

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>

	<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.</p>
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>
<p>30.</p>	<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>
<p>31.</p>	<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>
<p>32.</p>	<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>