

ROTHER ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (RALC)

Quarterly Meeting

**Minutes of meeting held on 8th July 2026, 13:00 in the Chambers at
RDC Offices, Bexhill Town Hall**

Attendees in person: Keith Robertson (Catsfield & RALC Chair), Martin Griffiths (Brede and Guestling and RALC Vice Chair), David Todd (Salehurst & Robertsbridge), Karen Ripley (Salehurst & Robertsbridge), Jenner Sands (Icklesham), Tracy Dixon (Brede and Whatlington), David Penfold (Pett), Al Evans (Pett), Paul Wilson (Bexhill), Sue Prochak (Rother District Council), Leslie Elmslie (Burwash), Mary Barnes (Etchingham), John Barnes (Etchingham), Jenny Exley (Battle), Robert Franklin (Udimore), Barbara Mould (Ewhurst) and Vicki Rutt (Catsfield Clerk and RALC Secretary).

Attendees via Teams: Margaret Howell (Battle), Tracy Dixon (Brede and Whatlington), Greta Anderson (Sedlescombe), Emma Neil (Burwash), Amy Head (Rye), Holly Harrison (RDC), Mike Hughes (RDC), Chris Hoggart (Rye), Carol Harris (Battle), Caroline Croft (Brightling), Rebekah Gilbert (Iden) and Michael Miller (Iden).

	Agenda Item	Action
1	Welcome The Chair welcomed attendees.	
2	Apologies for absence Cllr Keith Saunders (Sedlescombe), Cllr Mike Boyd (Rye), Cllr David Young (Ewhurst), Cllr Richard Farhall (Mountfield), Cllr Lynda Roller (Crowhurst), Cllr Geoff Thomas (Crowhurst) and Cllr Jacqui Stanford (Icklesham).	
3	Accuracy of Minutes of the meeting held on 14th April 2026 RESOLVED: To approve the draft minutes of the meeting held on 14 th April 2026 as an accurate record.	
4	Matters arising or reports from Members from previous meetings and Chairmans report No matters were arising. The Chairmans report was circulated to all. The new Strategic Authority has been launched. As the Chair of eSALC, Keith is attending some interesting meetings so will report back on the Chairmans report next time. RDC should find out the new boundaries on the 15 th July.	
5	Update on the Local Plan Holly Harrison from RDC reported the below. <i>(A copy of the presentation will be circulated with the minutes).</i> RDC are doing a Local Plan because they must and will regularly review. The Local Plan will remain in place until the new Unitary do one and put theirs in place so the RDC Local Plan should be around for some time. The recently held public consultations events were well attended. 3000 comments received via 1400 respondents, 55% of comments were received online. The highest number of comments were about Battle, Bexhill, Peasmarsch and the infrastructure needs.	

	The timeline they are following is: • Summer 2024 – reg 18 consultation. • December 2024 – new NPPF and new housing need figure from Government. • Dec 2025 – new draft NPPF. • Jan 2026 – second reg 18 consultation. • Autumn 2026 – reg 19 period, publication of final draft of Local Plan for 6wks. • Dec 2026 – Gov deadline for submitting Local Plan for examination. • 2027/28 – Examination and adoption of the new Rother Local Plan. How will RDC get there – • Reviewing all the comments from the two public consultations. • Finalising evidence base [40+ documents]. • Reviewing relevant changes e.g. in legislation, national policy and also reviewing the NPPF draft 2025. RDC will circulate something for Council’s agendas in September ahead of the 6-week consultation. Questions from the meeting – • <u>Could there be a longer consultation, 6 weeks is a short time? No there is no wiggle room. The consultation will come out end of September / beginning of October.</u> • <u>Could there be a document to show what changes have been made so don’t need to go through the whole document again? Holly will look into this to see if it is possible.</u> • <u>Are Council’s outside Rother allowed to consult, if they are neighbouring. Yes, anyone can comment on it.</u>	
6	Update on LGR and the NAC proposal Keith explained that when we lose the District Councils, we need to ensure there is engagement with the Unitary Council. Parish and Town Councils need better representation. NACs are not going to be the best way. The proposal from RALC has been circulated to all and Keith needs to get a sense on whether it is a route that will be supported. It was agreed that all will take back to their Councils, discuss at their next meetings and report back to Vicki <u>by the end of September</u> with any feedback. Sue congratulated Keith and Martin on their hard work and said it was great idea and proposed. It is key to get it right, at the beginning with the new Unitary. Take something to them that has already been agreed, which will save them work and something they can adopt quickly. Keith is meeting with LDC this week to discuss. Keith has a meeting with the Lead of ESCC who is also a director and Co-Chair of the new Strategic Authority, and would like the authority from RALC to raise this idea in principle. Members present at the meeting stated as long as it is clear that the document is in DRAFT format, they support it being shared.	
7	Highways issues This agenda item will be deferred to the October 2026 meeting.	

8	Discuss issues with the new RDC planning portal and enforcement Mike Hughes reported that the Enforcement Plan is going to Overview and Scrutiny in September. The 10-page plan/policy went to O&S on Monday, it is noted there is no statutory consultation to comment on the plan, however members felt strongly that Councils should be able to comment on the plan. Mike agreed that through RALC, there could be a 4-week period to send any comments through to Vicki which can then be compiled and sent to Mike. The deadline will be <u>no later than 5pm on Wednesday 5th August</u> and an email will be sent out to all members. Action 1. RALC are grateful for the committee to defer their decision so they can receive comments. It was thought that the RALC Chair and Vice Chair would be invited to attend the Task committee appointed to look at the document and comments. It is key to ensure that comments are kept constructive and do not mention any specific enforcement matters. Martin explained that the original reason this was on the agenda was issues had been raised with RALC about the new RDC planning portal regarding accessibility. MG is going to take this up with the RDC technical support. Action 2. Most issues have been rectified now but if you continue to have issues, please feed any feedback through to Vicki who can liaise with RDC. Mike reported on the new portal, it was need as the old one was no longer sufficient. There are sections that are better and some are worst. Functionality is a lot better but not perfect. It was reported that how enforcement breaches are recorded and reported have people concerned. Mike stated that there is not anything that can be done about this.	
9	Receive an update on the proposal of a RALC triage complaint scheme Martin updated that he first raised this as an initial idea a few months when he met with the Monitoring Officer. At the recent standards committee, 17 complaints had been raised, 16 of them against a Cllr. It is thought that if anything RALC could do to assist to reduce the numbers we would do so. The new Monitoring Officer has now seen the proposal, he is enthusiastic with the idea. Martin is now going to pull some further ideas together to bring forward a proposal, in the form of a mediation process. Keen for it to be an independent person for an unbiased, professional and confidential view. It was asked what role would the Clerk have in this scheme? Martin will have a think about this and feedback. General feedback had some concerns but would be interested to see the proposal.	
10	Update on future meetings – • <i>Agree October 2026 AGM and meeting date, due to possible combining with Parish Conference.</i> This has been confirmed as Wednesday 21st October 2026, in the afternoon, exact times TBC at Bede Village Hall.	

	• <i>Discuss possible future venues that have adequate parking and IT facilities. We want to keep hybrid facilities so if anyone knows of a facility that will allow this and has adequate parking, please let Vicki know.</i>	
11	Appoint new Director to eSALC John Barnes has been serving on eSALC as a director for many years but is now unable to continue. Keith proposed Martin Griffiths to replace him, this was seconded by John Barnes, therefore Martin was nominated.	
12	Future business - Members to suggest specific items for October 2026 meeting • The Executive Team at RDC have asked whether members would like a one-off Teams briefing in September on the new National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions. All were in favour of receiving a briefing. Vicki to feedback. Action 3. • Asset devolution - Sue updated that a paper is going to cabinet, there are still tasks to be completed by RDC, then it will all need to go to legal before being transferred. It is a very lengthy process. • eSALC are going to be doing a strategy review. You will get a survey from eSALC on this shortly, please complete. • At recent SLCC meeting, it was raised what is eSALC doing with their reserves, and will the fees be increasing next year. Keith explained this is the reason for the eSALC strategy review, see what they can deliver and then set the fees accordingly. This is work in progress. • It was asked whether there should be a RALC voting policy?? It was agreed the constitution will be looked at and the RALC Exec group will review this. Action 4.	

Meeting ended at 14:56