

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