

Rother District Council

Report to	-	Community Governance Review Steering Group
Date	-	24 November 2020
Report of the	-	Chief Executive
Subject	-	Next Steps and Terms of Reference Review

Introduction

1. As Members are aware, the Community Governance Review Steering Group (CGRSG) was formed to lead on and make recommendations regarding the Community Governance Review of Bexhill-on-Sea. Following the completion of the review, the final recommendations and review of the Community Governance Order elsewhere on this Agenda, the Terms of Reference as currently set for the CGRSG have been fulfilled.
2. However, Rother District Council (RDC) is keen to ensure that the establishment of the parish (town) council for Bexhill-on-Sea is a success. To this end, officers are being guided and supported by Surrey Hills Solicitors from the legal perspective, and the Sussex Association of Local Councils (SALC) on the practical side. Trevor Leggo, Chief Executive Officer of SALC will also attend this meeting. Members are reminded, that once established, the new parish council is a totally separate organisation from RDC and is a sovereign body in its own right – there is no hierarchical management between the local government tiers.
3. This report sets out the next steps that have been recommended by SALC which includes the appointment of an interim parish council administrator to cover the transition period, an expanded role for the CGRSG in terms of working with the interim administrator on the preparation of the job description and person specification and appointment process for the new clerk, the promotion of the elections and pre-election events and information sessions for prospective candidates. These matters are considered in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Appointment of interim parish council administrator

4. SALC have suggested that it would be advantageous to secure the services of someone who has previous experience and skill set to successfully create a new council; SALC are able to recommend such people. An interim administrator would be contracted to provide services rather than be directly employed by the Council. It is recommended that the interim appointment commences on 1 February 2021 for a 6-month period (expiring 31 July), for an average of 15 hours per week, recognising that flexibility would be required with some weeks requiring less or more hours than 15.
5. Cabinet will be requested to approve the appointment of the interim administrator at their December meeting and authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Lead Member for Transition Bexhill Town Council to agree the appointment and terms of conditions thereof.
6. The interim administrator would potentially be involved setting up the initial governance structure, policies and procedures, briefing prospective councillors,

identifying and securing accommodation, drafting the cycle of meetings, asset transfer and any other governance issues. The interim administrator would also oversee the inauguration of the new Council, election of Chairman/Mayor, establishment of committees and a hand over to the permanent Town Clerk.

Appointment of Town Clerk

7. With the new parish council coming into being with effect from 1 April 2021 and Members elected in early May, the first task for the new parish council will be the appointment of its Town Clerk. To achieve an interview process within that timeframe the following is suggested:
 - Draft person specification, job description, pay level and advert by end January.
 - Advertise widely in February with closing date end of March.
 - Initial sift by a working party of this CGRSG, advised by the parish council administrator in early April.
 - Shortlist drawn up ready for the new parish council.
 - Interviews week commencing 17 May 2021.
8. Depending on the notice period of the person selected, start date could be between June and August, in which case the interim administrator could be asked to stay on. Looking at similar Town Clerk posts around the country, the salary level will need to be in excess of £60,000 per annum but will very much depend on the aims and ambitions of the new parish council.

Promotion of election

9. Whilst RDC has a duty to publicise the elections, in accordance with election regulations, the interim administrator, working with RDC will organise and run pre-election events and information sessions for prospective candidates. The success of the new parish council will very much depend on the calibre and enthusiasm of the new parish councillors elected into office.

Terms of Reference Review

10. For the CGRSG to be involved in the matters outlined in this report, the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Group will need to be expanded. Members are invited to review the ToR attached at Appendix A, with additions in red text. Cabinet will be requested to approve these, along with the appointment of the interim administrator at the meeting to be held on 14 December 2020.

Conclusion

11. The report highlights the significant amount of work that needs to be undertaken for the creation of the Bexhill-on-Sea Parish Council. The engagement of an interim Clerk and associated external expertise will ensure there are sufficient dedicated resources to ensure this is a smooth process.

Malcolm Johnston
Chief Executive

Appendices

Appendix A - Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Review Steering Group

<p>Aims and Origins</p>	<p>To manage the Community Governance Review (CGR) process, under the terms of reference set by full Council.</p> <p>A CGR is required following the motion passed by Full Council on 22 May 2019.</p>
<p>Scope</p>	<p>To determine a detailed timetable and consultation programme for the CGR;</p> <p>To progress the review in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the Guidance on CGRs issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government and The Local Government Boundary Commission for England in March 2010;</p> <p>To recommend appropriate electoral arrangements for a parish / town council created within Bexhill-on-Sea, where necessary (including the name of any newly created parish; the number, name and boundaries of any parish wards; the number of councillors to be elected within each ward; and the ordinary year of elections); and</p> <p>To consider and make recommendations on any consequential matters arising from the review which are required to give effect to any subsequent Community Governance Order (CGO), e.g. the transfer and management or custody of property, the setting of precepts for new parishes, provision for the transfer of any functions, rights, liabilities, staff, etc.</p> <p>To work with the interim parish council administrator on the preparation of the job description and person specification and appointment process for the new clerk, the promotion of the elections and pre-election events and information sessions for prospective candidates.</p>
<p>Outcomes</p>	<p>To recommend to Cabinet, via the OSC to create a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea and if so what types of functions it would seek to undertake.</p> <p>A successful recruitment campaign and identification of suitable candidates to be appointed as Town Clerk by the new parish council.</p> <p>A successful pre-election campaign with sufficient candidates standing for election.</p>