

Bexhill Town Centre Steering Group Meeting

16th January 2020 Bexhill Town Hall

Agenda Item		Action
Present	<p><u>Steering Group (SG) Members:</u> Chair: Cllr C Bayliss, <i>RDC Portfolio Holder for Bexhill Affairs</i> Luca Venditto <i>Business Rep</i> Kaela Mills <i>Business Rep</i> Adam Burger <i>Locate East Sussex</i> Gina Sanderson <i>RVA,</i> <i>(SG quorum is four members)</i></p> <p><u>Invited Members:</u> Howard Martin <i>Chamber of Commerce</i> Hilary Randell <i>Bexhill Town Team</i> Tony Leonard <i>RDC Executive Director</i> Ben Hook <i>RDC Head of Service ATR</i> Graham Burgess <i>RDC Property Investment & Regeneration</i> Diane Russell <i>RDC Conservation & Design Officer</i> Melanie Powell <i>RDC Regeneration Officer.</i></p>	
Apologies	<p>Stewart Drew: dlwp Cllr Dowling: ESCC Cllr Courtel: Bexhill Central Ward Nicola Watters: RDC Planning Policy Manager Cllr Thomas: Bexhill Ward Representative Cllr Timpe: Bexhill Ward Representative Cllr Timpe and Cllr Thomas were unable to come due to a clash with Council Planning meeting. We will ensure this doesn't happen in the future.</p>	
Welcome	<p>From our Chair: Cllr Bayliss Vision for this group is to take an inclusive approach to town centre development through three stands to work: live, work, relax and members have been invited to be part of the Steering Group along those three strands. Live: there is an ambition to make sure we have quality housing in the town. Work: there is a clear ambition to support skills development, look at the retail offer and retail premises. Relax: continue to support the events in town and the unique cultural offer, consider also the evening economy and possible further leisure offer.</p>	
Terms of Reference	<p>The steering group was taken through the revised Terms of Reference. Objectives are for the group to look at developing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear vision • An immediate strategy • Think about long term master-planning • Attract funding 	

	<p>The ToR Scope point to the Rother Local Plan Policy BX2 relating to Bexhill Town Centre. Please find details of that policy here: http://www.rother.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=22426&p=0 Pg 53.</p> <p>Which is further supported by detail in the DASA relating to Bexhill which can be found here: http://www.rother.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=32806&p=0 Pg 163.</p>	
Resident Representatives	<p>Draft application form was circulated for comment. Members noted the residential areas from where we would draw membership.</p> <p>Discussion on how we ensure real community representation. Can we engage with young people as part of this process and whether inviting post-graduates students into this type of meeting was appropriate.</p> <p>It was agreed that all Steering Group members would use their organisations to promote the vacancies. RDC will also ask their Communications dept. to promote this opportunity</p> <p>Need to be clear how we select and what we say to those who don't become resident reps? Suggested that we should ask to keep their details on file and approach them when we look to consult on various issues? This was agreed by the group. We could also send Steering Group minutes to them after meetings.</p> <p>On return of applications we will need to select resident reps through a panel of Steering Group members to be agreed.</p>	<p>MP to circulate final application form (with line about keeping data) to all members.</p> <p>Selection panel to be agreed via email.</p>
Strategy Brief	<p>Draft consultant brief was discussed.</p> <p>Time allowed in the draft doc was thought to be too quick and money allocated was acknowledged would only allow for a specific tight piece of work.</p> <p>Need to start with a very clear vision to inform the rest of the work and subsequent actions.</p> <p>Important that the consultants draw on the work of the last strategy document and also look at the wider economic context and its impact on the town centre area.</p> <p>There is a challenge around joining up all the relevant pieces of work that are taking place e.g. the work of 1066 country, dlwp, developments at North East Bexhill and the same messages being carried through? Can we encourage new residents to think of Bexhill as their main town centre? How do we bring young people into that conversation? Can we do focus groups with students at High School / College?</p> <p>Can this group impact planning? Is there a desire to bring retail more into the centre and use vacant properties for other purposes? Can we look to socialize parts of the town centre?</p> <p>Much of this is outlined in the DASA, it does outline a retail core in the Town Centre (Bex 13 Bexhill Town Centre Primary Shopping Area). The brief needs to refer to relevant parts of the DASA and allow the Local Plan to be the overarching vision under which this piece of work will sit.</p>	<p>MP to add discussion and revisions into the brief and recirculate to SG for final agreement.</p>

	<p>Agreed this document should be a five year plan focused on actions starting with some quick wins (next 12 months which might include some of the grot busting and image of the town) but also have actions for the medium (1-2 year) and ambitions for the longer term (5 year +).</p> <p>Needs to look at funding and project costs alongside, especially for quick wins that may not have time to attract external funding, need to be clear what the costs are likely to be.</p> <p><u>Further considerations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at Community Infrastructure Levy funding. • Look at potential for Business Improvement District. • Comparisons with other local areas, what are the drivers for Hastings Old Town, can we use any of what's been done there? • Zoning areas, the DASA has zoned certain areas in Bexhill (Bex 15; Bexhill Cultural Area and Bexhill 16; London Rd, Sackville Rd). Wickham Ave has become a zone in itself through the Wave Festival. Can we develop this into other areas of the town? Can we further use culture to do these very focused bits of work as per the Coastal Currents Festival in 2019? RDC are supporting Coastal Currents 2020 and will be pushing to have more artist studios open. • Can the plan focus on the small independents and creative businesses and what support they need? • Frustration with landlords not letting properties. Consultants to be asked to look further into this situation and propose some solutions. • Ensuring Bexhill has the right draw and appeal. • Gaps in services in town: no health centre which would also increase footfall. Offices and hot-desk space. <p>Timeframe: Brief recirculated and agreed via email. RDC and SG Chair to undertake procurement. Consultant to come to SG for initiation meeting March 2020.</p>	
London Road	<p>This is an ESCC project. Unfortunately no representative from County able to be at the meeting, apologies sent. Consultation plan circulated to SG which shows a focus on 3 junctions.</p> <p>Town Centre Steering group has been highlighted to ESCC as a key stakeholder.</p>	
Round Table Updates	<p><u>Beeching Road Studios:</u> RDC now has a business plan for the repurposing of light industrial units in Beeching Road to creative workspace. Project has secured Local Growth Fund grant to allow the developments to happen. Objectives around developing a creative hub and support network and developing new start-up businesses.</p> <p><u>Chamber of Commerce:</u> Strategic working for businesses in Bexhill.</p>	

	Working with ESCC on electric charging points in town. Working with Stagecoach buses on feasibility of additional bus service to support evening economy.	
Next Meeting	Initiation meeting with consultants March 2020.	Date to be circulated nearer the time.