

BEXHILL TOWN CENTRE STEERING GROUP

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose:

The Bexhill Town Centre Steering Group (BTCSG) is responsible for the development and delivery of a shared vision and action plan for the future of the Town Centre.

Working with a wide variety of stakeholders the BTCSG, led by Rother District Council (RDC), will create a new Town Centre Strategy and Master Plan that will clearly define and articulate the vision for the future sustainable economy of the area. The BTCSG will also set out a proposed funding approach and will be responsible for initiating engagement with key partners to secure funding for the delivery of the Strategy's aims and objectives. The BTCSG is tasked with being ambitious and aspirational in its plans for Bexhill.

This strategy will build on the work already delivered by the group in recent years. The ultimate ambition for this work is to provide Bexhill with a town centre that works for all those who use it, as residents, businesses and or visitors.

2. Objectives:

- 1) Develop, agree and implement an ambitious vision for the town centre that will set it out against other coastal towns on the South coast, will highlight and make best use of its unique and distinct features.
- 2) Develop a clear strategy for the long term future of Bexhill Town Centre with focus on addressing four key themes:
 - a. The future sustainable economy of the town centre including a clear way forward for retail and job creation.
 - b. Understanding and improving movement and access between key economic assets within the town centre
 - c. A focus on improving the quality of the residential offer in the town centre and ensure the mix of residential to retail/ office accommodation is right.
 - d. Clarity and vision on how urban design and public realm can be improved to attract further inward investment into the town.
- 3) Develop a visionary Masterplan for the physical environment in the Town Centre that can be broken down into manageable sub-projects to allow the ambition to be realised in stages and as when funding becomes available.
- 4) Set out an approach to funding and undertake action:
 - a. To commission any necessary studies or specialist expertise required to support the leveraging in of investment and the development of projects.
 - b. Identify opportunities for funding from a range of national, regional, and local funding sources and prepare bids to these in order to deliver the programme.
 - c. Where appropriate, through the development of business cases to promote inward private investment into the Town Centre.

3. Scope:

For the purposes of this work the Town Centre is considered to be the area in Bexhill Central ward to the south of the railway line. However the primary focus of intervention will be on Devonshire Road, Western Road, Sackville Road and Wickham Ave.

The BTCSG may also consider issues relating to areas adjacent to the defined area where appropriate and where they are likely to have a significant bearing on the town centre, such as the seafront.

The work of the BTCSG will complement Policy BX2 of the Rother Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted September 2014) and other relevant policy documents.

4. Membership and Structure:

The BTCSG will be an unincorporated partnership. It will be a small working group design to manage change and move things forward. The BTCSG will be chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Bexhill Affairs. By invitation, the core membership of the partnership will be formed of the following:

- Chair: Portfolio Holder for Bexhill Affairs
- RDC Members of Bexhill Central Ward
- Leader of Rother District Council
- Two business representatives to be nominated by the Chair
- Two resident representatives (by application process)
- Locate East Sussex
- East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Portfolio Holder for Transport and Environment (or nominated ESCC substitute)
- CEO of the De La Warr Pavilion
- A representative of Rother Voluntary Action
- Two Bexhill Ward Cllrs

Additional members may be invited by the Chair to join the BTCSG for specific workshops / meetings or on a more permanent basis as co-opted members.

The quorum for BTCSG meetings will be four.

The term of office for the appointed RDC Members will be coterminous with the election cycles of the Council.

The Leader of the Council is authorised to fill any RDC vacancy arising mid-term, following necessary consultation, without referral to Cabinet.

Support to the BTCSG will be provided by the Steering Group Co-ordinator, with other officers attending as necessary.

5. Meetings:

The BTCSG will meet twice yearly and additionally as and when required. The Partnership Coordinator will oversee administration and the agenda. Meetings will:

- Not be open to the general public.
- Operate in a collaborative, open and effective way that views each member as an equal partner and values the contribution of partner organisations.
- Conduct business in a climate that seeks to find effective and realistic solutions through consensus.

6. Accountability and Transparency:

The BTCSG will be accountable to RDC's Cabinet.

Where required, RDC will act as the accountable body in respect of external funding for the delivery of projects within the masterplan. The BTCSG will not directly employ any staff or incur any direct staffing and associated costs. Members will not charge for their time and services arising from the proceedings of the BTCSG.

The work of the BTCSG will be publicised by the Partnership Coordinator, principally through the RDC website. However, at times there may be commercial sensitivities surrounding some projects that will be treated as confidential by all members, unless informed otherwise.

A Register of Interests will be maintained by the Steering Group Co-ordinator for those selected onto the BTCSG.

7. Communication and Press Protocol:

The BTCSG will develop a communications plan to engage with the local community, businesses and stakeholder groups. All enquiries should be referred to the Steering Group Co-ordinator who will ensure that a response is given in accordance with the relevant protocol.