

# Becoming a Rother District Councillor –



## Representing your local community

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This information can be available in large print, Braille, audiotape/CD or in another language upon request.

**For all enquiries please contact**  
**[democraticservices@rother.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@rother.gov.uk)**

**Tel: 01424 787813**

# Introduction

Councillors play a key role in improving the quality of life for all those who live or work within the 200 square miles of the Rother District.

As a local Councillor you will:

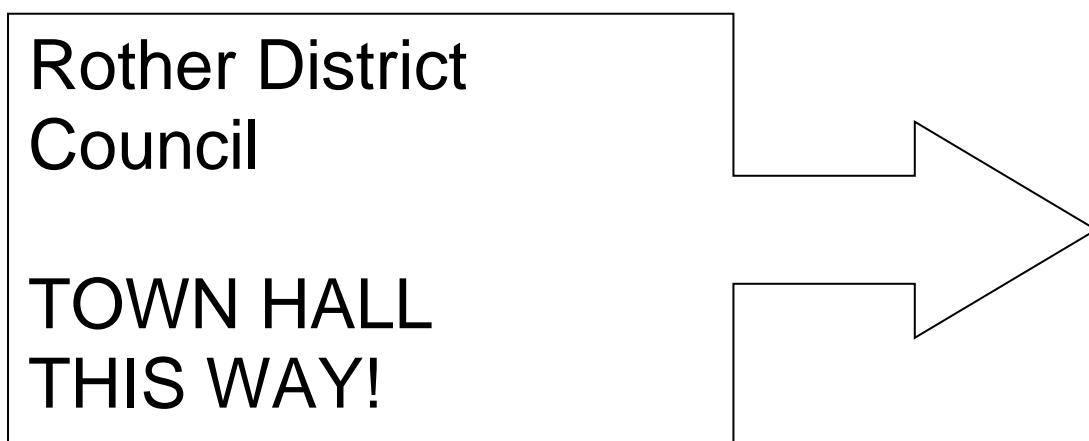
- act as the voice of your local community
- help shape Council services
- work with other authorities and service providers to agree and achieve common goals
- look after services with a revenue budget of around £14 million a year
- act with the utmost integrity and honesty in carrying out your work as a Councillor



All 38 seats on the Council are due for election in May 2019 giving you the perfect opportunity to get involved and

exert some influence on future decisions for your local community.

We hope that this booklet will help you make up your mind about becoming a Councillor for Rother. If you are interested, this booklet tells you what you need to consider and what steps you need to take to make that a reality.



## **Rother District Council**

Rother District is recognised for its excellent quality of life, as a place where there is a strong emphasis on community and neighbourhoods. This will be achieved by continuing to support and further encourage the development of vibrant, strong, safe and inclusive communities.

The Council's aims are:

- An Efficient, Flexible and Effective Council
- Sustainable Economic Prosperity
- Stronger, Safer Communities
- A Quality Physical Environment

The Council's Corporate Plan sets down our vision for the future and the specific ways in which the Council will both lead and contribute to the achievement of this vision. The Plan can be found at:

<http://www.rother.gov.uk/corporateplan>

The Council operates a five year financial strategy to give stability and direction to

financial planning. The budget is reviewed annually and the level of Council Tax is set by the full Council.

Rother District Council is committed to developing its elected Members in order to assist the Council in achieving its aims and priorities in accordance with the Corporate Plan. Member development and training is a joint commitment between officers and elected Members. By working in partnership, appropriate investment in relevant training and development will be identified and resourced.

At Rother we value our elected Members and ensure that they are all given an equal opportunity to develop their knowledge and learn new skills. This enables them to promote partnership working



and community engagement in order to become effective Ward Councillors and lead a modern and progressive District Council.

## **Why become a Councillor?**

People become Councillors for different reasons; the most common theme is their wish to “make a difference” and to help their local community.



You may already be involved in your community and you may have specific issues that you would like the Council

to address. You may wish to challenge the way the Council has operated in the past or influence the way it operates in the future.

Whatever the reason, no specific qualifications are required other than a commitment to serve your local

community to the best of your ability and a willingness to give up your time.

The Council is keen to attract candidates who are representative of all sections of the communities that make up the District of Rother and candidates who also have a range of skills and experience to add value to the Council as an organisation.

### **Rother District Councillor quotes**

“To try to improve the quality of life for ward residents.”

“I realised the time had come for me to put words into action!”

“When I first put my name in the frame to become a District Councillor it was because I CARE for where I live and that has not changed since 2001.”

“I wanted to give something back to the community.”



“To influence change in improving Bexhill and steer decision making in a positive direction.”

“The best thing about being a Rother Councillor is serving my local community and working as a community leader for all residents; making a difference to people’s daily lives by prioritising them, what is needed and what matters to residents to ensure a better quality of life for them – better economic prosperity, strong and safe communities, effective and reliable Council.”

## **Do I have to belong to a Political Party?**

No. Some people stand as Independent Members. However, if you wish to stand as a candidate for a political party you will need to be a member of that party. Contact details for each of the main political parties are given at the end of this booklet.

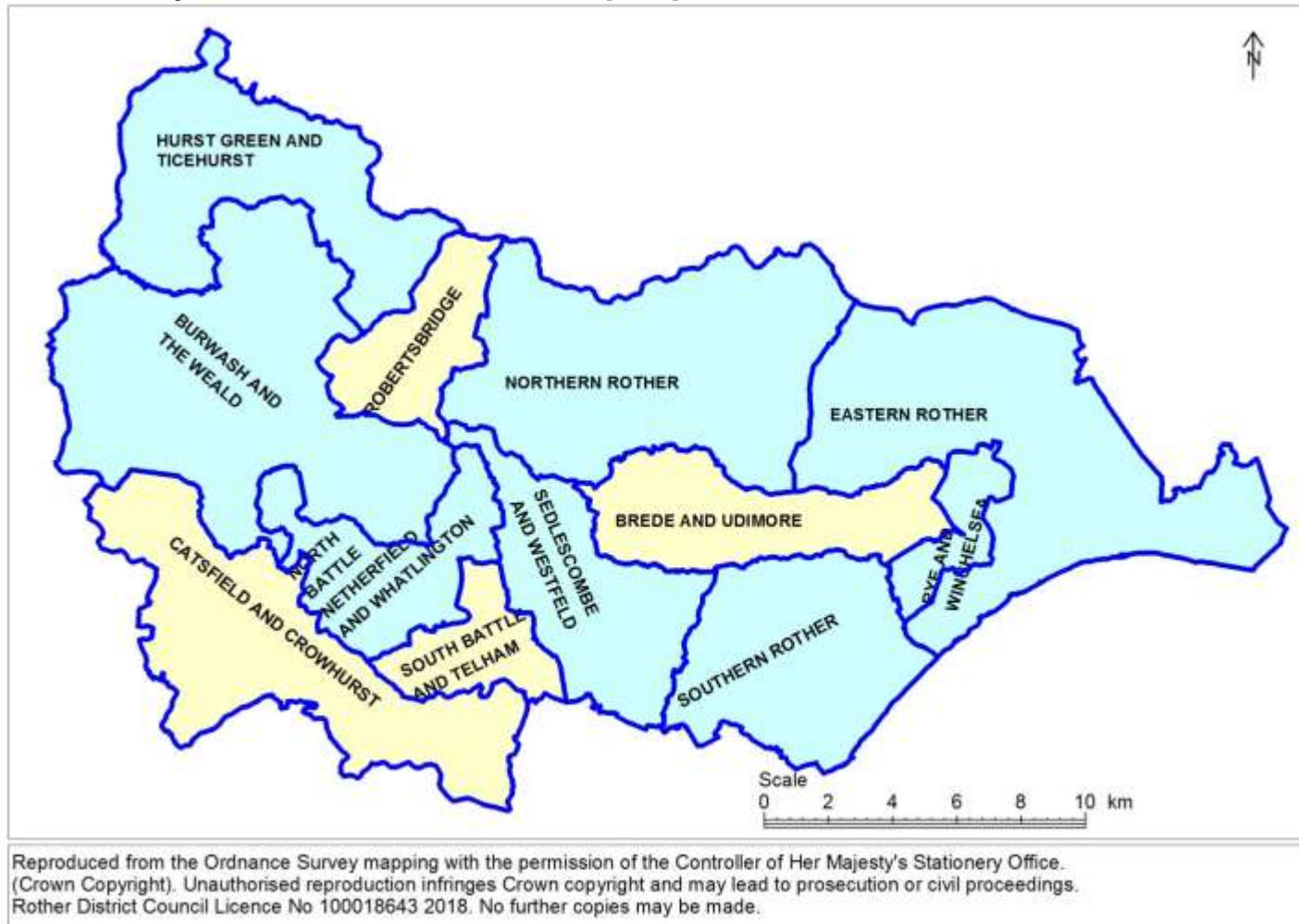
Rother District Council is currently composed of 31 Conservative, three Liberal Democrats, three Association of

Independents and one Independent Councillor (2015-2019 term).

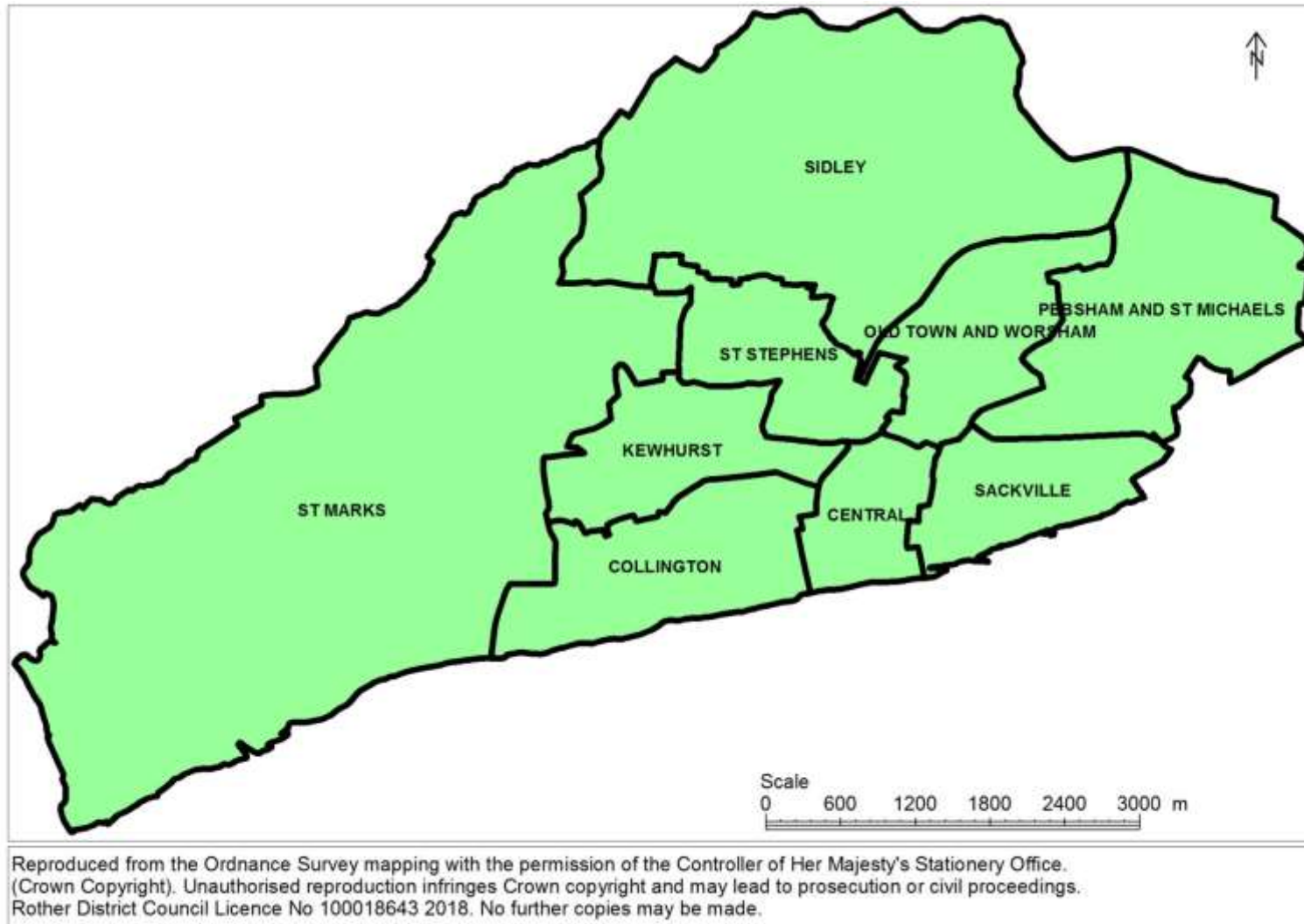
Each District Councillor represents a Ward. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England undertook a Boundary Review in 2015-16, the effects of which will come into being at the May 2019 election. One of the desired outcomes of the review was to ensure, as far as possible, that each Councillor across the district represented roughly the same number of voters.

The Wards in Rother fall into two different parliamentary constituencies: Hastings and Rye and Bexhill and Battle.

This map shows the new 2019 Wards and boundaries for the rural Wards outside Bexhill-on-Sea. Wards are either represented by one (cream) or two (blue) Councillors, being determined by the size of the population.



This map shows the new 2019 Wards and boundaries within Bexhill-on-Sea, each of which are represented by two Councillors.



## Who can become a Councillor?

To stand for election in Rother, you must, on the day of the election be:

- 18 or over; and
- a UK, EU or commonwealth citizen

and satisfy at least one of the following:

- be registered to vote in the Rother District or have occupied land or premises in the district for the whole of a period of 12 months preceding the election as an owner or tenant; or
- be working in the Rother area; or
- be living in Rother.

A person **cannot** stand for election if they:

- work for Rother District Council; or
- hold a politically restricted post for another authority such as East Sussex County Council; or
- are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order; or
- have served a three month or more prison sentence (including suspended

sentences) within five years of the election; or

- have been convicted of a corrupt or illegal practice by an election court.

## **How decisions are made**

Rother's 38 Councillors are elected every four years and they meet together regularly as full Council. These meetings are open to the public and are led by the Chairman of the Council. He or she is appointed at the annual Council meeting in May and serves a term of one year.

The decision making structure itself is subject to scrutiny and may change from time to time, to ensure efficient and effective decision making; any proposed changes have to be agreed by full Council. The majority of meetings are held at the Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea.

## **Full Council**

The Council decides overall policies and sets the budget each year. It also appoints the Leader for a four year term of office following the elections. The Leader

appoints the Deputy Leader and the Cabinet which develops and implements policies on behalf of the authority.

## **Cabinet**

Cabinet meets monthly and makes most day to day decisions that are in-line with overall policies and budgets. If Cabinet wishes to make a decision outside this framework it must refer the matter to full Council for approval.

## **Overview and Scrutiny**



The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitors the decisions of Cabinet and the implementation of policies.

It also recommends policies to Cabinet and Council and may be asked by Cabinet to review particular areas of activity. It can also 'call-in' a decision made by Cabinet but not yet implemented - enabling them to consider whether the right decision has been taken.

**Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups** are informal groups appointed to carry out

particular tasks and may invite representatives from other external organisations or interested members of the public to assist them in their deliberations.

## **Planning**

**Committee** makes decisions regarding planning applications and other planning related matters.



## **Licensing and General Purposes**

**Committee and Panels** make decisions on alcohol and taxi licensing and Human Resources issues, amongst other matters.

## **Audit and Standards Committee**

monitors financial and audit matters and risks and promotes and maintains high standards of conduct within the Council. It also has responsibility to put in place arrangements to investigate and make decisions on written allegations where Members may have failed to comply with the Code of Conduct.



## **Rother District Councillor quotes**

“Decisions are made using rigorous processes and discussion between Members. Serving on Committee is rewarding and has increased my knowledge of issues affecting local residents.”

“Decisions are mostly clear and easy, but not always. When every option has predicable but undesirable or unknown consequences it can be difficult, however I have always felt that it is better to make a decision than defer until later, otherwise nothing is ever accomplished.”

“When you have such a large and strong majority party, most of the decisions are made by that group regardless of the opposition. However the debates within Committee meetings are very good, hopefully they (opposition Members) influence the final decision on the direction of the authority.”

## **What do Councillors do?**

Roles can be very varied and to a great extent depend on the amount of time individuals can give to the role. A considerable amount of time will be taken up dealing with local people – this could be issues or enquiries about Council work. Councillors represent their residents' views on matters associated with the Council.

Every Councillor is a Member of full Council and will also sit on some of the formal Committees and informal Task and Finish Groups to debate and approve Council business. All formal meetings are open to the public except where personal or confidential matters are being debated.

Councillors will collectively be the ultimate policy-makers; carry out a number of strategic and corporate management functions; contribute to the good governance of the District; and have an overriding duty to the whole community and their constituents.

## **To the Council:**

- help form policy;
- help develop the budget and set Council tax levels; and
- make and scrutinise decisions.

## **To the Ward:**

- represent the views of the community;
- ensure services are provided in the Ward;
- try to secure resources for their Ward;
- help individual residents on specific issues;
- attend Parish Council meetings if representing a rural Ward; and
- attend meetings relevant to Bexhill and community associations.

## **To the community:**

Councillors are local leaders, able to listen to their communities and bring partners

together to implement a shared vision of how they can improve their areas.



Councillors have a key role to play in leading communities and working to resolve local issues.

### **As leaders.....**

- stimulating local organisations and individuals to take up opportunities to express views;
- representing local concerns;
- maintaining a link between the users and providers of services;
- encouraging the community to organise services for themselves;
- working with other community leaders in the voluntary, community and business sectors;
- offering vision and direction to local groups and building support for that vision; and
- brokering agreements between different interests and partners.

### **As advocates...**

- speaking up for and on behalf of residents and groups;

- encouraging residents to engage and participate;
- taking part in making plans and planning decisions; and
- communicating residents' concerns to the Council and other providers.

## How much time is involved?

Each Councillor will decide their own level of commitment to the role – and how much time they can devote. It can range from a



few hours a day or a few hours a week – or even a few days a week – but it will depend on which Committees they sit on and whether they hold a position of responsibility, such as a Committee Chairman or Cabinet Portfolio Holder.

Some of the issues to consider before committing to the role are:

- how being a Councillor will impact on family and personal relationships – you will need support as some of your free

time will be occupied with Council business;

- the people you represent will look to you for help so expect more post, emails and telephone calls – at all times of the day;
- you may need to spend some time visiting your constituents in their homes or at Council offices;
- you may also need to meet Council Officers to discuss key issues;
- there are five full Council meetings a year which you are expected to attend - meetings start at 6:30pm and generally conclude within two hours;

- you will normally be a Member of at least one Committee or be on Cabinet –



meetings are held both during the day and in the early evening and may typically last for two to three hours.

These meetings may not be spread evenly over a month so some weeks may need more time than others. For more information on the current year's meetings visit the Calendar of Meetings

page on our website:

<http://www.rother.gov.uk/article/6827/Calendar-of-meetings>

- many Councillors also represent the authority on outside bodies;
- background reading for most meetings is essential before attending;
- if you are elected as Chairman of a Committee more work and time will be involved;
- there is an expectation for rural District Councillors outside Bexhill-on-Sea to attend meetings of their local Parish / Town Councils on a regular basis;
- if you are a member of a political party there will be political group meetings; and
- you may also be expected to hold regular 'Ward surgeries' with constituents.

## **Allowances**

Allowances are paid to reimburse time and expenses incurred while on Council business.



Every Rother Councillor is entitled to such allowance, paid monthly, along with reimbursement of

travelling and subsistence expenses incurred within and outside the District, when appropriate.

Some Councillors also get additional allowances to cover special responsibilities such as Cabinet Members and Committee Chairmen. Childcare and other dependent costs are also met up to a maximum amount with qualifying criteria.

## **Training and Support**

All newly elected Councillors go through an induction training programme where you can attend sessions designed to help you understand the role and functions of the Council and its structure.





Each Member is required to complete a Training Needs Analysis to identify the areas where further training and support would be of assistance to them in fulfilling their new role.



The Council is committed to delivering a training programme that is owned by and meets

the needs of its Members. The training available may also benefit Members in their employment or private lives.

In recognition of our work in developing Members, the Council holds the South East Employer's Charter for Member Development.

In addition to the various training opportunities a range of support is offered to Councillors:

- information to help deal with Ward matters and all other work done as a Councillor will be provided by Council

Officers who will point you in the right direction if they are unable to help;

- senior Officers and the two Executive Directors will also provide guidance;
- the Democratic Services Team provides limited administrative support to Members;

- you will be expected to communicate electronically with the Council



- and the community and appropriate IT equipment, support and training will be given;
- you will have access to the Members' Room at the Town Hall and meeting rooms based at Council offices in connection with your role as a Councillor; and
- a range of training materials, including DVDs (audio and visual) and books within the Members' Library are also available for self-learning at your own pace.

## **Rother District Councillor quotes**

“As a new Councillor I was made aware of officer support available to me and was advised to ask for help when required.”

“The training and support from Democratic Services is first class, if you need help they are always willing to guide you in the right direction.”

“Support, help and advice is there if you want it, as a newly elected Councillor that was invaluable.”

“I have been impressed with the diligence and care of the Council in assisting Councillors to undertake skill development to help them carry out their roles effectively and make informed effective decisions.”

“As an Independent Councillor I hope I have earned the respect of my peers, I do my best for those who have put their trust in me, I enjoy the trust of my fellow Councillors across the political divide, but

the most important thing for me personally is the incredible support I have received from my community to whom I am ultimately answerable for my actions. To have contributed fully over many years in supporting those who need my help and have placed their trust in me.”

“The best thing about being a Councillor is being involved in Council decision making and representing the views of my ward residents.”

“Working with experienced, knowledgeable Members and officers who enable you to learn and develop in your role. This gives you the opportunity to focus on what you want to achieve.”

## **Working / Employment as well as being a Councillor**

By law, if you are working, your employer must allow you to take a reasonable amount of time off during working hours to perform your duties as a Councillor in addition to your normal holiday

entitlement. The amount of time depends upon your responsibilities and the effect it will have on your employer's business. This should be discussed with them before making the commitment to being a Councillor. Employers can choose to pay you for this time, but they do not have to.

## **Code of Conduct**

Councillors' conduct is formally governed by the Code of Conduct adopted by the authority. It sets out the rules



Members should work to.

Councillors must make sure they do not do anything to bring the Council into disrepute and not misuse their official position to their own advantage or the advantage of others.

Councillors must at all times act with the utmost honesty and integrity in serving the public and never improperly confer an

advantage or disadvantage on any person.

Councillors should make all decisions on merit and are accountable to the public for their actions and the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities.

They are expected to promote equality by not discriminating against any person and treat people with respect regardless of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

For the effective conduct of Council business there must be mutual respect, trust and courtesy between Members and Officers.

## **Getting elected – the process**



Once you have decided to stand for election as a Councillor you need to be proposed and seconded by two people and have a further eight people as assentors to your nomination. It is your responsibility – or

that of your agent – to present nomination papers to the Returning Officer at the Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea before the closing deadline.

**Selection** – Political groups have their own selection procedures.

## **Electoral Register**

In the run up to the election, candidates can request a free copy of the electoral register for the Ward for which they are standing. This lists residents who can vote at the next election and maps the ward boundary.



## **Election Agents**

You can take on this role yourself but it can be helpful to have an agent. Some political parties will supply an agent – some take on the role for several candidates. It becomes the agent's responsibility to ensure all the forms are

lodged at the correct times and to keep an accurate record of election expenses which must be submitted after the election.

**Before completing the nomination form make sure you:**

- do not leave it until the last minute – allow at least 10 days before the deadline – your papers will need verifying so give yourself enough time to correct mistakes;
- take a copy of the electoral register with you when collecting the 10 signatures needed – this will enable you to compare the name with that on the nomination form and get their assentors number;
- read the nomination paper and supporting material carefully; and
- make sure the people nominating and seconding you are only backing you and not several candidates.



Full details of the nomination process are available from:

The Electoral Services Manager  
Rother District Council  
Town Hall  
Bexhill-on-Sea  
East Sussex  
TN39 3JX  
Tel: 01424 787826

✉: [elections@rother.gov.uk](mailto:elections@rother.gov.uk)

## Useful Contacts

### Rother District Council

Town Hall

Bexhill-on-Sea

East Sussex

TN39 3JX

: 01424 787000

Website: [www.rother.gov.uk](http://www.rother.gov.uk)

Executive Director

Dr Anthony Leonard

: 01424 787800

Executive Director

Malcolm Johnston

: 01424 787800

Democratic Services Manager

Lisa Cooper

: 01424 787813

: [democraticservices@rother.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@rother.gov.uk)

## **Political Parties**

### **Conservative**

Bexhill & Battle Conservative Association

6a Amherst Road

Bexhill-on-Sea, TN40 1QJ

☎: 01424 219117

✉: [office@bbca.uk.com](mailto:office@bbca.uk.com)

Hastings & Rye Conservative Association

Swallow House, Theaklen Drive

St. Leonards-on-Sea, TN38 9AZ

☎: 01424 423949

✉: [office@hastingsandryeconservatives.org.uk](mailto:office@hastingsandryeconservatives.org.uk)

### **Labour**

Bexhill & Battle Labour Party

✉: [secretary.bexhill@bexhillandbattlelabour.org.uk](mailto:secretary.bexhill@bexhillandbattlelabour.org.uk)

✉: [secretary.battle@bexhillandbattlelabour.org.uk](mailto:secretary.battle@bexhillandbattlelabour.org.uk)

Hastings and Rye Labour Party

84 Bohemia Road

St. Leonards-on-Sea, TN37 6RN

☎: 01424 424125

✉: [hastingsandryeclp@btinternet.com](mailto:hastingsandryeclp@btinternet.com)

## **Liberal Democrat**

Bexhill & Battle Liberal Democrats

✉: [info@bexhillandbattlelibdems.org.uk](mailto:info@bexhillandbattlelibdems.org.uk)

Hastings & Rye Liberal Democrat Centre

9 London Road

St. Leonards-on-Sea, TN37 6AE

☎: 01424 715176

✉: [info@har0ld.org.uk](mailto:info@har0ld.org.uk)

Other political parties are accessible through the Register of Political Parties on the Electoral Commission's website:

Electoral Commission

3 Bunhill Row

London

EC1Y 8YZ

☎: 0207 2710500

✉: [info@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:info@electoralcommission.org.uk)

Website:

<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/>