**Rother District Council**

**Bexhill Town Centre Report**

**Survey of Neighbouring Towns**

**May 2011**

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**1. Executive Summary of Main Findings**

**Frequency of Visits:**

1.1 Just over half of all respondents (51.2%) to the Neighbouring Towns Survey said that they had visited Bexhill Town Centre in the last 12 months, with this varying between town of interview substantially. Just 30.4% of those interviewed in Polgate said that they had visited in the last 12 months with this rising to 66% of those interviewed in Hastings.

1.2 Of those respondents to the Neighbouring Towns Survey who had not visited Bexhill Town Centre in last 12 months, it is apparent that the primary reason related to respondents having ‘no reason’ to visit with 45.2% of responses falling into this category. 14.4% (15 respondents) of those who had not visited in the last 12 months commented on lack of transport both relating to a lack of public transport and not having access to a car. 13.5% of respondents commented on ‘negative’ aspects of Bexhill Town Centre, with this primarily relating to there being ‘nothing of interest’ in Bexhill, which also was apparent when respondents commented on their ‘preference for other towns’ (8.7% - 9 respondents). 9.6% made comments on ‘lack of time or opportunity’ to visit (10 respondents); and only 4.8% (5 respondents) said that this was because of a lack of knowledge about Bexhill town centre.

**Positive Aspects of Bexhill Town Centre:**

1.3 Three aspects of Bexhill Town Centre particularly liked by over 30% of respondents to the Neighbouring Towns Survey who had visited within the last 12 months were the ‘unusual and unique shops’ (33%), being ‘close to the seafront’ (32.1%), and the ‘quiet and safe atmosphere’ (31.2%).

**Improvements/Changes to Bexhill Town Centre:**

1.4 Just under 30% of respondents to the Neighbouring Towns Survey who had visited Bexhill Town Centre in the last 12 months (29.4%) said that they were satisfied with existing and did not require any further facilities or services. A further 20.2% said that they were ‘not sure’. 19.3% of respondents said that they would like to see more large chain stores with most not being very specific about the names of stores they would wish to see, although some did mention departmental stores such as House of Fraser, John Lewis or Wilkinsons, with others mentioning named clothes stores such as Principals or River Island. Several participants mentioned Marks and Spencers. 11.0% of respondents mentioned a requirement for more unique or independent stores.

1.5 Over 40% of respondents to the Neighbouring Towns Survey also said that a ‘regular market’ (46%) and more ‘unique or independent shops’ (41.3%) were likely to make them want to visit Bexhill Town Centre more in the future.

**2. Background and Introduction**

2.1 Rother District Council commissioned NWA Social and Market Research to undertake research with a representative sample of residents living in the neighbouring towns of Hastings, Pevensey, Eastbourne and Polegate. The purpose of the research was to assist in the planning of future improvements relating to the Bexhill Town Centre Regeneration and builds upon research previously undertaken by Rother District Council.

The objectives of the surveys were as follows:

**Neighbouring Towns:**

Visiting and reasons for not visiting Bexhill Town Centre

Aspects liked about the town centre

Improvements to the town centre

Changes to the town centre and how this might affect frequency of visits

**3. Methodology and Achieved Sample**

3.1 The survey for respondents in neighbouring towns to Bexhill were undertaken using a street intercept methodology with a short questionnaire. Copies of the questionnaires is attached as **Appendix 3** to this document marked up with top line findings.

Interviewers were instructed to use a random means of selecting potential respondents using multiple starting points and ensuring that the sample of respondents was broadly representative of the local population. A 10% back check was undertaken on each interviewers work and returned questionnaires were entered onto SPSS and analysed to tables. Tables of results for respondents from neighbouring towns are attached as **Appendix 1**.

3.2 The achieved samples are shown in the table below together with confidence intervals.

All survey results are subject to a ‘margin of error’ (‘Confidence Interval’): this is based on both the sample number and the proportion of respondents giving a particular response. The table below can be used as a guide to give an indication of the Confidence Interval at the 95% Confidence Level relating to the overall sample and/or sample sub-groups.

Responses to open questions are included as **Appendix 4**.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Neighbouring Towns Survey | | Number | Sample Percent | Confidence Intervals | | |
| 10%/90% | 30%/70% | 50%/50% |
| +/- | +/- | +/- |
| Gender | Male | 103 | 48.4% | 5.8 | 8.9 | 9.7 |
| Female | 110 | 51.6% | 5.6 | 8.6 | 9.4 |
| Age group | 16 to 24 | 24 | 11.3% | 12.3 | 18.7 | 20.4 |
| 25 to 39 | 37 | 17.4% | 9.8 | 15.0 | 16.3 |
| 40 to 54 | 53 | 24.9% | 8.2 | 12.5 | 13.6 |
| 55 to 69 | 50 | 23.5% | 8.4 | 12.8 | 14.0 |
| 70 and over | 49 | 23.0% | 8.5 | 13.0 | 14.1 |
| Limiting illness, disability | Yes | 31 | 14.6% | 10.7 | 16.4 | 17.9 |
| No | 182 | 85.4% | 4.4 | 6.7 | 7.3 |
| Ethnicity | White British | 194 | 91.1% | 4.2 | 6.5 | 7.1 |
| BAME | 19 | 8.9% | 13.9 | 21.2 | 23.1 |
| Location | Hastings | 50 | 23.5% | 8.4 | 12.8 | 14.0 |
| Pevensey | 57 | 26.8% | 7.9 | 12.0 | 13.1 |
| Eastbourne | 50 | 23.5% | 8.4 | 12.8 | 14.0 |
| Polegate | 56 | 26.3% | 7.9 | 12.1 | 13.2 |
| TOTAL |  | 213 | 100% | 4.0 | 6.2 | 6.7 |

NOTE: Full details of ethnic groups are shown on page 19 of Appendix1.

**SURVEY FINDINGS**

**4. Neighbouring Towns Survey**

**4.1 Frequency of Visits to Bexhill Town Centre**

***Q.1: ‘First of all have you visited Bexhill’s Town Centre in the last 12 months?’***

**Appendix 1 – page 1**

4.1.1 Just over half of all respondents said that they had visited Bexhill Town Centre in the last 12 months (51%), with this varying between town of interview substantially. Just 30% of those interviewed in Polgate said that they had visited in the last 12 months with this rising to 66% of those interviewed in Hastings.

Q.1: ‘First of all have you visited Bexhill’s Town Centre in the last 12 months?’

(% by town - 213 respondents)



**4.2 Reasons for Not Visiting**

***Q.2: ‘What are your reasons for not visiting Bexhill Town Centre?’***

**Appendix 1 – page 2**

4.2.1 Those respondents who had not visited Bexhill Town Centre in the last 12 months were asked an open question on their reasons for not visiting. Responses have been coded and are shown verbatim in Appendix 4. However from this review and coding it is apparent that the primary reason related to respondents having ‘no reason’ to visit with 45% of responses falling into this category.

4.2.2 14% (15 respondents) of those who had not visited in the last 12 months commented on lack of transport both relating to a lack of public transport and not having access to a car. 14% of respondents commented on ‘negative’ aspects of Bexhill Town Centre, with this primarily relating to there being ‘nothing of interest’ in Bexhill, which also was apparent when respondents commented on their ‘preference for other towns’ (9% - 9 respondents). 10% made comments on ‘lack of time or opportunity’ to visit (10 respondents) and only 5% (5 respondents) said that this was because of a lack of knowledge about Bexhill town centre.

(NOTE: this is coded as a multiple response question so answers may add up to more than 100%).

Q.2: ‘What are your reasons for not visiting Bexhill Town Centre?’

(% 'not visited' responses - 104 respondents)



**4.3 Aspects Liked about Bexhill Town Centre**

***Q.3: ‘In previous research people were asked what they liked about Bexhill’s Town Centre and this list shows their main responses. Which of these aspects do you particularly like about Bexhill Town Centre?’***

**Appendix 1 – page 3**

4.3.1 Three aspects of Bexhill Town Centre particularly liked by over 30% of respondents who had visited from other towns were the ‘unusual and unique shops’ (33%), being ‘close to the seafront’ (32%) and the ‘quiet and safe atmosphere’ (31%).

4.3.2 Amongst the other aspects of the town centre mentioned spontaneously by respondents were the cafes, the charity shops (which some respondents appeared to like), the atmosphere of the town and the proximity to the sea so that it can be seen from cafes and restaurants frequented. Details are shown in Appendix 4.

Q.3: ‘In previous research people were asked what they liked about Bexhill’s Town Centre and this list shows their main responses. Which of these aspects do you particularly like about Bexhill Town Centre?’

(% those who visited at Q.1 - 109 respondents)



Q.4: ‘Thinking now about how the town centre could be improved, are there any facilities or services you would like to see more of in Bexhill Town Centre?’

(% those who visited at Q.1)



**4.4 Improvements to Bexhill Town Centre**

***Q.4: ‘Thinking now about how the town centre could be improved, are there any facilities or services you would like to see more of in Bexhill Town Centre?’***

**Appendix 1 – page 4**

4.4.1 Just under 30% of respondents who had visited Bexhill Town Centre in the last 12 months (29%) said that they were satisfied with existing and did not require any further facilities or services. A further 20% said that they were ‘not sure’.

4.4.2 19% of respondents said that they would like to see more large chain stores with most not being very specific about the names of stores they would wish to see, although some did mention departmental stores such as House of Fraser, John Lewis or Wilkinsons, with others mentioning named clothes stores such as Principals or River Island. Several participants mentioned Marks and Spencers. (Details shown on page 5 of the tables). 12% of respondents mentioned a requirement for more unique or independent stores with demand for these being highest in Pevensey (25%), and Polegate (18%). Only 3% of respondents from Hastings noted this and no one in Eastbourne.

4.4.3 Just under 30% of respondents who had visited in the last year (29%) gave ‘other’ responses to this question. Responses to this question were varied (and are shown on page 6 of the tables) including comments relating to traffic management, provision of public toilets, events and entertainment.

**4.5 Changes to Bexhill Town Centre**

***Q.5: ‘Thinking now about changes which might encourage you to visit Bexhill’s Town Centre in the future. Can you please tell me whether you think these changes would be likely to make you visit the Town Centre more or less often in the future or whether they wouldn’t make any difference to how often you are likely to visit?’***

**Appendix 1 – page 7 to 17**

4.5.1 Respondents were asked to state whether changes listed in the questionnaire were more or less likely to make them visit Bexhill Town Centre in the future. Overall, over 40% of respondents said that a ‘regular market’ (46%) and more ‘unique or independent shops’ (41%) were likely to make them want to visit more. ‘A regular market’ was the most popular change in Hastings (58%), and Pevensey (49%); whereas ‘events and festivals’, were most popular in Eastbourne (44%); and in Polegate (50%).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Hastings | Pevensey | Eastbourne | Polegate | Overall |
| Events and festivals | 34.0 | 29.8 | 44.0 | 50.0 | 39.4 |
| A regular market | 58.0 | 49.1 | 34.0 | 42.9 | 46.0 |
| Pedestrianisation | 20.0 | 17.5 | 16.0 | 17.9 | 17.8 |
| Unique or independent shops | 34.0 | 49.1 | 32.0 | 48.2 | 41.3 |
| Large chain stores | 38.0 | 38.6 | 26.0 | 19.6 | 30.5 |
| More trees and flowers | 12.0 | 22.8 | 14.0 | 33.9 | 21.1 |
| More car parking | 16.0 | 35.1 | 20.0 | 28.6 | 25.4 |
| Smarter appearance | 18.0 | 19.3 | 14.0 | 17.9 | 17.4 |
| Fewer charity shops | 6.0 | 3.5 | 12.0 | 17.9 | 9.9 |
| Tourist Information Centre | 26.0 | 3.5 | 4.0 | 33.9 | 16.9 |
| Better maintained roads/pavements | 18.0 | 12.3 | 14.0 | 21.4 | 16.4 |

4.5.2 Least popular was ‘fewer charity shops’, with less than one in ten respondents (9.9%) indicating that they would be likely to visit more if there were fewer charity shops. Only in respect of having fewer charity shops did the ‘likely to visit less often’ rise to over 10% of respondents (13.6%), indicating that some visitors value charity shops as part of the retail offering, although others may dislike them (as indicated by responses to some of the open questions).

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Visited in last 12 months? (Q1)** | Yes | | No/not sure | |
|  | Count | Col % | Count | Col % |
| Events and festivals | 40 | 36.7 | 44 | 42.3 |
| A regular market | 57 | 52.3 | 41 | 39.4 |
| Pedestrianised street or streets | 23 | 21.1 | 15 | 14.4 |
| More unique or independent shops | 52 | 47.7 | 36 | 34.6 |
| More large chain stores | 44 | 40.4 | 21 | 20.2 |
| More trees and flowers | 26 | 23.9 | 19 | 18.3 |
| More car parking on offer | 32 | 29.4 | 22 | 21.2 |
| Smarter appearance of buildings | 24 | 22.0 | 13 | 12.5 |
| Fewer Charity Shops | 11 | 10.1 | 10 | 9.6 |
| A Tourist Information Centre | 17 | 15.6 | 19 | 18.3 |
| Better maintained roads and pavements | 19 | 17.4 | 16 | 15.4 |

4.5.3 An analysis of the ‘more likely to visit’ responses by whether respondents have visited in the last 12 months (see above table) has been undertaken. This reveals that only in respect of ‘events and festivals’ and a ‘tourist information centre’, are those who have not visited in the last 12 months more likely than those who have to say these are likely to make then want to visit more in the future.

Q.5: ‘Thinking now about changes which might encourage you to visit Bexhill’s Town Centre in the future. Can you please tell me whether you think these changes would be likely to make you visit the Town Centre more or less often in the future or whether they wouldn’t make any difference to how often you are likely to visit?’

(Overall % - 213 respondents)



**4.6 Visiting more often in the Future**

***Q.6: ‘Is there anything else which might encourage you to visit more often in the future?’***

**Appendix 1 – page 18**

4.6.1 Finally respondents were asked an open question on whether there was anything else they would like to suggest that would encourage them to visit more often in the future. Full details of this are shown in the appendices.

4.6.2 Overall 45.5% of respondents did not make any further suggestions here with this rising to 53% of those who had not visited before and reducing to 40.4% of those who had.



4.6.3 Issues arising from this open question included the shopping offering, other entertainment and activities transport, parking and road access.

**5. Respondent Demographics**

**5.1** **Neighbouring Towns Survey Respondents**

***Q.7: ‘Gender’***

***Q.8: ‘Which of the following age bands do you fall in to?’***

***Q.9: ‘Do you have any long-term physical or mental impairment or disability, or learning difficulty that limits your daily activities or the work you can do, including problems due to old age?’***

***Q.10: ‘Which of the following most closely describes your ethnic background?’***

**Appendix 1**

5.1.1 Of the 213 respondents to the Neighbouring Towns Survey, the majority (51.6%) were female, and 48.4% were male.

5.1.2 Just under half of all respondents (46.5%) were over the age of 55 - 23.5% were aged 55 to 69 years, and 23.0% were over the age of 70. The remaining 114 respondents were aged: 16 to 24 (11.3%), 25 to 39 (17.4%) and 40 to 54 (24.9%) years of age.

5.1.3 31 respondents (14.6%) to the Neighbouring Towns Survey stated that they have a long-term physical or mental impairment or disability, or learning difficulty that limits their daily activities or the work they can do, including problems that are due to old age. The remaining 85.4% had no such impairment.

5.1.4 Over nine-in-ten respondents (91.1%) stated that they consider their ethnic background to 'White British', 4 respondents (1.9%) gave other 'White' backgrounds - 'White - Other' (1.4%) and 'White - Irish' (0.5%). 6 respondents (2.9%) were from 'Asian/Asian British' backgrounds - 'Indian' (0.5%), 'Bangladeshi' (0.5%) and 'Asian/Asian British - Other' (1.9%). 6 respondents (2.9%) were from 'Black/Black British' backgrounds - 'Caribbean' (0.5%), 'African' (1.9%) and 'Black/Black British - Other' (0.5%). The remaining 3 respondents (1.4%) gave other ethnicities - 'Chinese' (0.9%) and 'Gypsy/Romany' (0.5%).

Neighbouring Towns Survey: Gender / Age / Disability / Ethnicity (Overall % - 213 respondents)

