

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW STEERING GROUP

To: CGRSG

Date 16th March 2021

Contact for this report Interim Parish Council Administrator

Subject **PROGRAMME FOR COMMUNICATIONS**

The purpose of this report is to provide information to ensure the changeover from CGRSG to Bexhill-on-Sea Parish Council can be achieved in a smooth and efficient manner. This can be simplified if Members accept that it is essential some matters need to be dealt with in the interim and there is a cost implication.

It is recognised that the Community Governance Review Steering Group will cease on 31st March and that the 18 Rother District Councillors for the nine Bexhill Wards will be a 'shadow council' from 1st April 2021. However, it is understood that they are unlikely to make any decisions on behalf of the new Bexhill-on-Sea Parish Council.

It is understandable that this could cause issues with some matters that need to be in place from 1st April. Although the Interim Parish Council Administrator is named in the District Council (Reorganisation of Community Governance) (Bexhill-on-Sea) Order 2021 as Proper Officer, it would be more open and transparent if certain matters could be achieved before and during this time, particularly as there are cost implications.

Perhaps the CGRSG or 'shadow council' would be able to agree that Rother District Council fund certain priorities and then the new Council be re-charged so they could be paid when the precept is received. This would be more transparent than reducing the amount of precept paid and will provide an audit trail for both authorities.

Insurance

In order to provide an accurate budget cost for insurance, the Interim Parish Council Administrator obtained two firm quotations from companies who specialise in providing insurance for local councils. The two companies were Came and Company, and Zurich. £2,000 was put into the budget and bearing in mind the Parish Council is created on 1st April it is essential that insurance is in place from that date.

Website and email for Bexhill-on-Sea Local Council and Councillors

A detailed WCAG2.1AA compliant website proposal has been received from Aubergine, a company recommended by SLCC and which designs specifically for councils. The process would take at least five weeks so it is important that this can be started prior to the council elections on 6th May 2021.

Examples of this company's designs can be found at:

Dawlish Town Council: <https://www.dawlish.gov.uk>

Bridgenorth Town Council: <https://www.bridgenorthtowncouncil.gov.uk>

Thornbury Town Council: <https://www.thornburytowncouncil.gov.uk>

Leighton Linslade Town Council: <https://www.leightonlinslade-tc.gov.uk/>

Beverley Town Council: <https://www.beverley.gov.uk>

Nantwich Town Council: <https://www.nantwichtowncouncil.gov.uk/>

Administration

There are a number of matters that will need to be in place as soon as the Council is created and approaches have been made to the following:

Independent Internal Audit Service
A Local Council-specific Financial Software Package
Payroll Service

Enquires have also been made about renting premises within Bexhill so the Council can have an immediate presence in the town centre. However, it is assumed that this is something that needs to be confirmed by the Council after the election. In the meantime, the Interim Parish Council Administrator will make enquiries about a P.O. Box address for the Council. A non-personal email address has been set up for public use Bexhillclerk@gmail.com

A draft Calendar of Meetings is attached (Appendix A) which shows bi-monthly Council meetings (May, July, September, November, January and March) although there may need to be an extra meeting to formally appoint the permanent Clerk. A copy of the Council Year is also attached for information (Appendix B).

A suite of policy documents is being prepared for consideration by the Parish Council after the election and these include:

Standing Orders	Financial Regulations
Draft Council Structure	Scheme of Delegation to Committees and Officers
Grants Policy	Complaints Procedure
Media and Communications Policy	Transparency and Publication Scheme
Disciplinary Procedure	Grievance Procedure
Performance Management Scheme *	Sickness Reporting
Member/Officer Protocol	Code of Conduct

*If the Council adopts a Performance Management Scheme the Council will need to identify its objectives then transfer those objectives that the Council wishes the Clerk to achieve (including timescales). It is important that these objectives are realistic, attainable and can be monitored.

DECISIONS REQUIRED:

- A) *To consider and authorise the Interim Parish Council Administrator to enter into an insurance agreement with Zurich*
- B) *To consider if the fee can be paid by RDC and then re-charged to Bexhill Local Council when the precept is received.*
- C) *To consider and authorise the Interim Parish Council Administrator to enter into an agreement to provide a gov.uk website for Bexhill-on-Sea Local Council which would also include gov.uk email addresses for the permanent Clerk and each Councillor.*
- D) *To authorise the Interim Parish Council Administrator to incur the cost of setting up a P.O.box address for the Council prior to an office being agreed by the new Council.*