

72 COUNCIL VACANCY

SIMON BOWLER

My name is Simon Bowler. I am 58 years old. I am registered visually impaired and have lived in Rye all my life. I am a retired Civil Servant and have worked in various Government departments and agencies over a period of 37 years.

I am a keen campanologist and regularly ring the bells at St Mary's church, Rye. I volunteer with Friends Altogether in Rother, a local befriending charity. This involves making a weekly companionship telephone call to a person who is identified as lonely and/or isolated within the Rural Rother area. I am also a member of the Rye and District Bonfire Society which is responsible for organising one of the largest events in Rye.

I believe that I possess the necessary attributes, and skill sets to be considered a suitable candidate for this vacant position. I passionately believe that people of all abilities should have a voice on the town council.

FIRAT BOZYEL

I am applying to join Rye Parish Council because I have developed a deep appreciation for this town, its people, and its unique character. Since moving to Rye, I have been warmly welcomed by the community, and I feel strongly that now is the time to give back both in gratitude for what I have received and to help secure a vibrant future for the town.

I enjoy enterprise and currently own and operate three businesses in Rye. This has given me not only a strong understanding of the local economy but also a first-hand view of the challenges and opportunities faced by residents, visitors, and fellow business owners. I have always believed in supporting the community that supports me, which is why I have been actively involved in local initiatives since my arrival.

Over the past two years, I have:

- Sponsored the Rye Cricket Club, helping to support local sport for young people and community spirit.
- Provided sponsorship and support for local charities and events,(i.e, bonfire night, 2 local primary schools, rye leisure centre), ensuring they can continue to benefit residents of all ages.
- Served as the main sponsor of the Iden Fete, reviving this much-loved event after a break of more than seven years.
- Contributed to a range of local causes, both through financial support and by giving my time and resources.

My vision as a councillor would be to encourage and develop more social and sporting opportunities for the people of Rye, with a particular focus on the younger generation. I believe that creating accessible, enjoyable, and inclusive activities is vital for strengthening our community bonds, improving wellbeing, and inspiring the next generation to take pride in their town.

I am committed to ensuring that Rye maintains its unique identity while also embracing positive progress that benefits residents. My experience as a business owner has taught me the value of listening, collaboration, and practical problem-solving skills. I believe I will serve the town council well. I understand the importance of balancing heritage and growth, and I would work to represent the interests of residents and businesses across the community.

Above all, I love Rye. I have felt the kindness, warmth, and generosity of its people, and I believe that by joining the Parish Council, I can help preserve and enhance the qualities that make this town so special. This is not only about giving back it is about working together to shape a strong, connected, and thriving Rye for today and for the generations to come.

I am 25 years old and recognise that I still have a great deal to learn. I would welcome the opportunity to listen to and be guided by the current councillors, whose expertise, age, and knowledge are invaluable. I would be honoured to work under the wings of those with experience, drawing on their wisdom to grow in my role and perform to the very best of my ability in serving the people of Rye.

I would be honoured to serve as a councillor and to bring my energy, experience, and commitment to the role.

LYN MICHAEL DUTTON

My career in military and civil aerospace engineering spanned government organisations and industry in the UK, Europe and the USA. Much of my work was in teams that needed to ensure that solutions were driven by the needs of the ultimate user, and I believe that my experience in this approach, plus that gained in senior management, could be beneficial to Rye Town Council as it faces the growth challenges posed in the Rye Neighbourhood Plan.

Growth for the town is identified as the very first goal in the Plan. I agree that growth is truly the key to Rye's future – the town must grow and stay relevant to meet the future needs of both residents and visitors. And I would welcome the opportunity to contribute to making that goal a reality.

The Neighbourhood Plan is a strategy document, so areas are identified where growth could be targeted and, importantly, the Plan gives RTC the mandate to enact that strategy. However, there is little detail of how that growth may be achieved.

Therefore, the RTC must translate that strategy into an achievable Rye Town Plan, adding the 'what, when and how' detail. This would be a dynamic document, maturing over several years as the plan matures.

Rye's growth opportunities are broadly two-fold. The first are near-term and largely incremental in nature, but valuable nevertheless. The second are for one or more larger opportunities, taking a longer view and creating significant new business dimensions for the town. However, the common denominator for whatever plan for significant growth is adopted must be that it should create long-term new local jobs.

The challenge ahead may look somewhat daunting, but achievable if we take an incremental approach and plan rigorously. We must work closely with the new layers of regional government - East Sussex Council and the Sussex Strategic Authority. But because RTC has embraced the General Power of Competence granted under the Localism Act 2011, the Town Council already has a span of substantial freedom to operate without seeking permission from higher authority.

Despite the lack of land with development potential within the development boundary, the plan must cover the provision of social and affordable housing so that young/less well-paid people and families can live in Rye. Also, there are near-term opportunities for incremental growth that could cover tourism development, economic diversification, infrastructure and transportation, environmental sustainability and community engagement. Growth agendas could be pursued within each of those broad categories, and job creation should be prioritised. It is also important that RTC recognises any Rye Business Improvement District incentives and decisions.

The bigger growth challenge would be to support new business dimensions to Rye that would provide significant new commercial opportunities. The main criteria should be that they must create a significant number of jobs while preserving Rye's historical character, and make Rye a more attractive place to reside and visit. Interestingly, it may well be that the roots for one such opportunity are already close at hand.

An example concept for the longer-term growth challenge could be to reawaken our vast but unexploited maritime heritage and grow a reputation for Rye as the place to learn, experience, participate, play or trade in the marine environment. The detailed plan for this idea would take several years to realise, starting small and building as the concept matures.

We could start, for example, by reinstating the maritime festival, with numerous associated events, maritime art & craft markets, heritage boat tours and trails – all reasonably simple to setup. Building on any success, we could consider linking local boating associations and developing of a centre for interest, education and training in sailing and navigation – perhaps establishing a local branch of the Royal Institute of Navigation. We could consider expanding the role of the Heritage Centre, emphasising maritime aspects. This incremental approach would test the appetite for more ambitious development. Improved marina facilities would draw in the boat users. However, for all developments there would need to be a positive business case before any firmer plans should be considered. RTC's role would be to encourage investment in such activities and collaboration to ease planning permissions in keeping with the Neighbourhood Plan.

In answer to the question about my prior local community involvement, my wife and I

have been involved in several fundraising activities that benefited local charities - the most recent raised £12,000 to replace two aged Rye community buses. I have also previously been involved with the Rye Arts and Jazz Festivals as a volunteer steward.

DENA SMITH ELLIS

I am putting myself forward for consideration to serve as a Rye Town Councillor not out of ambition, but from a lifelong ethos of community service and a desire to be useful where I'm most needed. I have always been a communitarian at heart—someone who thrives in collaborative, purpose-driven environments. When a vacancy on the Council opened, I felt called to offer my support, trusting that whether I am chosen or not, the right person will step into the role for the highest good of the town

That said, I believe I bring a unique and valuable skill set to the Council. As a dual citizen, I have more than 30 years of experience in community leadership, health and wellbeing education, organisational development, and public engagement—across two countries and several US states. Since moving to Rye, I've wholeheartedly immersed myself in local initiatives: I currently serve as Co-Chair of both the Rye Allotments Forum and the Rye Community Food and Wildlife Garden, as well as founding and leading the Rye Pickleball Club. These roles have deepened my love and respect for this town and its people, and have helped me better understand the strengths and needs of our diverse community.

Professionally, I am the Founder and Director of the Wisdom & Wellness Academy CIC, a brand new community interest company based here in Rye, focused on holistic health, wellness education, personal empowerment, and transformational leadership. I am also a board-certified health and wellness coach, mentor, and instructor who has worked with individuals from over 175 countries. This global experience allows me to see Rye through a wider lens, bringing fresh ideas, inclusive perspectives, and cultural sensitivity to the table

My strengths lie in collaborative leadership, strategic planning, compassionate communication, and creative problem-solving. I hold an MBA and Level 7 Diploma in Strategic Management & Leadership, and am a Fellow of the Royal Society for Public Health. My prior roles include Organisational Lead for the Blue Zones Project in Hawaii (a public health initiative), Director of Development for a performing arts foundation, and Chair or Board Member of several nonprofit and community boards.

What motivates me is building bridges—between individuals, generations, and sectors. I am passionate about youth engagement, elder inclusion, environmental stewardship, and creating spaces where all voices can be heard. I believe that healthy, thriving communities begin at the local level, and town councils have an important role in holding that vision, supporting civic participation, and safeguarding public interest.

As a resident of Tilling Green who is also deeply socially engaged in the Citadel and wider Rye community, I feel well-positioned to relate to and represent the full spectrum of Rye's residents. I understand the nuances, challenges, and opportunities of both areas and am committed to helping foster cohesion, access, and equity across the town.

While I am deeply committed to the wellbeing of Rye, I also understand the importance of process, governance, and respectful dialogue. I am well-versed in meeting facilitation, policy development, and navigating complexity with calm, care, and fairness. My approach is grounded in listening, collaboration, and practical wisdom.

In closing, I offer my time, energy, and experience in service to this community I now call home. If chosen to join the Council, I will do my utmost to represent the interests of Rye with integrity, humility, and an open mind. If another candidate is better suited at this time, I remain ready to support their leadership and continue contributing in other ways. Thank you for your consideration.

OWEN THOMPSON

I am passionate about making a positive difference in our community and possess a strong sense of civic pride. I run my business, Newo Dance, in town from the Community Centre on Conduit Hill where I teach adult dance. My classes are not just about learning the steps they are also about social interaction, the principal skill I believe you need to be a productive local councillor.

I am a regular volunteer at RYZ Rye Youth Zone which is rewarding as well as challenging as no two sessions are the same. Once a month I give an hour of my time at the Hub on Rye Hill at their dementia café interacting with the carers, family members and most importantly those affected with dementia.

I truly believe we should all have a sense of pride for where we live, and I make sure I always volunteer for the litter pick after the Rye town bonfire and the litter pick organised through the Rye Chamber of Commerce. I take pride in the town looking its best, particularly at Christmas when I assist putting up the Christmas lights along the High Street (I am already signed up for this year too!).

If elected, I hope to be a positive voice and ear for Rye residents. My experience working with RYZ Rye Youth Zone, the Hub on Rye Hill's dementia café, and volunteering with initiatives like the Rye Chamber of Commerce litter picks and Christmas lights has given me insight into the needs and aspirations of our community. These roles, alongside my regular dance classes at the Community Centre, enable me to connect with a wide range of residents and represent a broad spectrum of local interests.