

# ROTHER ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (RALC)

## Meeting & AGM

**Minutes of meeting held on 23 July 2025, 2.30pm**  
**Staplecross Village Hall TN32 5QG**

**Attendees:** David Young (Ewhurst & RALC Chair 2024-25), Keith Robertson (Catsfield & RALC Vice Chair), Philip Allard (Iden), Graham Furness (Guestling), Geoff Thomas (Crowhurst), Lynda Roller (Crowhurst), Margaret Howell (Battle), Jenny Exley (Battle), David Todd (Salehurst & Robertsbridge), Karen Ripley (Salehurst & Robertsbridge), Jenner Sands (Icklesham), Jacqui Stanford (Icklesham), Lesley Elmslie (Burwash), John Barnes (Etchingham), Beverley Coupar (Sedlescombe), Martin Griffiths (Brede and Guestling), Mark Wey (Brede), Tracy Dixon (Brede and Whatlington), Julie Ramus (Rye Foreign), Al Evans (Pett), David Penfold (Pett), Vicki Rutt (Catsfield), Judy Petty (Brightling), Nigel Jacklin (Bexhill-on-Sea), Sue Prochak (Rother District Council), Alice Nolan (RALC Clerk)

	Agenda Item	Action
1	<b>Welcome</b> The Chair welcomed attendees and introductions were made.	
2	<b>Apologies for absence</b> Apologies were noted from Richard Farhall (Rye and Ewhurst), Mary Philo (Beckley, Iden, Pett), Paulette Barton (Etchingham) and Bob Franklin (Burwash).	
3	<b>Accuracy of Minutes of the meeting held on 23 July *attached</b> AGREED To approve the Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2025 as an accurate record.	
4	<b>Matters arising or reports from Members from previous meetings</b> None raised.	
5	<b>Election of Chair, Vice Chair, Executive officers, Secretary, Treasurer</b>  <b>Chair</b> The Chair of RALC 2024/25 called for nominations for the incoming Chair. It was agreed by vote that Keith Robertson be appointed as Chair for the ensuing year.  <b>Vice Chair</b> The Chair of RALC 2025/26 called for nominations for the Vice Chair. It was agreed by vote that Martin Griffiths be appointed as Vice Chair for the ensuing year.  <b>Executive officers</b> Three self-nominations were made for the executive officer group. It was agreed that John Barnes, David Todd, and Geoff Thomas be appointed as executive officers for the ensuing year, plus the Chair and Vice Chair.  <b>Secretary</b> It was agreed that Vicki Rutt be appointed as secretary for the ensuing year. There will be a handover period with the former secretary.  <b>Treasurer</b> It was agreed that Keith Robertson be appointed as treasurer for the ensuing year.	

6	<p><b>Appointment/confirmation of representatives to outside bodies:</b></p> <p><b>A) Rother Standards Committee</b></p> <p><b>B) East Sussex Association of Local Councils (ESALC) Directors</b></p> <p><b>Rother Standards Committee</b> Two self-nominations were received for the Rother Standards Committee representatives. It was agreed that Nigel Jacklin and Martin Griffiths be appointed as representatives for the ensuing year.</p> <p><b>ESALC</b> Three self-nominations were received for the ESALC Directors. It was agreed that John Barnes, Keith Robertson, and Geoff Thomas be appointed as ESALC Directors for the ensuing year.</p>	
7	<p><b>Finance</b> The accounts are published online (<a href="#">Finances – Rother Association of Local Councils</a>). An audit will be scheduled for the coming months. The accounts were noted and approved at the meeting.</p> <p>RALC is within budget for the financial year 2025/26 at the midpoint of the financial year. There are some outstanding fees to paid and these will be followed up. It was confirmed that there will be a paid handover period for the secretary position and the payment will increase to £110 p/month, commencing from November 2025.</p> <p>Fees for the financial year 2026/27 will not be raised.</p>	
<b>END OF AGM</b>		
8	<p><b>Update from the RALC Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Working Group</b> The Terms of Reference and minutes from the first meeting have been circulated to RALC members. Views from RALC members are welcomed and can be reported to the LGR Working Group for consideration. It was noted that the next step in the LGR process is a public consultation, led by government, which is expected to launch next month and run until January.</p> <p>Etchingham underlined the importance of ensuring Neighbourhood Area Committees have purpose and the ability to influence decision-making. To achieve this, they could report or feed into the scrutiny process and governance structures.</p> <p>Bexhill-on-Sea questioned the geographical makeup of area committees. It was reported that the group have considered this and the benefits of a rural/urban split were highlighted.</p> <p>Councillor Susan Prochak reported that RDC have expressed interest in acting as a pilot area for new proposals. It was also underlined that while the new unitary council will be the final decision-maker on how areas are represented, this group can focus on how the town and parish councils organise themselves. The starting point is that town and parish councils would like a voice and a way to share information. The group can look at models in other areas to evaluate what does or does not work. The Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill is currently going through the House of Commons and one of the amendments being proposed is that town and parish councils are consulted on changes.</p>	
9	<b>Proposal for town/parish representative in new unitary structures</b>	

	<p>Nigel Jacklin (Bexhill-on-Sea) presented his proposals for how town and parish councils could be represented in the new unitary council(s). The proposal is place-based and aims to reflect local identity.</p> <p>The proposal puts forward an alternative to the Neighbourhood Area Committee model that is favoured by the government. It outlines potential for an office which holds local knowledge and acts as a central point for contact and liaison between tiers of local government. This would follow parliamentary constituency boundaries.</p> <p>Etchingham indicated a preference for committees organised by commonality of interest rather than areas or boundaries. The value of having a liaison officer to act as a point of contact between the unitary council and parish councils was also highlighted.</p> <p>The group agreed to note the proposals put forward. The LGR Working Group will continue to review how town and parish councils will be represented under the new structure.</p> <p><i>Additional item to note:</i> There was consideration given to RDC's asset transfer process. There has been contact made with anyone who completed an expression of interest. The next step is to submit a business case.</p> <p>Icklesham expressed reservations over the requirement to submit a business case. Pett also reported some difficulties in obtaining information from officers. Councillor Susan Prochak will follow up on Pett's query outside the meeting and advised that the business case is part of the process because there is a need to demonstrate that any assets have been transferred to viable bodies.</p>	
10	<b>Confirm date of next meeting: 14 January 2026.</b>	