

## **Bexhill Town Centre Steering Group**

### **Notes from the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2020 Virtual Meeting**

The Steering Group welcomed its 2 resident representatives Carol Cook and Richard Sage.

#### **Item 1)**

**The Bexhill Chamber of Commerce** presented thoughts on the Chambers response to the Active Travel Fund proposal.

Introduction from Howard Martin: President Bexhill CoC highlighted the opportunities that Covid 19 brings; regeneration opportunities, staycations especially for summer 2021.

Ian Hollidge: V President Bexhill CoC presented the Chambers ideas for town centre regeneration.

Bexhill Chamber of Commerce currently has over 70 active paid up members up from 32 a year before including some of the largest employers in the area, inc Hastings Direct, Park Holidays, the De La Warr Pavilion, Wetherspoons and Stagecoach meaning they represent over 5,000 employees and their families.

They also have about 20 organisations and stakeholder affiliates whom they both support and share experience and expertise with. These include Edeal in Eastbourne and Let's Do Business in Hastings. Bexhill Lions, Living Streets, Hastings and Eastbourne BIDs, the FSB, 1066 Country Marketing et al. They have an affiliation arrangement with Eastbourne Chamber which facilitates a mutual exchange of activities.

Following the presentation there was discussion around the Active Travel Fund and Parking Enforcement Order. Questions around whether we need an on and off street parking review.

Members of the Chamber were thanked for coming and left the meeting.

#### **Item 2)**

The Steering Group discussed how they would move forward with the town centre strategy work.

The Steering Group had been allocated £10,000 from Cabinet for the development of a 5 year light touch strategy / action plan. The brief went out at the beginning of the year to which 2 consultants responded with proposals. The project was put on hold during lockdown and no consultant engaged. The group discussed what approach to take as we come out of lockdown and how to move this piece of work on with some many unknowns. Concern was raised as we are not at the end of Covid and do not know the landscape in

which the Steering Group will be working. It was thought best to employ a consultant when Covid is behind us.

Cllr Thomas suggested now is a good time to look at what other towns are doing and how they are responding to challenges and a consultant would be best placed to advise us.

Agreement to establish 3 working groups based around the focus areas: Live, work, relax. These would address some of the light touch work that the group would like to start working on. When the situation becomes more settled the group will revisit bringing on board a consultant for strategy development.

It was agreed the group needs to make itself ready for investment, monitor how other towns are meeting the challenges of the pandemic and recognise the importance of continuing to lobby for tourism investment through our own DMO (destination organisation ie 1066 Country) and in partnership with other East Sussex DMOs, Sussex Modern and Visit Eastbourne.

### **Item 3)**

Round table updates were offered by members and agreement dates for next meetings with establishment of working groups before December and next full meeting in January 2021.