

Rother District Council

Report to - Community Governance Review Steering Group
Date - 24 November 2020
Subject - Proposals from Democracy4Bexhill

Email received from D4B to Councillor Bayliss

Dear Christine

As you know, for some time there have been suggestions that some community organisations could be involved in the forthcoming decisions on the town council.

Most of the Rother councillors for Bexhill and the steering group which you chair, came from D4B, so their commitment to the town council is not in doubt, nor the expectation that the town council and Rother should work harmoniously together. However, there are two sets of interests involved here - Rother's and Bexhill's- and it would not be surprising if there were some split loyalties. In other words, it could be perceived that you will be negotiating with yourselves!

To address this and to give an immediate community feel to the town council, perhaps some of the leading voluntary organisations in the town could be invited to join the discussions about the main points of the Reorganisation of Community Governance Order. Of course, from May 2021 it is likely that the town council will want to involve the wider community in a structured way, but it would be a good idea to start off by giving the organisations some voice now and listening to them. This is an idea which Trevor Leggo has enthusiastically endorsed and it worked well in Queens Park.

The organisations may simply want to say what their hopes are for the town council but at this crucial point, there are some key issues to be decided. It is very good that no services currently provided under Bexhill Special Expenses will be transferred until the councillors are in place and make their own decisions. But there are other decisions as you know on which they may have views.

For example - when discussing the precept which has to be settled in the Order, there will be questions arising from:

- CIL money and any 106 money - can the town council get its fair share?
- The RDC Community Grants Fund budget, ditto.
- Premises - presumably initially part of the town hall, but which part, will it look like a town hall entrance and not just a few rooms out the back. We presume it will be rent free and could be under an initial 5 year non-repairing lease. (I see that Lowestoft town council retrieved its town hall from Waveney DC and promptly leased it back to Waveney DC ! (Waveney RCG Order 2017).
- The transfer of the Charter Trustees & Mayor's budget of c 12K to the BTC, plus its assets, regalia etc.
- The May 2021 election expenses to be met by Rother. We assume that Rother would also pay for the 2023 elections if the town council has to join the usual "cycle" of election years, since it was Rother who denied the creation of the town council on the "right" year.
- Some training provision for BTC candidates.

- Subscriptions to NALC and SSALC, about £4,000 a year.

In addition, it could be noted that there will be considerable savings to RDC if and when services are transferred in later years, reflected in the RDC 5 year budget of January 2019 of a figure of up to £1.3 million, and a 50/50 share of that would be appropriate.

The organisations consulted might include RVA, Bexhill Heritage, D4B, The Pelham, the Chamber of Commerce, perhaps a residents association. I am sure you will have a better idea of who could be on board. There could be representations from the police or from schools or churches or transport authorities, but this may make it too unwieldy in the short time available.

Hoping that the steering group can consider this idea and take it forward.

Thanks and best wishes

Viv

Viv Taylor Gee

Chair, Democracy4Bexhill