

## Rother District Council

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date:** 7 September 2020

**Title:** Bexhill Community Governance Review

**Report of:** Malcolm Johnston, Executive Director

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Bayliss

**Ward(s):** All (Bexhill)

**Purpose of Report:** To consider the recommendations arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20 July 2020, regarding the Bexhill Community Governance Review. The recommendation and minute arising is reproduced below.

**Decision Type:** Key

### Officer

**Recommendation(s):** **Recommendation to COUNCIL:** That:

- 1) a Parish Council be created for the whole of Bexhill-on-Sea, to be styled a Town Council based on the existing Bexhill Ward External Boundary;
- 2) the Town Council to contain nine Wards, based on the 2019 District Ward Boundaries and that two Town Councillors be elected to each Ward, making a total of 18 Bexhill Town Councillors;
- 3) the first elections be held in May 2021;

Subject to the approval of 1), 2) and 3) above,

- 4) the dissolution of the Bexhill Charter Trustees following the formation of the Bexhill Town Council be noted; and
- 5) the consultation results be taken into account when the transfer of services / powers to Bexhill Town Council are discussed.

### Reasons for

**Recommendations:** To approve the creation of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea.

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## OSC20/13. **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW OF BEXHILL-ON-SEA – DRAFT FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members received the report of the Executive Director outlining the draft final recommendations of the Community Governance Review Steering Group (CGRSG).

In 2017, under the former administration, the Council undertook a Community Governance Review of Bexhill-on-Sea, and whilst there was overwhelming support shown for the creation of a Town Council (93% of some 9,000+ responses) it was decided at that time not to proceed with the establishment of a Town Council.

Following the local elections in May 2019, and the change in political control, the Council approved a Motion requesting officers to report as to the required procedure with a view to the establishment of a Town Council for Bexhill by 2021. Full Council subsequently agreed the process by which the Council would undertake the Community Governance Review of Bexhill-on-Sea at its meeting on 16 September 2019 and appointed the Community Governance Review Steering Group (CGRSG) to lead on the process.

The CGRSG had met on four occasions between October 2019 and May 2020 in order to progress its Terms of Reference and comprised of the following Members: Councillors J. Barnes, C.A. Bayliss, T.J.C. Byrne, J.J. Carroll, P.J. Gray, L.M. Langlands, P.N. Osborne, R.B. Thomas and H.L. Timpe. Councillor Bayliss was appointed Chairman and all meetings of the CGRSG were held in the public domain.

At its last meeting held on 29 May 2020, the CGRSG had considered the outcome of the public consultation exercise; the report and full consultation response was attached at Appendix 3 to the report and the Minutes of the meeting attached at Appendix 4.

The key points from the consultation were outlined to Members as follows:

- 2,193 responses were received from the public – 1,564 on-line and 629 response slips;
- in total the Council received 2,208 responses – (4.6% of the population);
- 78% of all responders supported the creation of a town council (22% did not);
- the younger the age group, the less likely they were to support a town council;
- the older the age group the more likely they were to support a town council;
- there were no differences between the views of males and females;
- there was support for the services already funded by Bexhill special expenses to be devolved to a town council; and
- the majority of responders in each Rother District Council Ward were in favour of a town council.

In light of the public support for the creation of a Town Council, demonstrated through both the 2017 and 2020 consultation and in line with the Council's stated objective of delivering a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea, the CGRSG recommended that the Council established a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea. The Town Council would be based on the current District Council external boundary of Bexhill, with nine wards, each appointing two Members and with the first elections taking

place in May 2021. It was noted that the recommendation would result in the demise of the Bexhill Charter Trustees who would become defunct once the Town Council was established.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and the following points were noted during the discussions:

- if full Council agreed to the creation of a Town Council for Bexhill, ways to engage with younger residents who were less likely to support a town council, would be explored;
- the consultation results showed support for the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan for Bexhill;
- legal advice and assistance would be procured to assist with drafting the Community Governance Order and the establishment of the Town Council; the scope of devolvement would be agreed with the new Town Council once established, but the District Council could have internal discussions prior to that time;
- legal advice had been sought concerning the establishment of a shadow Town Council. This would be set up from 1 April 2021 using existing Bexhill District Councillors until the date of elections; and
- the Bexhill Special Expenses for next year would be set as part of the Council's annual budget setting procedures in the usual way, funded only by Bexhill residents, and would continue until the new Town Council took over the agreed devolved services.

(Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agenda Item 5).

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	Consultation	No
Environmental	No	Access to Information	No
Sustainability	No	Exempt from publication	No
Risk Management	No		

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Appendices:	N/A
Relevant Previous Minutes:	None.
Background Papers:	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Reference Documents:	None.