

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date and Time - **Monday 18 October 2021 – 6:30pm**

Venue - **Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea**

Councillors appointed to the Committee:

P.N. Osborne (Chairman), Mrs V. Cook (Vice-Chairman), J. Barnes, J.J. Carroll, C.A. Clark, S.J. Coleman, B.J. Drayson (ex-officio), Mrs D.C. Earl-Williams, S.J. Errington, P.J. Gray, C.A. Madeley, C.R. Maynard and M. Mooney.

Substitute Members: L.M. Langlands, G.F. Stevens and R.B. Thomas.

AGENDA

1. MINUTES

To authorise the Chairman to sign the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 September 2021 as a correct record of proceedings.

2. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES

The Chairman to ask if any Member present is substituting for another Member and, if so, to declare his/her name as substitute Member and the name of the absent Member.

3. ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS

To consider such other items as the Chairman decides are urgent and due notice of which has been given to the Head of Paid Service by 12 Noon on the day of the meeting.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

To receive any disclosure by Members of personal and disclosable pecuniary interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the Member regards the personal interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct. Members are reminded of the need to repeat their declaration immediately prior to the commencement of the item in question.

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**Rother District Council's aspiring to deliver
an Efficient, Flexible and Effective Council; Sustainable Economic Prosperity;
Stronger, Safer Communities; and a Quality Physical Environment.**

5. **FORGOTTEN PLACES - A PRESENTATION BY TREES FOR CITIES**
6. **PROGRESS ON THE ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY (2020)** (Pages 1 - 6)
7. **ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN UPDATE** (Pages 7 - 44)
8. **WORK PROGRAMME** (Pages 45 - 46)

Malcolm Johnston
Chief Executive

Agenda Despatch Date: 8 October 2021

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**Rother District Council's aspiring to deliver
an Efficient, Flexible and Effective Council; Sustainable Economic Prosperity;
Stronger, Safer Communities; and a Quality Physical Environment.**

Rother District Council

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	18 October 2021
Title:	Progress on the Environment Strategy (2020)
Report of:	Head of Service - Neighbourhood Services
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of Report:	To update Members on progress of the implementation of the above strategy
Officer	
Recommendation(s):	It be RESOLVED : That: the progress made against the Environment Strategy (2020) be noted.

Introduction

1. On 16 September 2019, full Council passed a motion declaring a 'Climate Emergency' and made a carbon neutrality commitment for Rother District Council (RDC) with a target date of 2030. The Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) has been established by Cabinet to develop, plan, and initiate the steps that the Council will need to take to meet this highly ambitious target. The Environment Strategy (The Strategy) was developed in 2019 and subsequently adopted on 21 September 2020. The Strategy and its action plan are delivered across all the Council's service areas.
2. This report is intended to update Members on progress made since the last report to Overview and Scrutiny on 15 March 2021.

Overview of last 6 months activities

Staff resources

3. The role of Environment and Policy Manager, which is currently vacant, is under review to take into account the general restructure of the Council's staffing and to explore working in partnership with neighbouring authorities to allow greater flexibility and efficiencies of scale. It is expected to have appropriate staff in place by no later than 31 March 2022.

Projects

4. **Bexhill Tree planting** - Work continues on the Bexhill i-Tree Study. Volunteers from Bexhill Environment Group, Combe Valley Countryside Park and Bexhill Rotary plus Rother parks and tree officers have received training in conducting tree surveys to provide detailed data to the i-Tree projects team. The data will inform a tree planting strategy and other local planning. Nearly 200 survey plots have been completed to date.

5. Following on from this work, the charity Trees for Cities has secured funding of £143,000 for the Rother area from the second round of the Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund as part of their 'Forgotten Places' project. This project will specifically focus on increasing tree cover in smaller coastal cities and towns with lower than average tree canopy cover and high levels of socio-economic deprivation. To support the project the Trees for Cities team will deliver a presentation to Members during the Overview and Scrutiny meeting.
6. The Council will continue to work with Bexhill Environment Group on tree and hedge planting including a hedge at Broad Oak Park and is developing a tree planting project at Sidley Recreation Ground to increase biodiversity.
7. **Carbon literacy training** - Training was delivered by the Director of the Climate Emergency Support Programme of the Centre of Sustainable Energy to all Councillors and members of the Corporate Management Team on 22 April. The general feedback from the session was that the training was informative, and the knowledge gained will help to support understanding of climate change and its impact, and how future projects may be able to reduce carbon emissions.

Council Contractor progress

8. **Waste Collections and Street and Beach Cleansing contract** - The Joint Waste Partnership team arranged for consultants Hester Management to facilitate a workshop on 2 June 2021 which was attended by Wealden, Hastings and Rother Joint Waste Committee Members, Biffa and relevant partnership executive officers including from East Sussex County Council. The workshop reviewed the existing carbon footprint of the vehicles and equipment used to deliver the service and offered various proposals to reduce the carbon emissions for partners to consider in more depth. Work is now in hand, with further support from Hester Management, to develop a more detailed, evidenced based and costed proposal to enable each local authority to make decisions on their way forward.
9. **Idverde Grounds Maintenance Contract** - Work is in progress to include the possibility of variations in the two year extension to the grounds maintenance existing contract that will facilitate increased bio-diversity, reductions in carbon emissions through the increased use of electric vehicles and equipment, and alternatives to some pesticides. The Idverde management team will deliver a presentation to Members at this or a future meeting of this Committee on a date to be agreed.
10. **Freedom Leisure Centre contract** - The table below shows energy consumption for the three centres and comparisons for the same month for the last two years. There have been significant reductions in energy usage as compared to the same month last year and the same month in 2019. This has been achieved through numerous minor operational changes that together add up to a substantial saving, including overnight boiler settings reduced to 60% capacity (allows extra savings to be made, but centre systems (such as frost protection) are still maintained); pool water temperature trimmed by 0.5 – 1.0 degree C (this is to be monitored following re-activation of swim school); swimming pool air handling unit (AHU) air temperatures trimmed in line with pool water temperature; central heating systems adjusted to ensure they are held off until outside temperature requires; dry side AHU supply air

temperatures adjusted to ensure centres feel 'fresh'; all areas and facilities individually assessed to identify ventilation requirements allowing some systems to be turned off when not needed.

Environmental Management

Kwh	Aug-21	Aug-20	Aug-19	Var to 2020	%	Var to 2019	%
BLC	12044	13722	17180	-1678	-12%	-5136	-30%
BLP	Data not available	(16882)	(26270)	-	-	-	-
RYE	14474	10502	18495	3972	38%	-4021	-22%
Total	26518	24224	35675	2294	9%	-9157	-26%

11. **General grounds maintenance** - The piloting of areas of longer grass (environmental grass) to promote the growth of wildflowers and grasses and provide habitat for invertebrates has been extended to additional sites this year. Customer feedback has been very limited and whilst some negative comments have been received, this does not necessarily reflect the views of the wider public. The sites where this has been piloted will be reviewed by officers taking into account customer feedback alongside input from officers and the grounds maintenance contractor. Alternative or additional locations for new pilots will be considered where there is opportunity.
12. **Long stay car parks Bexhill, Battle and Rye** - The Off-Street Car Parks Task and Finish Group recommended the implementation of three, 'long stay' car parks across the district to both support people who need to park all day and reduce congestion and therefore carbon emissions, in town centres by encouraging people to park on the outskirts in these lower daily tariff car parks; this was supported by Cabinet and implemented.

Local Plan Review

13. The purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development. Interventions through planning policy are essential to support the delivery of the Environment Strategy.
14. The published programme in our Local Development Scheme (March 2021) anticipates that the Council will adopt a new Local Plan by December 2023. The Planning Policy team are on track to achieve this and is currently collating the evidence base to enable a draft Local Plan to be issued for consultation by April 2022. The potential to draft a Net Zero Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in tandem with the Local Plan Review process is being explored.
15. Working across departments and across local authorities is an essential part of this process and particularly for delivering climate action through coordinated strategies that maximise co-benefits and provide a joined up, long-term vision. Some of the environmental evidence that underpins the Environment Strategy sits within the Council's Planning Policy and vice versa.
16. The dialogue with Planning Policy colleagues will ensure that there are robust linkages between The Environment Strategy and the sustainability and climate evidence which will underpin the new Local Plan and a critical part of this

currently is a consideration of staff resources within the new Place and Climate Change Directorate. Discussions continue about how links with the Planning Policy team can be developed and strengthened to identify opportunities for joint evidence-bases to support the Environment Strategy and policies within the new Local Plan, such as the Bexhill i-Tree Study. The MSc placement study of onshore and offshore wind mapping potential has been completed and the Planning Policy team are currently producing a guidance document on renewable energy land requirements and is linked to a call for potential sites.

Progress within the Council

17. The Council has made steady progress in making changes that will contribute to our carbon reduction target, including:
 - Changes to buildings, such as the addition of solar panels and new, energy efficient windows and roofs.
 - The use of a 100% renewable energy supplier for our electricity and a gas supplier with offset certificates.
 - More opportunity for staff to work from their homes to cut down on travel, and schemes to encourage greener travel.
 - Continuing the use of Microsoft Teams for non-decision making meetings and internal meetings.
 - Implementing a paperless pledge to reduce the amount of paper used by Councillors and staff.
 - Forming Alliance Homes (Rother) to build houses to high environmental standards.
 - Distributing grants to local environmental projects through our grants scheme.
 - Enabled a number of Members and officers to attend a Carbon Reduction training day and the intention is to roll this out throughout the organisation.

Next Steps

18. Ben Hook, Director of Place and Climate Change will talk verbally to the proposed next steps for driving forward carbon reduction across the district. This will include proposed use of the budget and resources to focus on key areas for early phase delivery.

Conclusion

19. Whilst there is still a long way to go to deliver on the ambitions of the Council, it is important to recognise that the significant changes to working practice and contracts that will help us reach our target take time to implement and need to be made in line with legislation, particularly relating to contracts. The targets set out in our Environmental Strategy are regularly monitored to ensure that every possible step to become a carbon neutral authority is taken. Our Climate Change Steering Group meets regularly to review the Council's progress and identify policies and strategies that require amendment. These meetings are open to the public and the group is keen to identify residents across Rother who can become climate champions for their communities and help implement initiatives locally.

Environmental implications

20. This report is about delivery progress against a key strategic document, Rother's Environment Strategy 2020.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	External Consultation	No
Environmental	Yes	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	Yes	Exempt from publication	No

Chief Executive:	Malcolm Johnston
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Appendices:	None
Relevant previous Minutes:	N/A
Background Papers:	None
Reference Documents:	None

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Rother District Council

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 18 October 2021

Title: Economic Recovery Plan Update

Report of: Melanie Powell, Principal Regeneration Officer

Ward(s): All

Purpose of Report: To update Members on progress against the Council's Covid Recovery Plan

Officer

Recommendation(s): It be **RESOLVED**: That:

- 1) the report be noted; and
 - 2) any further recommendations be referred to Cabinet.
-

Introduction

1. In November 2020, Cabinet approved the Council's Economic Recovery Action Plan, setting out the actions that the Council will take to support local economic recovery in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic (Minute CB20/64 refers). This was subsequently adopted by the Council in December 2020.
2. This followed the work of the Economic Recovery Steering Group which was established in June 2020 to consider the impact of COVID-19 on the local economy and agree and recommend a recovery strategy and action plan for Cabinet and full Council approval. The purpose of this report is to update Members on progress and actions to date in delivery of the Recovery Plan.

Progress to date

3. A copy of the Economic Recovery Action Plan is attached as Appendix 1. The Plan sets out six broad ambitions: thinking local, acting local; building skills, creating jobs; fast-forwarding business; better places, fuller lives; cleaner energy, greener transport; and the future is digital.
4. The right-hand column in Appendix 1 summarises the progress and activity against each action point. Particular points to note are:
5. Supporting Business
The Reopening the High Street Funding from Government was extended to become the Welcome Back Fund and a total of £236,675 allocated to Rother to support temporary measures to ease businesses back after lockdown. The first tranche was used to support local promotional campaigns in Battle, Rye and Bexhill and the second phase has funded additional toilets at Winchelsea Beach and increased litter bins and collections over the summer; support for events; training to businesses; additional footfall data.

Attached as Appendix 2 is an evaluation of the #ShopLocalBexhill campaign run in Bexhill Town Centre over the Christmas period in 2020.

6. Skills and Workforce

The Hospitality sector saw issues around filling vacancies which still continue. Recruitment to public facing jobs was also challenging in the context of some hostile customer behaviour who were unwilling to follow venue guidelines. Since the summer, skills shortages are becoming evident in a number of sectors.

7. Social Media for Business workshops were offered to businesses across Rother by Let's Do Business to help reach customers and develop brand awareness. Further training sessions are to be offered in the Autumn.

8. Events were supported with an online training programme to support event organisers and promoters in Rother, delivered by 18 Hours. Half way through the programme it has:

- Supported an average 15 people per session.
- So far have covered: Concept development and feasibility/COVID safety for events/Programming/Finance and fundraising.
- Upcoming sessions will cover Marketing and Audience Development, Diversity and Inclusion, Environmental Sustainability, Monitoring and Evaluation.
- Has involved three guest speakers: Applause Rural Touring/The Fundraisers.
- Is developing a network of community events organisers: Participants working with us, calling us with queries, working with each other.

9. Attached as Appendix 3 is a case study showing how a local business has responded to changing demands by developing their online sales.

10. Tourism and Culture

1066 Country have been working to a COVID Recovery Plan, updated as Government guidelines change. The summer of 2021 has required a fine balance between encouraging staycationers to the area, against the problems of 'over tourism' as seen in Cornwall and the Lake District. The campaign sought to encourage visitors away from the tourist 'honey-pots' whilst also guiding people to the safest lifeguarded beaches.

11. This summer has seen a shift in demographic of visitors to the area with an increase in numbers of millennials visiting and repeat booking for next summer; a trend the National Coastal Tourism Academy thinks is set to continue.

12. The Sussex Modern campaign has continued to promote Sussex celebrating its modernity, culture, wine and landscape in partnership with its 36 partner organisations. Key themes over summer 2021: #StayYourWay campaign promoting self-curated visits to encourage longer dwell time; competitions and giveaways; an out of home campaign targeting London and Sussex.

13. The 1066 Country Walk has now re-launched bringing new life to this 31-mile footpath. Bespoke sculptures and new signage, seating and information boards

will guide visitors along its path unearthing the history of William the Conqueror. The route, which begins at Pevensey, passes through Battle, and ends at Rye, has been transformed thanks to a European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development grant of more than £160,000 to support rural tourism infrastructure.

14. Improving Places

The De La Warr Pavilion's (DLWP) vision to level-up Community, Creativity and Skills in our region was a basis of the Council's £17 million Levelling Up Fund application. Building on its legacy of culture-led regeneration, the DLWP's capital project centres around a series of objectives for the Pavilion which, if met, could dramatically impact the local landscape.

- DLWP to excel as a visitor destination of international quality with a radically extended events programme offer.
- Protect, enhance and safeguard the important heritage asset.
- Ensure regeneration and deliver environmental efficiencies.
- Deliver an integrated, inclusive and needed learning offer.
- Further the vision for aspirational creativity and the role as a community asset.
- Bring vibrancy, inspire communities and address structural challenges in Bexhill.
- Deliver COVID-19 recovery at pace and level-up for the benefit of our communities.

15. Low Carbon (mostly medium and long term)

The impact of staff working from home has been a significant boost to carbon reduction targets. The Council quickly established new working practices to facilitate this change which continue to be used.

16. Connectivity

Information on the Government's Rural Gigabit voucher scheme continues to be rolled out to parish councils across the district. A case study of a local business taking advantage of the scheme is attached as Appendix 4.

Conclusion

17. COVID remains a significant threat to public health, and whilst the vaccination programme has lessened its impact and allowed for the lifting of lockdown restrictions, the virus will remain in the population for the foreseeable future. There also remains the ongoing risk of mutations that are resistant to the current vaccines, which could necessitate the re-imposition of restrictions.
18. Lockdown restrictions have forced changes to the way people work, shop and spend their leisure time. In some sectors this has accelerated existing trends (such as online shopping); in others it has required businesses to re-align their business models to meet new demands and realise opportunities. With the end of furlough and the temporary VAT reduction on tourism and hospitality from the 1 October 2021, we will get a more realistic sense of what the landscape looks like going forward. As international travel reopens, we can start to predict patterns for summer 2022.

19. Skills shortages have become apparent in a number of sectors and whilst there is ongoing debate as to the causes, with Brexit also considered by many to be a key factor, these could have lasting implications on the capacity of those sectors. The hospitality sector is particularly at risk in this regard.
20. The increase in home working is a trend that is likely to continue, with lasting impacts on traditional commercial and economic centres and on travel-to-work patterns. This will have knock-on implications on the demand for office accommodation in particular, and the way in which that space is used. The Council's longer-term strategies will need to take account of these structural changes.
21. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note the report and invited to make any further suggestions for consideration by Cabinet.

Financial Implications

22. The majority of the activities are being delivered within existing budgetary and staff resources. The Council is also making use of external funding such as the Re-opening High Streets Safely Fund and Welcome Back Fund.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	Consultation	No
Environmental	No	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	No	Exempt from publication	No

Chief Executive:	Malcolm Johnston
Report Contact Officer:	Melanie Powell
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Appendices:	1 - Rother District Economic Recovery Action Plan 2 - #ShopLocalBexhill Campaign 3 - The Kitesurf Centre Case Study 4 - Russet Farm Case Study
Relevant previous Minutes:	CB20/64
Background Papers:	None
Reference Documents:	East Sussex Economy Recovery Plan – East Sussex County Council

**Rother District Economic Recovery Action Plan
Priority areas**

General:

- Though we have a specific Ambition focusing on low carbon and energy efficiency we will aim to consider impact to the environment throughout.
- We anticipate that people’s mental health is considered in all aspects of project development and delivery.
- We would expect at all times to follow procurement processes and enter into dialogue with local suppliers wherever possible.

The order given for the Ambitions below reflects that of the East Sussex Recovery Plan: East Sussex Reset.

AMBITION 1: Support businesses to recover, grow and ensure increased investment in the local economy

East Sussex Reset: Thinking local, acting local

Objectives:

- Create and safeguard local jobs
 - Support local businesses to adapt, recover and grow
 - Work to increase local public and private sector spend within the District.
- Capitalise on inward investment potential created by the COVID-19 crisis

Action	Plan	Timeframe	Outcome	Update
Be ready for a second / further waves of COVID-19 and possible future local lockdowns.	Much of the lockdown infrastructure has now been put in place and can be picked up again should further waves occur. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring of local infection rates. • Communications with Director of Health on local lockdown protocol. • Engage directly with businesses. • Be clear with any further public messaging via communications team. • Work with Environmental Health on guidance and possible additional prevention support. 	Continuous from now.	Speedy decisions to ensure public safety.	2 x Covid information officers paid for through the Reopening the High Streets Safely funding worked with businesses to ensure they were compliant with Covid restrictions and guidelines. We continue to employ 1 Covid officer with the Welcome Back Funding. During lockdown the officers also worked with specific sectors: nursery and preschools / garden centres / churches / car washing to help through some of the more grey areas. Cabinet (6 th Sept 21) agreed Additional Restrictions Grant of

				£554,531 to be administered through Community Grants Panel.
Help promote training from external providers.	Direct information through the RDC website and social media platforms. Brief newly appointed communication officers to supply up to date information to local businesses.	Started and will be ongoing.	Local businesses accessing recovery support.	Let's Do Business have run a series of social media online workshops. Firstly, funded through CHART which limited engagement to Bexhill Central and Sidley but now with Welcome Back these have opened up to the whole of Rother District.
Push for increased capacity at the Business East Sussex (BES) Growth Hub	Work with other Districts and Boroughs to support additional funding for Growth Hub expansion. Signpost more local businesses to Growth Hub for bespoke advice. Be clear on Brexit in readiness for January 2021.	Already flagged as an issue and additional staff employed.	More capacity to support businesses.	Brexit Officer was employed for changes from 1 st January 2021 as difficulties still remained around a lack of detail of the changes that came into play on the 1 st Jan. Env Health worked directly with Rye Fisheries to ensure supply chains were unbroken and are continuing to do this placing additional ongoing demands on Env Health.
Support businesses to reopen and trade whilst conforming to government guidelines on social distancing and safety measures.	Employ two communications officers (six month contracts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor business feedback • Survey broadband speeds 	Started 1 st October until 19 th July.	Businesses are confident in their approach.	Feedback from the Bexhill Christmas Shop Local campaign Appendix 2 identified a need for driving traffic online which resulted in the online training delivered by Let's Do Business (below). RDC ran 2 customer confidence surveys (Nov 2020 and June 2021) -second survey showed a small increase in confidence and a small decrease in concern when visiting the high street. Points to note: 57% of respondents had increased how much they shop online. There was a 23% increase

				from 2020 on those returning for leisure and social purposes. Social media campaign to support coming out of lockdown on 19 th July.
Work with Locate East Sussex to match premises to businesses relocating to Rother.	Propose to sponsors board research project to identify vacant buildings. Work with Locate to start discussion with leisure operators.		Maximise opportunity for inward investment.	Monthly reports received from Locate throughout Covid tracking business movement. New Director of Locate East Sussex to revise focus areas – specifically North East Bexhill. The demand for larger industrial units is growing. Marketing team at Locate working with RDC and Bexhill College on the Beeching Road Studios project.
Promote the 'Better Business for All' Toolkit on the Sussex Chambers of Commerce website	Toolkit adapted for local use - led by BES.	Continual promotion and adaptation.		Done

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AMBITION 2: Retain our skills infrastructure, support employment, build workforce resilience

East Sussex Reset: Building skills, creating jobs

- Objectives:**
- Expand our local skills base to increase employment opportunity
 - Support young people into training and work
 - Increase digital inclusion and digital skills

Action	Plan	Timeframe	Outcome	Update
Future proofing with digital skills development.	Work with businesses who wish to develop or enhance their online presence.	Started and will continue	Digital awareness and increased skills.	As per training update above. Most requests from business for support was around growing business on line effectively. An

	Work with James Wilkinson Digital Skills Partnership Co-ordinator to see what can be offered in Rother.		Retail moving online.	<p>example of this done well is seen in The KiteSurf Centre case study Appendix 3. RDC continues to offer training in this area through Let's Do Business.</p> <p>RDC has also signposted to external training providers through Social Media posts and emails to Town / Parish Councils and Chambers.</p>
Page 14	Work with LEP sub groups to develop sector skills funding binds.	Cultural bid being developed around high streets. Be mindful of Shared Prosperity Fund.	October deadline on SSF round 2 Poss January announcement	<p>Maximise grant funding into the District.</p> <p>LEP funded funds: £2m Skills Covid Recovery Fund / £2.4m Covid Business Skills Fund RDC has signposted these to businesses</p> <p>£17m Levelling Up Fund bid submitted June 2021 for dlwp capital project, - awaiting result. Cultural Development Fund bid EOI submitted July 2021 – not invited to next stage. UK Community Renewal Fund (precursor to Shared Prosperity) – administered by ESCC, 6 projects with Rother element passed for funding with total UKCRF ask of £2.5m.</p>
	Provision of affordable childcare	RDC supporting the provision of affordable childcare across the District to ensure parity of access to work.	To be picked up in the BTSSG meeting as a starting point	<p>Equitable increase in employment by gender.</p> <p>RDC has facilitated the reinstatement of nursery provision at Sidley Children's Centre by taking a sublease from ESCC.</p>
	Opportunities for young people.	Work with Skills East Sussex and intermediary organisations: Sussex Chambers / Artswork, using	October start applications	Local business and organisations using the Kickstarter programme including Optivo / The Pelham /

	<p>the Kickstart scheme to develop six month job placements for young people. Encourage local businesses to get involved. Encourage local young people to apply.</p> <p>Encourage creative pathways through partnerships established in the Beeching Road studios.</p>	Workspace from Spring 2021	Clear career pathways in creative industries.	<p>local schools. MP endorsement of scheme Sept 2020.</p> <p>Creative pathways bid to Arts Council successful (£50k) able to subsidise 6 young graduate placements when Beeching Road Studios open.</p>
Local Skills and Employment Plans (LSEP) alongside construction projects.	<p>Implement RDC planning policy changes that introduce a standardised requirement for Section 106 to support skills and employment plans. Encourage pathways into construction with on the job training. Increase number of CSCS (construction skills certification scheme) cards. Increase number of work placements and apprenticeships offered. Work with our most local communities first.</p>	Currently working with RDC Planning Policy on inclusion in next Local Plan.	<p>Standardised method for S106 for employment and skills.</p> <p>Local construction opportunities improved through local development.</p>	<p>Local Skills & Employment Plan (LSEP) in delivery: Bovis/Vistry at Worsham Farm Rosewood Park, Little Common</p> <p>LSEP Confirmed: Blackfriars, Battle Bexhill High School site Former Thomas Peacock school, Rye</p>

AMBITION 3: Re-start the leisure, hospitality, tourism, retail and cultural economy to get people back into work

East Sussex Reset: Fast-forwarding business

Objectives:

- Support jobs in these sectors
- Help freelancers to access advice, funding and guidance
- Maintain the status of the District as a visitor attraction through safe and sustainable tourism
- Sector skills development

Be mindful of local community health and wellbeing as key to growth and prosperity

Action	Plan	Timeframe	Outcome	Update
Encourage and promote use of the kite mark: We're Good to Go to show businesses are COVID compliant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.visit1066country.com/visitor-information/were-good-to-go • RDC social media 	<p>1-2 months</p> <p>Aug-March</p>	Businesses using kitemark as standard at	21/07/2020 = 59 signed up

<p>Work with the De La Warr Pavilion (DLWP) to re-promote Bexhill as a visitor destination.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with DLWP for safe reopening of public events with consideration for staff and public. • Ensure DLWP avoids further lock-down by closely managing the amount of activity offered. 		<p>Staff brought off furlough. Some small amount of risk assessed activity. Building up to events re-starting in March 2021.</p>	<p>Nov 2020: light show to thank the NHS – Social reach 10,000. May 2021: England's Creative Coast, £1.3m cultural tourism project to increase coastal tourists by 3%. Dlwp one of 7 venues involved.</p> <p>Summer 2021: Sea Art campaign with Dlwp and Towner Gallery</p>
<p>Event strategy paper from Overview and Scrutiny Committee to November Cabinet.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devolve events budget to towns and roll over unallocated funds from 2020. • Towns (Rye & Bexhill) to programme own events in 2021. 	<p>November Cabinet Implement by spring 2021 onwards</p>	<p>Events budget devolved to Rye & Bexhill (Battle already devolved)</p>	<p>Done</p>
<p>Christmas Campaign to encourage people to shop in local high streets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If viable in line with Government social distancing measures - work with 18 Hours for a 'Streets of' feel using the 2019/20 events pot. • Work with Town Councils to animate high streets for Christmas. • Website to direct traffic. • Christmas markets (local suppliers). 	<p>2-3 months</p>	<p>Officer lead in partnership with 18 Hours and town/parish councils.</p>	<p>Cllr led 'Shop Local' campaign Christmas 2020, posters and social media. Different levels of success in each town.</p> <p>Many events not able to happen Christmas 2020 due to Tier 4 restrictions.</p> <p>Autumn / Winter 2021 events supported through Welcome Back Fund: Rye Jazz / Rye Town App/ Bexhill Winter Festival</p>
<p>Enhancing the 1066Walk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the project as detailed and agreed in the EAFRD funding application. 	<p>By summer 2021</p>	<p>Renewed attention on the 1066 walk.</p>	<p>Launch events Rye / Battle / Pevensey 17th Sept 2021 - 100 pieces of new infrastructure: way markers / signages / benches / sculptures: 12 left to install. National publicity being generated for the project.</p> <p>https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/uk/best-uk-travel-staycation-2021-b1778681.html</p>

				Try a new type of glamping and soak up the rich history of the Sussex countryside (thescottishsun.co.uk)
Pudding and Pathways Marketing Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Led by 18 Hours event company this project supports the RDC led 1066 pathways project by marketing businesses along the route. Discussion with restaurants and eateries along the route. Ensure all participating businesses support the 'Were Good to Go' kitemark. 	Spring 2021	Direct support to local business on 1066walk.	A series of eateries along the 1066 Walk route have embraced this project with themed 1066 Puddings, we hope this grows led by them, with full 1066 Country support and would hope we can help support a long term vision for this new festival, supporting rural business economy and tourism.
Support events spring / summer 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call out to promoters early 2021 – work with neighbourhood services to manage expectations with regards use of RDC land. Cabinet approval for Section 106 funds to support railways station poster campaign. 	January 2021	Events budget	<p>Events started again from 19th July onwards with Streets of Battle and Bexhill.</p> <p>On line programme of support for event programmers delivered by 18 Hours April 2021 – Feb 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event Concept Development Covid Safe Events Perfect Programming Budget, Finance & Fundraising Marketing & Audience Dev Diversity & Integration Events, Environment & Sustainability Monitoring & Evaluation
Re-start of live performances / cinemas / outdoor markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support events with licences as necessary and use of RDC spaces. 		Promote the area with live events	<p>See above re events programme and budget support.</p> <p>Use of RDC land to support the following events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bexhill 100 Static Car Show Bexhill Regatta

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bowls Tournament • Made in Bexhill Summer Fair • Little Lily Harley • Bexhill Rotary Club Scrapheap Challenge • Shaw's Fair, Rye • Bexhill 100
Review of tourism businesses at the end of the summer season	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with 1066 Country on a members survey to understand where tourism businesses find themselves at the end of the season. 	November 2020	Understand how businesses are likely to fare over winter.	1066 Country Covid related surveys of members. 1066 Country Covid Recovery Plan.
Promote Julie's Bicycle accreditation to creative businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification scheme, Creative Green, is the recognised benchmark for sustainability achievement within the creative industries. 		Ensure environmental impact is considered in adaptation strategies.	

AMBITION 4: Adapt and improve places

East Sussex Reset: Better places, fuller lives

Objectives:

- Support high street changes and adaptation
- Create safe social spaces
- Maintain strong community led change working with community leaders and the voluntary sector

Action	Plan	Timeframe	Outcome	Update
Monitor the impact of the temporary road changes made by ESCC under the Emergency Active Transport Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Footfall counts • Business interviews • Local surveys 	Six months	Have a clear understanding to the impact of the scheme	ESCC yet to evaluate.
Bexhill Town Centre strategy development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint Resident Representatives. • Bexhill Town Centre SG to relook at consultant brief and appoint consultant to undertake work. 	Interviews September 1 SG meeting September 29	Resident voice on the SG Consider changes in	Resident representatives now appointed to BTCSG. Cabinet agreed remaining Section 106 funds to be allocated to projects by the Town Centre SG,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share the learning from this piece of work with other Town Centres. 		High Street post COVID.	<p>supporting refurbishment of Devonshire Sq toilets / railway footbridge mural project.</p> <p>With the formation of Bexhill Town Council, it is proposed that the Town Council oversee the future of the Bexhill Town Centre Steering Group - discussions are underway.</p>
Reopening the High Streets Safely (RHSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shop local banners for Bexhill / Film and social media campaign in Rye / Banners and bags for Battle. Employment of 2 x communications officers. Monitor impact on high streets through footfall. 	Waiting on grant Start 1 October	Towns highlight they are open for business message. Bespoke guidance for businesses across Rother.	RHSS funding was followed by Welcome Back funding which has been allocated in the following way: 1x Covid Information Officer retained / Work on road options at Camber Sands during peak season / additional bins and collection across the summer / support for off season events to drive footfall / training for businesses.
Push for investment in public realm to improve town centre environments	Keep aware of funding streams as they become available and make bids as and when appropriate.	Ongoing	Grant funding investment into Rother.	<p>Levelling Up application for dlwp includes public realm work around the building.</p> <p>ESCC planned improvements to London Road Corridor out to consultation key stakeholders summer 2021 and public autumn 2021.</p>
Work with communities to maximise the benefits of rural areas of Rother.	Work with Environment Officer to assess the viability of improving places' aesthetics through greening and rewilding, with associated wellbeing and health benefits as well as benefits for the wildlife.	Spring 2021		1066 Country Walk development.

AMBITION 5: Expand low carbon transport and energy infrastructure

East Sussex Reset: Cleaner energy, greener transport				
Objectives:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware in all projects of the RDC carbon neutral target by 2030 Encourage clean methods of transport				
Action	Plan	Timeframe	Outcome	Update
Local Growth Fund (LGF) walking and cycling infrastructure packages in growth corridor areas.	Work with ESCC's 2020/21 and emerging 2021/22 capital programme for local transport improvements, supporting design and delivery of LGF funded walking and cycling packages for Bexhill.	12 months+		
Match economic goals with environment objectives already specified in the RDC environment strategy.	RDC Environment Strategy 2020-2030 (currently in draft) https://www.rother.gov.uk/consultations/draft-environment-strategy/		Aligning this action plan and subsequent regeneration strategies with the RDC Environment Strategy.	Strategy adopted September 2020; awaiting subsequent action plan
Reduce unnecessary commuting.	Supporting people to work at home bring life back into local village communities and reducing carbon emissions.		People supported to work from home.	It is likely that Covid-19 will have a lasting impact on commuting patterns due to the increase in home working.
Grow public transport network.	Lobby for continued, improved public transport service.		Public transport as a viable option across Rother.	
Local Plan	Work with officers to highlight areas where carbon neutral areas of economic growth could feed into the Local Plan.		All future growth is considered for its environmental impact.	
AMBITION 6: Capitalise on digital connectivity				
East Sussex Reset: The future is digital				
Objectives:				

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embrace the new digital landscape and use it to best advantage Ensure our communities; businesses and residents, are digitally skilled Work for digital access to all areas of the District 				
Action	Plan	Timeframe	Outcome	
Support push for 100% ultrafast broadband cover for the area	<p>Promote the government Gigabit voucher scheme (rural premises with broadband speeds of less than 100Mbps can use vouchers £1,500 per home and up to £3,500 for each small SME to support the cost of installing new fast and reliable connections for those who meet the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing broadband speeds are less than 100Mbps A gigabit capable network isn't likely to be built to that area commercially in the near future There is no government-funded contract planned or in place to improve the network already 	Scheme runs until end March 2021 – then being relaunched.	Communities encouraged to collaborate and apply to the scheme.	The Scheme has been promoted through Parish councils to encourage sign up. Sign up in Robertsbridge and Sedlescombe. Cllr case study of Russett Farm application to the scheme attached Appendix 4 . Case study circulated to business through Locate East Sussex, internal comms team.
Support push for 5G rollout across the district	With 5G now available in Brighton and Eastbourne we will continue to lobby for roll out in Bexhill. Look for government schemes to be involved with 5G opportunities.		5G roll out in Rother	

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EVALUATION OF THE #ShopLocalBexhill RUN IN CENTRAL WARD BEXHILL OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2020



Report by Councillor Christine Bayliss
Central Ward Councillor and
Rother Cabinet member with responsibility for
Economic Development and Regeneration

Introduction

In the Autumn of 2020 the recovery of the local economy in Rother appeared to be faltering. Following the loosening of lockdown restrictions in Summer 2020, local retailers were reporting that trade and customers had not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

The #ShopLocalBexhill campaign was developed partly in response to data from shoppers and Town Centre retailers set out in a report published by Bexhill Chamber of Commerce in August 2020¹. The survey was focused on gaining views on the Chamber's plans to increase social distances through new traffic measures. However, it also collected information around shoppers habits post the initial lockdown.

80% of survey respondents claimed they had been out less often in recent months and 60% claiming that under normal circumstances they would go into the Town Centre. These stark results were borne out by anecdotal conversations with town centre retailers over the late summer and early Autumn months. Most reported less footfall and turnover than usual. The only businesses who reported increased turnover were ones where there was an established online selling element to their business.

In terms of financial support the Government via Rother District Council was supporting businesses during lockdown with grants which allowed retailers to 'keep their head above water'. There was an additional programme of support through the 'Reopening High Street Safely Fund' which provided Rother District Council with £85K from the European Regional Development Fund to spend on 4 project areas aimed at promoting High Streets. Rother agreed to spend the funding on a Christmas Shopping Campaign in Bexhill and funded lamp standard banners encouraging safe shopping. Rye and Battle Town Councils organised their own campaigns.

It was within this context that the #ShopLocalBexhill campaign was conceived and delivered by the Central Ward Councillors. The objective was to raise awareness with a Ward Newsletter to be followed up with a social media and poster campaign. However, Covid 19 infections continued to rise through the autumn and the Government introduced a full lockdown for a month from 5 November through to 2 December. When Rother and Bexhill emerged from the Lockdown they entered in Tier 2 Covid restrictions which meant that non-essential retail could reopen. However, with Covid infections still rising, on 19 December all non-essential retail premises closed and will remain closed until further notice.

The purpose of this evaluation is to determine what effect the #ShopLocalBexhill campaign had in terms of turnover and encouraging people to shop locally in the short period 2 December through to 19 December. It also looks at what more Rother and the County Council could do to support local retail businesses and whether there are lessons to be learned in terms of rolling out a similar campaign when the current lockdown ends.

¹ Bexhill Chamber of Commerce Town Centre Survey August 2020 compiled by think.me.uk

#ShopLocalBexhill Campaign



The campaign had three elements:

- A ward newsletter with a headline article urging local residents in Shop Local – this Christmas. This was delivered to 2500 homes in the Town Centre between the beginning of October and 5 November when National Lockdown 2 was introduced. **Total Cost £350** for the printed materials plus volunteer hours estimated in excess of 30 hours for delivery.



- #ShopLocalBexhill posters displayed in shop windows throughout the Town Centre including London Road. We asked permission from our Sackville Ward councillor colleagues to offer the posters in Sea Road and the eastern end of St Leonards Road and were pleased to see the poster in the MP's office window. The posters were designed by a colleague and distributed in the run up to the easing of lockdown at the beginning of December. **Total Cost £40** for 200 posters plus 10 hours of councillor time for distribution.



- Publicity which included organising a press release, social media coverage and a paid promotion on Facebook to support take up of the posters. We distributed all but 20 of the posters to shops, estate agents and offices where the windows were visible from the street. During the time that shops were allowed to open we posted on Facebook and occasionally Twitter to promote the campaign. **Total cost of publicity £10** (Facebook Ad) plus 50+ hours councillor time spent on social media promotion and press releases.



The printing and advert costs were paid from the Councillor's campaign funds

Evaluation – Methodology

While the posters were very visible and retailers were positive about the Christmas trade we wanted to find out if the campaign had made a difference. Had people noticed the campaign and had they bothered to shop local in the short period of time between shops reopening on 2 December and 19 December when they had to close again? We also took the opportunity to also ask some additional questions around the numbers of retailers who

were operating online and what support they felt they needed to increase online sales as well as support more generally to improve their business. Finally, we asked shoppers about gaps – were there goods they would like to have bought in Bexhill but could not.

Because of the National Lockdown we could not interview shoppers or retailers face-to-face in the town centre. We set up an on-line survey and promoted it through social media. We split the questions between two groups – Retailers and Shoppers. We did not collect any demographics but respondents could only complete the survey once.

The survey ran for 9 days from 8 through to 17 January. It was promoted via Facebook with a paid for advert which encourage people to click through to the online survey link.

Headline findings

We found good awareness of the #ShopLocalBexhill campaign. The campaign needs to continue, with an evaluation again at the same time next year to see if we have achieved behaviour change.

Products that residents most wanted to buy locally but were unable to do so, were clothes and toys.

Retailers highlighted that the issue around developing online sales is not about the mechanics of setting up the tools but how to use the tools effectively. Specialist online marketing support is needed.

Having a clean, well maintained and attractive Town Centre was an important factor to encourage shoppers back into Bexhill.

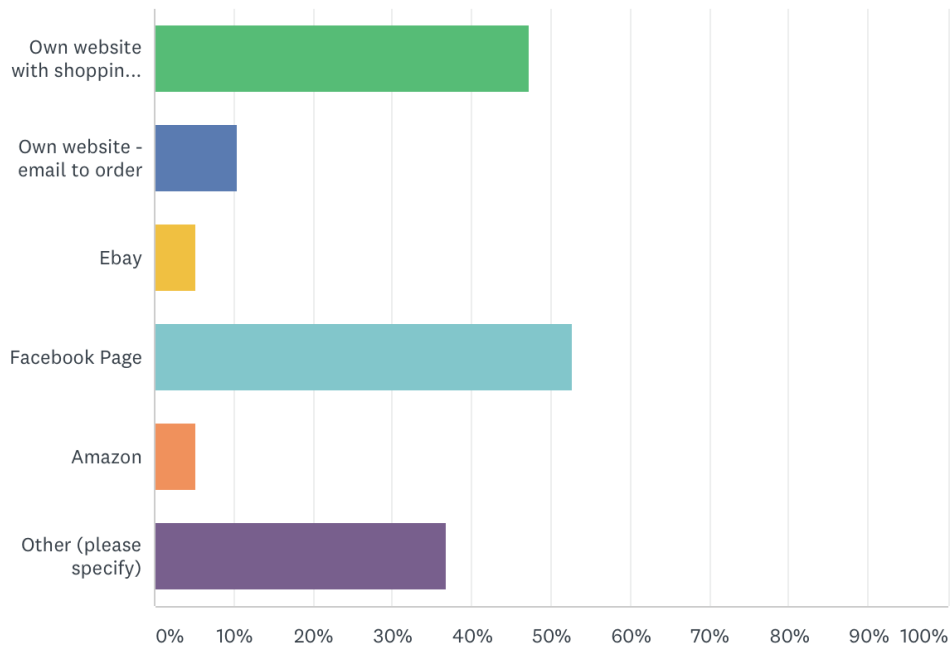
Detailed analysis

Of the 266 respondents completed the survey, 8.2% were retailers (22) and 91.8% (244) shoppers.

RETAILER FEEDBACK

85% of the retailers said that they were aware of the #ShopLocalBexhill campaign. 76% had displayed a poster. Most retailers thought that their customers were not aware of the campaign. 56% believed that the campaign did not lead to more sales. However, this may reflect the fact that the campaign was late started and finished early. One respondent wrote *“Difficult to judge. We were provided the poster in November during a local shutdown and then were only open for 3 weeks in December before being shut down again”*

When asked “Do you have an online ordering or online shopping facility?” 57% responded positively. Most retailers had introduced on-line shopping before March 2020 and those with an on-line presence used a variety of platforms:

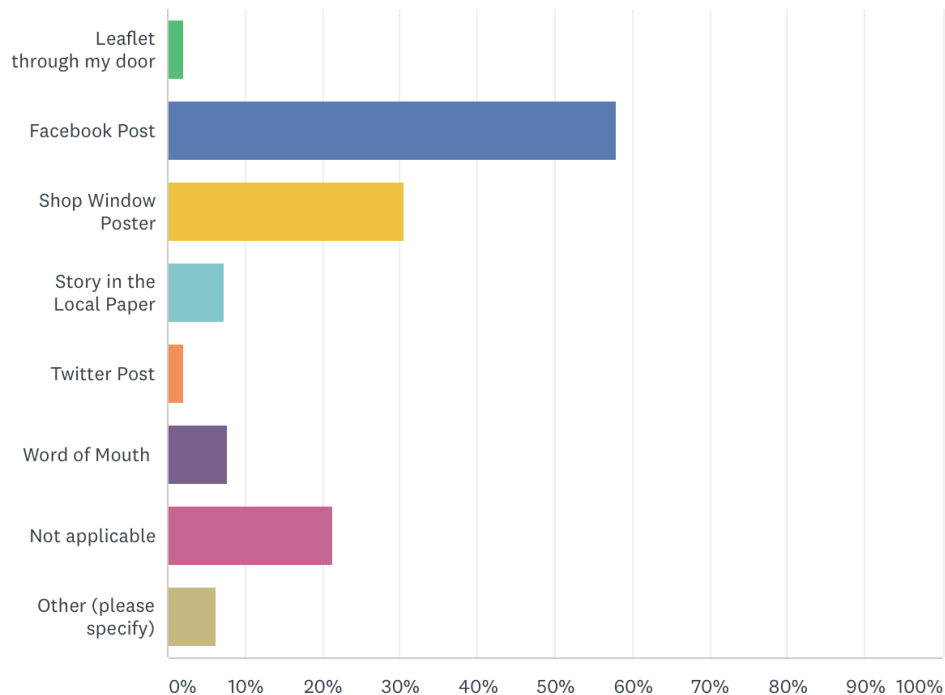


Where respondents had chosen 'other' they cited Google Market Place, 'Not on the High Street' and 'Etsy' (which is an online shop for handmade, vintage, custom and unique gifts)

Just over 70% of retail respondents said they would like support to increase online sales. One 'not sure' respondent said *"we tried click and collect basis during November but had little interest. Most calls were enquiring when we were opening again, and some people reserved things for when we reopened"*

SHOPPER FEEDBACK

91.8% of respondents to the survey were shoppers. Surprisingly, given the retailer responses, over 64% said that they were aware of the #ShopLocalCampaign. The response from the question about how they become aware is shown below. Respondents could select more than more source of information and Facebook was by far the most quoted source. This may have been slightly skewed as the survey itself was conducted through social media rather than face-to-face interviews or hard copy questionnaires. After Facebook, the next most popular choice was shop window posters which were recognised by 30% of respondents. Where people selected 'other' it was mainly to say that they had seen the posters elsewhere, for example, on notice boards around the town.



We asked shoppers whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements. A sliding scale of 0 – 10 was used, with 0 representing strongly disagree and 10 strongly agree.

Respondents only slightly agreed with the statement *“I made an effort to shop locally during the run up to Christmas”*. (Scoring 5.43 on a Scale 0 – 10) Checking through the general comments those that did not agree tended to have already done their shopping online in November when the country was in National Lockdown 2.

On average they did not agree with *“I spent more in local shops in December than I would have in previous years”* (Scoring 3.91 on a scale of 0 – 10) and did not agree with this statement *“I have ordered online from local shops in December”* (Scoring 3.04 on a scale 0 – 10).

We asked an open-ended question about *“goods or items that you couldn’t source from a local retail stores”* The top answers were Clothes (27% respondents) and Toys (25% respondents).

Finally, we asked both shoppers and retailers *“Do you have any comments you’d like to make about what more can be done to support the retail sector in Bexhill?”* The full responses are set out in Annex A and B. But here are a number of interesting suggestions set out below.

A significant number of respondents who would like to see more **pedestrianisation** within the town and increased events to encourage visitors – but not on the seafront as this is thought to reduce footfall in local shops.

Many people commented on the mix of shops and the abundance of charity shops (without perhaps realising that charity shops bring visitors into Bexhill). There were a lot of comments about the new parking restrictions and worryingly, a significant number of shoppers who wrongly believe that there are no free parking spaces in the Town Centre. The majority of town centre on-street parking is free although restricted to 2 hours with no return for 4 hours.

Several shoppers said that the Town Centre could do with a facelift including making sure shop fronts are maintained and kept clean. *“The only asset Bexhill centre has to attract people to shop there is the place. So it is absolutely essential that the place looks good - clean, well maintained, attractive”.*

There were also comments about boarding up empty shops and making them look attractive and suggestions about reducing rents and rates and dealing with rogue commercial landlords.

There were only a few suggestions about creating an on-line directory along the lines of ‘Bexhill Unwrapped’. Current thinking however, is that shoppers go straight from the search engine to the retailers website or Facebook page, cutting out ‘the middle man’. This is highlighted by a retailer who stated that it is not necessarily getting online that is the issue but seeking professional advice around how to *“drive traffic to your website”* once it is up and running.

Recommendations

- Feed the results of this survey back to Rother District Council, the Bexhill Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses.
- Continue to develop the campaign working with the local Chambers of Commerce in Bexhill, Battle and Rye. Aim for having promotional materials ready when the current restrictions are lifted. Include Councillors in the local delivery of campaign materials.
- Research sources of training in online marketing with emphasis on how to achieve search engine optimisation as well as how to adopt successful strategies to promote Facebook and other social media channels.
- Undertake some test events away from the seafront to retain footfall in the Town Centre (post Covid Lockdowns)
- Promote free on-street parking in Bexhill Town Centre through a social media campaign run by RDC and ESCC.
- Investigate ways to tidy up the appearance of empty shops – with decorative boarding or window films.
- Investigate whether there is more which can be done in terms of Rate Relief

- Roll out the public realm strategy and make sure the town centre is well maintained and cared for.

ANNEX A – Responses from Retailers (What more can be done to support the retail sector in Bexhill)

I think the council have done a lot in the last few years. I do believe though that the De la Warr pavilion has lost its appeal for some visitors. It used to have a cafe on the ground floor. This led out to the terrace there was often a band playing and deck chairs etc. Local art displayed in the corridors. It is quite expensive now and up too market for some people . Especially families.
The parking has helped massively now introduced, but there needs to be more for people to come in to town for (when circumstances allow) events etc. There is no 'joined up' thinking between retailers, no planning of how we get footfall back in the town centre, and most events are centred to the seafront, and actually lower footfall.
Make Western/Devonshire Roads pedestrian.
Grants to help businesses maintain decor of shop fronts. This would improve the look of the high street at a time when retailers don't have excess budgets and provide a boost to local decorating businesses at the same time.
Need to have more free parking in Bexhill to allow shoppers to come to town
Financial support to enable local businesses to continue trading
Great initiative. Unite town for Christmas. Lots of people were ready to support local shops. Need to carry on with all year round ideas to tie up shopping experience. Regular monthly events of quarterly events. A town pound scheme. Or other local shopping initiatives. Thank you for your efforts so far though.
Pandemic to end and more varied shops to entice people in. Far too many cafes etc in Bexhill.
Get the parking sorted!
I think the campaign was great - increasing awareness and getting the message out there. Thank you
I think the campaign worked locally but was also supported by social media campaigns from various outlets, including news stories on how high streets have to adapt. For the future, I think it would be really useful to help high streets get online, via courses and better still how to drive traffic to your website. As selling online as well as in shop, can keep business on the high street and pay the rent. I sell online but wasn't to keep my shop open rather than move to a warehouse on an industrial unit. The high streets need to be a mix of community feel, and more of an overall experience. Not just about shopping. A combination of both.
Better parking facilities including loading bay in Wickham Avenue
Town centre needs a good face-lift with greenery, seating and facilities. Customers have commented they feel unsafe bringing youngsters and teenagers to town because of the increasing anti-social behaviour particularly around any seating areas/benches in the centre. An increasing abundance of empty shops and charity shops also does not assist the situation.

Annex B - Responses from Shoppers (What more can be done to support the retail sector in Bexhill)

A Bexhill Autumn Fair, over a whole weekend ... stalls, a parade, bands, locally produced products of all types, Stilt walkers, Jugglers, a car race, amazing music at the Del- La Warr Pavilion, barbecue on the beach.... Bexhill is a stunning place, let's celebrate that fact and inform the rest of the world.
A nice children's clothes shop, card shop, gift shop, pound shop in Sidley
A Shop Local Discount card
A start would be retailers keeping their shops exteriors looking painted and clean, the town looks dated and derelict
ACCESSIBILITY! All people on the council or in charge or making these decisions should be required to try and use the town with a mobility aid, wheelchair or pushchair! My stepfather uses an electric wheelchair and can't get in a ridiculous amount of shops. We felt we could only come into town with our baby in a sling if we had the pram we avoided not worth the hassle at all. Outrageous when you consider the demographic of Bexhill's population.
Affordable clothes shops that suit younger residents. Move stores online and advertise during this pandemic when people are avoiding shops
Allow shops to operate in the town centre, rather than charity shops that have reduced rates. Not a fair playing field for shops whether big companies or independent.
As a former business owner, I feel very strongly that we must make Bexhill town centre shops a "destination" and retain as many independent shops as possible. A reduction in business rates would be beneficial.
As one that has tripped on the uneven pavements and been a victim of the numerous potholes in Sackville Rd and Western Rd, how about offering an acceptable surface underfoot. Work from the bottom up, as it were!
Better landlords made to look after their properties. lower rates?
Better parking
Better variety of shops. Particularly shoe shops, men's and children's clothing.
Bexhill is a unique town and more high end shops would attract locals and visitors- e.g. Hearts with Love shop in Devonshire road. Also toy shop and clothes shop for younger people.
Clean the streets up, stop the fly tipping. Repair the footpaths, close to traffic Western Rd 10 - 4pm each day except Sunday, only needs a barrier at one end. Have Police on foot patrol during the day.
Condensing the shopping area which is too spread out.
Consistent opening hours. Any time you shop in town after 4pm is a lottery for shops being open. Get a town centre manager. Encourage and book buskers. Good ones make people stop and listen and spend more time. This is why Eastbourne welcomes them. People stay in cafes longer. They come to listen on purpose. Lose some of the disabled spaces. Accept and embrace the charity shops. Encourage more. People from other towns come specially. Otherwise it is the same shops in a different town. Embrace Bexhill's differences. Bexhill town centre is like the world's end. There is nothing to draw people in and less to make them stay.
Create some incentives to get more traders
Cut down on the number of charity shops and cafes and encourage more diverse retail.
Do not allow non-essential shops to remain open during lockdown i.e. The Drug Store, The Catalogue Shop, Steve's Tobacconist and the dry cleaners in Western road to remain open instead totally on the other shops that have had to close.
Do you mean local or local independent?

Due to difficulty walking and standing for any length of time, I usually cycle to the shops. The introducing of parking restrictions has made cycling along Devonshire Road easier now there's no double parking. I was disappointed that the proposal to pedestrianise Western Road didn't get anywhere. There need to be more cycle racks dotted around, not all in one place. If I've got a heavy bag I can't carry it far.
Easier/more parking
Encourage more independent shops to come/stay i.e. Books, clothes, and also stores like m & s, away from out of town locations. Provide good cheap parking, i.e. multi storey car park would also be good for shop workers.
Encourage or help with online presence
Encourage the new town council to give the shopping streets a facelift including trees. Keep business rates under review Proactively seek out new independent shops with incentives
Fashionable clothes for younger people.
Fill up empty shops Reconsider parking restrictions on seafront
Free adverts with web links on Weekly Council Email
Free parking
Free parking Reduced rates May be a Waitrose or M an S Food hall to attract more people to the town
Get better shops I never been to a more depressing town you can't get anything here
Get rid of the parking meters and parking charges.
Get the retail sector to ask - expel what they actually want/need to buy
Greater opportunities for small retailers to use social media, and maybe a website which co-ordinates this? Some training in website design?
Haha, yeah, keep the shops open
Have themed events more often (difficult through Covid though), the key to supporting retail is increasing footfall
Help them with business rates and save them from rogue landlords
Help towards payment of rent and council tax
Help with business rates
Helping small businesses get online effectively.
Hold a couple of Bexhill black Fridays and get all the shops to partake
I can only think of making it easier to park so I can carry my shopping to the car. As I cannot carry anything heavy, sometimes it's just not possible. I love shopping locally and chatting to the retailers. It's a lovely experience when they recognise that you are a regular, but sometimes I have to go further afield just because of the parking.
I don't go into charity shops as my impression is that they are (like many 'local family' businesses) cramped and dirty, and the goods not well displayed. Shops need to look as though customers are welcome.
I don't normally use the High Street as I don't want to use Charity Shops and traditional Cafes and that's really all there is.
I don't think the local ecosystem is very diverse. Mostly second hand shops, cafes and estate agents. But the local food offering - greengrocer, butcher, fishmonger, etc - is very good. Would like to see more shops that meet the needs of families and different age groups.
I make an effort to wear a face covering. Normally a shield. Though I still carry in my pocket, a mask. I also carry with me. A copy of my medical records. There are times. When wearing a mask is ok. Yet times when not. So I take a face shield. I wear a mask for as long as I am able. But switch to shield when I need to. But there are times when I forget at least one of them I have received both nasty comments and looks from local businesses and their customers. I now use, unsafe, with no detrimental comments, supermarkets.

I think more seating and cover outside shops to encourage people to socialise in good times and to queue safely in the pandemic
I think planning strategy needs to look to focus retail activity in the town centre, convert London Road more to residential where possible.
I think we need a range of shops which offer good prices . No more cafes, hairdressers, estate agents.
I won't shop in Bexhill now since the parking charges. I go to Ravenside, Eastbourne on a Sunday (free parking), Lottbridge Drive and Crumbles.
I would like to see a good deli in town.
I would love a few more clothing shops. Another toy shop would be good and also a sports shop
I'm new to the area and love the variety of local stores Bexhill town has, I would hope every support is being offered to those businesses in this difficult time to ensure all retailers stay open
It is vital that 2021 is the year that small businesses are supported by LA's to get online and improve their social media presence. Also helping the community to access businesses for click & collect etc.
It would be good to have some retail chains interspersed with the independent stores and for there to be a pedestrian only zone, Devonshire Rd would be ideal, so that cafes can have tables outside and create a central space that shoppers want to spend time in.
It would be lovely to have a really nice deli such as the one in Little Common. Also there are two Co-ops - a different store, maybe Asda/Tesco would be beneficial. A lot of the shops need a facelift - I think the town looks dirty. There are too many charity shops and/or empty shops. I think the new parking scheme works well and I believe people may be more encouraged to shop once the pandemic is over. Often in local shops the price of goods is higher - perhaps reduced rates might encourage slightly cheaper goods.
Just that we must support our local traders as much as possible.
Keep reminding us. It's a really good idea
Late opening on a Thursday for shoppers.
Less charity shops
Less charity shops
Less charity shops, lower rates and more clothes shops
Less charity shops. Less cafes and restaurants. We need an effort to get more individual shops in the town
Less taxi and disabled parking spaces
Less taxi ranks and disabled spaces might make parking easier for your average shopper. One taxi rank on town hall square is more than ample, and the disabled parking should not take up one side of an entire road with additional spaces scattered around. The whole town should be considered, not just the town centre. London Road has shops and looks like a dumping ground, especially with the scrap metal company parking scrap cars all over the pavement.
Lower rates and more retail shops.
Lower rents and rates to attract more varied/interesting retail outlets. Cut down on Italian restaurants!!!
Main retail shops
Make Devonshire road traffic free
Make the town more welcoming, by adding floral displays and having proper high quality designed signage on lampposts.
More businesses need to go online with products. We need more variety in Bexhill... too many charity shops & cafes
More for children. There isn't a lot for young people - aside from New Look there isn't a young person's clothes store.

More free parking and safer pavements that don't damage my wheelchair castor wheels (they need to change the paving slabs that are uneven and dangerous)
More of an online presence - love the COVID click and collect for local shops
More pubs
More quality high street names
More shops for children. And plus clothing shops
More shops for younger adults are a must can't think of one shop apart from food places that would make me go into Bexhill town centre
More support for specialist shops and independent shops. Let community groups (not just formalised charities) borrow empty shops until a renter is found. Focus on types of shops not already in Bexhill.
More variety of shops not charity shops, cafes or restaurants.
More variety of shops to cater to all ages
More variety of shops with affordable prices. I mostly shop online because of the pandemic, it feels safer. Most of Bexhill's shops are small and I found it stressful to browse and social distance.
Need more for young adults/teenagers. I would not go into town to shop for anything. I do go to the charity shops and Jacobs but that is it
Needs a large parking area. Maybe multi story car park. Limit the number of charity shops. I found the Xmas shopping question a little odd we were in lockdown from 2nd December in Bexhill!!
Needs to be far more up to date. Needs pedestrian area with outside seating. Needs a chain store or two to bring the shoppers to town like a costa or Starbucks
No more charity shops, estate agents or hairdressers. I know we like the little boutique shops but they just don't necessarily have the finance behind them to survive, especially with the state of some of the retail units and the amount of work they have to do to make them usable (even with a rent free period). The big names are what will bring people into the town and the boutiques would benefit from the increased footfall. Also having cleaner streets would be nice. Dog mess everywhere! I would never think of Bexhill for a Christmas shopping trip, because I know I wouldn't be able to obtain gifts for multiple people. Scatter box is probably the only place where I used to regularly purchase, and these days factory shop and Boots. However I no longer live in Bexhill, I just work there so it is convenient during lunch breaks, if I didn't work there I wouldn't come to Bexhill at all. Nothing for children, as a kid I spent a large amount of time in Gamleys and Woolworths, can't even get their Clark's shoes anymore. Not even any leisure facilities now to pull people in except the swimming pool which of course isn't in town. It's fine if you want a haircut, a new house and some bits from dearly departed great aunt Mauds wardrobe, but that's about it. It's awful to say but it just feels like another sad little seaside town full of empty and rundown looking units, which will not convince a business owner to take a risk on it, particularly now.
Now parking enforcement is here the town is easier to access. Encourage more retail shops rather than cafes/restaurants.
Online map like mayors website but with all the shops on saying what they sell plus same for businesses bit like Yelp maybe the guy who does the ONS website can do it
Opening time can be sporadic, e.g. some shops close at 4, others close for lunch. It makes the town centre less 'reliable' as a destination, compared to Ravenside which you know will be open 8am to 7pm Mon- Sat.
Park and ride from, say, Wainwright Rd, to Devonshire Rd
Parking issue has now been sorted out it is much easier to park in Bexhill Town centre than before new parking restrictions.
Parking issue. The council should encourage shop owners with a reduction in rates to encourage him to come and clean at Western Road and Devonshire Road the old shops should be boarded up and made smart so we don't look like a slum town with empty shops it's up to the council to

encourage shop owners to come to the town Parking and clean smart town to encourage people to come in
Pedestrianisation, tidying the streets, concentrating shops in fewer streets
Pedestrianise the streets.
Reconsider pedestrian only areas e.g. Western Road
Reconsider pedestrian only areas for specific times e.g. western road
Reduce the business rates, so that small businesses can compete with the bigger companies. Provide one road that is pedestrian only, it works in so many towns and restaurants on Western Road, Sackville Road, or segments of the seafront could add outside seating and live bands - when everything gets back to normal. A place to visit rather than just entertaining our own residents. We must make people come to Bexhill to visit and then stay to spend money and enjoy the town. Stop living in the past and stopping the future under the "conservation rules" some things are just silly and we need to move forward and keep the history without being stuck in time.
Remove parking restrictions.
Reverse the daft parking restrictions that have made it less attractive to shop on town!
Scrap parking charges
Scrap the parking charges on Rother car parks.
See my previous comment.....you can't have all the shops shut over the Christmas shopping period and expect people to wait and hope they can get what they want.....they will order them online to guarantee they will get them.
Smarten up shop fronts
Smarten up the shop fronts, put flowers etc around town, use empty shops for housing, or other purposes. If the town is about cafes, barbers, hairdressers and charity shops then make it a social space that we want to be in. I think independent shops need to be encouraged, smart shops with low business rates, good landlords. But u feel the whole of retail will be something different after this period.
So many local shops don't have accessible websites. Need a central website to list them all
Something for mums and babies would be nice- or parents and kids etc
Staff need to stick to the rules too. I was in a shop in Bexhill, the lady serving me lifted her mask from her mouth, coughed in my direction then covered her mouth with mask!!! Needless to say, I walked straight out without finishing my purchase & will never go in there again << a lost customer for that shop!
Stop business rates for small businesses in town, help support them during these times. Stop encouraging people shop with them as its prolonging this pandemic.
Stop car parking charges
Stop charging for parking! A lot of shoppers including myself will go to the supermarkets instead as I refuse to pay for parking! If you want to charge then ticket all those drivers parking on yellow lines and on pavements etc.
Stop ripping them of with extortionate rates
Stop turning all the empty shops into charity shops or estate agents! Maybe reduce rent charged on these buildings.
The council needs to stop allowing estate agents popping up, we have plenty also the idea too charge people too park in the town has basically put the final nail in the coffin of Bexhill town centre in my opinion
The Covid pandemic has changed the entire face of retail. Working from home will/should continue and Bexhill has a great opportunity to develop and cater for the ex-commuters. A good range of food outlet and more independent retailers would no doubt benefit the community who would otherwise rely on "London" retailers. Fewer charity shops as a result of a more diverse "resident" population during the day. Perhaps more local crafts and services to cater for tourism.

Economies will almost certainly de-centralise (a positive thing) moving “wealth” from the city to the coast. Business facilities to help remote workers?
The only asset Bexhill centre has to attract people to shop there is the place. So it is absolutely essential that the place looks good - clean, well maintained, attractive. Also local shops do not communicate well visually as to what exactly they sell (the picture framing inside Priceless Devonshire Road east side). It was months before I discovered lots of things about what shops in Bexhill sell. They seem to expect you do spend time discovering this. Small local businesses need to try harder - like Hearts!
The parking has made a huge difference, so nice to be able to pop into town without spending ages looking for a spot or having to do a long walk when I only have a short time. So much better now.
Theatre/cinema and free parking one day a week. Making parking info clearer as some are only 2 hours and that's not long enough for appointments and browsing and lunch
There is too much available online e.g. Amazon/eBay, unfortunately most small retail shops won't be able to compete. I think you've done as much as you can.
There should be caps on building rent because it's my understanding this is why shops have closed! (High costs) Too many charity shops and Estate Agents - why does this supersede retail? Clothing shops for young people don't exist in Bexhill. I think more people will support local if there were a better selection of retail establishments. I also think Bexhill is in danger of being a ghost town. If it wants to thrive, we must provide the younger residents with better options.
Think recent parking changes may HELP ok you may have to pay but you are more likely to get a space as commuters cannot park for day
Think this survey will not give true reflection during pandemic as many feel safer avoiding going around shops and not going out unnecessarily.
Too many charity shops, too many disabled parking bays, more high street names needed
Unfortunately because of the Covid I have only been to Bexhill town 3 times since March, I have moved to more online shopping than ever before. I will go back to visiting when all this shielding is behind us. I only hope the shops survive till then. I have used many shops for delivery and have found them so helpful. I didn't find Christmas gift shopping so easy as day to day.
Variety needs to be added to make Bexhill a place people want to shop. There are way too many charity shops!
We are in a pandemic. Stay home
We have a nice selection of shops, parking is still an issue
We have too many hairdressers and charity shops. We are a seaside town so gift shops are always good.
We need more clothing shops, since new look has gone I have to go to Hastings or Eastbourne, it's easier to do everything I need once I'm over there than heading into Bexhill town and then other towns for clothes and shoes.
We need more quality shops, less coffee shops and less tatty charity shops
We need more variety
We need to make the entrance to Bexhill attractive, at the moment London Road looks like a slum!
Website directory for shops
When lockdown make they get support financially so local trader can survive when they can open up again.
While shops are empty make sure they are maintained and perhaps have some sort of window display rather than dead flies
You need a good amount of free parking and the cost of things to be as close to online prices as possible. I'm not going to go out in the cold, pay to park (if I can find a space) to pay a higher price

for something when I can sit at home in the warm and get it delivered to my door for less money. Shopping locally is for rich people who can afford to pay more and afford the parking charges

You need to consider that the people running this campaign are middle class do gooders who can afford to spend more in the name of shopping local. Not everyone can. Fruit and veg in the grocers and meat at the butchers is one thing but gifts and homeware is just too expensive in independent shops. Stop lecturing and understand the audience is wider than those in your fan club

Economic Development and Covid Recovery Plans – Improving Connectivity

The Kitesurf Centre

Growing On-line Business – A Case Study from Camber



The Kitesurf centre is run by three brothers Thomas, Tristan and Rupert Cawte. The business, comprising of a school and retail shop is based in a corner of Broomhill Sands Car Park next to the beautiful Camber Sands. The shop, classroom, storage and equipment are housed in a new eco off grid 'all singing and dancing' facility built during the Covid Pandemic lockdown. The shop also operates on-line retail and has the back-office facilities needed to package and dispatch their high-end kit and accessories to customers in the UK and abroad. Currently the business employs 8 year-round full-time members of staff with many more employed during the summer months to meet demand for instruction and kit. Due to the proximity to London and the high spending nature of their customers The Kitesurf Centre has had a positive impact on the economic viability of Camber village.

The brothers initially set up the school in 2008 opening the shop in 2009 as ancillary to their teaching business. Initially they sold online through a generic web based third party facility

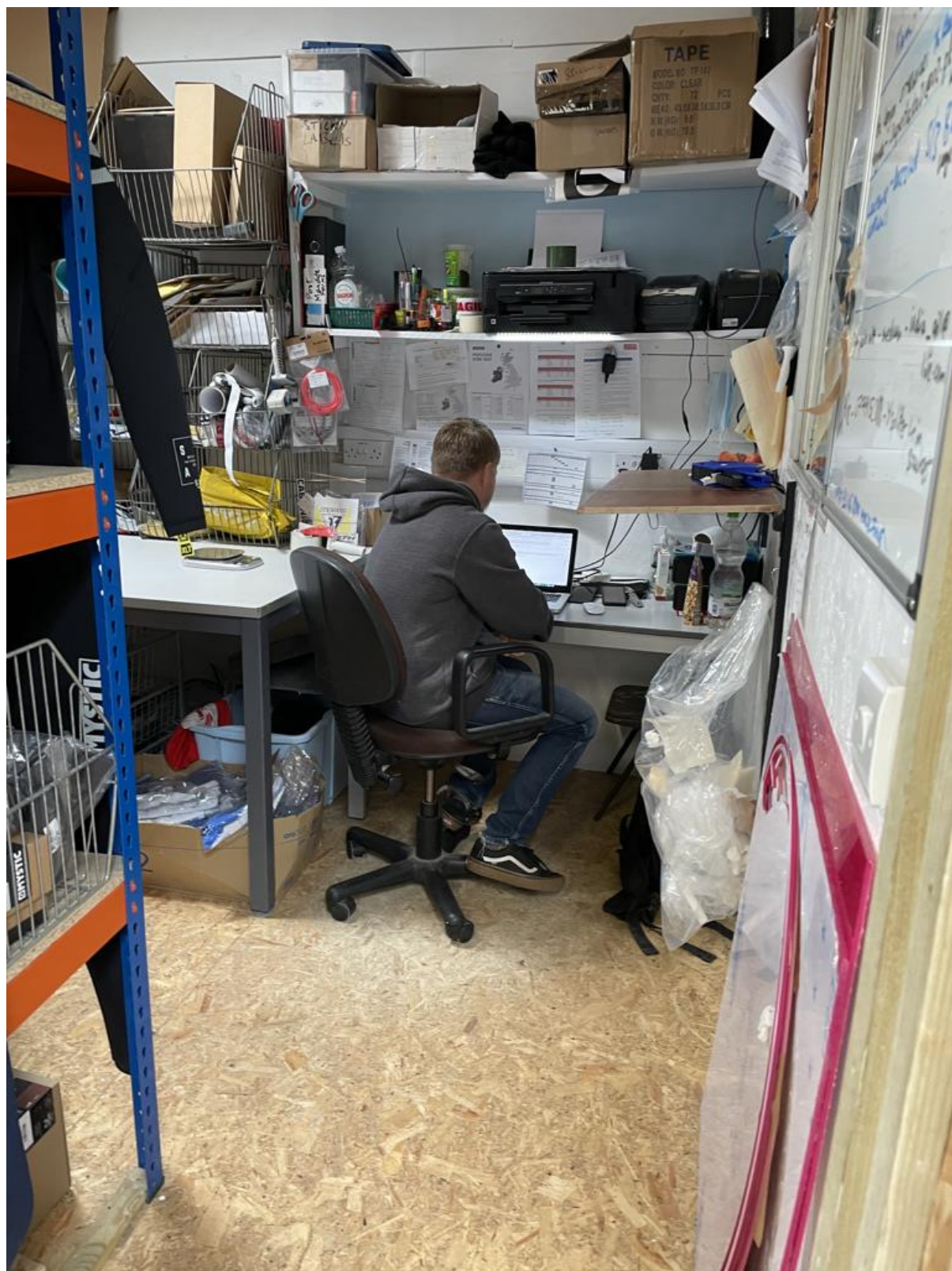
that charged commission on sales. However, as on-line sales grew and commission mounted, they decided in 2018 to launch their own on-line shopping facility embedded in an upgraded website.

Merging the teaching and retail elements of their business into what is effectively one portal marked a dramatic growth of retail sales. While the website was expensive to build, it is now maintained in-house which means that the brothers are able to respond quickly to business risks such as notifying students that a class is cancelled due to weather conditions through to changes of marketing focus due to BREXIT.

The CAWTE brother have created an impressive eco business which continues to grow. BREXIT has been challenging for a business that exported 30% of its online sales to the EU. However, a drive to attract new business in the US and Australia is beginning to pay off.

Here are their top tips for business who might be thinking of dipping their toes into on-line sales.

- Using an online shop with commission charges is a good way to test the strength of the market but once sales take off consider developing your own platform to cut out third party agency costs.
- Make sure you draw up a business plan. Developing an in-house online sales platform is not cheap and the cost has to be set against savings in commission charges. The business plan also needs to factor in how back office space needs to change as turnover grows.
- Bring everyday maintenance of the site 'in-house' so you are not reliant on a third party to update the content.
- Understand how website's work especially SEO (Search Engine Optimisation). Rother District Council has funded courses for businesses to learn more about how to successfully market your business online. For more information contact Melanie Powell: Regeneration Officer on 01424 787506 / melanie.powell@rother.gov.uk



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Economic Development and Covid Recovery Plans – Improving Connectivity

Russet Farm – Case Study



A key element of Rother's post covid recovery plan is to capitalise on digital connectivity by promoting the government Gigabit voucher scheme delivering Full Fibre through Community Fibre Partnerships.

In May 2020 we ran Zoom on-line conversations with Rother Businesses. The conversations focused on three questions:

- The Challenges of lockdown and how this has impacted on local businesses?
- What opportunities have you had to do businesses differently or in a more environmentally friendly way?
- What further support do you need to recover, for your own business and for the Rother economy more widely?

We heard from rural businesses that the poor state of broadband provision was a serious issue. As the country moved to online trading and communications during the initial lockdown, poor connectivity hampered the switch to online trading and communications. Businesses said they wanted Rother to support and campaign for improved connectivity and super broadband provision in the rural areas.

A report setting out the conclusions from the online conversation included a case study provided by Tamara Strapp who owns Russet Farm small business units. She highlighted that the future success of the business is limited by the poor broadband provision which means that of the 12

units, a maximum of 5 tenants can be supplied with internet access. Those 5 businesses run off two different incoming lines. In addition, Tamara and her husband Nick's business, Buckland 360, which designs and delivers training courses requires good broadband connection. To overcome the speed limitations of the basic broadband service they added a 4G service to the property. However, uploading massive e-learning programmes continues to be a real problem. The process can take hours and may then crash halfway through because the 4G signal is not always secure. Training via ZOOM to 10 or more delegates



strains the 4G system so that it starts to fall over. In a post Covid world where online becomes the norm 4G does not provide all the answers.

One of the businesses supplied via the existing copper infrastructure is Rex's Speed Shop run by Marcus Rex. <https://www.rexs-speedshop.com/about/> This small company, exports motorcycle parts to the UK and around the world. Marcus employs 8 people based in a Russet Farm units. However, Marcus regularly experiences poor connectivity and drop out which can have serious implications when most of his business is on-line.



Marcus from Rex's Speed shop

Tamara had investigated bringing super-fast fibre broad band onto the farm complex but the cost of routing fibre from the A21 to the farm has proved too expensive. However, a catch-up call and visit to the Farm Units in July 2021 revealed that Tamara, her tenants and neighbouring homes and businesses are about to take advantage of the Governments Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme. This is a scheme which offers funding in the form of vouchers towards the collective costs of connecting groups of homes and businesses to ultra fast broadband in hard-to-reach rural areas.

An initial survey identified the potential for around 50 premises to have a fibre connection. The quote to connect everyone was £59,000. The Gigabit scheme offered vouchers worth £4,500 for businesses and £2,500 for residential lines which includes a top up

subsidy from East Sussex County Council. 24 properties have signed up, including six businesses from Russet Farm. The total vouchers exceed the £59,000 installation costs so work to install the fibre cable, is due to start in November 2021.

Tamara said "4G has dramatically improved our lives but it does have regular 'down' times. We were very impressed with BT Openreach Rural Engagement team who made the process really easy".

If any rural Rother businesses would like to know more about the Government's Gigabit Voucher scheme you can find out more by visiting <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/home/about-the-scheme/>

END
22.07.2021

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME 2021 – 2022		
DATE OF MEETING	SUBJECT – MAIN ITEM IN BOLD	Cabinet Portfolio Holder
18.10.21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Recovery Plan Update • Progress on the Environment Strategy (2020) 	Bayliss Field
22.11.21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Review of the Homelessness Strategy • Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2026/27 • Performance Report: Second Quarter 2021/22 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 2 2021/22 • Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2022/23 Consultation Response 	Byrne Dixon
24.01.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Revenue Budget Proposals 2022/23 • Key Performance Targets 2022/23 • Report of the Off-Street Car Parks Task and Finish Group 	Dixon Field
14.03.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime and Disorder Committee: to receive a report from the Community Safety Partnership • Performance Report: Third Quarter 2021/22 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 3 2021/22 • Draft Anti-Poverty Strategy Proposals 	Dixon Byrne
25.04.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call-in and Urgency Procedures • Draft Annual Report to Council 	
ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regeneration incl Leisure Centre, Fountains, Skate Park and Accessibility of Green Spaces across the district • Corporate Plan review – referred back by Cabinet • Review of the Economic Regeneration Strategy • Peer Review • Draft Corporate Customer Services Strategy Proposals • Litter Strategy • Review of the Tourism Strategy and the impact of Airbnbs – Spring 2022 • Impact of Airbnb and second homes in Rye/Winchelsea/Camber – Spring 2022 • Effectiveness of 'MyAlerts' 		

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