



# Guidance for Members



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## Being a Rother District Council Councillor

The role of a Rother District Council (RDC) Councillor is challenging but rewarding. It may require you to devote quite a lot of time to it. Sometimes there can be distances to travel to meetings which can continue late into the evening. It is recommended that you should engage with and take part in all learning and development activities that are offered to you, as well informed and knowledgeable councillors are more effective. Here are some pointers to help you in your role.



- With the exceptions of Brede and Udimore, Catsfield and Crowhurst, Robertsbridge and South Battle and Telham Wards which have one Councillor, most wards have two District Councillors representing them who may not necessarily be from the same political group. You should try to work as a team, see through any political differences for the common good, and share workloads wherever possible.
- Get to know and become involved with your Parish or Town Council Chair (or Mayor), Members and Clerks. Make sure they have your contact details and that you have theirs. Discuss with the Clerk your preferred method and hours of contact.
- If you have a matter that you wish to discuss with your Parish or Town Councillors make sure you liaise with the Clerk so it can be considered by the parish / town as a whole at a meeting.
- Many Parish or Town Councils take the view that party politics at their level of governance is inappropriate. Comments made

at a Parish or Town Council meeting of a party political nature tend to be frowned upon.

- Be present at as many Parish or Town Council meetings and such other Committee meetings as you are able. If you are unable to attend an important meeting, make sure you send your apologies and provide a written report in time for the Agenda despatch, especially if requested to do so.
- In preparing for a meeting, you should read all the relevant papers including the agenda and minutes of the previous meeting. Thus you will be prepared for most of what is likely to come up.
- You will also be expected to attend Annual Parish and Town Assemblies at each of the Parishes in your Ward and usually required to give a written or oral report to the public who attend. There is usually a 'question time' from the general public as well.



- Always take the opportunity to speak at Parish or Town Council meetings where there is provision on the agenda. Something of interest to the town / village / community and within your area of expertise is bound to crop up. Keep your remarks

short, factual and to the point. Remember that anything you do say may be recorded and reported by the press.

- Remember that your legal rights at a Parish or Town Council meeting are the same as a member of the public and that, like a member of the public, you have no automatic right to speak.

- It may be wise to show interest even when a meeting seems overly long: you may like to set a time limit on your attendance and advise the Chair before the meeting starts of the time you intend to leave.
- LISTEN to what is said by all attendees at any meeting you attend and always treat others with respect. Be cautious of promising to deal with matters which you may not be able to influence, let alone settle.
- Sometimes you may not know the answers! It is better to acknowledge that fact and avoid trying to bluff. Say that you will get back to your contact when you have the answer (and do not forget to do so!).
- Pick up the issues raised by Parish or Town Councillors or members of the public and deal with them. Your Councillor colleagues, RDC officers or staff at Community Help Points may be able to assist you to deliver solutions to local problems.
- Be aware of planning issues! It is useful for you to know what is going on and what is in the pipeline. Beware of expressing a prejudicial opinion on planning issues discussed in a public meeting. If you are seen to pre-judge a matter, perhaps not being aware of all the facts, you may make yourself ineligible to continue involvement in an issue which concerns you and the Parish or Town.
- As a District Councillor you may “call in” planning applications for the consideration of RDC’s Planning Committee. You must have regard to *planning issues alone* and disregard any personal feelings on a particular matter. In each case, you should keep in contact with the appropriate Planning Officer.



- Several Parish and Town Councils across the district have developed – or are in the process of developing Neighbourhood Plans (NPs). You should be aware of the process and the policies (and emerging policies) contained therein. You may be asked to join or be involved with the NP committee on the Parish or Town Council – this is a matter for you. You may wish to maintain a watching brief in your capacity as the local Member. Attend your Parish and Town Council Planning Committee meetings if they have one.
- You will need to be aware of what implications may be for planning applications within the Parish or Town Council area, particularly those that may conflict with an emerging or NP already in place, bearing in mind their status and relationship to the Council’s Local Plan. Currently, six NPs have been adopted by RDC and form part of the overall development plan for the District (Battle, Burwash, Crowhurst, Rye, Salehurst and Robertsbridge, Sedlescombe and Ticehurst). Three others are currently in preparation – Etchingham, Hurst Green and Peasmarsh.



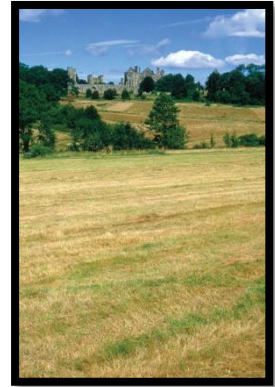
- Set up a monthly / quarterly “surgery” if that suits your style. This will help you to maintain visibility in your ward. Beware of local issues becoming personal to you. This could prejudice your actions when you take those matters back to the District Council. If in doubt,

seek advice from the Council’s Monitoring Officer.

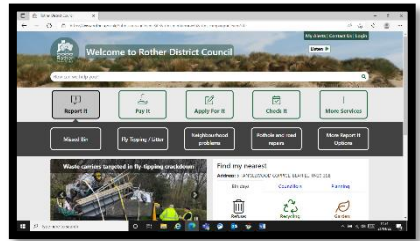
- When conducting meetings or surgeries, it is recommended that you always choose a neutral venue, particularly where you may meet people who are confrontational or in different states of distress. They may display different emotions and be upset, angry or aggressive. It is important to continually

assess your surroundings, the person's behaviour and potential threats before and during meetings. You should take proportionate steps to reduce the risks and stay safe.

- You may have been elected as a member of a political group. Remember that, following the elections, you have become a Member of the full Council and therefore represent all your constituents, even those who did not vote for you. You will participate in decisions which may affect all the residents of the District and beyond. **You represent both your constituents at RDC and RDC within your ward.**
- Remember that you are your Ward's representative on RDC. You do not have to agree with or justify all RDC's decisions but you should be able to inform others of what is going on at RDC.
- Make sure your voice is heard at meetings of RDC: have a profile in Rother.
- Certain information issued to District Councillors is confidential and should not be disclosed to the Parish or Town Council or in a public meeting.
- You will soon learn how Rother works and will be able to use that knowledge, together with your own experience and contacts, to help your Parish, Town or Ward.
- Be aware that the legislation governing the affairs of a Parish or Town Council is not always the same as that for a principal authority, such as RDC.
- Know what the local issues are by subscribing to the local newspapers on-line, Facebook and / or Twitter accounts.



- Acquaint yourself with RDC's website – the answers to many questions asked by Members in the early days following the elections can be found on the website: [Rother District Council](http://rother.gov.uk)



- Hopefully, the more involved and experienced you become the more enjoyable and worthwhile the experience will be. As a Member, stand up for what you think is right, be it for your Parish or Town or your own convictions. **You are there to make a difference!**

## Democratic Services Contact Details

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## Useful Information Available on Rother District Council's Website

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- **Home Page** [Rother District Council](http://rother.gov.uk)
- **Report it** (Missed Bin Collections, Fly-tipping, Neighbourhood Problems, Pothole and Road Repairs etc.)



- **Pay it** (Planning Payments, Council Tax, Business Rates, Parking Fine etc.
- **Apply for it** (Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Discretionary Housing Payment, Relief and Unoccupied Properties etc.
- **Check it** (Bin Days, Planning Applications, Bulky Waste, Moving in Rother etc.
- **More Services** (Planning and Building Control, Rubbish and Recycling, Committees, Agendas and Minutes, Equalities at Rother, View all Services.
- **Council, Democracy & Meetings** (inc. Calendar of Meetings and Committee Agendas & Minutes) [Councillors, democracy and meetings – Rother District Council](#)

## Corporate Management Team – Key Contact Details

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## Heads of Service – Key Contact Details

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- **Richard Parker-Harding**, Environmental Services, Licensing and Community Safety  
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## Other Key Officers – Key Contact Details

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- **Customer Services**

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The '**Out of Hours**' Emergency Number is 01424 787868

Officer information correct as at October 2022