ROTHER ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (RALC)
Quarterly Meeting and AGM

Minutes of meeting held on 21st October 2026, 12:30 in Brede Village Hall, *followed by the RDC Parish Conference*.

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), David Penfold (Pett), Al Evans (Pett), Paul Wilson (Bexhill), Sue Prochak (Rother District Council), Leslie Elmslie (Burwash), Jenny Exley (Battle), Robert Franklin (Udimore), Barbara Mould (Ewhurst, David Young (Ewhurst), Bekki Freeman (RDC), Louise Hollingsworth (RDC), Beth Luckhurst (Iden), Rebekah Gilbert (Iden), Marion Roberts (Guestling), Tony Wadie (Northiam), Lynda Roller (Crowhurst), Riley Lee (Northiam), Mike Hughes (RDC), Mark Wey (Brede), Geoff Smith (Fairlight), Emma Neil (Burwash), Judy Petty (Brightling), Mary Philo (Beckley), Peter Knatchbull-Hugessen (Guestling), Adam Chugg (Bexhill), Nicola McLaren (RDC), Margaret Howell (Battle), Vikki Cook (Battle) and Vicki Rutt (Catsfield Clerk and RALC Secretary).

	Agenda Item	Action
1	**Welcome** The Chair welcomed attendees and explained the new voting process that has been put into place and circulated to members.	
2	**Accuracy of minutes of meeting held on 8 July 2026** RESOLVED: To approve the draft minutes of the meeting held on 8th July 2026 as an accurate record. Matters arising from the minutes: Planning portal – RALC had a conversation with the team at RDC and it was agreed that Martin Griffiths would collate any issues, none received so far but please let him know if you continue to have issues with the portal so he can feedback. Triage of Complaints – Martin Griffiths updated that RALC are aware of the number of complaints that come through to RDC related to Parish or Town Councils and these put a burden on RDC, so it was looked into whether they could be resolved prior to getting that far. Martin confirmed that a meeting will be arranged now that the new Deputy Monitoring Officer is in post.	
3	**Election of Executive Officers, Committee, Secretary and Treasurer** Chair The Chair of RALC called for nominations for the incoming Chair. It was agreed by vote that Keith Robertson would continue as Chair for the ensuing year. Vice Chair The Chair of RALC called for nominations for the Vice Chair. It was agreed by vote that Martin Griffiths would continue as Vice Chair for the ensuing year. Executive officers It was agreed that John Barnes, David Todd, and Geoff Thomas would continue as executive officers for the ensuing year, plus the Chair and Vice Chair. Secretary It was agreed that Vicki Rutt would continue as secretary for the ensuing year. Treasurer It was agreed that David Todd would continue as treasurer for the ensuing year.	
4	**Appointment/confirmation of representatives to outside bodies:**	

	Rother Standards Committee It was agreed that Martin Griffiths and David Penfold would continue as representatives for the ensuing year. ESALC Directors (x3) It was agreed that Keith Robertson, Martin Griffiths and Geoff Thomas would continue as ESALC Directors for the ensuing year.	
5	**Finance accounts and budget for 2027-28** The accounts are published online (Finances – Rother Association of Local Councils). The audited accounts for 2025/26 are now available online. Both the audited accounts for 2025/26 and the budget for 2027/28 was approved by members. David Todd went through the mid-year picture for 2026/27. The fees for 2027/28 are increasing and the method of allocating fees to member Councils was presented at the meeting. All the information is available on the slides available on the website.	
6	**Update on ESALC strategy review** Keith Robertson reported ESALC have reviewed and their strategy review because it was both overdue and the changes to LGT and devolution require ESALC, and probably the district associations to re assess how we need to operate and communicate in the future. The review covered the effectiveness of the current Support services, the effectiveness of current representation, the future needs of both and what adequate governance is needed for 2027-28. The outcome of the review will be published later in 2026. In 2026-27 ESALC has improved its transparency in finances, now sets an annual budget and reports financial performance to the board quarterly. This year there will also be review of the adequacy of reserve levels. The strategy consultations have also shown that communication needs to be improved and that ESALC needs to improve governance. Members asked why the ESALC reserves are so high, why are the ESALC fees are so high and what service do Councils actually receive and do you have to be a member of ESALC to be a member of RALC? Keith explained these are all valid questions. Reserve levels for 2027-28 will form part of the budget process. Yes, you do have to be a member of ESALC to be a member of RALC. Fee levels will be explained for 2027-28 as will the services, support and representation that is provided from the fees. The emergence of the SBSA and potentially the Unitary will change how DALC's and ESALC can effectively represent Parish & Town Councils. It is anticipated but not agreed that ESALC will have a non-voting representation of some form in the SBSA. If so the Parish and Town Councils in East Sussex will have a stronger voice, and will require ESALC to make some changes to its organisational structure and executive function. Members are encouraged to attend the ESALC AGM and Conference at the Amex Stadium on Wednesday 4th November 2026, where the leaders of the Sussex and Brighton Strategic Authority will be presenting.	
7	**Update on devolution / LGR / NACs** Keith Robertson updated on the proposal from RALC on alternatives to Neighbourhood Area Councils via which a Unitary authority may engage with stakeholders. Keith attended each of the Districts Association meeting to discuss the RALC proposals. It was	

	agreed to take the principle forward to ESCC and to give the DALC's time to review the details. The leaders of ESCC were open to the ideas of alternative approach in principle and asked ESALC to define how such alternatives may work. The UK Gov then paused LGR which means that for now alternatives to NAC's are also paused given that District and County Councils will remain for the foreseeable future. This work will re start if/when Unitary authorities are again a live proposal. Martin Griffiths updated that the proposal paper which was circulated to all Parish and Town Councils still needs feedback. Please keep it on your agendas and when any further update is received from Government, this will be communicated. Both Keith Robertson and Martin Griffiths are happy to attend any meetings to explain the work.	

RALC AGM meeting ended at 13:40

The presentations from the Parish Conference are available on the RALC website and have been circulated to all.