



Community Governance Review Steering Group

Date and Time - **Thursday 19 December 2019 – 9:30am**

Venue - **Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea**

Councillors appointed to the Committee:

Councillor J. Barnes, Mrs C.A. Bayliss (Chairman), T.J.C. Byrne, J.J. Carroll, P.J. Gray, L.M. Langlands, P.N. Osborne, R.B. Thomas and H.L. Timpe

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. 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.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING - 30 OCTOBER 2019 - MATTERS ARISING (Pages 1 - 6)

4. CONSULTATION MATERIALS AND TIMETABLE (Pages 7 - 26)

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- mid March / early April - TBC

Malcolm Johnston
Executive Director

Agenda Despatch Date: 13 December 2019

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an Efficient, Flexible and Effective Council; Sustainable Economic Prosperity;
Stronger, Safer Communities; and a Quality Physical Environment.**

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Rother District Council

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW STEERING GROUP

30 October 2019



Minutes of the Community Governance Review Steering Group held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea on Wednesday 30 October 2019 at 9:30am.

Members of the Steering Group Present:

Councillors J. Barnes, Mrs C.A. Bayliss, T.J.C. Byrne, J.J. Carroll (in part), P.J. Gray, L.M. Langlands, P.N. Osborne, R. Thomas and H.L. Timpe.

Other Members Present:

Councillors P.C. Courtel, C.A. Madeley and D.B. Oliver.

Officers Present:

Malcolm Johnston	–	Executive Director
Lisa Cooper	–	Democratic Services Manager and Monitoring Officer
Joanne Wright	–	Consultation Officer
Julie Hollands	–	Democratic Services Officer

CGR19/01. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

(1)

RESOLVED: Councillor Mrs C.A. Bayliss was appointed as Chairman of the Community Governance Review Steering Group.

CGR19/02. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(2)

An apology for absence was received from Hollie Farley – Marketing and Communications Account Manager.

CGR19/03. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

(3)

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

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

CGR19/04. **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW PROCESS**
(4)

Consideration was given to the Community Governance Review (CGR) Process, Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Review, as well as the ToR for the Community Governance Review Steering Group (CGRSG) including the timetable to be followed. From its formal launch in January 2020, the CGR would need to be completed within 12 months and final recommendations published on 7 May 2020.

The timetable for the procedure was noted as follows:

- October – November 2019: CGRSG meet to review ToR, understand process, agree consultation period and communication plan.
- Consultation (six weeks – 6 January to 14 February 2020): Formal publication of the ToR for the review and launch consultation period. Invite submissions on the proposal to establish a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea.
- Consideration of submissions – March 2020: CGRSG to consider submissions received and develop draft final recommendations.
- 7 May 2020: Council would formally publish the final proposals and recommendations.
- 18 May 2020: Full Council would consider the final recommendations and subject to the outcome consider the creation of a Community Governance Order (CGO) in relation to the establishment of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea.
- CGO: The CGRSG would need to consider recommendations on the CGO e.g. transfer and management or custody of property, the setting of precepts, provision for the transfer of functions, rights, liabilities, staff etc. Or alternatively, delegate and establish a Shadow Bexhill Town Council Committee, consisting of the 18 Bexhill-on-Sea Councillors to complete this work. This work would be progressed during 2020 with a further detailed CGO presented to Full Council in February 2021. The CGRSG felt it was not appropriate to decide at this stage and that the decision should be made after the consultation exercise.

In order not to prolong the process and the fact that the review would be focused solely on the creation of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea,

it was noted that reporting to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Full Council in December was no longer a requirement. Therefore these meetings were removed from the timetable. It was also noted that the date of the Cabinet meeting in May had changed from 11 May to 4 May as the 2020 May Bank Holiday was moved to mark the 75th Anniversary of VE Day.

Consideration was given to whether the CGRSG's meetings should be held in public. It was unanimously agreed that all meetings be held in public and that all minutes and reports of the meetings be published on the Council's website.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the Timetable of the Community Governance Review and process, as at Appendices B and C to the report be approved;
- 2) all meetings be held in public; and
- 3) all minutes and reports of the meetings be published on the Council's website.

CGR19/05. **CONSULTATION**
(5)

The Community Governance Review Steering Group (CGRSG) gave consideration to the two options proposed for the consultation process, as follows:

Option 1 – the creation of one Parish Council for the whole of Bexhill-on-Sea (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 (BTC) based on the existing Bexhill Ward External Boundary. BTC 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 BTC with the first elections to be in May 2021.

Option 2 – 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.

Both options were approved for the consultation process.

During discussion, consideration was given to the examples of other town councils across the country of a comparable size to Bexhill which had been appended to the report for information. It was noted that some indicative costings had already been completed however, it was 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 Rother District Council (RDC). The Council's Financial Services Team would be tasked with supporting the development of the initial precept anticipated to be

levied in 2021/22 by the new BTC. It was agreed that this information should feature in the consultation documentation.

In order to ensure full participation / engagement and understanding of the process, it was important that the consultation documentation was informative and enhanced awareness of what a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea could actually do. Therefore, it was also suggested that the following information be included:

- town council boundaries;
- potential devolved functions and services;
- location of BTC (at Town Hall, Bexhill or elsewhere);
- staff resources (shared with RDC or standalone);
- potential to set an allowance or payment for BTC Members; and
- election cycle (to coincide with future RDC elections etc.).

The CGRSG was advised that current RDC Members could stand as BTC Members. Concerns were raised that it could be potentially difficult to fill all 18 BTC seats. The population of Bexhill-on-Sea was considered sufficient to find enough interest.

A discussion ensued on whether open-ended questions should be used. The Consultation Officer advised that these types of questions were challenging, time consuming and difficult to analyse. It would be simpler to ask residents / organisations to answer tick box questions. However additional information could be forwarded in writing or by email.

Members agreed that officers be tasked with developing clear and concise consultation documentation using plain English, including tick box questions, flowchart and financial implications. The CGRSG was encouraged to forward additional questions / information as soon as possible to officers for inclusion within the documentation. The draft consultation documents would be presented at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) Options 1 and 2 be approved for the consultation process;
- 2) draft consultation documentation using plain English, including tick box questions, flowchart and financial implications be developed and presented at the next meeting; and
- 3) additional questions / information be forwarded as soon as possible to officers for inclusion within the documentation.

CGR19/06. **COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**
(6)

Members considered a report that set out the Communications Plan for the Community Governance Review (CGR); this was essentially an officer's guide. The Plan set out the key dates, audiences and methods for communications throughout the life of the CGR. It was noted that the Council's Marketing and Communications Account

Manager would be supporting all communication activities highlighted within the Plan. Information regarding how the Communications Team could promote the consultation was tabled at the meeting. Promotional methods included: press releases; social media platforms; and My Alerts etc.

In light of the extensive consultation and communications already undertaken for the 2017 CCR, in order to contain costs, it was noted that a light-touch process would be conducted this time.

Attached at Appendix 2 to the report was a list of the outside organisations that would be targeted to respond to the consultation. It was suggested that Bexhill Churches and Conservation / Heritage organisations be added to the list. Members were encouraged to provide additional suggested organisations / groups to the Consultation Officer for addition to the list to receive a direct invitation to the consultation.

The Community Governance Review Steering Group was advised that the results of the 2017 consultation process would be taken into consideration. However the population of Bexhill-on-Sea would have changed since then, through people moving on and new residents arriving. Therefore it was important that the current residents were consulted on the establishment of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea. To ensure full participation, especially those residents that were not online, it was suggested that a leaflet drop to all Bexhill households be undertaken. No financial data for a leaflet drop was available at the meeting. It was agreed that costs would be sought and reported at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the Communications Plan at Appendix 1 to the report be approved;
- 2) Members provide additional suggested organisations / groups to the Consultation Officer for addition to the list to receive a direct invitation to the consultation; and
- 3) costings of a leaflet drop to all Bexhill households be sought and reported at the next meeting.

CGR19/07. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
(7)

There were no any other business items proposed.

CGR19/08. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**
(8)

The date of the next meeting was arranged for Thursday 21 November 2019 at 9:30am to be held in the Council Chamber.

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 11:27am.

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Rother District Council

Report to	-	Community Governance Review Steering Group
Date	-	19 December 2019
Report of the	-	Executive Director
Subject	-	Consultation Materials and Timetable

Introduction

1. At the last meeting, the Community Governance Review Steering Group (CGRSG) agreed that a draft consultation documentation using plain English, including tick box questions, flowchart and financial implications be developed and presented to this meeting.
2. This report therefore brings forward the proposed consultation materials and information to be made available to members of the public and other interested stakeholders together with a revised timetable for consultation as a result of the General Election.

Consultation Materials and Information

3. At the last meeting Members were invited to submit any additional ideas for questions to be included within the on-line consultation and other consultation materials as well as those that were noted at the meeting; three Members responded to the request and their comments have been taken into account by officers in preparing the materials and on-line questionnaire.

4. The following materials have been put together:

Proposed Leaflet

5. To ensure full participation, especially for those residents who are not online, at the last meeting it was suggested that a leaflet drop to all Bexhill households be undertaken. It has been established that a non-household specific, i.e. not addressed to individual householders but a generic A4 leaflet, folded to A5 booklet style, delivered by the Post Office would cost in the region of £1,396.
6. There are 20,500 households in Bexhill and the cost of the leaflets would equate to £1,165 for black and white and £2,195 for colour. This would mean an overall cost for production and distribution of between £2,562 and £3,591.
7. Officers have produced a proposed leaflet in consultation with the Chairman of the Group and the text for an initial working draft is attached at Appendix A for Members' consideration. It is noted that the financial information within the leaflet will be updated prior to publication and distribution.

Frequently Asked Questions

8. It is proposed that the dedicated consultation webpage will include Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs); these were produced for the last Community Governance Review (CGR). Attached at Appendix B is the proposed draft

FAQs; Members are asked to consider these, agree the answers as drafted or amend and add any additional questions / answers, as appropriate.

9. All the information produced on the website can also be made available in hard copy format, if requested. In order to save on paper it is proposed to provide an information pack for each of the Council's Community Help Points for residents to inspect if they are not on line.

On-line questionnaire

10. The following link takes Members to the proposed draft on-line questionnaire which has been compiled by the Consultation Officer, in consultation with the Chairman. Members are asked to follow this link prior to the meeting, try out the questionnaire to enable an informed debate at the meeting. If possible, Members will be guided through the questionnaire on line at the meeting.

Link: <https://surveymechanics.com/s/BCGR2020verson1>

11. The on-line questionnaire will be produced in hard copy format for those responders who are unable to complete on-line.

Marketing Material

12. The Communications Team has been tasked with coming up with branding for the review and draft A4 posters and A5 flyers are attached at Appendix C for Members' consideration and comment. The Council's Communication Account Manager will be present at the meeting to take comments and advise on the marketing strategy, as outlined at the last meeting.

Timetable

13. As Members are aware following Royal Ascent on 31 October a General Election (GE) was called to take place on 12 December 2019. The CGRSG's last meeting scheduled for 21 November was postponed due to the Chairman of the CGRSG's candidacy for the GE and secondly, the lack of staff resources to deal with the Community Governance Review at that time. This has resulted in a necessary change to the consultation timetable.
14. As previously advised to Members via email, the consultation period has therefore been put back a week and will start on Monday 13 January rather than 6 January and run until Friday 21 February and not Friday 14 February as previously agreed. The delay of one week can be accommodated within the timetable and not affect the overall timescales for the CGR.
15. Members are asked to note the revised timetable.

Responders

16. Whilst in accordance with the 2007 Act, the Council is only required to consult local government electors (i.e. residents) for the area under review, it is recommended, as in the previous CGR, that responses are accepted and considered from anyone who works within Bexhill-on-Sea, who may not necessarily be a resident, as well as non-residents of Bexhill-on-Sea, but who live within the Rother District Council boundary.

17. In order to ascertain whether or not responders are residents in Bexhill-on-Sea or not, all responders on the on-line questionnaire will be asked to provide their postcode; this will enable the responses to be analysed by residents and non-residents.
18. Local government electors are also defined by age, i.e. 18 or over. However, Members may wish to consider whether we accept responses from under 18s as up and coming local tax payers with an interest in Bexhill-on-Sea's future governance arrangements. If this is agreed it will be necessary to put an age profile question into the on-line questionnaire.
19. Members may also wish to consider how anonymous responses are treated; it is usual practice not to consider any comments that are made by anonymous responders.

Publication of Responses Received

20. For openness and transparency, it is recommended that all responses received will be published anonymously on the Council's website (without the responders' names).

Next Steps

21. Following the publication of all responses, officers will prepare a report on the outcome of the consultation; the CGRSG will be required to consider the outcome of the consultation and to make recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's meeting on 27 April 2020. This will require the CGRSG's next meeting to be held at the end of March / early April – dates will be canvassed in due course.

Conclusions

22. Members are asked to consider and agree:
 - the proposed leaflet drop to all households at an estimated cost of £2,562 and £3,591;
 - the proposed content of the leaflet;
 - the content of the FAQs to be published on the website;
 - the content of the on-line questionnaire;
 - whether or not to accept responses from non-residents of Bexhill-on-Sea;
 - whether or not to encourage all age groups to respond to the consultation and to include an age profile question into the on-line questionnaire, if appropriate; and
 - whether to accept / take account of anonymous responses.

Malcolm Johnston
Executive Director

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A Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea?

Tell us what you think.....



Following the outcome of the local elections in May 2019 and the overwhelming support for candidates that supported a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea, Rother District Council is undertaking a further Community Governance Review with a view to establishing a Town Council for Bexhill. The Council believes that local decisions should be made by local people at the lowest possible level of decision making.

This leaflet explains how this will affect you, including estimated costs and how you can respond to the consultation which runs between Monday 13 January and Friday 21 February 2020.

This will affect all Bexhill residents!

Every resident of Bexhill is invited to tell us what they think. We are also inviting responses from Bexhill businesses and local organisations.

What will a Town Council look like?

A new Town Council:

- 18 Town Councillors
- In 9 Wards across Bexhill
- 2 Councillors for each Ward
- Starts 1 April 2021
- First election in May 2021
- 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 of the current Charter Trustees

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 the Town Council to decide. More information about what a Town Council could do and its powers and responsibilities is on our website at 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. We cannot devolve some services, like Planning. Rother District Council would continue to provide many of the services currently provided.

A Town Council could support

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

What will a Town Council cost?

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 – but that is a decision for the Town Council to make, once in place.

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** per annum based on a Band D property. The table to the right shows the amounts for each charging authority.

Charging Authority	Estimated 2017/18 Band D charge with a Town Council
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	£2.25
Bexhill Charter Trustees	N/A
Bexhill Town Council	£62.34
Total Charge at Band D	£1,790.58

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

What is the current arrangements for Bexhill?

There is no Town Council in Bexhill. Rother District Council 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 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
Total Charge at Band D	£1,767.83

* 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 shelters and Bexhill Town Forum.

** 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 www.rother.gov.uk/communitygovernancereview

This consultation closes at 4:30pm on Friday 21 February 2020

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

Tell us what you think:

Online at www.rother.gov.uk/communitygovernancereview

Or, if you are not on-line write to us at: Community Governance Review, Rother District Council, Town Hall, Bexhill, East Sussex, TN39 3JX.

Rother District Council will determine the outcome of this review and take account of your views.

Late submissions, duplicates and anonymous responses will be discounted.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR WEBSITE

1.	<p>What is a community governance review?</p> <p>A community governance review enables a principal council such as Rother District Council to review and put in place or make changes to community governance systems and structures e.g. by creating a new form of governance for the Council and / or creating merging, abolishing or changing parish or town councils in the review area.</p>
2.	<p>What is community governance?</p> <p>It is the way in which local communities are represented and governed at local authority level and through the involvement of other statutory and voluntary agencies and community groups and by the efforts of local people themselves. It is also about the way in which individuals and groups within the community are listened to and able to influence decisions that affect them.</p>
3.	<p>Who can undertake a community governance review?</p> <p>Since 13 February 2008 all principal councils have had responsibility for undertaking community governance reviews and have been able to decide whether to action the recommendations made in those reviews. In making that decision, they will need to take account of the views of local people. Principal councils are also required to have regard to the guidance on undertaking community governance reviews published jointly by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE). This document can be found at the following link: http://www.lgbce.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/10387/community-governance-review-guidance.pdf</p>
4.	<p>Why is Rother District Council doing another community governance review?</p> <p>In 2017, Rother District Council undertook a Community Governance Review of Bexhill-on-Sea to consider all possible governance options, including the parishing of part or all of Bexhill-on-Sea. At the end of that review, the Council decided not to make any changes to the existing governance arrangements for Bexhill-on-Sea. The reason for the decision at that time can be found here: http://www.rother.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=29558&p=0</p> <p>Following the elections in May 2019 and a change in political leadership the Council agreed the following Motion:</p> <p>“In the light of the outcome of the Local Election results and the overwhelming support for candidates that support a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea this Council requests officers to report as to the required procedure with a view to the establishment of a Town Council for Bexhill by 2021.”</p> <p>The Council is legally required to conduct a further Community Governance</p>

	Review in order to introduce a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea. The Council is able to take into account the views expressed during the 2017 Community Governance Review.
5.	<p>If I responded to the consultation in 2017, do I need to respond again?</p> <p>Whilst the Council is able to consider the views expressed in 2017 on the various options that the Council consulted on, we would like to hear the views on the specific issue that we are now consulting on. i.e. the introduction of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea.</p>
6.	<p>Who will undertake the community governance review?</p> <p>Rother District Council is responsible for conducting the review within its electoral area. The Council has established a Community Governance Review Steering Group who will undertake the review and make recommendations in accordance with its terms of reference set by Full Council.</p> <p>The Steering Group will be responsible for undertaking the communication and consultation strategy, analysing public consultation responses and making the final recommendations to Cabinet, via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Full Council will be required to approve the final recommendations prior to the completion of any community governance order which may be required, depending on the outcome of the review.</p> <p>Information about the Steering Group's membership and minutes arising from its meetings can be found at the following link:</p> <p>https://rother.moderngov.co.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=247</p> <p>The meetings of the Steering Group are open to the public.</p>
7.	<p>How long does a community governance review take?</p> <p>Legislation requires community governance reviews to be completed within 12 months of the terms of reference being formally published. For this review this will be 12 months from January 2020.</p>
8.	<p>What must Rother District Council take into account when undertaking a community governance review?</p> <p>Rother District Council is required to take into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ the impact of existing community governance arrangements on community cohesion; and ➤ the size, population and boundaries of any local community or proposed parish or town council. <p>In carrying out a community governance review, Rother District Council must also consider the wider picture of community governance. This includes taking account of well-established forms of community governance such as local residents associations and community forums. These can be considered as either alternatives to or stages towards establishing parish or town councils. Guidance does, however, indicate that Parish and Town Councils are set apart</p>

	<p>from these other kinds of governance by the fact that they are a democratically elected tier of local government and can raise a precept, set a budget and possess specific powers.</p> <p>The Guidance published jointly by the DCLG and the LGBCE specifically refers to Charter Trustee areas, such as Bexhill-on-Sea and states:</p> <p><i>“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:</i></p> <p>a) <i>the effect on the historic cohesiveness of the area; and</i></p> <p>b) <i>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?</i></p> <p><i>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.”</i></p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>What are the criteria by which options for the future will be judged?</p> <p>Government guidance indicates that characteristics of good community governance to be considered in assessing the options when undertaking such a review include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ a sense of civic pride and civic values; ➤ a strong, inclusive community and voluntary sector; ➤ a sense of place - with a positive feeling for people and local distinctiveness; ➤ effective engagement with the local community at neighbourhood level ➤ strong leadership; ➤ the ability of local authorities to deliver quality services economically and efficiently; and ➤ an area that is of a size that is viable as an administrative unit of local government. <p>Local people might consider these characteristics when submitting their views.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>What will the community governance review consider?</p> <p>Specifically, this community governance review will consider whether a new Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea should be created.</p>
<p>11.</p>	<p>Will the community governance review change Rother District Council electoral wards?</p> <p>No. District ward boundaries are reviewed by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).</p> <p>This community governance review does not have the power to change any</p>

	district ward boundaries.
12.	<p>Who will Rother District Council consult with?</p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ consulting local government electors within the area under review; ➤ consulting any other person or body (including a local authority) which appears to the Council to have an interest in the community governance review (e.g. East Sussex County Council and Parish and Town Councils across the District); and ➤ taking into account any representations received in connection with the community governance review.
13.	<p>How will Rother District Council consult?</p> <p>In view of the extensive consultation exercise under taken in 2017, the Council is undertaking a light-touch consultation. The Council will use a range of consultation methods including an on-line questionnaire, letters and emails, a leaflet drop to all Bexhill-on-Sea residents, direct invitation, media releases, elected Members, posters and leaflets distributed across Bexhill-on-Sea and social media.</p>
14.	<p>When will Rother District Council consult during the process?</p> <p>There is one opportunity for the public to contribute to the review. Consultation on the proposal to introduce a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea will take place between Monday 13 January and Friday 21 February 2020.</p>
15.	<p>Can the public come along and listen to the debates?</p> <p>Yes. Meetings of the Community Governance Review Steering Group are open to the public; however, the Group has no decision making powers and all recommendations on the outcome of the review will be made through the Council's formal decision making machinery – the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and ultimately full Council. Members of the public are welcome to attend all these meetings and listen to the debates.</p>
16.	<p>Why do some areas of Rother District Council have a parish or town council, but others do not?</p> <p>The answer is largely historical. Prior to the local government reorganisation in 1974, most urban areas of England had an urban district council serving a single town (Bexhill Borough Council). Since its creation in 1974, Rother District Council, in common with many borough and district councils, has governed a larger area than its predecessors. While some of the local councils in town areas, for example Battle and the parish councils in the rural areas, have continued to exist following reorganisation in 1974, other councils, such as the former Bexhill Borough Council, were subsumed into the larger District Council and the Bexhill Charter Trustees were established.</p>

<p>17.</p>	<p>Who are the Bexhill Charter Trustees?</p> <p>The Bexhill Charter Trustees comprise all 18 Rother District Councillors who represent the wards in Bexhill, once elected to Rother, they automatically become a Charter Trustee. The Trustees came into existence in April 1974, when the old Bexhill Borough Council was merged with the Rye Corporation and the Battle Rural District Council to form the new Rother District Council. Some areas opted at that time to create new "Town Councils", but the decision was taken not to do this in Bexhill, but to form a Charter Trustee Body.</p> <p>There are currently only 12 Charter Trustee bodies in England and Wales.</p> <p>The role of the Trustees is purely ceremonial, they elect a Mayor and Deputy Mayor each May, and safeguard the traditions of the former Borough of Bexhill. They maintain the civic regalia and the "Town Plate", which is a collection of gifts and artefacts that were donated to the Town during its days as a Borough.</p> <p>The Trustees meet formally on four occasions each year, they receive reports from the Mayor and Clerk and they set an annual budget which covers the running cost of the Trustees. They make a formal precept for funds to Rother District Council, in the same way that Parish and Town Councils do. The cost of the Trustees is paid for solely by the residents of Bexhill, and the annual cost works out at 46p per household.</p> <p>The Mayor of Bexhill represents the Charter Trustees at numerous functions each year (sometimes as many as 250) both within, and outside of the Town of Bexhill, whilst neither he/she, nor the Charter Trustees themselves have any "executive powers", the Mayor is seen as an extremely important person within the locality, and brings a great sense of civic pride to all events which he/she attends.</p>
<p>18.</p>	<p>What is a parish or town council?</p> <p>A parish or town council is an elected body made up of local people representing the interests of their community. The creation of a new parish or town council within Bexhill-on-Sea would be in addition to and not instead of Rother District Council, and Members currently elected to Rother District Council would be able to stand for election to any parish or town councils created within Bexhill-on-Sea.</p> <p>This would mean there would be three tiers of local government in Bexhill-on-Sea as there are in the rural areas of the district (for example Battle Town Council (parish/town local level), Rother District Council (District level), East Sussex County Council (County level)).</p>
<p>19.</p>	<p>Is there a difference between a Parish and Town Council?</p> <p>No, they both have the same statutory powers and can provide the same services. The only differences are that a Town Council has decided that it should be known as a Town Council instead of a Parish Council, and a Town Council usually has a Mayor. An area must become a Parish Council first and then decide if they want to become a Town Council at a later date and apply for that status. It cannot become a Town Council until the actual parish is in</p>

	operation.
20.	<p>How are Parish and Town Councils funded?</p> <p>Parish, Town and Community Councils are funded through a sum of money called a 'precept' – this is a separate charge which is added to, and collected along with your existing council tax. The parish, town or community council will decide what it will need for the coming year and that depends on what services and facilities are needed by the local community. Parish and Town Councils can also apply for grants and loans.</p>
21.	<p>What does a parish or town council do?</p> <p>Parish, Town and Community Councils are the same in terms of their powers and responsibilities, but a Town Council also elects a Town Mayor. They are democratically elected bodies that have the power to do a number of things, including providing allotments, bus shelters, supporting local crime initiatives and local highway matters such as street lighting and maintenance of roadside verges. They can be involved in provision of community transport schemes, sport and recreation facilities, and tourism.</p> <p>They can provide a focus for representing local issues and identity, and are also consulted in planning applications in their area.</p> <p>Any parish or town council created for Bexhill as a result of this community governance review would work with Rother District Council to agree which services it would like to be involved in delivering.</p> <p>A parish or town council does not replace the District Council; it provides an additional layer of government. For example, if a Town Council is introduced within Bexhill, Rother District Council would still be the District Council delivering services in Bexhill. Any new Town Council would be in addition to Rother District Council.</p> <p>Rother District Council would have to meet most of the costs of establishing a Parish / Town Council, the Town Council itself would then be responsible for meeting all its expenditure, including the cost of premises, staffing and providing services.</p>
22.	<p>How many parish or town councillors would there be?</p> <p>It is being recommended that a Bexhill Town Council should have 18 Members across the current 9 Bexhill District Council Wards.</p> <p>Any councillors elected to the Town Council would be in addition to the existing local ward councillors who are members of Rother District Council.</p> <p>It is possible for the same people to be elected to the District Council and a parish, town or community council.</p>
23.	<p>Are parish or town councillors paid an allowance?</p> <p>Parish and town councillors are not usually paid an allowance, but may incur costs which can be reimbursed. Whether the Town Councillors are paid an allowance will be for the Town Council to decide, once established.</p>

24.	<p>How can I take part in the consultation?</p> <p>You can do this in a number of ways. You can either go on-line and complete the on-line consultation questionnaire, or visit the Community Help Point, Town Hall, Bexhill and complete a paper copy or contact your local Councillor for assistance.</p>
25.	<p>Will anonymous responses be taken into account?</p> <p>No. Each responder will have to provide their name, address and postcode to be included.</p>
26.	<p>Who is my local Ward Councillor and how can I contact them?</p> <p>If you do not know who your local Ward Councillor is and how to contact them, you can find this information out easily on the Council's website at:</p> <p>http://www.rother.gov.uk/article/6828/Who-is-my-councillor</p> <p>or alternatively, ring Democratic Services on 01424 787814 who will be pleased to help.</p>
27.	<p>Which option will cost me more money than I am currently paying in Council Tax?</p> <p>Option 1, the introduction of a Town Council will cost additional money, over and above what you currently pay in Council Tax.</p>
28.	<p>Which is the cheapest option?</p> <p>Option 2 (no change) will 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.</p> <p>For 2017/18 this was set at £211.16 per annum for a Band D property, which includes Bexhill Special Expenses of £41.05 to fund the following services specific to Bexhill: Bexhill Parks, Bexhill Allotments; Christmas Lighting; Bexhill Museum; Bus Shelters and the Bexhill Town Forum.</p> <p>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. This cap does not currently apply to Parish and Town Councils.</p>
29.	<p>Will Rother District Council and the Bexhill-on-Sea District Councillors still exist if there is a Bexhill Town Council?</p> <p>Yes. Rother District Council would still exist and continue to provide many of the services currently provided, not just to Bexhill-on-Sea but the whole of the Rother District.</p> <p>The introduction of an additional layer of local government would mean there</p>

	<p>would be three tiers of local government in Bexhill-on-Sea – the same as all rural Towns and Parishes across the District. Bexhill-on-Sea residents would be represented by two Town Councillors, two Rother District Councillors and one East Sussex County Councillor in the Ward in which they live.</p>
30.	<p>Will a Bexhill Town Council be able to make decisions for Bexhill-on-Sea?</p> <p>A Bexhill Town Council will be able to make decisions about services that have been devolved to it, along with other additional services it wants to provide for the residents of Bexhill-on-Sea; Rother District Council would continue to provide and make decisions about the majority of services to the residents of Bexhill-on-Sea, including responsibility for local planning decisions, licensing, waste collection etc.</p> <p>The Town Council would also be able to make representations to Rother District Council and endeavour to influence decisions that affect Bexhill-on-Sea by representing the views of the residents, in a very similar way to what the District Councillors do now.</p>
31.	<p>What will happen to the Bexhill Town Forum if a Town Council is created?</p> <p>Currently, Rother District Council provides funding to the Bexhill Town Forum, in the absence of a Town Council. The funding provided by Rother District Council to the Town Forum would cease. It would be a matter for the new Bexhill Town Council to consider whether they wished to continue to fund the Bexhill Town Forum.</p> <p>Whether the Bexhill Town Forum could exist without funding from either Rother District Council or a new Bexhill Town Council would be a matter for the Bexhill Town Forum to decide.</p>
32.	<p>Why are residents not being given a chance to vote in a proper referendum on this matter?</p> <p>Referendums come at considerable cost, which would have to be funded by the Council Tax payer; estimated costs for a referendum in Bexhill-on-Sea are in the region of £40,000.</p> <p>With the exception of a referendum on governance arrangements of the District Council itself (mayors, cabinets and committee systems), no power is available to local electors either to force their local authority to hold a referendum, or to oblige it to take any particular action following the result of a referendum.</p> <p>In accordance with legislation Rother District Council is able to determine the outcome of the Community Governance Review, without the need for a referendum.</p>

A town council for Bexhill?



Tell us what you think at:

rother.gov.uk/CommunityGovernanceReview

The consultation closes **21 February 2020**





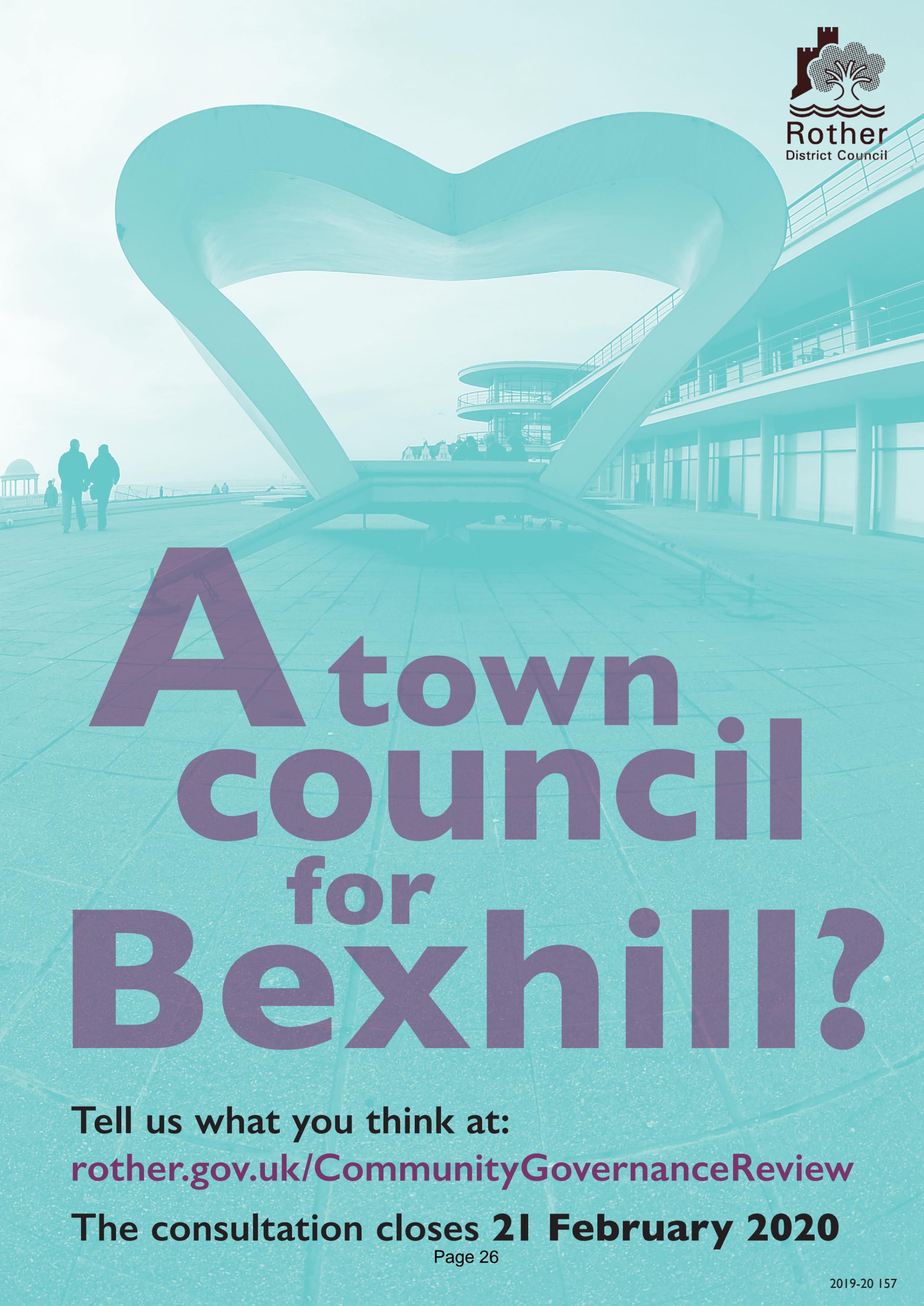
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