

**COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW STEERING GROUP**

16 March 2021

Minutes of the Community Governance Review Steering Group meeting held remotely on Tuesday 16 March 2021 at 10:00am.

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

Other Members present: Councillors P.C. Courtel, C.A. Madeley, S.M. Prochak, MBE (in part) and G.F. Stevens.

Advisory Officers in attendance: Chief Executive and Democratic Services Manager.

Also Present: Linda Butcher, Interim Parish Council Administrator and 19 members of the public via the YouTube live broadcast.

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**CGR20/14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was recorded for Councillor J.J. Carroll.

**CGR20/15. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

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

Councillor Barnes declared a personal interest in all matters on the Agenda as Vice-Chair of East Sussex Association of Local Councils.

**CGR20/16. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING - 21 JANUARY 2021 - MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes from the last meeting were accepted as a correct record of the proceedings.

**CGR20/17. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE ORDER**

The Chief Executive confirmed that since the last meeting the Community Governance Order, the legal document to establish the Bexhill-on-Sea Parish Council had been signed, sealed and delivered in accordance with the requirements of s96 of the 2007 Act.

The Bexhill-on-Sea Parish Council would come into being on 1 April 2021 and the existing Rother District Council Councillors who represented the Bexhill-on-Sea Wards would technically become “caretakers” until the elections took place on Thursday 6 May 2021, but it was not anticipated that they would be required to meet.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

**CGR20/18. THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS - PERMANENT CLERK**

It was noted that whilst the Chief Executive and Cabinet Portfolio Holder were able to progress the items within this and the following matter (Minute CGR20/19 below) under their existing delegated powers, Members' views and agreement to the proposals were sought.

Members considered the report of the Interim Parish Council Administrator that provided further details of the timescale and relevant documentation to enable the recruitment process for the permanent clerk to commence prior to the Bexhill-on-Sea Parish Council (BPC) being in place; the budget recently set for the BPC included £1,300 for recruitment.

It was proposed to advertise the post on the 19 April, with a closing date of 17 May, shortlisting on 21 May and interviews taking place on 1 June. It was noted that an additional BPC meeting might be required to appoint the Clerk. The first Annual Statutory Meeting would be held on Wednesday 19 May and the new BPC would need to agree an Appointment Panel (usually comprising of three councillors) to undertake the shortlisting and conduct the interviews. It was anticipated that an opportunity for all Members of the BPC to meet the shortlisted candidates would be built into the programme.

A copy of the draft advertisement was attached at Appendix A to the report and it was proposed to place it free of charge on the websites of SSALC [Sussex and Surrey Associations of Local Councils] and NALC [National Association of Local Councils] and on the SLCC [Society of Local Council Clerks] website at a cost. There were three price bands bronze, silver and gold offering different levels of service and it was recommended and agreed that the silver level for four weeks would be appropriate for this exercise. It was noted that Rother District Council would meet the initial costs and recoup from the BPC's budget, once the precept was available.

Members requested that the job advertisement be amended to be more aspirational and appealing to potential candidates and a number of suggestions for improvements were noted. Whilst Members hoped that the new Clerk would bring innovation, creativity and flair to the role, it was acknowledged that a qualified Clerk (or within 12 months of appointment) and/or someone with good knowledge of local authority workings would be critical and was required in any event to enable the BPC to spend funds that had been put into the budget. Members were reminded that it would be for the BPC to appoint the Clerk and determine the appropriate candidates for interview when shortlisting, taking into account their various skill sets.

A copy of a regular Job Description for a Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer and Person Specification were attached at Appendices A and B respectively to the report. It was noted that

applicants would be required to complete a 5-page application form and no recruitment agencies would be used.

**RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) the recruitment timetable as set out in the report be approved;
- 2) the advertisement be amended as per the discussion;
- 3) that the silver level of advertising be agreed for four weeks;
- 4) the advertising costs incurred be paid by Rother District Council and recovered from the BPC's budget; and
- 5) the job description and Person Specification be agreed, as submitted.

CGR20/19. **PROGRAMME FOR COMMUNICATIONS**

Whilst the Interim Parish Council Administrator (IPCA) was named in the District Council (Reorganisation of Community Governance) (Bexhill-on-Sea) Order 2021 as Proper Officer, a number of administrative matters needed to be progressed in the short term.

It was agreed to recommend that the insurance quotation from Zurich who specialised in providing insurance for local councils be accepted and paid for by Rother District Council (RDC) and recouped to ensure that the policy was in place from 1 April 2021.

With regard to a website, it was agreed to recommend that RDC establish the domain name and set up a basic page giving some information ahead of the BPC taking over and developing the website once in operation. Representations had been received from interested members of the public that, where possible, such a service should be commissioned from a local business. The IPCA confirmed that it would be for the BPC to determine the commissioning of the website, in accordance with its financial procedures and standing orders, once adopted.

The IPCA would establish a PO Box address for the BPC, ahead of the BPC agreeing and securing its own accommodation within the Town. A non-personal email address for the Clerk had also been set up [Bexhillclerk@gmail.com](mailto:Bexhillclerk@gmail.com).

For information purposes, a draft Calendar of Meetings had been attached to the Agenda which showed bi-monthly BPC meetings; Members were of the opinion that more meetings may be required at the outset to enable BPC to conduct all the necessary business to establish itself. It was noted that once BPC had agreed its decision making structure and delegated decision making and budgets to the various committees, there would be less need for numerous full Council meetings. These were matters to be determined by the BPC.

It was noted that there would be training for new Parish Councillors and an Induction Day was being organised, hopefully in person at the Town Hall, but if necessary remotely, following the elections. In particular individual Parish Councillors would need to be aware that they were

not able to speak on behalf of the Parish Council unless authorised to do so; this was usually only the Clerk and other designated Councillors.

**RESOLVED:** That the Interim Parish Council Administrator:

- 1) be authorised to enter into an insurance agreement with Zurich, to be paid by Rother District Council and re-charged to Bexhill-on-Sea Parish Council when the precept was available;
- 2) work with Rother District Council to establish a domain name and holding site with a gov.uk website for Bexhill-on-Sea Parish Council (BPC) and the provider to be agreed by BPC, once elected; and
- 3) incur the cost of setting up a PO Box address for Bexhill-on-Sea Parish Council (BPC) prior to an office being identified and agreed by BPC.

CGR20/20. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Cessation of the Community Governance Review Steering Group

The Chairman confirmed that as the Community Governance Review Steering Group (CGRSG) had concluded its business there would be no further meetings and she thanked all Members of the Group and the supporting officers for their contributions to the work of the CGRSG.

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 11:05am

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