
  - The cost of staff salaries – a full time Clerk and one or more administrative staff would need to be employed for a Town Council to be effective in an area as large as Bexhill; other members of staff might be needed depending on the range of activities the new Council would undertake. In general large Town Councils have a significant staffing establishment.
  - The cost of administering such services as may be transferred to the new BTC by agreement with RDC.
  - In respect of the above point, it needs to be remembered that the “type” of services which could be administered by BTC are generally those already paid for by Bexhill residents through Special Expenses, although it is not limited to these.
35. In order to undertake more detailed costings it will be necessary to make some assumptions and, given the last bullet point above, it is suggested that a situation where all the functions carried out under Special Expenses are transferred to any new BTC (thereby removing the Bexhill Special Expenses and replacing it with a BTC Precept) is used as a working model. There are some practical considerations regarding contracts such as Grounds Maintenance which will be difficult to disaggregate.

### **Option three – the creation of an Area Committee for Bexhill**

36. As the Steering Group will recall, the original petition that triggered the CGR called for an Area Committee structure to be introduced for Bexhill-on-Sea; whilst this was not the most popular option favoured by the respondents to the first stage consultation, it is considered that this option should be considered as part of the second stage consultation. There are currently no Area Committees operating within RDC nor any other Council within East Sussex.
37. The law already confers upon local authorities a general power to appoint a committee (or joint committee in the case of two or more authorities) for the purposes of discharging any of their functions (except functions for which a statutory committee must be established), and to appoint area committees for the purposes of discharging functions delegated by the Executive. (Local Government Act 1972, s.102(1)).
38. This provision is set out in the Council's Constitution as follows:

#### **Article 10 - Area Committees and Forums**

##### **10.1 Area Committees**

*The Council may appoint area Committees and forums as it sees fit, if it is satisfied that to do so will ensure improved service delivery in the context of best value and more efficient, transparent and accountable decision making. The Council will consult with relevant Parish and Town Councils and the Chairmen of relevant Parish meetings when considering whether and how to establish area Committees.*

39. As Members are aware, Area Committees are composed of those Councillors representing the wards of a specific area. An Area Committee for Bexhill-on-Sea would therefore comprise the 18 elected Members for the Bexhill-on-Sea District Council Wards.
40. If RDC was to establish an Area Committee for Bexhill-on-Sea, the Executive (Cabinet) would then have the ability to delegate executive functions to that Area Committee.
41. At the conclusion of the CGR, should the Council agree to the establishment of an Area Committee structure, with effect from May 2019, further more detailed work and legal advice would be required; this would include compiling proposed structures and possible functions to be allocated to an Area Committee.
42. As a general rule of thumb, it should be noted that those authorities who operate Area Committees with executive decision making powers are appropriately resourced with appropriate staffing levels and therefore come at a cost; such a structure within RDC could not be accommodated within existing resources and will incur costs if operated at the level that is being sought by the respondents to the consultation. Attached at Appendix B is a list of District / Borough authorities who operate an Area Committee structure for information.

43. It is difficult at this juncture to speculate as to what functions / responsibilities would be delegated to an Area Committee for Bexhill-on-Sea and to therefore cost out this option with any great accuracy. It is however recommended that Cabinet be invited to consider which functions it would be prepared, if any, to delegate to such an Area Committee structure for the purposes of the Stage 2 consultation.
44. As part of the CGR the Council will also need to consider whether a recommendation made by petitioners will undermine community cohesion in any part of its area. It is considered that should an Area Committee be established within Bexhill-on-Sea, there would need to be some form of Area Committee structure established covering the rural areas of the District, outside of Bexhill-on-Sea for the remaining 20 rural Members. Otherwise there could potentially be contention between the rural Members serving on RDC who were unable to make executive decisions concerning their areas, as opposed to Bexhill Members who would have more control over matters that alone concerned Bexhill.
45. In order to avoid this scenario and in the interests of fairness, if an Area Committee structure was introduced, it would have to comprise a minimum of two Area Committees, one for Bexhill-on-Sea and one (or possibly two) for the rural area outside of Bexhill-on-Sea.

#### **Other Matters**

46. In carrying out the review, the Council must also consider the wider picture of community governance and give consideration to other established forms of community governance such as local residents' associations, or community forums which local people have set up and which help make a distinct contribution to the community. Potentially, as representatives of their community, these bodies may be considered as foundations for or stages towards the creation of democratically elected parishes.
47. In Bexhill-on-Sea, the most prominent body in this category is the Bexhill Town Forum, whilst acknowledging that there are many other smaller residents' associations / community forums in existence across Bexhill-on-Sea.
48. In the absence of a P&TC within Bexhill-on-Sea, RDC established the Bexhill Town Forum in 1996 to provide views on local needs and priorities, to monitor service performance at a local level, to act as a focal point to express views and act as a public forum for consultation on appropriate issues, and to act as the voice of the community of Bexhill in relation to services.
49. In July 2013, following on from the work of the Devolution Working Group, the Council agreed to continue to support the Bexhill Town Forum to the maximum sum of £4,000 per annum, collected through Bexhill special expenses but to no longer provide the secretariat support. The Bexhill Town Forum is now a separate entity, responsible for all secretarial and administrative functions.
50. It is considered that none of the existing bodies within Bexhill-on-Sea have a proven track record of making a distinct contribution to the community, nor has any approached the Council setting out any aspirations to be considered as a foundation for the creation of a democratically elected Town Council.

## **Proposed Recommendations**

51. The Steering Group is invited to consider the options to take forward for the Stage 2 consultation and make appropriate recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
52. Officers will begin to cost as far as possible, the options to go forward to enable indicative costs to be included within the Stage 2 consultation documents.
53. The Steering Group is requested to consider the following, as suggested recommendations:
54. The Stage 2 consultation be based on the following 3 options:

### **Option one – no change and retain the status quo**

This would see the continuation with the current governance arrangements for Bexhill-on-Sea and the decision making arrangements.

### **Option two – the creation of one Parish Council for the whole of Bexhill (to be styled a Town Council)**

A Parish Council be created for the whole of Bexhill-on-Sea, to be styled as Bexhill Town Council based on the existing Bexhill Ward External Boundary. The Town Council to contain nine Wards, based on the 2019 District Wards and that two Town Councillors be elected to each Ward, making a total of 18 Bexhill Town Councillors with the first elections to be in May 2019.

### **Option three – the creation of an Area Committee for Bexhill**

An Area Committee is created for Bexhill-on-Sea, comprising the 18 Bexhill District Ward Members, acknowledging however that this would also require the establishment of at least an additional Area Committee(s) covering the rural areas of the District.

Malcolm Johnston  
Executive Director of Resources

### Parish and Town Councils Suggested by Respondents

Some respondents suggested the Steering Group consider the following parish and town councils as examples of the role and work of a parish and town council. Councils are listed in order of the population served by the Council, largest at the top.

N.B. Bexhill population is 44,200 based on the ONS mid-year estimates 2015. Additional examples, not suggested by respondents, of town councils of similar size to Bexhill are provided at the end of this appendix.

Council	Population Served	Elected Members	Staff	Committees (in addition to Full Council meetings)	Functions & services provided (all town councils have mayoralty functions)	Political Groups	Council Tax precept total £	Average £ Band D property, approx. £ per month	Website URL
Kidderminster Town, Wyre Forest, Worcestershire Established 2015/16	55,500	18 in 6 wards	>2, no. of TUPE staff not specified	4: Planning, staffing, events advisory, strategic advisory and working groups (was 11 committees and working groups in 2016)	Churchyard, statue, clock tower, war memorials, street furniture, paddling pool, public toilets, Christmas events & lights, town centre flowers, arts collections & promotion, arts festival, community & sports awards, grants, Town Hall, town twinning.	None stated	482,850	29 £2.90 a month over 10 months, £2.42 over 12 months	<a href="http://kidderminstertowncouncil.gov.uk">kidderminstertowncouncil.gov.uk</a>
Folkestone Town Established 2004	43,000	18 in 7 wards	10	4: Finance & general purposes, planning, community services, grants and 1 sub-committee, 6 working groups	Museum & heritage, allotments, grants, tree management, magazine, events & campaigns, parks/gardens, Christmas lights & events, youth facilities, tourist information, CCTV, war memorial, statue, salt bins, The Old Town Hall.	Conservative (majority) UKIP Labour People First	666,735	49.95 £5 a month over 10 months, £4.16 over 12 months	<a href="http://folkestonetc.kentparishes.gov.uk">folkestonetc.kentparishes.gov.uk</a>
Ramsgate Town, Kent Estd. 2009	40,410	16 in 7 wards	7	4: Amenities, finance & general purposes, planning & environment, town promotion	Allotments, visitor information centre (staffed by volunteers), Custom House, grants, events, newsletter/magazine, coastal community partnership member, neighbourhood plan, 'Visit' & 'Invest In' websites, town twinning, town promotion.	UKIP (majority) Labour Conservative	413,904	38.43 £3.85 over 10 months, £3.21 over 12 months	<a href="http://ramsgatetown.org">ramsgatetown.org</a>
Canvey Island Town, Essex Estd. 2007	38,170	11	4	5: community relations, policy & finance, environment & open spaces, personnel, planning plus one liaison committee	Allotments, gardens, park, lake, tidal pool and section of beach, litter, dog fouling, seats & shelters, newsletter & notice boards, events, town centre planting, community warden, grants, financial support for youth worker.	None stated	235,943	20.61 £2.07 over 10 months, £1.72 over 12 months	<a href="http://canveyisland-tc.gov.uk">canveyisland-tc.gov.uk</a>
Blyth Town, Northumberland Estd 2009	37,340	16 in 8 wards	6	7: Allotments, assets, community grants, events, finance, planning & development, staff.	Allotments, community grants, In Bloom, environmental services (partnership with county/unitary inc. litter bins, grass cutting, weeds, street sweeping, bus shelters, toilets), play areas, inspection/cleaning public seating, war memorials, commemorative (blue) plaques	None stated	1,062,290	119.53	<a href="http://blythtowncouncil.org.uk">blythtowncouncil.org.uk</a>
Abingdon Town, Oxfordshire	33,130	19 in 6 wards	Unknown	6: Planning & highways, amenities & recreation, County Hall Museum management, Guildhall, community services, finance & general purposes	Archives, PCSOs part funded, cemeteries, allotments, Christmas lights, events, fairs, fishing permits, newsletter, town guide & map, markets & market place, guildhall, museum, recreation areas, play areas, agents for residents parking scheme, visitor & community information centre, war memorial, public spaces, street furniture (bus shelters, seating, notice boards, some bins), salt bins, grants, town twinning	None stated	1,372,839	115.23 £11.53 a month over 10 months, £9.61 over 12 months	<a href="http://abingdon.gov.uk">abingdon.gov.uk</a>



Council	Popula tion Served	Elected Member s	Staff	Committees (in addition to Full Council meetings)	Functions & services provided (all town councils have mayoralty functions)	Political Groups	Council Tax precept total £	Average £ Band D property, approx. £ per month	Website URL
Harpenden Town, Hertfordshire	30,000	16 in 4 wards	20 inc. 1 appre ntice	5: Environment, Human Resources, Planning A, Planning B, Strategic Planning and 9 working parties	Allotments, street collection licenses, market, community grants, common (events, pond, pitches, golf, byelaws, dog bins, educational resources), In Bloom, one stop shop for all local authorities, parks and open spaces inc. recreation ground, public conveniences, trees, town guide, community hall.	Conservative (majority) Independent	929,350	67.52  £6.76 over 10 months, £5.63 over 12 months	<a href="http://harpenden.gov.uk">harpenden.gov.uk</a>
Sevenoaks Town, Kent	29,500	16 in 6 wards	29, 24 FTE plus appre ntices & casual staff	5: Planning, finance & general purposes, open spaces & leisure, personnel, town partnership and sub committees	Café & gardens, arts centre, public toilets, historic sites, youth services, community centre, Council Offices & Chamber, cemeteries, sports pitches, playgrounds, bandstand, recreation grounds, common, open spaces, baskets & planters, car parks, events including Christmas events & illuminations & summer concerts, supported bus service, bus shelters, 3 markets, town twinning, grants, allotments, magazine, info pods & screens	Conservative (majority) Liberal Democrat	973,618	105.53  £10.56 a month over 10 months, £8.79 over 12 months	<a href="http://sevenoakstown.gov.uk">sevenoakstown.gov.uk</a>
Stratford on Avon Town Established 1974	27,500	18 in 9 wards	16	5: General purposes, finance & scrutiny, planning consultative, mayoral & protocol, human resources and sub-groups	Avon mooring, cemeteries & churchyards, war memorials, clocks, crime prevention, dog, salt & litter bins, gardens, grants, Planning (advisory), street furniture, Town Hall, markets contracted out, events	Liberal Democrat (majority) Independent Conservative Labour	465,819	38.32  £3.84 a month over 10 months, £3.19 over 12 months	<a href="http://stratford-tc.gov.uk">stratford-tc.gov.uk</a>
Haywards Heath Town	25,300	16 in 5 wards	14 inc. 1 seaso nal + 2 in a CIC	3: Planning, policy & finance, environment & general purposes plus 7 sub committees and working groups	Town Hall, public open space grounds maintenance, war memorial, cemetery, allotments, grants, town guide, street furniture including most street lighting, salt bins, bus shelters, provision and maintenance of litter bins (not emptying), town twinning support, sports forum, Highways works taken on through CIC: weeding, sign cleaning, clearing sight lines, gully clearance, removal graffiti and fly tipping, managing defects, damage to highways & street furniture, art trail.	None stated	493,968	43.83  £4.39 a month over 10 months, £3.65 over 12 months	<a href="http://haywardsheath.gov.uk">haywardsheath.gov.uk</a>
Seaford Town Established 1999	24,338	20 in 5 wards	23 plus casual staff	4: community services, planning and highways, finance & general purposes, golf & The View, plus personnel committee	War memorials, cemetery, recreation grounds, seafront, refreshment & other concessions, market, filming licences, allotments, arts centre, beach huts (some), rehearsal space, gardens, event fields, Martello tower (museum), memorial benches, recreation ground, golf course & combined club house, restaurant, meeting venue, nature reserve, In Bloom, Town Crier, honorary freemen, town guide	None stated	612,553	65.41  £6.54 over 10 months, £5.45 over 12 months	<a href="http://seafordtowncouncil.gov.uk">seafordtowncouncil.gov.uk</a>  <a href="#">YouTube</a>
Crowborough Town	22,000	16 in 5 wards	20 inc. 6 seaso nal	6: Communications & events, environment, finance & general purposes, personnel, sport, recreation &	Allotments, cemetery, sport & recreation grounds (8), bluebell wood & country park, memorial garden, community centre, poster boards, grants, newsletter, events, town twinning support, Town Hall, planting & baskets	None stated	1,278,452	151.55  £15.16 a month over 10 months, £12.63 over 12 months	<a href="http://crowboroughtowncouncil.gov.uk">crowboroughtowncouncil.gov.uk</a>

Council	Popula tion Served	Elected Member s	Staff	Committees (in addition to Full Council meetings)	Functions & services provided (all town councils have mayoralty functions)	Political Groups	Council Tax precept total £	Average £ Band D property, approx. £ per month	Website URL
				cemetery, planning & development					
Hailsham Town	20,400	24 in 4 wards	28	5: Finance, budget & resources, strategic projects, neighbourhood planning, communities, planning & development and 1 current sub- committee	Offices inc. information point for all enquiries, street lighting maintenance, allotments, play areas and playing fields, country park, pond, parks & gardens, other public space, cemetery, youth service, grants, dog bin maintenance, tree warden, newsletter	Conservative (majority) Liberal Democrat Independent	910,484	126.35  £12.64 a month over 10 months, £10.54 over 12 months	<a href="http://hailsham-tc.gov.uk">hailsham-tc.gov.uk</a>
Lewes Town	17,783	18 in 3 wards	14	1: Planning plus panels for personnel, internal audit/corporate governance and grants.	Open air pool, Lewes Priory, Town Hall, community centres, litter bins, bus shelters, street furniture, allotments, downland, CCTV support, environmental cleansing support, grants, newsletter	Liberal Democrat (majority) Green Independent Indep. Green	860,072	141.71  £14.71 over 10 months, £11.81 over 12 months	<a href="http://lewes-tc.gov.uk">lewes-tc.gov.uk</a>
Uckfield Town	15,100	15 in 4 wards	17 plus restau rant staff	3: General purposes, environment & leisure, plans and 3 sub-committees	Civic centre & restaurant, community centre, allotments, cemetery, sport pitches & pavilions, play areas, parks, woodland, nature reserves, pond, litter & dog bins, graffiti removal, bus shelters, street furniture, floral displays, 200 street lights owned but maintained by ESCC, newsletter, photographic calendar/competition, regeneration in partnership	None stated	835,219	149.74  £14.98 over 10 months, £12.48 over 12 months	<a href="http://uckfieldtc.gov.uk">uckfieldtc.gov.uk</a>
Great Baddow, Chelmsford	15,000	13	6	6: Planning, finance & general purposes, organisation, methods & personnel, highways & amenities, parish hall, grounds and 2 sub-committees	Allotments, recreation ground, play areas, outdoor gym, sports courts, cemeteries, parish halls, village sign, bus shelters, litter & dog bins, some seats, grants and awards for services, community centre	None stated	355,639	66.78  £6.68 over 10 months, £5.57 over 12 months	<a href="http://greatbaddowparishcouncil.co.uk">greatbaddowparishcouncil.co.uk</a>
Southborough Town, Tunbridge Wells, Kent Estd. 1974	12,330	18 in 3 wards	1	2: Planning & transportation Finance & parks	Town guide, newsletter, allotments, common, pond & fishing licences, playing fields, recreation grounds & courts, play area, outdoor gym, war memorial, cemetery, civic awards, community centre, building of new community hub (inc. medical centre, hall/theatre space, town council offices, library, café/bar) in partnership with borough & county, along with new pitches & pavilion.	Conservative (majority) Labour Liberal Democrat	445,715	108.64  £10.87 over 10 months, £9.06 over 12 months	<a href="http://southboroughcouncil.co.uk">southboroughcouncil.co.uk</a>
Battle Town, Rother, East Sussex	6,700	17 in 4 wards	4	4: Environment, external relations & town development, finance & general purposes, planning & transport and 2 sub-committees	Civic awards, The Almonry (offices, museum, public garden), allotments, cemetery, church yard, recreation grounds, play area, open spaces, magazine, grants, town twinning, writing competition, events	None	252,683	95.40  £9.54 over 10 months, £7.95 over 12 months	<a href="http://battletowncouncil.org.uk">battletowncouncil.org.uk</a>
Lingfield, Surrey	4,500	7	1	1: Planning	Community centre (owned not managed),	None	50,000	26.49	<a href="http://lingfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk">lingfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk</a>

Council	Population Served	Elected Members	Staff	Committees (in addition to Full Council meetings)	Functions & services provided (all town councils have mayoralty functions)	Political Groups	Council Tax precept total £	Average £ Band D property, approx. £ per month	Website URL
					nature reserve (owned not managed), allotments, pond, grounds maintenance & graffiti removal, war memorial, village punishment cage, benches, flag pole, notice boards, financial help to some bodies, grants, co-ordinates volunteers on Speedwatch			£2.65 over 10 months, £2.21 over 12 months	
Rye Town, Rother, East Sussex	4,300	16	14	2: Policy, resources & general purposes, planning & townscape and one ad-hoc charity committee	Town Hall, heritage centre, playing field, cottage, skate park, signage, street collection permits, community grants, welfare grants, events fund, newsletter	None	122,100	66.56 £6.57 over 10 months, £5.55 over 12 months	<a href="http://ryetowncouncil.gov.uk">ryetowncouncil.gov.uk</a>
Brede Parish, Rother, East Sussex	1,760	9	1	1: Planning	Village hall, recreation ground, trees, seats & bus shelters, voluntary car scheme, footpath liaison, newsletter	None	23,075	27.72 2.78 over 10 months, £2.31 over 12 months	<a href="http://bredeparishcouncil.org.uk">bredeparishcouncil.org.uk</a>
Sedlescombe Parish, Rother, East Sussex	1,500	9	1	1: Finance	Playing field & recreation ground, playground, village green, nature park, bus shelter, seats, dog & litter bins, signs, sports field (owned not managed), village hall car park (owned not managed)	None	45,054	68.97 £6.90 over 10 months, £5.75 over 12 months	<a href="http://sedlescombe.org.uk">sedlescombe.org.uk</a>

### Town Councils for similar Populations to Bexhill

For comparison purposes, here is a small selection of town councils serving a population similar in size to Bexhill's population. These councils were not suggested by respondents.

Bexhill's population is 44,200 based on the ONS mid-year estimates 2015 (2016). Please also see Folkestone, similar in size to Bexhill, on the list of parishes suggested by consultation respondents.

Council	Population Served & Tax base	Elected Members	Staff	Committees (in addition to Full Council meetings)	Functions & services provided (all have mayoralty)	Political Groups	Council Tax precept total £	Average £ Band D property, approx. £ per month	Website URL
Royal Leamington Spa Est. 2002/03	49,500	16 in 8 wards	Yes, no number given but 130k budget	6: Allotment, staffing, neighbourhood plan, cultural & community, planning, policy & resources	Community and activity/event grants and support, Christmas lights, blue plaque scheme, allotments (owned not managed), gardens & park, tree planting, street furniture.	No majority Labour Conservative Liberal Democrat Green	323,386	19.74  £1.98 over 10 months, £1.65 over 12 months	<a href="http://leamingtonspatowncouncil.gov.uk">leamingtonspatowncouncil.gov.uk</a>
Banbury, Oxfordshire Est. 2000	46,900	22 in 12 wards	14	4: Planning, general services, resources, traffic advisory	Allotments, bus shelters, by-laws, cemeteries, crime prevention initiatives, dog & litter bins, grit bins, events, grants to voluntary orgs, parks, open spaces & play areas, planning (consultative), public clocks, recreation & facilities including pitches, courts & pavilions, skate ramps, park rangers, tree planting, town hall, town publicity & tourism, cross, statue. Highways grass verge cutting in agency agreement from county. Library phone box, chewing gum removal, some snow clearance & gritting, Fairtrade town, town guide, In Bloom.	Conservative (majority) Labour	1,666,853	122.12  £12.22 over 10 months, £10.18 over 12 months	<a href="http://banbury.gov.uk">banbury.gov.uk</a>
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk Est. 2003	40,700	17 in 9 wards	3	2: Planning, Licensing & Finance, Staffing & employment	Allotments, nativity scene, war memorials, salt/grit bins, dog & litter bins, grants and awards, In Bloom, 2 events.	None	302,465	23.40  £2.34 over 10 months, £1.95 over 12 months	<a href="http://burystedmunds-tc.gov.uk">burystedmunds-tc.gov.uk</a>
Salisbury City, Wiltshire Est. 2009	40,300	23 in 8 wards	60	3: Policy & resources, services, planning & transportation plus 1 sub-committee	Allotments, all city grounds maintenance, play areas, shopmobility, a square, a marketplace, markets, multiple monuments, health centre, camping & caravan site (owned not managed), car parks, cemeteries, crematorium, fair, community development, Guildhall, memorial trees & benches, parks & open spaces, play areas, sports walls, skate parks, nature reserves & wildflower areas, community orchards, litter/dog bins, fly tipping, public conveniences, information centre, gift shop, sports pitches & pavilions, town twinning, Also own & lease shops & offices, gym, farm, bunker, various sports clubs grounds, etc. garages for rent, In Bloom, community grants, events & festivals.	No majority Conservative Labour Liberal Democrat Independent Green	1,496, 763	£105  £10.50 over 10 months, £8.75 over 12 months	<a href="http://salisburycitycouncil.gov.uk">salisburycitycouncil.gov.uk</a>
Andover, Hampshire Est. 2010	38,290	19 in 5 wards	3	3: Policy & resources, planning, assets & amenities, community engagement, allotment plus steering groups	Grants, events & festivals, Christmas lights, youth council, allotments.	None	261,652	20.03  £2.01 over 10 months, £1.67 over 12 months	<a href="http://andover-tc.gov.uk">andover-tc.gov.uk</a>

Council	Populatio n Served & Tax base	Elected Members	Staff	Committees (in addition to Full Council meetings)	Functions & services provided (all have mayoralty)	Political Groups	Council Tax precept total £	Average £ Band D property, approx. £ per month	Website URL
				and working groups					

## District / Borough / City Councils that have Area Committees Structures

Authority	Population / Area (if known)	Number of Area Committees / frequency of meetings	Functions
Arun District Council	155,732 22,811 hectares (85 square miles)	Currently 3, proposals to reduce to 2, currently meet 4 times per year, proposal to reduce to 3. Managed by West Sussex County Council.	<p>The District Council has agreed to delegate the following functions to the Joint Area Committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The promotion of the environmental, social &amp; economic well-being of the rural area.</li> <li>➤ The overview of the Action Plan for the Downland, Eastern and Western part of the Community Strategy.</li> <li>➤ To develop and advise on the Council's policies on rural matters and to raise the prominence of the Council's activities in these three areas.</li> <li>➤ To be responsible for countryside and urban recreation matters.</li> <li>➤ To advise on matters relating to farming and other rural activities, including the impact of Council services on such activities.</li> <li>➤ To advise on the delivery of Council services by electronic means in conjunction with Town and Parish Councils and Parish Meetings.</li> <li>➤ To develop and maintain partnerships within the three areas.</li> <li>➤ The implementation and management of new facilities in the form of play areas, public seats, concessions, kick-about areas, car parks, toilets, bus shelters, litter and recycling facilities, street nameplates, drains and sewers.</li> <li>➤ The disposal of facilities of the kind referred to in the</li> </ul>

			<p>Paragraph 9.4.8 in accordance with Council policies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Recommend to the Council the granting of financial assistance (in accordance with Council policy) with regard to Village Enhancement Grants.</li> <li>➤ Recommend to the Cabinet/Council the provision of new facilities in accordance with the Council's business system.</li> <li>➤ The granting of the temporary use of Council facilities.</li> </ul>
Cambridge City Council	123,900	4, every 8 weeks each	Typical issues discussed include planning applications, grants for community development, leisure and environmental improvement projects, and police priorities.
Eastleigh Borough Council	125,199  80 square kilometres (7,985 hectares)	5, 6 times per year each	<p>To take Cabinet decisions within policy framework and budget on locally provided services and the local Community Investment Programme (including matters delegated to them by either the Council or the Cabinet).</p> <p>(ii) To take local planning, licensing (subject to the provisions of and bye-law decisions within policy framework and to make recommendations to the Council on development management matters outside the terms of their delegated powers.</p> <p>(iii) To determine complaints made by the owner/occupiers of domestic property adversely affected by evergreen hedges over two metres high (in the case of hedges owned by the Council)</p> <p>(iv) To act for the Council where a local response is appropriate to a local community issue.</p> <p>(v) To develop partnerships/links with other agencies to the benefit of the local area community, and in particular with Local Councils.</p> <p>(vi) To contribute to the wider community planning process and to the Council's related corporate</p>

			<p>planning process.</p> <p>(vii) To promote efficiencies at local level and to work with the Cabinet and Scrutiny Panel on the wider promotion and securing of related objectives.</p> <p>(viii) To work closely with the Cabinet's lead member for the Local Area, to promote close integration between local level and Cabinet level action.</p> <p>(ix) If appropriate, to report to the Council on the local impact of the decisions of the Cabinet.</p> <p>(x) To authorise direct action under section 219 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.</p>
Ipswich Borough Council	135,600	5, 6 times per year each (or as required)	<p>The overarching aim of each committee is to identify area priorities and to take a strategic role in shaping the future of their Areas by developing and implementing an Action Plan for its Area.</p> <p>Any committee business must be transacted in line with Area Action Plans. The Council will allocate a budget for each Area Committee on a rolling 3 year basis in line with the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.</p> <p>Funding is available to make positive improvements within each of the five Area Committee areas. Area Committees commission improvement works in local neighbourhoods to improve the life of residents and tackle local issues in the area.</p> <p>Some examples of what Area Committees have funded in the past:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Outdoor gym equipment and toddler play equipment.</li> <li>➤ Parking enforcement around schools to prevent illegal parking.</li> <li>➤ The construction of a wildlife area at Whitton Community Primary School.</li> <li>➤ Benches in Landseer Park.</li> </ul>



			<p>➤ Development of new community allotments.</p> <p>(NOT PLANNING)</p>
North Hertfordshire District Council	131,000	5, 4 times per year each	<p>Policy - exercise of decisions by resolution</p> <p>(a) To allocate discretionary budgets within the terms determined by the Council.</p> <p>(b) To allocate devolved budgets and activities within the terms determined by the Council.</p> <p>(c) To promote the introduction of local byelaws.</p> <p>(d) To provide public seats and shelters.</p> <p>(e) To maintain public War Memorials.</p> <p>(f) To provide art in public places.</p> <p>(g) To designate polling places and review the boundaries of polling districts. (NOT PLANNING)</p>
South Somerset District Council	165,000 370 (958 km2) square miles	4, 12 times per year each	<p>Area Committees take decisions in public on significant planning applications, invest in local projects, discuss issues of interest and priority to the local area, and enable residents to get involved in local decision-making.</p>

## Have your say on how Bexhill is governed!

The **Bexhill Community Governance Review** is looking at new governance arrangements for Bexhill-on-Sea. The Council has looked at all possible methods and created a short list -- **now it is your turn to choose your preferred option**. This leaflet explains the options and how each option might affect you, including estimated costs.

### Bexhill residents – this will affect you!

It is important that you consider how each option would affect you and that you have your say on the best option for you and your household. **These options could affect the quality of life of living in Bexhill**. It might change the number of elected representatives that you vote for. It might change how much you pay in Council Tax.

This is your opportunity to tell us your preference so that we can consider this when we make our final decision. Every resident of Bexhill is invited to tell us their preferred option. We are also inviting a response from Bexhill businesses and local organisations.

**The Council has no preference at this stage – tell us what you think and help us to make a final decision.**

### What are the options for Bexhill-on-Sea?

#### Option One: No change

The first option is not to add anything else to the current arrangements. **There would be no additional costs to the taxpayer.**

Bexhill-on-Sea comes under Rother District Council, which provides local services to all Rother residents such as community safety, pest control and food hygiene inspections, waste and recycling collection, leisure and cultural services, planning, economic development, and much more. **The role of Rother District Council would stay largely the same regardless of the outcome of this review.**

The Council Tax you pay contributes to Rother District Council's services and to services provided by East Sussex County Council, East Sussex Fire and Rescue Authority and the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner. Outside Bexhill, the rest of Rother has parish councils. Residents pay parish councils for their services in a charge on their Council Tax.

The Council Tax bill for a Bexhill band D property is £1,767.83 per household, each year. For Bexhill, the Council Tax is divided between public bodies like this:

East Sussex County Council	£1,314.36
Rother District Council	£169.32
Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner	£153.91
East Sussex Fire Authority	£88.40
Bexhill Special Expenses*	£41.05
Bexhill Charter Trustees**	£0.79
<b>Total Charge at Band D</b>	<b>£1,767.83</b>

#### \* Bexhill Special Expenses

In Bexhill each resident pays the equivalent of £15 each year for Bexhill special expenses. It pays for specific services delivered in Bexhill by Rother District Council. The services include some of the costs for Bexhill parks, Christmas lighting Bexhill Museum bus

#### \*\* Bexhill Charter Trustees

Each year, Council Tax payers pay 79 pence to fund the Bexhill Charter Trustees. The trustees make sure Bexhill's civic traditions continue and appoint a mayor and deputy mayor annually. All Bexhill ward district councillors automatically become charter trustees while they are councillors. More information on the role of the Charter Trustees is at

## Option Two: Parish all of Bexhill and create a Bexhill Town Council.

The arrangements in Option One would remain, except for Bexhill Charter Trustees. All of Bexhill would be one large parish and a new local council created for it, called Bexhill Town Council. **There would be an additional cost to the taxpayer (see below).**

A new town council:

- 18 town councillors
- In 9 wards across Bexhill
- 2 councillors for each ward
- Starts 1 April 2019
- First election in May 2019
- Elections every four years
- 44,200 residents in Bexhill

Bexhill would move from two to three tiers of local government in Bexhill-on-Sea. You would be represented by two town councillors, two Rother district councillors and one East Sussex county councillor for the ward in which you live. A map of the proposed parish wards is available on our website or at the Town Hall, Bexhill.

A town council would

- Elect a mayor and deputy mayor
- Take over the civic traditions

The Bexhill Charter Trustees would cease to exist.

The services provided by a new town council could vary a lot and it would be a decision for whoever is elected. Typically, parish councils take care of some green spaces, sport and leisure, bins and benches, support tourism and the local economy and give local grants and civic awards. More information about what a town council could do and its powers and responsibilities is on our website at [www.rother.gov.uk/communitygovernancereview](http://www.rother.gov.uk/communitygovernancereview)

Rother District Council could transfer some of its services to a new town council. No decision has been made, but a transfer might include things like parks and open spaces and public conveniences, when the current maintenance and cleaning contracts expire. We cannot devolve some services, like Planning. Rother District Council would continue to provide many of the services currently provided (see Option One).

A town council could support

- Some green spaces
- Sport and leisure
- Bins and benches
- Tourism and the local economy
- Give local grants
- Give civic awards
- Run the public toilets

All parish and town councils need money to pay for services they provide. They are funded through a charge added to your Council Tax, known as a precept.

By way of an example, if Bexhill Town Council took over parks and open spaces and public conveniences this would cost around £910,000 a year. In addition, if the proposal went ahead, we estimate there would be additional costs of around £100,000 a year. The town council would have to employ a town clerk to manage the money, any staff, contracts and services, rent offices and meeting rooms and meet day to day operating costs. It is unlikely the town councillors will be paid an allowance but they would be reimbursed expenses for carrying out town council activities or duties. Most arrangements set up when a parish council starts, such as its name, services or staff, can be changed by the councillors when they are elected.

**Assuming a total precept (cost) of £1,010,000 this would mean a Council Tax charge for a band D property of £62.34. This would be offset by a reduction in the amount of Bexhill Special Expenses charged by Rother District Council to Bexhill residents. Overall we would expect the total Council Tax charged to Bexhill residents to increase by £22.75 based on a Band D property. The table to the right shows the amounts for each charging authority.**

Authority	ted 2017/18 Band D with a Town Council
ex County Council	£1,314.36
strict Council	£169.32
police and Crime Commissioner	£153.91
ex Fire Authority	£88.40
ecial Expenses	£2.25
arter Trustees	N/A
wn Council	£62.34
<b>rges at Band D</b>	<b>£1,790.58</b>

For each Council Tax Band the expected annual increase in Council Tax for Bexhill residents is shown below:

Council Tax Band	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Estimated Annual Increase	£15.17	£17.69	£20.22	£22.75	£27.81	£32.86	£37.92	£45.50

### Option Three: Area Committee for Bexhill

In addition to the arrangements in Option One, Rother District Council would create a Bexhill Area Committee. **There would be an additional cost to the taxpayer.**

An Area Committee for Bexhill would be made up of people elected to Rother District Council to represent a Bexhill ward. They would discuss local issues in geographical boundary of the 9 district wards of Bexhill-on-Sea.

In the interests of fairness across the district, the Council decided that, if an Area Committee for Bexhill-on-Sea is created, it would not have any decision-making ability. Otherwise, the Council would have to create decision-making area committees for other parts of Rother. More area committees would lead to more costs for all residents of Rother, not just Bexhill-on-Sea. Before going any further we would have to ask the residents in the rest of Rother if they would like to have an area committee and be prepared to pay the cost. An Area Committee for Bexhill-on-Sea without decision making ability would be a consultative committee.

#### A Bexhill Area Committee

- Discusses local, Bexhill-only issues
- Inside Rother District Council
- 18 district councillors elected to the 9 Bexhill wards sit on the committee
- Being elected to a Bexhill ward for Rother District Council gives automatic membership of the area committee
- Starts 1 April 2019
- Cost is £1.50 to £2.50 a year for a band D property.

The 18 elected Bexhill ward councillors would meet regularly to consider matters that relate to Bexhill-on-Sea only. All the current arrangements in option one would continue.

Examples of councils that operate area committee structures are on the Council's website, including what powers and responsibilities they can have.

An Area Committee for Bexhill-on-Sea without decision making ability will still require adequate resources with appropriate staffing levels and therefore will come at an additional cost; such a structure within the Council could not be accommodated within existing staffing resources. A minimum of two additional officers would be required, a local area co-ordinator / manager and additional administrative support staff. Depending on the role and responsibilities of the officers this could cost in the region of between £48,450 and £92,700 per annum.

Given the current financial constraints the Council faces and a predicted funding gap of £1.8m already identified to provide services to their current levels in future years, the introduction of an Area Committee structure in reality may mean that some non-essential services may have to be reduced or stopped altogether in order to pay for these posts.

### Option Four: four parish councils for Bexhill-on-Sea

The arrangement in option one would remain, except for Bexhill Charter Trustees. **There would be an additional cost to the taxpayer.**

We would set up four new Parish Councils covering Bexhill-on-Sea, namely North, East, South and West Bexhill. Their boundaries would be based on the current East Sussex County Council divisional boundaries. As a Bexhill resident you would live in one of the new four proposed parish councils in this option. We propose 17 parish councillors for each of the new parishes because this is the number of councillors for parish councils of a similar electorate size.

#### Four parish councils in Bexhill

- North Bexhill Parish Council
  - East Bexhill Parish Council
  - South Bexhill Parish Council
  - West Bexhill Parish Council
- would focus on the needs and local issues of the neighbourhoods in their boundaries.

This would mean there would be three tiers of local government in Bexhill-on-Sea, as in Option Two. However, under this option you would be represented by 17 parish councillors, two Rother district councillors and one East Sussex county councillor for the area in which you live. A map setting out the proposed ward boundaries is available to view on line or at the Town Hall, Bexhill.

What each of the parish councils could do is under option two, above. You can read more information on our website at [www.rother.gov.uk/communitygovernancereview](http://www.rother.gov.uk/communitygovernancereview)

The Bexhill Charter Trustees would cease to exist if all four new parish councils were created. The new Parish Councils would each appoint a Chairman and Vice-Chairman. There would be no mayor or deputy mayor covering the whole of Bexhill-on-Sea.

Each parish:

- 17 parish councillors
- No wards
- Start on 1 April 2019
- First election in May 2019
- Elections every four years
- About 11,000 residents in each

All parish councils need money to pay for services they provide and are funded through a separate charge added to your Council Tax, known as a precept.

The services the four new parish councils would provide could vary a lot depending on the needs and aspirations of those communities. No decisions have been made about which services, if any, Rother District Council would transfer to each parish council.

The minimum costs for running these parish councils would include employing a parish clerk, the election expenses and securing premises to operate from (offices, meeting rooms). For the first year of operation, these have been calculated as follows:

Parish Council	Election Costs	Administration Costs	Estimated minimum precept in Year 1
North Bexhill	£9,300	£25,000	£34,300
East Bexhill	£9,600	£25,000	£34,600
South Bexhill	£11,000	£25,000	£36,000
West Bexhill	£11,400	£25,000	£36,400

#### Further information!

More information can be found on the Council's website at [www.rother.gov.uk/communitygovernancereview](http://www.rother.gov.uk/communitygovernancereview) or viewed at the Community Help Point, Town Hall, Bexhill.

**This consultation closes at 5.00 pm on Tuesday 31 October.**

**This leaflet can be available in large print, Braille, audiotape or CD or in another language upon request. For all enquiries please contact [democraticservices@rother.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@rother.gov.uk)**

#### **Tell us your preferred option:**

Online at [www.rother.gov.uk/communitygovernancereview](http://www.rother.gov.uk/communitygovernancereview)

Or, if you are not on-line collect, complete and send in our response postcard, available at: the Town Hall, Bexhill; from your district ward councillor in Bexhill; local events we are holding for this review.

Photocopied postcards will NOT be accepted. **THIS IS NOT A VOTE.** Rother District Council will determine the outcome of this review and take account of your views.

Residents are to make one response only. Your first response will be counted. Later submissions, duplicates and anonymous responses will be discounted. Entries received after the deadline will not be included.