

Community Governance Review Steering GroupDate and Time - **Wednesday 30 October 2019 – 9:30am**Venue - **Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea**

Councillors appointed to the Steering Group:Councillor J. Barnes, Mrs C.A. Bayliss, T.J.C. Byrne, J.J. Carroll, P.J. Gray, L.M. Langlands, P.N. Osborne, R.B. Thomas and H.L. Timpe

AGENDA1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**3. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

To receive any disclosure by Members of personal and disclosable pecuniary interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the Member regards the personal interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct. Members are reminded of the need to repeat their declaration immediately prior to the commencement of the item in question.

4. **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW PROCESS** (Pages 1 - 8)5. **CONSULTATION** (Pages 9 - 18)6. **COMMUNICATIONS PLAN** (Pages 19 - 26)7. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**8. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 21 November 2019 – 9:30am

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**Rother District Council's aspiring to deliver
an Efficient, Flexible and Effective Council; Sustainable Economic Prosperity;
Stronger, Safer Communities; and a Quality Physical Environment.**

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Rother District Council

Report to	-	Community Governance Review Steering Group
Date	-	30 October 2019
Report of the	-	Executive Director
Subject	-	Community Governance Review Process

Introduction

1. Full Council agreed the process by which this Council will undertake the Community Governance Review (CGR) of Bexhill-on-Sea at its meeting on 16 September and appointed this Steering Group to lead on the process (Minute C19/41 refers). The CGR will be undertaken in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the 2007 Act).
2. As Members will be aware, the Council undertook a thorough CGR during 2017, which included extensive public consultation and community engagement events with associated costs and staff resources. With yet further reduced budgets and fewer staff resources than in 2017, it is welcome that this review will be less labour intensive and streamlined, whilst meeting the requirements of the relevant legislation.
3. Attached at Appendix A is the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the review itself and attached at Appendix B is the ToR for this Steering Group.
4. By way of background, a copy of the report made on the outcome of Stage 1 and Stage 2 Consultation and Final Recommendations in 2017 have been circulated separately to Members of the Steering Group.
5. The Council has to take regard of guidance issued by the Secretary of State for the former Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) now known as the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), together with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) in undertaking, and giving effect to recommendations made in CGRs. A copy of the guidance will be available at the meeting and can also be viewed at the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/8312/1527635.pdf
6. Members' attention is drawn to Paragraph 134, in the guidance that concerns Charter Trustee Areas, it states:

“Charter trustees were established following the local government reorganisations in the early 1970s and 1990s to preserve the historic identity of former boroughs or cities, most with relatively large populations. To this end, charter trustees have the power to carry out ceremonial functions. They were not intended to act as administrative units. 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:

- a) *the effect on the historic cohesiveness of the area; and*
- b) *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?*

These issues need to be taken into account in those areas with certain cities or boroughs which will be affected by any consequent reorganisation from the structural and boundary changes in the 2007 Act.”

Terms of Reference of the Community Governance Review

7. The agreed ToR for the review are set out at Appendix A and these have been written in accordance with the 2007 Act in that they specify the area under review and set out the matters on which the CGR will focus.
8. In areas for which there is both a district council and a county council, such as Rother, the Council is required under section 79 of the 2007 Act to notify East Sussex County Council (ESCC) of the Council’s intention to undertake a CGR.
9. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out, in consultation with the Council’s Equalities Officer, to ensure that this review process (not outcome) does not discriminate against any disadvantaged or vulnerable persons covered by equalities legislation and is available to Members on request.

Terms of Reference of the Steering Group / Public Meetings

10. The agreed ToR for this Steering Group, including the timetable, are set out at Appendix B; it is noted that the CGR should be completed within 12 months from the formal launch of the CGR (January 2020).
11. With regard to the Timetable there are a couple of amendments to note. Firstly, there is no requirement to report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Council in November and December this year; these meetings can therefore be removed from the Timetable. These meetings were required last time a CGR was conducted as the Council undertook a two stage consultation to identify possible forms of governance for Bexhill-on-Sea; this review is focusing solely on the creation of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea which has already been set by the ToR.
12. Secondly, the Council will publish its final recommendations on 7 May 2020, as part of and alongside the Annual Council Agenda and not on 18 May as stated previously, which is the actual date of the Council meeting. It is also noted that the date of the May Cabinet has changed from 11 May to the 4 May as a result of the 2020 May bank holiday being moved to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day.
13. Members may also want to give consideration to whether or not any of the Steering Group’s meetings will be held in public, given the public interest in this matter. Some Members may recall that a number of meetings of the

Community Governance Review Steering Group held in 2016/17 were held in the public domain.

Timetable for Review

14. For ease, a flowchart of the process is attached at Appendix C. The following paragraphs explain the steps within the timetable in more detail:

October – November 2019

15. This meeting is the first meeting of the Steering Group to review its ToR and get an understanding of the process for conducting the CGR. Elsewhere on the Agenda is the proposed draft communications plan. Material to be published on the Council's website when the CGR is launched in January will need to be agreed by the Steering Group at its next meeting in readiness for the launch of the CGR.

Consultation - (six weeks – 6 January to 14 February 2020)

16. Formal publication of the ToR for the review and launch of the six week consultation. The Council will invite submissions on the proposal to establish a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea.

Consideration of submissions – March 2020

17. The Steering Group will meet and consider all submissions made during the consultation period and develop draft final recommendations for presentation to the OSC (27 April) and Cabinet (4 May) for approval.

7 May 2020

18. The Council will formally publish the final proposals and recommendations to Council; there will be no further consultation on the final recommendations.

18 May 2020

19. Full Council will consider the final recommendations and, subject to the outcome of the consultation, may consider the creation of a Community Governance Order (CGO) in relation to the establishment of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea.

Community Governance Order

20. Should the Council agree to the establishment of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea, the Steering Group will need to consider who makes recommendations on the CGO, e.g. the transfer and management or custody of property, the setting of the precepts, provision for the transfer of any functions, rights, liabilities, staff, etc.
21. Whilst this work is currently within the ToR for this Steering Group, Members may wish to consider whether the setting up of a Shadow Bexhill Town Council Committee made up of the existing 18 Bexhill-on-Sea Councillors would be a more appropriate vehicle for this work.
22. This work will be progressed during 2020 with a further detailed Order that will be put before full Council in February 2021.

Conclusion

23. Members are invited to consider the report and note the timetable and processes for undertaking the CGR. Consideration also needs to be given to whether or not any subsequent meetings are held in the public domain and the vehicle for considering and recommending the CGO, should it be agreed that a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea be established.

Malcolm Johnston
Executive Director

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 will consider the establishment of a Parish Council for Bexhill-on-Sea encompassing all nine District Electoral Wards within the local authority area of Rother District Council.

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 a new parish of Bexhill-on-Sea, the name of any new parish and the styling (i.e. parish, town, 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;

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

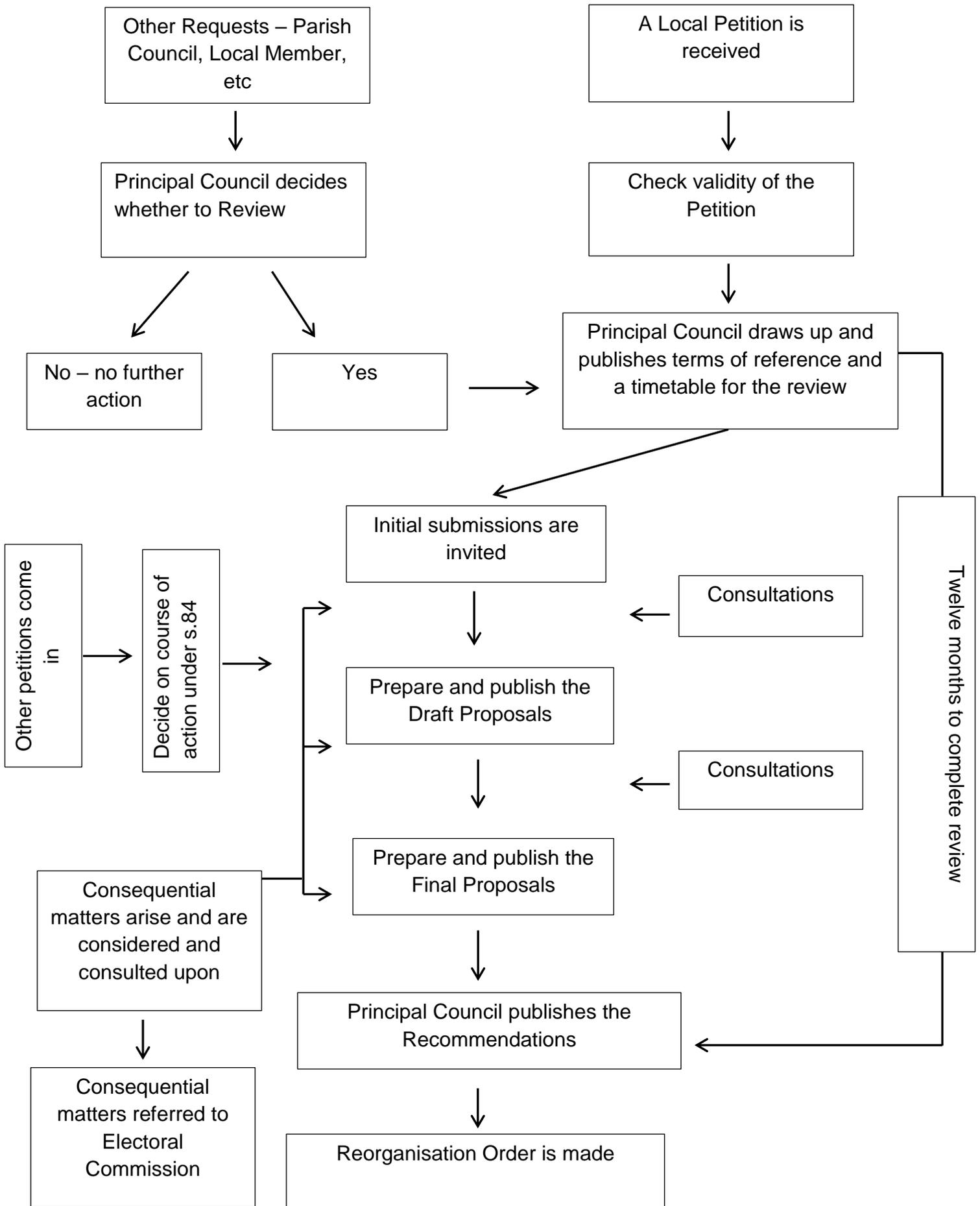
Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Review Steering Group

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 motion passed by Full Council on 22 May 2019.</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 recommend appropriate electoral arrangements for a 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 to create a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea and if so what types of functions it would seek to undertake.</p>

Proposed Timetable	Outline of Action
29 July 2019	Cabinet makes recommendations to Council on the CGR process.
16 September 2019	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/November 2019	Meetings of CGR Steering Group to consider the proposed timetable for review, consultation methods etc.
25 November 2019	Report to OSC
2 December 2019	Report to Cabinet
16 December 2019	Report to full Council
6 January – 14 February 2020 (6 weeks)	Formal publication of ToR and launch of public consultation (12 months' timescale starts from now), timetable for review, consultation methods etc.
February/March 2020	CGR Steering Group considers submissions and develops recommendations for submission to the OSC (27 April 2020) for approval by Cabinet (4 May 2020)*
7 May 2020	Publish final proposals (within Council Agenda).
18 May 2020	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	Councillors J. Barnes, Mrs C.A. Bayliss, T.J.C. Byrne, J.J. Carroll, P.J. Gray, L.M. Langlands, P.N. Osborne, R. Thomas and H.L. Timpe.
Quorum	4
Officer Leads	Malcolm Johnston, Executive Director Lisa Cooper, Democratic Services Manager

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

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - FLOWCHART



Rother District Council

Report to	-	Community Governance Review Steering Group
Date	-	30 October 2019
Report of the	-	Executive Director
Subject	-	Consultation

Introduction

1. As Members are aware the Council is conducting a Community Governance Review (CGR) into whether or not a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea should be created. The Steering Group will need to provide a steer to officers in terms of the scale of the consultation exercise, the methods to be used and what information should be included within the consultation.
2. The consultation will be based on two options, the creation of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea or the status quo.

Option one – the creation of one Parish Council for the whole of Bexhill-on-Sea (to be styled a Town Council)

3. The following paragraphs sets out the considerations that need to be given to the establishment of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea.

Size

4. 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).
5. 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, Parish and Town councils 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 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.
6. 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”.

7. 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; and
- 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?

8. The following table shows the 2019 *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	2019 Electorate
Central	4,175
Collington	3,977
Kewhurst	4,052
Old Town Bexhill & Worsham	3,177
Sackville	4,147
Sidley	4,129
St Marks	3,671
Pebsham & St Michaels	3,939
St Stephens	4,048
TOTAL	35,315

9. However, from the consultation undertaken in 2017, save for a very few comments in relation to smaller discrete communities within Bexhill-on-Sea, for example Little Common and Sidley, there was not a great call to see PCs established within smaller communities, most of which in theory, could be viable administrative units.

Number of Councillors

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. Equality of representation allows for Councillors to adequately and fairly represent the interests of residents. Therefore, using the district level warding arrangements that came into force in 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.
13. For administrative and financial purposes should a new PC be created, it could take effect from 1 April 2021 with the first elections taking place in May 2021 for a two year term. The next elections would then take place in May 2023 falling into line with the ordinary year of election of councillors for all local elections within Rother District (District, Parish and Town Council elections), and be held every four years thereafter.
14. 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; 9 two Member Wards.
15. As a comparison, examples of town councils of similar size to Bexhill-on-Sea are provided at Appendix A.

Wards and Names

16. 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.
17. These requirements would be satisfied by a recommendation that a Bexhill-on-Sea PC retains the current nine district ward boundaries, otherwise there would be a single election of 18 Councillors (as in the case at Rye Town Council which elects 16 Councillors with no wards). 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.
18. With regard to the ward names, in order to avoid confusion for the public and for ease of administration for electoral staff with the existing District Ward names, it is recommended that the Bexhill Town Council wards are simply called Collington, St Marks, Kewhurst etc., as opposed to "Bexhill Collington, Bexhill St. Marks, Bexhill Kewhurst etc. which are the names of the District Council wards. Ballot papers will clearly be marked "Bexhill Town Council" as the header and will be a different colour to District Council ballot papers when the elections are held on the same day.

19. Unless there are compelling reasons for doing so (in terms of community identities and interests), it is suggested that the Steering Group wish to retain the current district-level ward boundaries and name the wards as detailed in paragraph 18 above.

Name / Style of Parish Council

20. 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.
21. 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.

Financial viability

22. 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 the Council’s Financial Services department is tasked to support the development of the initial precept likely to be levied in 2021/22 by the new Bexhill Town Council (BTC), as detailed below. This information would need to feature in the consultation documents.
23. 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 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 Rother District Council 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 (see Appendix A).
 - The cost of administering such services as may be purchased or 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.
24. 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.

Option two – no change and retain the status quo

25. In the interests of good consultation practice, the option to maintain the status quo and have no change has to be an option. The following paragraphs provide information on some of the issues that were discussed by respondents as reasons for change in 2017 and will form part of the information provided within consultation documents.

Council Size

26. 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.
27. 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 +/- 10%. Within the nine Bexhill wards, the variance ranged from -5% in Bexhill Central to +10% in Sidley at that time.
28. The projections calculated at that time have not come to fruition, particularly in relation to Old Town and Worsham Ward whose electorate has not increased as forecast due to the delay in progressing the North East Bexhill development.
29. 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.
30. 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

31. No change would see the continuation with the current governance arrangements for Bexhill-on-Sea with 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 2019/20 this was

set at £217.21 per annum for a Band D property, which includes Bexhill Special Expenses of £612,730 to fund the following services specific to Bexhill: Bexhill Parks, Bexhill Allotments; Christmas Lighting; Bexhill Museum; Bus Shelters and the Bexhill Town Forum.

32. 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.
33. 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. As an example, in 2017/18 Northiam Parish Council increased its pre-cept by over 200% in order to purchase a piece of land and RDC was lobbied by disgruntled residents to do something. However, 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.
34. 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 was £12,830 and costs for a Band D property 79p per household, per year.
35. 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

36. 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.
37. 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.

Other Matters

38. 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.

39. 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.
40. 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.
41. 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.
42. 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 have 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

43. That the consultation be based on the following options and officers present draft consultation documents at the next meeting:

Option one – 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 2021.

Option two – no change and retain the status quo

This would see the continuation of the current governance arrangements for Bexhill-on-Sea.

Malcolm Johnston
Executive Director

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.

Bexhill's population is 45,074 based on the ONS mid-year estimates for 2017 (2018 update will be available soon). (Bexhill's population is 47% of Rother's population.)

Council	Population Served & Tax base	Elected Members	Staff	Committees (in addition to Full Council meetings)	Functions & services provided (all have mayoralty & civic)	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 150.5k budget, Town Clerk	6: Policy & Resources, Cultural & Community, Planning (advisory), Staffing, Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, Urgent Matters plus allotments sub	Community and activity/event grants and support, Christmas lights, blue plaque scheme, allotments (owned not managed), gardens & park, tree planting, public seating, neighbourhood plan, crime prevention initiatives, In Bloom, town twinning (4), visitor promotion, funding support to extend library opening hours and run CAB, war memorial/annual remembrance service, town hall	No majority Liberal Democrat (6) Green (5) Labour (4) 1 vacancy	£377,876	£22.04, £2.20 for 10 months	leamingtonspatowncouncil.gov.uk
Christchurch, Dorset. May 2019	48,000 residents CT base is only 12,500	19 in 5 wards	2 – 1 Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer & 1 Mayor's secretary TUPEd 0.5 FTE and 0.5 FTE admin officer (same person), £75,000 staff budget	4 Full council Planning & regulatory (for comments on Licensing) Community Resources	Dorset Rural Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council, two new unitary authorities for Dorset, removed 9 district councils including Christchurch Borough Council. The main drivers for a town council creation were to preserve the mayoralty and keep day to day management of green spaces. Took on 200 civic possessions from paintings to land. 3 allotments sites, litter/dog bins, play areas and equipment, skate ramps, etc. in 9 open spaces including Green Flag parks and Quayside with listed bandstand. Maintained by principal authority with town council paying BCP Council in a service level agreement (no staff transferred under TUPE). Big annual food festival and other major events & licensing for events are assisted by principal authority in SLA because no events staff transferred. War memorials, old town hall (their offices, Grade 2 listed), community grants were devolved but current staff don't have time to operate and may devolve further into a charity or similar, town centre management as member of a BID partnership. Moving away from reliance on principal authority, given low precept, will take a 5 year plan. Started neighbourhood planning process. Started re-engaging Britain in Bloom. Started consultation on	Independent (no political groups)	£343,000	£27.59, £2.76 for 10 months	No website set up yet but hoping to set up before end of year.

Council	Population Served & Tax base	Elected Members	Staff	Committees (in addition to Full Council meetings)	Functions & services provided (all have mayoralty & civic)	Political Groups	Council Tax precept total £	Average £ Band D property, approx. £ per month	Website URL
					Corporate Plan including residents' survey. Started community payback scheme/project. Also Purple Flag award for night time economy project.				
Banbury, Oxfordshire Est. 2000	46,900	22 in 12 wards	20 Some part time Plus 3 sessional only (civic) = 23	4: Planning, general services, resources, traffic advisory	Allotments, bus shelters, by-laws, cemeteries, dog & litter bins and litter picking (pay for provision under contract with Cherwell district council), grit bins, 3 events: show, canal day, Christmas. Grants to voluntary orgs. 2 cemeteries, 1 churchyard, 12 parks, 90 open spaces, 50 play areas, recreation & facilities including pitches, courts & pavilions, skate ramps, park rangers, tree planting. Grounds maintenance contract for open spaces & cemeteries. Town hall including as venue for hire for functions and events, town publicity & tourism (official town guide), public clocks, Banbury Cross & Fine Lady statue. 61 bus shelters.	Conservative (majority) Labour	£1,846,320	£122.12 £12.22 over 10 months, £10.18 over 12 months	www.banbury.gov.uk
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk Est. 2003	40,700	17 in 9 wards	3 Town Clerk, Asst TC & RFO, Allots & Admin Asst.	2: Planning, Licensing & Finance, Staffing & employment plus 1 ad-hoc Civic Duties Advisory	Allotments (5 sites), nativity scene put up at Christmas, 2 war memorials & 1 memorial service, salt/grit bins, dog & litter bins, repairs to pavements considered low priority by County Council, grants and awards, tourist/visitor information point at town council offices, dog friendly Bury St Edmunds project.	None	£452,571 operating fund with £434,015 from precept	£33.30?	burystedmunds-tc.gov.uk
Folkestone Town Established 2004	43,000	18 in 7 wards	10	4: Finance & general purposes, planning, community services, grants and 4 working groups	Museum & heritage, allotments (2 sites), ward and town grants, tree management, magazine, events & campaigns, Christmas lights & events, youth facilities, tourist information, CCTV, war memorial, statue, salt bins, The Old Town Hall, Fairtrade town campaign,	Labour 10 (majority) Conservative 6 Lib Dem 1 'Foundation' 1	£786,950 precept (2018/19)	£55.57 £5.56 10 months £4.63 12 months (2018/19)	http://www.folkestonekentparishes.gov.uk/
Salisbury City, Wiltshire Est. 2009	40,300	23 in 8 wards	60, some part time	3: Finance & governance, services, planning plus ad hoc personnel committee	Allotments (12 sites), all city grounds maintenance, play areas, Shopmobility, a square, a marketplace, markets: charter, artisan, vintage, French, street food, teenage, Christmas Sunday, multiple monuments, health centre, camping & caravan site (owned not managed), 2 car parks, 3 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, 8 public conveniences,	Conservative 15 (majority) Labour 6 Liberal Democrat 1 Independent 1	£3,016,222	£208 £20.80 10 months £17.33 12 months (2019/20)	salisburycitycouncil.gov.uk

Council	Population Served & Tax base	Elected Members	Staff	Committees (in addition to Full Council meetings)	Functions & services provided (all have mayoralty & civic)	Political Groups	Council Tax precept total £	Average £ Band D property, approx. £ per month	Website URL
					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. Neighbourhood plan. Purple Flag. Town Crier. Stoma friendly city project. Teenage market for entrepreneurial young people 13-21/25.				
Andover, Hampshire Est. 2010	42,000	19 in 5 wards	7 - 3 full time, 4 part time	5: Policy & resources, assets & amenities, community engagement, allotments, planning. Plus staffing sub and time limited working groups	Grants, events & festivals, Christmas lights, youth council, allotments, bus shelters.	Andover Alliance 12 (majority) Andover Independents Party 3 Independent 1	£261,652	£20.03	andover-tc.gov.uk

Rother District Council

Report to	-	Community Governance Review Steering Group
Date	-	30 October 2019
Report of the	-	Executive Director
Subject	-	Communications Plan

Introduction

1. Fundamental to a Community Governance Review (CGR) is consultation. The 2007 Act requires that local people (the local government electors for the area, in this case Bexhill-on-Sea) are consulted during a CGR, that representations received in connection with the review are taken into account and that steps are taken to notify them of the outcomes of the review, including any decisions.
2. Before making any recommendations or publishing final proposals, the Council will take full account of the views of local people. The Council will comply with the statutory consultative requirements by:
 - Consulting local government electors for the area under review (Bexhill-on-Sea);
 - Consulting any other person or body (including a local authority) which appears to the Council to have an interest in the review (including all parish and town councils within the district);
 - Notifying and consulting East Sussex County Council; and
 - Taking into account any representations received in connection with the review.
3. In accordance with the Steering Group's Terms of Reference, a key role is to determine the consultation and communication methods for the CGR; attached at Appendix 1 is the draft Communications Plan for consideration and approval.
4. In light of the extensive consultation and communications undertaken for the 2017 CGR, at the request of Members and in order to contain costs, a light-touch consultation is being conducted for this CGR.
5. Members will play a crucial role in ensuring that the community is aware that the CGR is taking place and how residents and other interested stakeholders can contribute; it will be essential for Members to raise awareness through their local connections and any relevant outside bodies to which they are affiliated.

Communication Plan

6. The Communications Plan sets the communications framework for the review and serves as an officer guide for communications throughout the life of the project and will be updated as communication needs change.
7. Members are invited to consider the draft Communications Plan which, once agreed, will set the style and approach to the communications surrounding

this project; the Plan will be kept under review and amended as necessary as the review progresses.

8. The Communications Team and the Council's Consultation Officer have contributed to the Plan and are aware of the level of commitment required to deliver this plan. A large proportion of the overall cost of the CGR will be attributable to the scale and extent of the communications undertaken.
9. Attached at Appendix 2 is a list of organisations that will be directly targeted to respond to the consultation. Each lead contact receives an invitation to take part in the consultation covering how to take part, where to find further information and a request to share this information with their staff, membership, customers or client groups. Members are invited to consider the list and provide details of any organisations / groups to add to the list.

Conclusion

10. Members are asked to consider and agree the contents of the Plan.

Malcolm Johnston
Executive Director

Project Communications Plan

Project Title:	Community Governance Review (CGR)				
Project Manager:	Lisa Cooper				
Date:	September 2019	Version: 1			
Key Messages: That the CGR is taking place, what it is and how the public can engage with the process and the timetable. Dates of the consultation period; how residents can contribute to the review and respond to the consultation. Details of what a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea could look like and what are the likely initial and potential costs.					
Key Audiences: Public / local government electors for Bexhill-on-Sea; All RDC Members; ESCC (a statutory requirement to notify of the review). Sussex Police / East Sussex Fire and Rescue. Other interested stakeholders / community groups within Bexhill, including the Bexhill Town Forum and Town Team; parish and town councils across the rural parts of the district. SMT; Heads of Service; all council employees.					
Activity	Audience	Methods	Date(s)	Budget/Resource	Success Criteria
1. Council approval of Terms of Reference / establishment of Steering Group.	Public / Members / other interested stakeholders.	Publication of Minutes Press release	September 2019	Officer time / Communications Team.	-
2. Launch of CGR and consultation period. (Information about CGR process, governance options / implications FAQs all to be published on website as part of launch). (6 January – 14 February 2019)	External: public, ESCC, local MP, Sussex Police / East Sussex Fire and Rescue, Bexhill Division County Councillors, Bexhill Charter Trustees, Bexhill Town Team, Bexhill Alliance, community groups, parish and town councils across the district. Other interested stakeholders. Secondary education schools and colleges within Bexhill. Internal: Members, SMT, all council employees.	Dedicated section on website; press releases; direct contact / mail shots / email; citizens' panel; regular social media tweets; Facebook; information at CHPs; A3/A4 posters / A5 flyers; Steering Group attendance at Bexhill Town Forum.	(6 Jan - 14 Feb 2019)	Officer / Member time Communications Team Postage Reprographics	Good engagement / response to consultation.

Activity	Audience	Methods	Date(s)	Budget/Resource	Success Criteria
3. Close of consultation and date all responses will be published. (28 February 2020)	As 2 above.	Dedicated section on website; press release; social media Tweet; Facebook.	28 February 2020	Officer time Communications Team	No submissions received after the deadline.
4. Analysis of all responses received and development of final recommendations for publication.	Steering Group / SMT / all elected Members.	Meeting of the Steering Group to receive officer report; available to all Members.	March 2020	Officer / Member time	A set of clear final recommendations on the future governance arrangements for Bexhill-on-Sea.
5. Presentation of final recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) for approval by Cabinet and Council. 22	OSC Members, public / all other Members / other interested stakeholders.	Meeting of the OSC to receive officer report; published on website. Cabinet meeting to receive recommendations of the OSC to recommend to full Council.	OSC 27 April Cabinet 4 May 2020	Officer / Member time	Cabinet approval of final recommendations on the future governance arrangements for Bexhill-on-Sea to Council.
6. Publication of final recommendations.	As 2 above + all responders.	Cabinet Minutes published 7 May 2020	7 May 2020	Officer time	-
7. Submission to full Council the final recommendations for approval, together with approval to create Governance Orders (CGO), as required.	As 2 above.	Council Agenda including Cabinet recommendations; published on website 7 May 2020.	18 May 2020	Officer time	Review completed within 12 months in accordance with the 2007 Act.

Bexhill Community Governance Review 2019/20
Proposed groups and organisations to receive an invitation to consult

Local Businesses and Business Groups operating in and around Bexhill

Name
Sussex Strategic Business Board
Battle and District Chamber of Commerce
Bexhill Chamber of Commerce & Tourism
Bexhill Leisure Centre
Bexhill Town Team/Bexhill Forward
Bovis Homes
De La Warr Pavilion
Dyer & Hobbis
Freedom Leisure
Hastings Direct
Hastoe Group (housing association)
Homecall Rother
Little Common and Cooden Business Association
Locate East Sussex
Orbit Living (Housing)
Optivo (housing association)
SeaChange Sussex
Southern Rail
Stagecoach Bus

Community Organisations operating in and around Bexhill

Name
Action in Rural Sussex
Age UK (East Sussex)
Alzheimer's Society (East Sussex)
Association of Carers
Bangladeshi Association (Hastings & Rother)
Bexhill 100
Bexhill Caring Community
Bexhill Community Bus
Bexhill Dementia Action Alliance
Bexhill Diabetic Group
Bexhill Environmental Group
Bexhill Foodbank
Bexhill Gateway Club (adults with learning disabilities)
Bexhill Heritage
Bexhill Hive
Bexhill Homelessness Unity Group
Bexhill Islamic Association
Bexhill Lions
Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society
Bexhill Street Pastors
Bexhill Talking Newspaper

Name
Care for the Carers
Christians Against Poverty
Churches Together in Bexhill
Democracy4Bexhill
East Sussex Association of the Blind & Partially Sighted People
East Sussex Better Together (NHS/Social Services project)
East Sussex Hearing Resource Centre
East Sussex Recovery Alliance
Egerton House (social landlord)
Energise Sussex Coast – Hastings (fuel poverty)
Friends, Families and Travellers (East Sussex)
Hastings Advice and Representation Centre (SLA)
Hastings & Bexhill Mencap Society
Hastings & District Interfaith Forum
Hastings & Rother Disability Forum
Hastings & Rother Furniture Service (SLA)
Hastings & Rother Mediation Service (SLA)
Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance
Hastings & Rother Samaritans
Hastings and Rother Transport Action Group
Hastings & Rother Voluntary Association (for the blind & partially sighted)
Homeworks
Rother District Citizens Advice Bureau (SLA)
Rother Environmental Group
Rother Neighbourhood Watch Scheme
Rother Race Action Forum
Rother Ramblers
Rother Seniors Forum
Rother Voluntary Action (SLA)
Sidley Community Association
Sompriti (represents & translates for minority groups)
SSAFA Force Help (divisional)
The Pelham Trust
Poles In Hastings (formerly Polish Association Hastings)+

Activity groups operating in Bexhill

Name
1066 Cycle Club
Active Sussex
Bexhill Amateur Boxing Club
Bexhill Runners & Triathletes
Bexhill Sea Angling Club
Bexhill Sailing Club
Bexhill Rowing Club
Bexhill Ramblers Association
Rother Ramblers
Cricket and football clubs using Bexhill playing fields
Hastings, Bexhill & District Freshwater Angling Association
Hastings & District Table Tennis Association
East Sussex Cyclists' Touring Club – Hastings & Rother

Name
East Sussex Health Walks

Public Organisations operating in and around Bexhill

Name
East Sussex Fire and Rescue
East Sussex Fuel Poverty Co-ordinator (HBC)
Jobcentre Plus, Bexhill (Department of Work and Pensions)
NHS Hastings & Rother
Sussex Police
East Sussex County Council - Adult Social Care & Health including - Mental Health Services and locality link workers, Traveller Team Library
Children's Centre – Egerton Park
East Sussex County Councillors for Bexhill Divisions
Bexhill Charter Trustees
IFH Hastings GP Federation (NHS)
NHS Hastings & Rother CCG
One You East Sussex

Other organisations in the district

Name
Town and Parish Councils (32)
Rother Association of Local Councils
MP for Bexhill and Battle
East Sussex County Council (formal notification)
Political Agents
Hastings Borough Council

Education, Schools & Colleges, Young People

Name
St Richards Catholic College
Sussex Coast College
Bexhill College
Bexhill High School
Bexhill Youth Council

Relevant outside bodies to which the Council appoints a representative, not already included above

Name
East Sussex Strategic Partnership
Battle Abbey Advisory Group
Battle Area Sports Centre
Bexhill Museum Ltd (SLA)
Bexhill Trust
Combe Valley CIC
Rother Local Strategic Partnership

Name
Rye Chamber of Commerce
Rye Harbour Nature Reserve (SLA)
Rye Partnership
Safer Rother Partnership
Tourism South East