

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW STEERING GROUP

19 December 2019

Minutes of the Community Governance Review Steering Group meeting held at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea on Thursday 19 December 2019 at 9:30am.

Steering Group Members present: Councillors J. Barnes, Mrs C.A. Bayliss (Chairman), T.J.C. Byrne, P.J. Gray, L.M. Langlands, P.N. Osborne, R.B. Thomas and H.L. Timpe (in part).

Other Members present: Councillors P.C. Courtel, B.J. Drayson (in part), C.A. Madeley and D.B. Oliver (in part).

Advisory Officers in attendance: Executive Director (MJ), Democratic Services Manager and Monitoring Officer, Marketing and Communications Account Manager, Consultation Officer, Democratic Services Officer and Business Support Assistant.

Also Present: 13 members of the public.

CGR19/9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J.J. Carroll.

CGR19/10. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Declarations of interest were made by Councillors in the Minutes as indicated below:

Mrs Bayliss Personal Interest in so far as she was a former member of Democracy4Bexhill and supporter of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea.

Byrne Personal Interest in so far as he was a former member of Democracy4Bexhill and supporter of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea.

Courtel Personal Interest in so far as he was a former member of Democracy4Bexhill and supporter of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea.

Drayson Personal Interest in so far as he was a former member of the Democracy4Bexhill and supporter of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea.

Gray Personal Interest in so far as she was a former member of Democracy4Bexhill and supporter of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea.

Langlands	Personal Interest in so far as she was a former member of Democracy4Bexhill and supporter of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea.
Madeley	Personal Interest in so far as she was a former member of Democracy4Bexhill and supporter of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea.
Thomas	Personal Interest in so far as he was a former member of Democracy4Bexhill and supporter of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea.

CGR19/11. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING - 30 OCTOBER 2019 - MATTERS ARISING

One omission from the previous minutes was highlighted: Councillor Courtel advised that he had made a declaration of interest as he was a former member of the Democracy4Bexhill and supporter of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea. It was agreed that the minutes be amended accordingly.

RESOLVED: That that minutes be amended to include Councillor Courtel's declaration of interest.

CGR19/12. CONSULTATION MATERIALS AND TIMETABLE

Consideration was given to the Executive Director's report which updated the Community Governance Review Steering Group (CGRSG) on the proposed consultation materials, public information and revised timetable for the Community Governance Review (CGR) for Bexhill-on-Sea. At the last meeting, Members were invited to submit additional ideas for questions to be included within the on-line consultation and other consultation materials. All comments received had been incorporated.

The Chairman led Members through the different individual materials. Some comments had been received from the public and were distributed at the meeting for the CGRSG's consideration.

Leaflet and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): Overall costs to produce and deliver a generic A4 leaflet, folded to A5 booklet style delivered by the Post Office to 20,500 households would cost approximately £2,562 to £3,591. A copy of the proposed leaflet and FAQs was appended to the report at Appendices A and B respectively.

Concerns were raised that the document and FAQs were too wordy and not written in a plain English format as previously agreed. It was suggested that both the leaflet and FAQs be cohesively re-drafted using plain English and simplified including bullet points. The leaflet should direct residents to the Council's website for more detailed information. Members felt the leaflet required further embellishment to look more attractive, should clearly include the actual cost to the rate payer, that it should be market tested before distribution and that a

more positive message be communicated, as Members felt the current format was too negative. It was important to focus on what a Town Council could do for Bexhill-on-Sea and ensure that residents who did not have access to on-line technology were not disadvantaged from responding to the consultation process. The CGRSG was advised that all materials would be produced in hard copy format and made available at the Council's Community Help Points for those residents who did not have access to on-line technology.

The following suggestions were proposed for inclusion:

- ability to raise its own revenue, apply for different funding streams and support community organisations;
- a Town Council could devise its own Neighbourhood Plan; once made would receive the local neighbourhood proportion or Community Infrastructure Levy funding from Bexhill developments;
- be a consultee to the District Council on planning applications; and
- an explanation of the difference between Bexhill Special Expenses and a Town Council's precept.

The Executive Director advised that it was important that the leaflet and FAQs explained the legal process, stipulated both arguments for and against the establishment of a Town Council to enable the public to make an informed decision and that dependent on what services were devolved or adopted, Bexhill's precept would increase.

Members requested that the Marketing and Communications Account Manager redraft the leaflet and FAQs using plain English, in consultation with the Chairman of the CGRSG and Councillors Thomas and Timpe and presented at the next meeting.

On-line Questionnaire and Video: The CGRSG requested that the 'Which option do you support?' be moved to the end of the questionnaire and placed before the 'About You' section and provide a box for people to give a reason why they did not support a Town Council. It was suggested that 'Town Council boundaries' be reworded as follow: 'Would you like the area you live in to be excluded from the Bexhill Town Council?' – YES/NO. Members were advised that the video would include a voice-over introductory script; once completed emailed to Members for consideration. Subject to the amendments suggested both were approved.

Posters: Attached at Appendix C to the report were four draft examples of A4 posters and A5 flyers. Members disliked the colours and requested that redrafted versions be presented at the next meeting.

To ensure full participation, openness and transparency, the CGRSG agreed that responses from people who worked in Bexhill-on-Sea or were resident within the Rother District boundary and any age groups should be accepted. It was also agreed that comments from anonymous responders should not be accepted.

To consider the redrafted documents, it was recommended that the next meeting be scheduled mid-January 2020. Therefore the consultation period would commence at the end of January. It was anticipated that this delay would not affect the overall timescale for the CGR. Members would be contacted in due course to identify a suitable date / time.

Members were reminded that the CGRSG would be presenting their recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 April 2020, for referral to Cabinet on 4 May 2020 and then full Council on 18 May 2020.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the Marketing and Communications Account Manager, in consultation with the Chairman of the Community Governance Review Steering Group and Councillors Thomas and Timpe redraft the leaflet and Frequently Asked Questions using plain English for presentation at the next meeting;
- 2) the on-line questionnaire, incorporating the suggested amendments be approved;
- 3) the voice-over introductory script be added to the video and emailed to Members;
- 4) responses from people who worked in Bexhill-on-Sea or were resident within the Rother District boundary and any age groups be accepted;
- 5) comments from anonymous responders not be accepted; and
- 6) Members be contacted to identify a suitable date and time for the next meeting.

CGR19/13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no any other business items proposed.

CGR19/14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was proposed to be held week commencing 13 or 20 January 2020; Members would be canvassed by email.

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 11:15am.