

## **Rother District Council**

Report to	-	Cabinet
Date	-	1 July 2019
Report of the	-	Executive Director
Subject	-	Use of Meeting Rooms by Political Groups

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**Recommendation:** It be **RESOLVED:** That elected Members of the political groups represented on the Council be permitted to book the Council's meeting rooms for group meetings.

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**Democratic Services Manager: Lisa Cooper**  
**Lead Cabinet Member: Councillor Oliver**

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### **Introduction**

1. This report seeks to amend and regularise custom and practice with regard to the booking of meeting rooms for political group meetings. Historically, custom and practice at the Council has been that the use of the Council's meeting rooms for political purposes or for political group meetings has not been permitted.
2. Following the elections in May and the resulting significant change to the political make-up of the Council, it is appropriate to review this situation.
3. Furthermore, Officers have consulted with neighbouring authorities and the general situation appears to be that the political groups represented on those authorities are permitted free use of meeting rooms for group meetings either before or after formal committee meetings or at any other time.

### **Proposal**

4. There appears to be no reason why Rother District Council should not follow the same approach and it is therefore suggested that Cabinet agree to the change in established custom and practice.
5. It is proposed therefore that elected Members of the political groups serving on the Council are able to book meeting rooms, via the Council's Facilities Team, for the purposes of political group meetings, subject to availability, either before or after formal committee meetings or at any other time. This would exclude the Members' Room, the Leader and Chairman's Office and the Interview Rooms in the Community Help Point.

### **Existing Delegation**

6. There is an existing delegation for the Executive Director within the Council's Constitution which states:

“To authorise, following consultation with the Chairman of the Council, the free use of the Council Chamber or Committee Room at the Town Hall, Bexhill for public meetings sponsored by a Member of the Council on matters relating to the responsibility of the District Council and not related to a political party or commercially sponsored issue.”

7. It is not proposed to change this delegation as it is important that Members are able to support public meetings of organisations they are involved in. In addition, the free use of Council facilities is one way the Council can support and encourage its local organisations.

### **Conclusion**

8. Members are asked to approve the change to custom and practice allowing elected Members of political groups to book meeting rooms and hold political meetings within the Town Hall (excluding the Members’ Room, the Leader and Chairman’s Office and the Interview Rooms in the Community Help Point).

Malcolm Johnston  
Executive Director

### **Risk Assessment Statement**

There are no risks associated with this report.