



Public Document Pack

Arun District Council
Civic Centre
Maltravers Road
Littlehampton
West Sussex
BN17 5LF

Tel: (01903 737500)
Fax: (01903) 730442
DX: 57406 Littlehampton
Minicom: 01903 732765

e-mail: committees@arun.gov.uk

Committee Manager Carrie O'Connor (Ext 37614)

8 October 2020

BOGNOR REGIS REGENERATION SUB-COMMITTEE

A meeting of the **Bognor Regis Regeneration Subcommittee** will be held on **Wednesday 21 October 2020 at 6.00 p.m.** and you are requested to attend.

PLEASE NOTE: *This meeting will be a 'virtual meeting' and any member of the press and public may listen-in and view the proceedings via a weblink which will be publicised on the Council website at least 24 hours before the meeting.*

Different meeting arrangements are in place for the period running from 4 April 2020 to 7 May 2021 from the provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 and the meeting regulations 2020, to allow formal 'virtual meetings'.

This Council's revised Rules of Procedures for 'virtual meetings' can be viewed here [click here](#)

Members: Councillors Stanley (Chairman), Brooks (Vice-Chair), Mrs Daniells, Dixon, English, Mrs Madeley, Oppler, Mrs Stainton and Mrs Warr

A G E N D A

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and Officers are reminded to make any declarations of pecuniary, personal and/or prejudicial interests that they may have in relation to items on this agenda and are reminded that they should re-declare their interest before consideration of the item or as soon as the interest becomes apparent

Members and officers should make their declaration by stating
:

- a) the item they have the interest in
- b) whether it is a pecuniary, personal and/or prejudicial
- c) the nature of the interest

3. **MINUTES** (Pages 1 - 4)
To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2020 (attached).
4. **ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA WHICH THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**
5. **STRATEGIC REVIEW OF ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL'S TOURISM SERVICE** (Pages 5 - 48)
This review considers all aspects of the Council's current tourism support functions. The report summarises the recommendations and findings made in the strategic review of the tourism service by Blue Sail Consulting and makes recommendations for the future delivery of tourism services by the Council.
6. **PRESENTATION ON THE TRACK CREATIVE DIGITAL HUB AT BOGNOR REGIS RAILWAY STATION**
A presentation will be given by Anne De Sausmarez, West Sussex County Council Principal Economic Development Officer.
7. **ECONOMY GROUP'S SUPPORT TO BUSINESSES DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC** (Pages 49 - 54)
This information paper updates Members on some of the activities undertaken by the Economy Group to help businesses during the Covid 19 pandemic.
8. **BOGNOR REGIS REGENERATION POSITION STATEMENT** (Pages 55 - 62)
To receive and note the Position Statement.

Note : Reports are attached for all Members of the Sub-Committee only and the press (excluding exempt items). Copies of reports can be obtained on request from the Committee Manager.

Note : Members are reminded that if they have any detailed questions would they please inform the Chairman and/or relevant Director in advance of the meeting.

Filming, Photography and Recording at Council Meetings - The District Council supports the principles of openness and transparency in its decision making and permits filming, recording and the taking of photographs at its meetings that are open to the public. This meeting may therefore be recorded, filmed or broadcast by video or audio, by third parties. Arrangements for these activities should operate in accordance with guidelines agreed by the Council and as available via the following link – [Filming Policy](#)

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BOGNOR REGIS REGENERATION SUB-COMMITTEE

17 June 2020 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Stanley (Chairman), Brooks (Vice-Chair), Mrs Daniells, Dixon, English, Mrs Madeley, Oppler, Roberts (Substitute for Mrs Stainton) and Mrs Warr

Councillors Charles, Coster, Dendle, Edwards, Goodheart, Gunner and Mrs Pendleton were also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor Mrs Stainton.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Brooks – Personal as (i) voting member of Arun Arts which runs the Alexander Theatre; (ii) had made a submission to Arun District Council on elements of an informal scheme on the Regis site; and (iii) Premier Inn cardholder.

Councillor Mrs Daniells – Personal as (i) voting member of Arun Arts; and (ii) Whitbreads shareholder but under £25,000 threshold as stipulated under the Council's Code of Conduct.

Councillor Dixon – Personal as a member of Bognor Regis Civic Society.

Councillor English – Personal. He stated that some of the questions he was asking were from supporters of the Sir Richard Hotham Project and he saw no reason to treat them any differently from any other residents of the Arun District. He saw that as the best way forward. As there were a number of questions which were being asked on behalf of lobbying groups and to which he did not know the answers, he had sent those to the Director of Place in advance of the meeting. On reflection, he was concerned that the questions might or could now be treated by some in a prejudicial way rather than as straight forward questions to be answered factually or clearly. He was not in any way connected to or part of any lobbying groups with regard to regeneration but, if asked, would make his own decision to pursue an answer or question or not. He had not attended any meetings, Council or otherwise, of any lobbying groups in respect of regeneration to the best of his memory.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2020 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman as soon as possible following the Council's resumption of normal working.

Bognor Regis Regeneration Sub-Committee - 17.06.20

4. START TIMES

The Subcommittee

RESOLVED

That the start times of meetings for the remainder of 2020/21 be 6.00 p.m.

5. BID UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr Jason Passingham, who was in attendance to provide the Subcommittee with an update on the work of BID.

Mr Passingham provided a comprehensive outline of the work he and his team had undertaken to assist businesses in a variety of ways to navigate the very serious effects of the pandemic and resultant lockdown that had been put in place by the Government. He thanked the Group Head of Economy and the Senior Regeneration Officer for their contribution to the partnership working that had taken place, particularly with regard to the signage that had been prepared and which had been designed uniquely for Bognor Regis and its surrounding area.

Following a brief question and answer session, Members of the Subcommittee commended Mr Passingham and his team for the huge effort they had made in assisting businesses in the town, and the Chairman also expressed his thanks for the way they had passed on all the information and guidance from the Government, which had been extremely beneficial for the business community.

6. UPDATE ON OPTIONS FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE REGIS CENTRE AREA

The Director of Place presented this report which provided the background to the Council's development strategy for the potential redevelopment of the Regis Centre but which might now be severely impacted in light of the challenging economic conditions that would be experienced as a direct result of the corona virus pandemic. A number of recommendations to Full Council had been set out in the report in order to facilitate an amended scheme which could be delivered commercially without resorting to any significant public subsidy.

In participating in a full debate, there was an overwhelming concern expressed by Members that they were being asked to make recommendations on a matter which they did not feel fully informed about. The previous administration had agreed a strategy but it was felt that far more detail was required, particularly with regard to the financial aspects relating to negotiations with Whitbreads and the future of the Alexander Theatre. There was also a certain disquiet that what was being proposed was piecemeal development and was not regeneration.

The Chairman, having picked up on the concerns being raised, proposed that the matter be deferred to seek further information around the financial implications, with a further report to be brought back by the Director of Place to a future meeting. This was duly seconded.

Further comments were made indicating that the development plans of the Sir Richard Hotham Project should be revisited and that the feasibility of opening the Royal Hall should be explored.

The Director of Place, in confirming that he would present a further report to a future meeting in the event the matter was deferred, advised that that report would set out the basis of the negotiations undertaken previously and also include other issues raised in the debate relating to, for example, the condition of the buildings. Due to the nature of its content, much of the report would necessarily have to be of a confidential nature.

The Director of Place also took the opportunity to remind Members that in 2018 the Council did have a redevelopment strategy for the Regis site, known as the Winter Gardens Project. It had been agreed at that time that, in order to deliver a complex and overall package of proposals, that would be best achieved through a series of individual developments. The report on the table was inviting Members to approve the first phase of that strategy to build a hotel and to bring back into the Council's full control the public house and theatre to allow the Council to move forward on developing the site. The Subcommittee was reminded that there was therefore a strategy, there was a plan, and the report was inviting Members to commence the delivery of the scheme. However, he did request that if Members now wished to deliver something completely different, officers be provided with clarity around what they wished to see delivered.

A further proposal was put forward that a recommendation be made to Full Council that the Sir Richard Hotham Project, proposals for a water feature and all other options be explored to deliver the best possible outcome for the people and businesses of Bognor Regis and to ensure that all Councillors were brought up to date to understand all the options available.

In line with the Council's procedure rules, the Subcommittee turned to the first proposal to defer and, having been voted on with an overwhelming majority,

RESOLVED

That the matter be deferred to enable the Director of Place to present a further report to a future meeting setting out the detail of previous negotiations and other matters.

7. BOGNOR REGIS REGENERATION POSITION STATEMENT

In receiving and noting the Position Statement, the Subcommittee received/made particular comment on the following:-

Enterprise Bognor Regis: An update was requested on the A29 realignment which was provided by the Director of Place who was able to advise that the County Council would be submitting a planning application in July/August for the northern section and a planning application for the whole of the road and the northern section of the strategic allocation would be coming forward at around December. Advice was also given that the Advisory Group was involved in discussions and there would be opportunities for public engagement.

Mention was made that a sign at Rolls Royce had still not been installed.

Town Centre Initiatives: A question was asked with regard to experimentation for improving pedestrianisation and cycling in front of the Arcade and the Station. The Subcommittee was informed that the Senior Regeneration Officer was working on that so that if money became available a bid could be submitted.

Seafront Regeneration: The Chairman advised that, in his role as Cabinet Member for Technical Services, a confidential mediation meeting had been held with the suppliers of the new toilet block. Good progress had been made and a satisfactory outcome had been reached. In the meantime, temporary toilets would be provided for use from 10 July to 3 September 2020. He expressed his thanks to officers for their work on this matter.

(The meeting concluded at 8.08 pm)

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF BOGNOR REGIS REGENERATION SUBCOMMITTEE ON 21 OCTOBER 2020

PART A : REPORT

SUBJECT: STRATEGIC REVIEW OF ARUN DISTRICT COUNCILS TOURISM SERVICE

REPORT AUTHOR: Denise Vine, Group Head of Economy
DATE: 6th October 2020
EXTN: 37846
PORTFOLIO AREA: Economy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This review considers all aspects of the council's current tourism support functions. The report summarises the recommendations and findings made in the strategic review of the tourism service by Blue Sail Consulting and makes recommendations for the future delivery of tourism services by the council.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Subcommittee is asked to resolve that officers to make Cabinet aware that the review recommendations contained within the Arun Strategic Review of Tourism are supported by the Subcommittee, together with any further observations it may put forward.

1. BACKGROUND:

1.1. Tourism is a key sector in Arun and very important to our local economy. The recently agreed Arun Economic Strategy identified, from the evidence base, the importance of the sector locally and that it should be treated as a priority sector. It is a major provider of jobs and income (visitor spend) and supports many businesses and a supply chain well beyond the most obvious attractions and venues.

1.2. But while the nature, funding and role of local government has changed dramatically and visitors expectations have risen, the types of services provided by the council to support tourism have remained largely unchanged for the last decade.

1.3. Combined with the challenges of Covid-19, this therefore is an ideal time to press 're-set' – to agree what needs to be done and why; where should the priorities and focus be and to decide how best to deliver that.

- 1.4. It is clear that the council needs to consider how best to take forward its tourism function and decide what is the best way to deliver this service, with the resources available to us, and in a format that meets modern visitors expectations.
- 1.5. Blue Sail Consulting were commissioned in July to carry out a review of our tourism function. The review has considered all aspects of our current tourism support offer and has made recommendations for the future delivery of the tourism service.
- 1.6. The review took account of what is already being done by others in the district towns of Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and Arundel as well as work at a county level through Experience West Sussex.
- 1.7. It considered whether the council or others were best placed to deliver the services visitors need or if there are other ways of delivering these services. It also considered the immediate and longer-term impacts of Covid-19 and ensuring the recommendations align to other council objectives such as those in the Arun Economic Strategy.
- 1.8. All aspects of the current service were reviewed including the main tourism facilities and services supported by the council including the VIPs, website, social media, visitor guides etc. It also reviewed all marketing plans and activities and considered how well the destination is performing and whether there are market opportunities and activities to exploit.
- 1.9. The consultants engaged with a range of key stakeholders, including key members, via telephone consultations which fed into the findings.
- 1.10. Areas explored included:
- Current performance, gaps and opportunities
 - Alternative ideas for destination marketing and management
 - Opportunities for collaboration and new models for delivery
- 1.11. The review was required to produce a strategic report with clear recommendations to include:
- Strategic context and rationale
 - Review of current delivery
 - Recommended roles in destination marketing and destination management to include an assessment of the destination strengths and opportunities
 - Organisation and resourcing implications
- 1.12. The completed review document is contained in Appendix A.
- 1.13. The review has identified four strategic initiatives that will allow the council to shift from tourism delivery (marketing, information) to a strategic commissioning, investment and development role. By doing this the council can be clear about what it wants to achieve and work through others, who are better placed, to deliver it through visitor marketing. The council can then use its influence (inside and outside the council) to improve the visitor experience – to make it as good as it can be, and to secure the types of investment which will help the district build its visitor economy.
- 1.14. The four strategic recommendations for the tourism service are:

- Strategic Tourism Investment Role – this is natural territory for the council with a strategic and operational focus. Strategically we want to secure investment in the district (accommodation, events, attractions, watersports) and operationally we need to ‘show the way’ in lifting the quality of the visitor experience (public realm, signage, beach management, toilets) and advocate for visitors across the public and private sector.
- A Refreshed Tourism Strategy – prepare a new plan setting out clearly what we want to achieve as a destination and bring focus and clarity to the actions that are needed. We can’t do everything, given limited resources, so the plan will help to be very targeted in choosing where to focus. It is also an opportunity to engage stakeholders more closely in the development and delivery of the strategy.
- A shared narrative – develop thematic and town based narratives for all to use. To attract new visitors we need everyone involved in tourism saying the same messages in a similar way through all of their own marketing. But what is that narrative now and how do we address the differences between the towns? This isn’t about a logo or even a brand identity – it is a richer seam of stories and narratives, images and ideas that everyone can use which highlight the ‘very best’ of the district. Work has recently been completed on what the Bognor Regis Place Branding ‘narrative’ should be. This wasn’t just about attracting tourism visitors but broader themes of why people should visit, live and invest in the town. The town-based narratives should complement each other.
- Commission marketing support – invest in the Experience West Sussex project to deliver regional campaigns that attract new visitors and work hard to get our fair share of that business. And invest in the information and marketing services in each of Arundel, Littlehampton and Bognor Regis.

1.15. It is possible to support these recommendations within existing resources and the review suggests other funding and income streams that may also further support additional activities.

2. PROPOSAL(S):

The subcommittee is invited to indicate their support, to Cabinet, for the review recommendations contained within this report and any further observations they may wish to offer.

3. OPTIONS:

Not support the recommendations and, if not supported by Cabinet either, the tourism service functions, and focus remains the same.

4. CONSULTATION:

Has consultation been undertaken with:

YES

NO

Relevant Town/Parish Council

Relevant District Ward Councillors

| | | |
|--|------------|-----------|
| Other groups/persons (please specify) 1 to 1 consultation with a range of key stakeholders. | Yes | |
| 5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below) | YES | NO |
| Financial | | No |
| Legal | | No |
| Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment | | No |
| Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act | | No |
| Sustainability | | No |
| Asset Management/Property/Land | | No |
| Technology | | No |
| Other (please explain) | | |
| 6. IMPLICATIONS: 6.1. There are no financial implications – proposed changes would be facilitated within the existing budget. 6.2. Some service activities will cease however if these recommendations are supported. This may result in job roles and responsibilities changing. The usual statutory consultation processes will be applied if this is the case. | | |

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:
 The subcommittee support the review recommendations and wish to advise Cabinet of this.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:
 Remember to list background papers and insert required links

 Appendix A – Arun Strategic Tourism Review



STRATEGIC REVIEW OF TOURISM SERVICES

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

SEPTEMBER 2020

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tourism is important to Arun. A major source of employment and part of what makes the district distinctive and an attractive place to live, work, study as well as visit. Tourism is in Arun's veins – you have, after all, been doing it for hundreds of years.

But while the nature, funding and role of local government has changed dramatically, while visitors today are very different to those of a decade ago, while some of your businesses have modernised and adapted to changing market demands, the types of services provided by the District Council to support tourism have remained largely unchanged for the last decade and more.

Combined with the challenges of Covid-19, this therefore is an ideal time to press 're-set' – to agree what needs to be done and why; and to decide who is best placed to deliver what.

Tourism done well is a force for good in Arun. It is able to support your local economy with jobs and income for local business; it can sustain that economy year-round; it should underpin and add to the qualities and assets that local residents admire and enjoy; it helps define what makes your district distinctive and compelling and that should have benefits beyond tourism – in inward investment, in attracting students and intellectual capital, and in attracting new residents.

We were asked to make strategic recommendation for the role that Arun District Council should perform in supporting tourism. But, as form follows function, it isn't possible to come to those conclusions without first addressing what the need is and what strategic approach is required. This therefore is not a destination strategy or plan – but we have looked at the destination through a similar lens allowing us to reach some swift conclusions about what you should be doing and therefore what that means for the District Council.

We have four recommendations for the District Council:

- ▶ **Strategic Tourism Investment Role** – this is natural territory for the Council with a strategic and operational focus. Strategically you want to secure investment in the District (accommodation, events, attractions, watersports) and operationally you need to 'show the way' in lifting the quality of the visitor experience (public realm, signage, beach management, toilets) and advocate for visitors across the public and private sector.

- ▶ **A Refreshed Tourism Strategy** – prepare a new plan setting out clearly what you want to achieve as a destination and bringing focus and clarity to the actions that are needed. You can't do everything, given limited resources, so the plan will help you to be very targeted in choosing where to focus. It is also an opportunity to engage stakeholders more closely in the development and delivery of the strategy.
- ▶ **A shared narrative** – develop thematic and town based narratives for all to use. To attract new visitors you need everyone involved in tourism saying the same messages in a similar way through all of their own marketing. But what is that narrative now and how do you address the differences between the towns? This isn't about a logo or even a brand identity – it is a richer seam of stories and narratives, images and ideas that everyone can use which highlight the 'very best' of the district. Work has recently been completed on what the Bognor Regis Place Branding 'narrative' should be. This wasn't just about attracting tourism visitors but broader themes of why people should visit, live and invest in the town. The town-based narratives should complement each other.
- ▶ **Commission marketing support** – invest in the Experience West Sussex project to deliver regional campaigns that attract new visitors and work hard to get your fair share of that business. And invest in the information and marketing services in each of Arundel, Littlehampton and Bognor Regis.

All of this means that the council shifts from a tourism delivery (marketing, information) to a strategic commissioning, investment and development role – be clear about what you want to achieve and work through others, who are better placed, to deliver it in your visitor marketing. And use your influence (inside and outside the council) to improve the visitor experience – to make it as good as it can be now, and to secure the types of investment which will help the district build its visitor economy.

BACKGROUND

THE BRIEF

This project brief was for an independent review of the tourism service within Arun District Council and clear strategic recommendations for the council in delivering tourism services, to clarify what it should be doing and how that should fit with other organisations in the district that support tourism marketing, management and development.

The context for this work is important and includes:

- ▶ Recent county-led marketing efforts through Experience West Sussex activity
- ▶ Developing town-led website, promotion and information development in Littlehampton, Bognor Regis and Arundel
- ▶ Covid-19 implications for destination marketing and management
- ▶ Pressures on public finances within the local authority and increasing demand for statutory services

Our aim in this review is to provide a clear roadmap for Arun District Council in developing tourism to support wider strategic objectives for the district.

OUR APPROACH

As part of this project we reviewed publicly available reports and data including those from regional and national tourism bodies, we interviewed in excess of 20 key stakeholders and we looked at examples of best practice from other destinations.

It is clear that the question of 'role' is very difficult to address in the absence of a clear strategy for tourism. While this project is not about developing a tourism strategy or plan, we have looked at issues needed to develop a tourism strategy and our background papers and analysis will be relevant and useful in the development of such a strategy for the district.

This is a challenging time for tourism with Covid-19 in evidence and the implications that continues to have for everyone involved in tourism. While it presents some fundamental challenges for tourism, our recommendations will ensure Arun is best placed to rebound strongly from the current crisis.

This is not a time when resources are easy to identify for growth plans. Nonetheless our recommendations are ambitious and deliverable. They necessitate new ways of working, or partnership and collaboration. But done well and with energy, will leave Arun in a strong position from which to capitalise on the benefits to be derived from tourism.

WHERE IS ARUN NOW

CURRENT VISITORS

Tourism is important to Arun with 4m visitors producing £221m of direct spend and 4360 FTE jobs (5972 actual). This compares favourably to neighbouring districts, with values just below Chichester but ahead of Worthing and Adur.

Day visitors dominate, as they do with other destinations along the coast. You receive 3.43m day visitors compared to 0.61m staying visitors but while day visitors outnumber staying by 5.6 times, staying visitors spend more (£116m compared to £105m) illustrating the huge **importance of staying visitors**.

Among staying visitors it is notable how important overseas visitors are. While district level data is not available on international visits, Tourism South East have estimated overseas numbers through the Cambridge Model and suggests that they represent just 13.4% of all staying visitors but their spend is 31% of all staying visitor spend¹.

Around two-thirds of all overnight stays are for holidays and a third are visiting friends and relatives. Very few visitors are here on business (5%) and those that are will probably be because of some of the major local employers (Rolls Royce, Body Shop) and events held at Butlins.

These numbers are substantial, but what do we know about the people behind the numbers? The 2016 Tourism Research Project commissioned by Coastal West Sussex gives us useful insights. While it may be a few years out of date it is likely to give a reasonably accurate picture of Arun's three leading town destinations. Here's what it tells us:

- ▶ The market is very local - over 90% of visitors (day and staying) come from the UK, and most of them come from West Sussex, Surrey or Hampshire

¹ Economic Impact of Tourism on Arun District 2018, Tourism South East

- ▶ The family market is important for Bognor Regis and Littlehampton, and couples are more important for Arundel
- ▶ Arundel attracts more up-market types, while Bognor Regis and Littlehampton have more appeal to the mid-market
- ▶ Day visits dominate Arundel and Littlehampton, while over half of Bognor's visits are staying
- ▶ Littlehampton gets the longest stays at over a week, Bognor just under, and Arundel attracts short breakers
- ▶ Day visitors generally spend more than 5 hours
- ▶ Staying visitors use catered accommodation of all types in Arundel, Bognor features hotels and caravans/chalets while visitors to Littlehampton are considerably more likely stay with friends and relatives
- ▶ Most visitors (around two-thirds) are on a repeat visit.

Looking at what motivates and attracts visits, and what visitors associate with each town, there are clear distinctions in the towns' appeal:

- ▶ Arundel – Castle, history & heritage, eating & drinking
- ▶ Bognor Regis – beach and seafront, Butlins, family holidays and fun
- ▶ Littlehampton – beach and seafront, parks, gardens and open spaces, eating & drinking, summer holidays.

Arun is fortunate in providing a varied offer that includes coast, countryside, three very different towns and access to the South Downs National Park. However, with one or two exceptions, **much of the experience is 'adequate' rather than 'great'** and offers little that makes it stand out from many other destinations making it very difficult to compete for discerning visitors.

Tourism in Arun is also very seasonal. Although this is not uncommon in coastal destinations, this is a challenge for year-round employment and businesses having the resources to invest and maintain high standards.

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL TOURISM SERVICES

In Arun District Council the services supporting tourism are very traditional and largely unchanged over the last 15 years. ‘Sussex by the Sea’ (SBTS) is the brand identity adopted by the council for the promotion of tourism and has been in use since 1994. There is a tourism budget of £68,000 of which £38,000 is allocated to staffing. Of the remainder approximately half is spent on IT, website, brochure and occasional marketing activity.

The main activities are providing the website, some social media activity, a visitor guide, support for visitor information points and some occasional destination marketing.

The website (www.sussexbythesea.com) was developed in 2013, requires updating and options for a new site are being considered. In 2019 it received 144,000 page views, down from 195,000 the year before. The visitor guide is now produced every two years rather than annually and 100,000 copies of the most recent guide were produced. Visitor Information Points are run and supported by local organisations /partners in the main towns. Arundel Museum hosts a leaflet distribution display in the foyer, in Bognor Regis the Regis Centre/ Alexandra Theatre hosts the VIP and leaflets are also available via the seafront office, and in Littlehampton a range of businesses provide an informal VIP.

The tourism officer maintains and supports the Sussex by the Sea website, helps service the VIPs, responds to direct enquiries, supports events, works on collaborative activity e.g. 2021 Year of the Coast, promotes quality assurance, supports networks and training, manages brochure fulfilment, and works closely with partners such as Experience West Sussex.

There is lots of activity taking place, however there are questions about whether this activity is achieving significant impact and what is needed at this time. There is no evidence it is attracting new visitors, changing visitor perceptions or supporting the development of new tourism experiences.

CURRENT APPROACH TO MARKETING

There is quite a complicated promotional architecture for a relatively small area, which has developed over time. At each level there is at least a website, various social media channels and sometimes even a printed brochure. There is clearly duplication of resources, if not overlapping messaging. The four main ‘destinations’ are detailed below and the South Downs National Park and other significant attractions could easily be added to create a yet more complex picture.

| Destination | Positioning | Channels |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Experience West Sussex</p> <p>Funded by partnership of local authorities and supported by the Coastal West Sussex Partnership.</p> <p><i>As the central voice for the region on tourism, destination management and the visitor economy, the Experience West Sussex Partnership delivers industry intelligence, local business support and creative marketing campaigns to attract visitors to the area.</i></p> | <p><i>One of the UK’s most diverse counties, West Sussex covers both coast and the South Downs National Park, encompassing hills, harbours, farmland and market towns. From stately homes to breath-taking beaches, West Sussex is bursting with inspirational things to do and see. Whether you’re looking for a coastal break, a relaxing weekend in the country or a jam-packed family holiday, we’ve got you covered.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Website – well-presented, lots of practical info, placing the destination and giving ideas for what to do, Searchable database with listings for nine themes, with opportunities to filter by group, budget, location etc to refine the search. Good blogs, listicles and inspiration section ▶ Twitter (3, 300² followers) ▶ Facebook (34,000) ▶ Instagram (4,500) ▶ YouTube channel (only 9 subscribers) |
| <p>Sussex by the Sea</p> <p>Managed by Arun District Council</p> | <p><i>Between the South Downs and the sea.</i></p> <p><i>From things to do in Sussex with kids to tourist attractions and activities for groups, fun days out on England’s sunny south coast start and end in Sussex by the Sea! In Arundel, Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and surrounding areas you’ll find the perfect mix of activities to add to your holiday diary.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Website – lacks strong district-wide distinctiveness or compelling sell. Focuses on the 3 towns and South Downs & villages. Themes are history & heritage, walk, cycle, horseriding (no info), beaches, parks & gardens, shopping. ▶ Brochure on request or e-guide. Presented by coast or countryside offer. Very family orientated. |

² Numbers, rounded, at 9 July 2020

| Destination | Positioning | Channels |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Arundel <i>Arundel's tourism information site</i></p> | <p><i>Arundel captures the essence of heritage, urban chic and country pursuits, all within a stone's throw of London. Experience this market town and you will discover more than you'd expect. Most of all it is a place to return to and tell others about.</i></p> <p><i>Combining one thousand years of history with independent shops, contemporary art galleries, restaurants, cafes, delightful drinking spots, great attractions and a thriving events calendar, plus outdoor activities from walking across the South Downs to canoeing or cycling... there is something for everyone.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Twitter (7421); #sussexbythesea ▶ Facebook (2160) ▶ Instagram (1,011) ▶ Website – new site, nicely put together with good use of moving images and celebrity quotes. Copy is sometimes a little breathless ‘so much to see and do!’ and over-promising. Good range of themes and suggestions, some done as blogs so variety of tone of voice. ▶ Facebook (2,000) ▶ Instagram (1,000) |
| <p>Bognor Regis Love Bognor Regis Delivered by Vinco Marketing</p> | <p><i>Fall in Love with Bognor Regis</i></p> <p><i>You won't have to look far to find things to do in Bognor Regis and the surrounding areas, from the beautiful coastline, to the shops, restaurants and seaside attractions such as crazy golf and the award-winning Butlin's Holiday Resort. There is plenty to keep you and the whole family entertained in Bognor Regis and with the likes of Chichester, Arundel and Littlehampton right on our doorstep, there is lots to explore within a short drive away.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Website – design clean and modern, copy little generic and sometimes clichéd – and currently some parts out of date. Relies a lot on paid listings so little inspiring content and some with only local relevance. ‘Inside Bognor’ section is good with blogs and features which unpack the destination written in a nice tone of voice. Markets beyond Bognor. ▶ Twitter (4,338) ▶ Instagram (6,447) ▶ Facebook (18,000) |

| Destination | Positioning | Channels |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Littlehampton</p> <p>Visit Littlehampton Managed by Town Council</p> | <p><i>Discover the many sides of this vibrant Town</i></p> <p><i>Two award-winning beaches, the beautiful River Arun and a large seafront green makes Littlehampton a popular destination for individuals, families and couples. Whether you are looking for a seaside Town with plenty to do on a day out or a base for exploring the beautiful Sussex Coast, Littlehampton is the ideal place to visit. With a variety of captivating award-winning architecture including the Stage by the Sea, East Beach Café and Britain’s Longest Bench plus an extensive programme of cultural events this certainly is a must-visit destination!</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Website Very functional – listings and database search for things to do, attractions etc. Promotes beyond Littlehampton but essentially just links to e.g. other towns, National Trust properties etc. ▶ Twitter (438) ▶ Facebook (328) |

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

THE BIG PICTURE

Tourism generates £106bn a year in England and employs 2m people. No wonder that VisitBritain's latest 5 year strategy is to **'make tourism one of the most successful and productive sectors for the UK economy'**.

But competition is fierce. Internationally the number of new and emerging destinations continues to expand. While domestically, the range, scale and quality of UK destinations continuously improves with new investment in accommodation, attractions, experiences, culture and heritage.

Consider the offer for visitors and it becomes apparent why smaller destinations struggle to achieve the awareness that they would wish for. In the UK there are:

- ▶ 927 towns or cities of more than 10,000 people
- ▶ 15 National Parks (Britain)
- ▶ 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Britain)
- ▶ 7723 miles of coastline
- ▶ 1600 museums
- ▶ 196 Castles and Historic Properties (England)
- ▶ 45,000 hotels

So the Arun offer not only has to be 'great', if you want to attract visitors, it has to be better than other destinations.

COMING OUT OF COVID

With VisitBritain predicting a 49% reduction in domestic trips and spend, and with forecasts being updated regularly, it is clear that 2020 will be as bad as it gets for tourism. Everywhere has experienced lockdown, closures, and quarantine. And most commentators expect that it will take a number of years to recover to pre-Covid levels.

At the same time, tourism is surprisingly resilient and the OECD states 'domestic tourism is expected to recover more quickly and offers the chance for driving recovery'³.

Recent research suggests 43% of UK adults expect to take the same or more UK short breaks this year⁴. So there are reasons to maintain some optimism.

Arun needs to think about the barriers and motivations visitors have and be clear where it has something to offer. So with visitors confidence in international travel low, Arun should be targeting near markets still wanting to take a break. A desire to avoid crowds, plays well to the strengths of countryside and quieter beaches. Places to walk and cycle are increasingly appealing to domestic visitors. And cleanliness and hygiene factors are paramount so efforts to work with business to deliver the highest standards will have dividends.

For some destinations, Covid-19 has also been a good opportunity to pause and take stock and press re-set on what they do and how they do it. This review therefore is timely and allows Arun to emerge from Covid with a new plan and routemap which positions it well for the future.

³ Tourism Policy Responses to Covid-19. OECD. June 2020

⁴ Covid-19 Consumer Sentiment Tracker. VisitBritain (Week 13)

ARUN POLICY CONTEXT

Arun’s Economic Development Strategy 2020-2025 states ‘The visitor economy continues to be a major asset but our plans are about more than tourism’, acknowledging that tourism is important while acknowledging the desire to diversify the economic base.

The analysis within the Economic Profile of Arun (background to the strategy) highlights major challenges for the district:

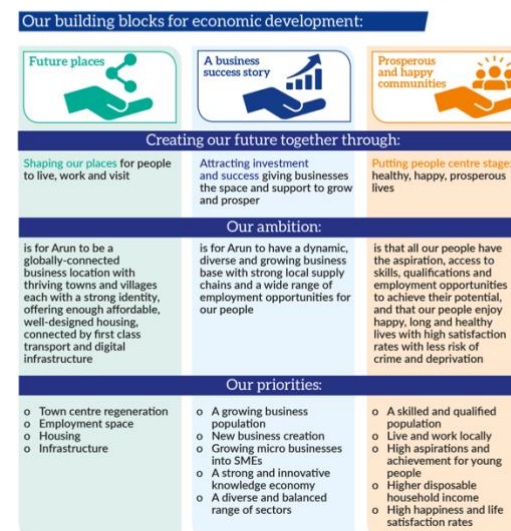
- ▶ Seasonal employment (horticulture and tourism)
- ▶ Low wage economy (in comparison to near neighbours and comparators)
- ▶ Few large businesses (0.1% have more than 250+ employees) though there are some notable companies (Rolls Royce and Body Shop)
- ▶ Lower qualified workforce – low value, low skilled labour market

This results in the district being a net exporter of labour to neighbouring areas with 8973 coming in and 27394 going out each day.

So tourism needs to support the approach set out in this strategy, renewing the offer and attracting new markets to support the economy year round with higher value jobs. The analysis in this strategy recognises the changing retail environment in town centres which must increasingly be given over to social, leisure and entertainment uses and done well this can enhance your tourism offer.

The strategy has some ambitions that reflect what tourism needs to succeed: masterplans for Bognor and Littlehampton; optimising the seafronts, seafront greens and waterfront sites; the need for the towns to be vibrant; a range of events to increase footfall; and improvements to cycling and walking infrastructure.

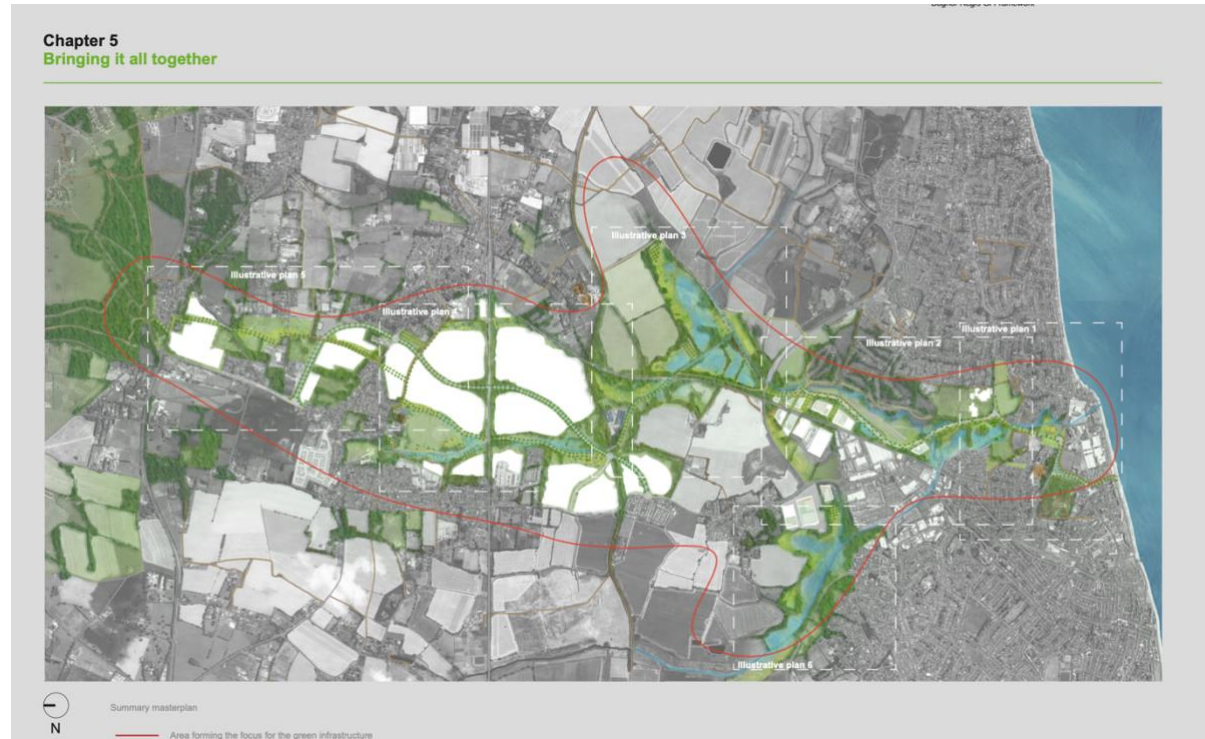
“Our vision is to create a dynamic, competitive and sustainable place to live, work and do business”



The strategy makes reference to a proposed Green Infrastructure Plan for Bognor to the South Downs. The background study was completed in January 2020 and while largely concerned with landscape design, conservation and the health and wellbeing of local communities, the proposals will have relevance for leisure activities for visitors especially in relation to cycling/walking.

From a planning perspective, the adopted Local Plan is clear in wanting to ‘create vibrant, attractive, safe and accessible towns and villages that build upon their unique characters to provide a wide range of uses and which are a focus for quality shopping, entertainment, leisure, tourism and culture activities’.

In the plan, the council supports ‘continuous adaptation and improvement in the visitor experience’ with reference to higher quality experiences, a more diverse offer and increased competition. The main outcome sought is longer stays and more retained spend.



MARKET TRENDS

In the table below are key trends particularly relevant to this piece of work. [Sources: VisitEngland, VisitBritain, VisitScotland, National Tourism Coastal Academy, Blue Sail].

| Trend | What this means for Arun |
|--|---|
| <p>Communication Overload Destinations of all size competing for attention in a crowded marketplace across multiple channels</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Breaking through screening out and filtering ▶ Challenge for those with little market recognition ▶ Substantial resources required to build a destination brand/presence ▶ Clarity of the proposition ▶ Ongoing significant resources required to maintain a presence across multiple channels ▶ Targeting a focused, compelling message at the right time to the best prospect segment(s) ▶ Reviews and endorsements important ▶ Detailed market knowledge and insight kept current |
| <p>Maximising Behaviour Holiday makers and short breakers looking to use their limited leisure and vacation time to see and do as much as possible</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Range of quality experiences on offer that are sufficiently different from home ▶ Need for reassurance that there is sufficient to occupy and entertain ▶ Inspiration and information about what there is and how to access, book etc ▶ Has to be easy to access ▶ Joined up travel options ▶ Makes sense for individual places or experiences with common ground (e.g. a shared history, character) to club together and build a shared, more desirable and versatile product |
| <p>Death of Risk Constraints on budgets and holiday time mean travellers want to find out as much as possible about their destination before getting there.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Particularly relevant in coronavirus times so reassurance on safety measures crucial for foreseeable future ▶ Prevailing interest in staycations and trips close to home ▶ Comprehensive information about what’s on offer to allow visitors to plan ▶ Reassurance that there is enough and of the right type of things to do ▶ Ease of booking either before or during the trip; clarity on terms and conditions, cancellations etc |
| <p>Pursuit of Real</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Quality, authentic experiences – in tune with local culture and way of life ▶ Seeking out of immersive, distinctive experiences |

| Trend | What this means for Arun |
|---|---|
| <p>Genuine, authentic, local experiences sought in preference to mass tourism 'sight-seeing'.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Families creating memories together – meeting the needs of multiple generations ▶ Bragging rights, shareable experiences ▶ Experiences that combine fun /learning/self-improvement/well-being ▶ Local – food, drink, crafts, independent businesses rather than chains ▶ Individual elements can be small but must add up to a holistic, integrated trip experience |
| <p>Multiple Interests Meeting multiple needs within the travelling group (families, friends, multi-generations).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Extensive range of types of accommodation and experiences available, and easy to access ▶ Activity and special interest holidays/breaks with weekend and day options ▶ 'Pick and mix' from a variety of options to create personalised trips e.g. active experiences with general holiday pursuits such as visiting historic sights, shopping and entertainment ▶ Base in one place and take trips out from coast to inland or from towns to coast |
| <p>Living with coronavirus Addressing a reshaped tourism landscape with restricted supply and weakened demand.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Importance of safety and hygiene measures in all elements of the visitor experience ▶ Demand likely to be greater for rural areas, destinations with open/car-free public space, for outdoor activities and attractions, and for self-catered accommodation ▶ Faster recovery in demand from families and those visiting friends and relatives ▶ Marketing messages need to respond to evolving market concerns over next few years – not enough to say 'come now' |

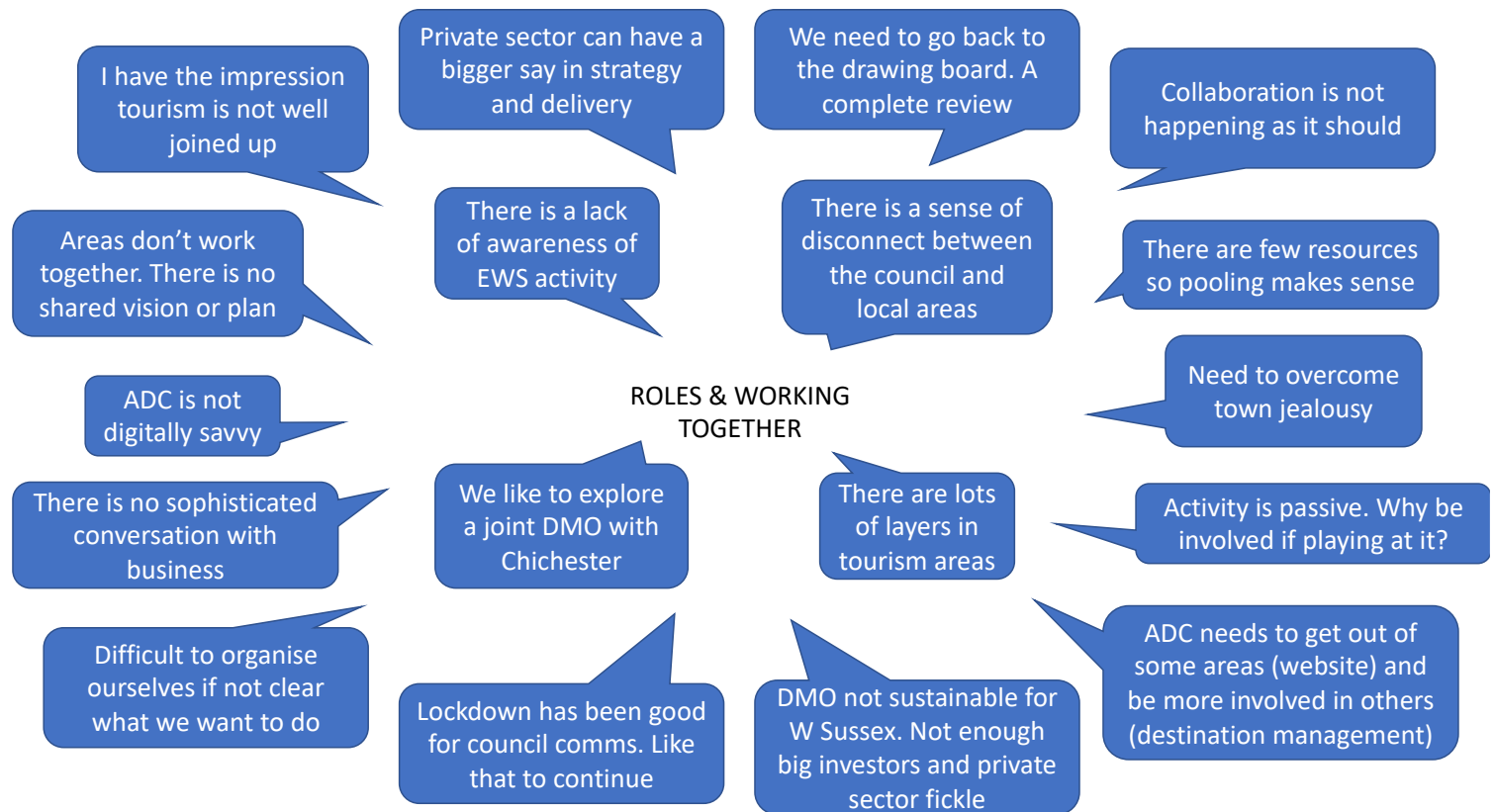
WHAT WE HEARD

ORGANISATION, ROLES & COMMUNICATIONS

Through the stakeholder consultation, we found a clear recognition that the council has limited resources and that there is a need to work smarter, whether that is in the pooling of resources, or in focusing activity.

Communications between the stakeholders could be better, for example lack of familiarity with the work of Experience West Sussex or the existence of research and insights.

Most pointed out the need for a clear strategy to determine focus and roles.



MARKETING

The identity and perception challenge for Arun was evident with most highlighting the lack of awareness of Arun and only slightly greater awareness of Littlehampton, Bognor Regis and Arundel.

Likewise, many felt 'Sussex' had some resonance, but 'West Sussex' was just as difficult to understand with the towns being better known as well as the South Downs National Park.

The promotional activity of Arun District Council (website, social media and brochure) were perceived to be not particularly effective and many questioned whether the council had the skills to address areas of opportunity.

Many saw the need to promote the very best and use those to hook visitors in rather than presenting everything the area has to offer.



VISITORS & INSIGHTS

A number of consultees felt there was a need for more data and intelligence to support decisions. But most of these were unaware of the research already produced by the district and Coastal West Sussex.

Most agreed on the current markets and felt the markets they wanted were younger groups and couples.



EXPERIENCES & DEVELOPMENT

This was the subject which received the most comments. With most feeling there was a need to lift the quality of what was there now and develop new experiences to attract new, discerning visitors.

Most cited a need for more and better accommodation and the potential for cycling and watersports was frequently raised.

Again, it was felt there was a need for a clear plan to judge the merits of potential development.



STRATEGY

There was a clearly identified need expressed for a plan or strategy to plot development and organisation against and to clarify the markets and their needs.

The objectives were fairly clear: to increase the spend and duration of stay from visitors, the economic impact and jobs.

It was also suggested that there was enough for everyone to be doing and no need for there to be duplication but that there should be greater clarity about individual roles and better alignment.



WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

SWOT

Below is our analysis of the situation – of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing Arun District and which guide our response in the recommendations that follow.

Stakeholders and the Council are up for change and that is very positive. However, a new approach to supporting tourism needs to ensure that:

- ▶ It is market focussed – the decisions you take should be driven by what visitors want not by what you want to sell them or say to them. They have a big choice and you need to keep one eye on your competition.
- ▶ Neighbours are not competitors – visitors don’t see the boundaries. They see experiences that complement what you have to offer.
- ▶ Collaboration is key – business, the towns and the council must all work together. A shared narrative will make the destination more appealing.
- ▶ It is focussed – doing less better with clear roles for the County, District, the towns and business. Keep limited resources targeted to maximise impact. The council only acting where it adds value and supporting others better placed to run activity.
- ▶ New experiences are developed – play to your destination strengths and continue to develop products and experiences that strengthen your appeal.

Strengths

- ▶ Proximity to source markets for visitors
- ▶ Reasonable starting point (4.04m visitors and 4360 FTE jobs)
- ▶ Variety of offer (beach, towns, heritage, countryside, national park)
- ▶ Robust local markets
- ▶ Butlins – national brand, reputation, investment and jobs
- ▶ Pleasant seaside and countryside
- ▶ EWS doing good ‘inspiration’ work. Towns doing good ‘information’ work.

Weaknesses

- ▶ Sussex by the sea website and digital capabilities (and number of users)
- ▶ Traditional marketing and information delivery by ADC (brochure/VIPs)
- ▶ Day visits dominate
- ▶ Not enough accommodation
- ▶ Strategy out of date
- ▶ No shared ambition for coalescing around
- ▶ Identity (Arun unknown, Sussex by the sea unclear) and little market recognition
- ▶ Retail in towns changing
- ▶ Use of the word 'nice' was used a lot to describe the area. Not compelling enough
- ▶ Seasonal tourism economy
- ▶ Many SMEs and lifestyle businesses
- ▶ Not enough to see and do (especially activities on land and water)
- ▶ Events seen as 'pedestrian' – not impactful
- ▶ Basics need to be better (e.g. toilets)

Opportunities

- ▶ PR activity and use of influencers
- ▶ Everyone up for change
- ▶ Pooling of resources needed to have any impact at all
- ▶ Green infrastructure – cycling and walking routes (R. Arun, Bognor-S Downs, Wey navigation)
- ▶ Masterplans and continued development of Littlehampton and Bognor
- ▶ Preservation and adaptation to lift quality of Arundel
- ▶ Watersports potential & cycling
- ▶ Experiences for younger audiences (seafront eating/drinking)
- ▶ Create experiences that have bragging rights are high quality and distinctively local
- ▶ Make more of assets in neighbouring areas with Arun as the 'base'
- ▶ A clear destination management role
- ▶ If identity is hard don't try to come up with a 'one-line' description – reflect the variety in a shared story (be anti-brand)
- ▶ Share what you have better (research, intelligence)

- ▶ Involve others in the thinking/planning and get 'buy-in'.

Threats

- ▶ Good work of EWS not recognised/understood and therefore ongoing support threatened
- ▶ Lack of visitor focus (many focussed on local needs/interests)
- ▶ Lack of excitement/ambition leads to lack of investment (public and private)
- ▶ Being insufficiently focussed/targeted – trying to do too much
- ▶ Covid-19 leading to long-term major changes in visitor behaviour and business viability

MARKETING ANALYSIS

If you take the visitor journey as a guide for where potential visitors are open to influence, the current arrangements with the county led Experience West Sussex activity have the ‘Imagining’ and ‘Planning’ elements quite well covered. With the town-led websites and social media platforms helping visitors at the ‘Experiencing’ stage. ‘Booking’ is largely driven by online travel agents and commercial booking websites.

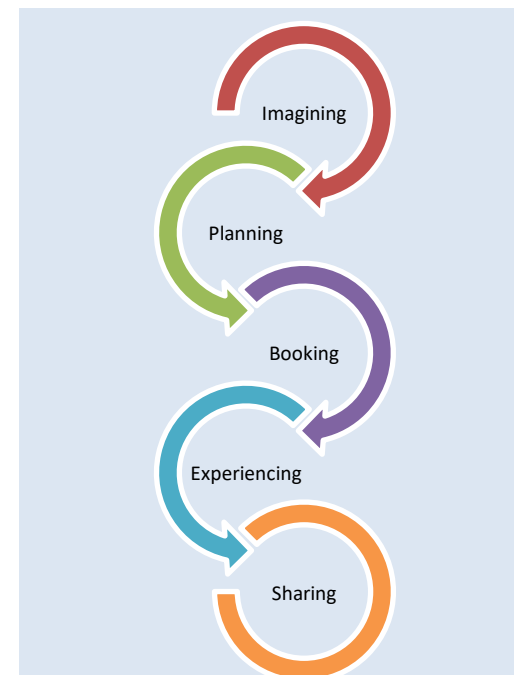
When it comes to destination marketing Arun District Council falls between two stools. Above sits West Sussex, a destination with greater market awareness, critical mass of ‘product’ and marketing leverage to raise awareness and inspire visits. Beneath it sits individual destinations with their own particular offer and which can provide the detail in their marketing to convert interest to booking. It is hard to make a case for the District Council undertaking destination marketing for Arun.

There are significant challenges in awareness and interest in terms of the geography as well as understanding of the tourism offer. This applies to all locations within West Sussex and even ‘West Sussex’ itself⁵. On the other hand there is a greater awareness among visitors and non-visitors of Bognor Regis and Littlehampton, and to a lesser extent Arundel, than there is of ‘Arun’. There is no clear, strong proposition for the district as a whole and current marketing understandably focuses on these three towns.

Arun District does have good tourism assets however:

- ▶ Coastal/seaside resort – beaches and seaside fun, entertainment, Butlin’s brand
- ▶ Landscape, history, market towns – for browsing, relaxing, exploring and some gentle activity in lovely surroundings.

Figure 1 Visitor Journey



⁵ Tourism Research Project for Coastal West Sussex, TSE 2016

- ▶ Proximity to large populations – ready markets within easy travel distance
- ▶ Proximity to National Park – association with a strong brand and understandable experience

Arun has three distinct propositions with some, but not much, overlap:

- ▶ Seaside with a twist – Littlehampton providing a traditional resort in the process of reinventing itself
- ▶ Traditional seaside – Bognor Regis and Butlin’s providing traditional good fun, self-contained holidays
- ▶ Market Town Heritage – Arundel providing the relaxing pleasures of an historic small town, nearby villages and attractive landscapes

These are likely to have most resonance with a day trip market and a domestic staying market within a two- hour (or up to three for the longer stay options in the resorts) travel time. From VisitEngland’s segmentation system⁶ two segments have a particularly good fit; these both reflect the current market and have most growth potential. The segments are called ‘Fun in the Sun’ and ‘Country Loving Traditionalists’.

| SEGMENT | ATTRIBUTES | DESTINATION APPEAL |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Fun in the Sun | Typically parents looking for family orientated summer holidays where beaches play a starring role. Tend to seek cheaper, more ‘social’ alternatives to hotel accommodation, such as caravans or holiday camps. This segment skews higher in the 30-50 age group – as expected for families. (The 30-50 group represents 55% of this profile vs. 40% average.) More likely to live in West and South West. | Resorts – self-contained good-value family fun, fun fairs, fish and chips etc Beaches – play, picnics, walks Activities – watersports, cycling, soft adventure |
| Country-Loving Traditionalists | Typically empty nesters with traditional values, country-loving traditionalists have a moderate household income, but fewer family members to cater for when on holiday. This means that their budget stretches further, and good quality, secure | Good fit for West Sussex generally. Arundel – local shopping/markets, churches, antiques, etc |

⁶ <https://www.visitbritain.org/visitor-segmentation>

| SEGMENT | ATTRIBUTES | DESTINATION APPEAL |
|---------|---|--|
| | accommodation is a priority when booking a holiday. They are likely to have recently taken a countryside break and keep up to date with UK tourism through websites such as English Heritage and the National Trust. This segment skews older, particularly over the age of 50. (Over 50s represent 56% of their profile vs. 41% for the average.) More likely to live in East/Anglia and South East. | Food & drink – independent, artisanal, quality History & heritage – Castle, Cathedral Seafront - Littlehampton Exploring the South Downs – Inc. cycling and walking |

WAYS FORWARD

We have identified four over-arching recommendations for Arun District Council which have implications for the way in which you organise and support tourism development in order to meet your wider strategic ambitions.

RECOMMENDATION 1 - STRATEGIC TOURISM INVESTMENT ROLE

There is a need to ensure that Arun not only has the best quality of experience to offer visitors but that it continues to add to the experience in ways which will attract visitors and help maximise local benefits. This is a strategic role and one which aligns closely with other economic regeneration functions.

This is a new role but one which is critical if Arun is to grow its visitor economy and compete effectively. The activity is about supporting private sector investment, maximising the benefits from public investment and it making certain that there is someone advocating for visitors in the ongoing delivery of public services within the authority.

| RECOMMENDATION | ACTIONS |
|---|---|
| Provide a strategic destination investment role in the council. This post should lead on the strategic development of the destination, stakeholder relationships and the commissioning of marketing services via other providers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Recruit a strategic tourism lead responsible for destination investment, management/development ▶ Use the Tourism Strategy to define development priorities (e.g. visitor accommodation, watersports, walking/cycling, welcome, events, signage) ▶ Pick a development project/year – work with neighbouring authorities on shared plans and investment across boundaries ▶ Support town development plans (similar to Fáilte Ireland guidelines) |

| RATIONALE | OUTCOMES |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Need to improve the offer to remain competitive and capitalise on destination opportunities to attract discerning/new visitors e.g. watersports, and investment ▶ Clear interest and appeal identified in consultation with a number of challenges to be addressed, and opportunities to take forward | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ More spend (e.g. increased overnights) ▶ More profitable businesses and more jobs ▶ More year round tourism (through increased activities, experiences and indoor offer) ▶ Improved quality of existing offer |

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE – THANET DISTRICT

In 2019 Thanet decided they needed to update their district destination management plan which had last been done in 2014. A new 5 year plan (2020-2025) was produced to strengthen and grow the visitor economy.

The plan was not about everything that could or should happen but about the things that would make the biggest difference, could be realistically delivered and which provided a focus for working together.

The plan is about growing the value of tourism, becoming more competitive and lifting the quality of the visitor experiences through private as well as public investment.

The plan provided 3 new priorities for the region:

- Vibrant Towns – making Thanet’s town centres more attractive for visitors and providing more of the right kind of accommodation
- Coastline Focus – focusing on providing year-round experiences, activities and facilities at key sites along the coast
- The Isle of Thanet Promise – using the strong themes from Thanet’s Shared Story to develop brilliant experiences and a brilliant welcome.

It was developed through an engaging process with tourism businesses that resulted in buy-in and support for the delivery of the new plan and uses the strategic tourism resources at the council to take forward.

Destination Management Framework

The Destination Management Framework (DMF) 2020 is for all partners in the destination and sets out shared key priorities for strengthening and growing the visitor economy for the next 5 years. It focuses on key things that will make the biggest difference and which can be realistically achieved by working together.

The Framework draws on views of stakeholders in Thanet's visitor economy, including attractions, accommodation providers and event organisers. These views were gathered through meetings, interviews, an interactive workshop attended by more than 50 people and via an online industry survey. Also used was recent third-party/existing research, including localised volume and value data, the results of face to face visitor surveys and perception research, as well as national research on holiday trends and coast perceptions. The framework builds on the work achieved through the first [Destination Management Plan](#) developed in 2012/13.

The headline priorities are:


- **Vibrant Towns** - making Thanet's town centres more attractive to visitors and providing more of the right kind of accommodation.
- **Coastline Focus** - focusing on providing year-round experiences, activities and facilities at key sites along the coast
- **The Isle of Thanet Promise** - using strong themes from Thanet's shared story to develop brilliant experiences and a brilliant welcome.

The Framework was commissioned by Thanet District Council (TDC) and developed by Blue Sail. TDC's senior executive team has input to its development.

The Framework was prepared before the COVID-19 crisis, but the content is still relevant and will help inform the recovery of the sector.


[Read the full Destination Management Framework](#)

[The Shared Story](#)




[See more](#)

[Destination Management](#)




[See more](#)

[Shared Story Toolkit](#)



[See more](#)

[Business Support](#)



[See more](#)

RECOMMENDATION 2 - START WITH A PLAN

Your tourism strategy is out of date and it is difficult for you and others to know whether decisions about activity, development, events, organisations or marketing are the right ones.

This project and plan is about ‘delivery’ of tourism services in Arun District Council but in preparing it, we have given thought to your current situation, the context, market and development opportunities. It would not take much effort to go from where you are now to having a new Tourism Strategy to guide your activity over the coming 5 years.

A Tourism Strategy is however just a document. As important is the way you go about generating support for how it is implemented and supported so the process of creating the new strategy should include the wider tourism industry in Arun. Use the process to galvanise ideas and opportunities into concrete plans and to get everyone working together and ensure that the new Strategy is focussed on as few priorities as possible. Long lists of actions are unlikely to be delivered. In our view the process should be led by the new Strategic Tourism Officer. If funding allows, running this process consecutively with the ‘shared narrative’ (Recommendation 3) would be more efficient and beneficial.

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| RECOMMENDATION | ACTIONS |
|---|--|
| Develop a new tourism strategy in 2020/21 with your businesses and key stakeholders. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Develop brief and commission the strategy development ▶ Form a business group to support implementation and monitoring of progress and aid communications |
| RATIONALE | OUTCOMES |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Renewed focus for destination development and marketing ▶ Ambitious but realistic targets to support economic objectives and employment ▶ Positive outcome from Covid-19 ▶ Shared buy-in to deliver across public/private/third sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Improving visitor economy outcomes (spend and jobs) ▶ New development in the District (accommodation, experiences) ▶ Better year-round tourism ▶ Aligned bidding and investment in community assets e.g. cycling/walking/public realm |

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE – PLYMOUTH

In 2018 Destination Plymouth updated their visitor plan to build on the significant strides they had made since their previous plan (2011) had been produced and which had resulted in a 25% growth in visitor numbers. They had achieved a lot (Mayflower 400, The Box Cultural Venue, Ocean City Identity etc) and needed a new ambitious plan to propel them forwards.

The plan which was developed set out a clear vision: *‘Plymouth is Britain’s Ocean City, famous for its Waterfront. We will be one of Europe’s finest waterfront cities, celebrated for our unique and diverse marine life, culture and experiences. We will continue to be recognised as unique among UK cities for our natural drama and 500-year history as a place of embarkation and exploration.’*

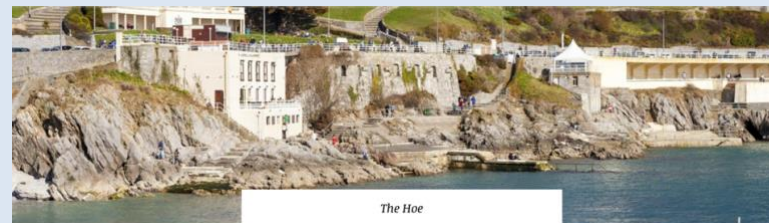
It also had ambitious targets to grow spend (30%) at a much higher rate than visitors (15%) and the plan was focussed on just 3 themes:

- Blue-Green City – with a ‘national marine park’ globally recognised for amazing experiences by, on, in and under the ocean...’
- Brilliant Culture – ‘known internationally for jaw dropping art, authentic cultural experiences and our urban spirit’
- Premier Destination – ‘Devon and Cornwall’s premier visitor destination and a top-ten UK city break’

The plan included some important enablers such as Partnership, People, Infrastructure, Accommodation, Brand, Markets and Business Tourism.

Importantly it provided the framework for partnership and private sector investment, for bidding and securing grants for development, and to underpin market focus and marketing development.

The plan is for the city rather than the City Council and is driven by the private sector led board of the DMO, Destination Plymouth.



About Us

Destination Plymouth is a private/public sector partnership. Our role is to increase visitors to the city and surrounding area, grow visitor spend and tourism related jobs.

We are funded by the Plymouth City Centre Company, Plymouth Waterfront Partnership and Plymouth City Council alongside membership income and support from businesses across the city and surrounding area.

Visitor numbers have jumped in the last ten years with the latest figures for 2018 showing a 5 per cent increase to 5.4 million visitors. Visitor spend has also grown by 25 per cent to £330 million

RECOMMENDATION 3 - DEVELOP SHARED NARRATIVES

The destination of Arun is not well understood by visitors and the individual towns have different offers that make it difficult to bring them together under a single identity. But most visitors don't respond to a one-line identity or logo in any case. Visitors take their knowledge and inspiration from many sources (news, tv, articles, social media, film, websites, search engines etc). This means that most official destination marketing organisations are just one small channel in delivering destination marketing messages to potential visitors. Local businesses, local media, residents, journalists, blogger and vloggers are part of the rich tapestry of writers and channels that can help you reach the visitors you want to attract. So it is not 'what you say', but 'what others say about you' that matters most.

How can you influence others to say the right things? Developing an agreed and shared narrative is one way to strengthen the collective communication capabilities of your industry. And the development of a suite of tools (stories, words, images, video etc) can be used by that industry as well as journalists, influencers, bloggers and vloggers to talk consistently about the things you want to say about the destination. Whether thematic or geographic, stories of 'heritage', 'farm to fork', 'being active outdoors', 'unusual places to stay', 'family experiences' are the sorts of things which can be developed as tools to help whoever is communicating do so with passion, inspiration and consistently.

Like the Tourism Strategy this is a focussed piece of work that could be delivered alongside your strategy which would make it more effective and an efficient process.

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| RECOMMENDATION | ACTIONS |
|---|--|
| Develop shared narratives and toolkit in 2020/21 for tourism stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Develop brief and commission a suite of narratives by town and theme ▶ Ensure the recent Bognor Regis Place Branding narrative and 'filters' are applied for the town and align with the Arun narrative. ▶ Consider commissioning alongside the tourism strategy |
| RATIONALE | OUTCOMES |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Arun not a strong identity for visitors ▶ Different and varied towns with no agreement on single identity ▶ Strong themes and concepts in Arun ▶ Present the variety rather than try to distil down to a single idea | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Clear and agreed messages used by all business ▶ Increased impact with visitors (consistency) and increased visits and spend |

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE - ABERDEENSHIRE

Aberdeenshire in the North East of Scotland had three DMOs – one for the city of Aberdeen, one for the north coast and one for Royal Deeside. There was no consistent approach to marketing or development across the area, nor was the whole area covered by a DMO. This was perceived by the City and County Councils, Scottish Enterprise (the economic development agency) and VisitScotland to be contributing to a lack of profile and underperformance of the area.

A review of strategy and structures resulted in the establishment of VisitAberdeenshire – a DMO bringing together businesses, support agencies and local authorities behind one strategic approach. The two ‘old’ rural DMOs continued to operate as local partnerships while the city DMO merged into VisitAberdeenshire.

To recognise the differences across the county while aligning how it should be promoted, VisitAberdeenshire commissioned the production of a series of Shared Stories™. These are narratives which capture the essence and strengths of the place and can be used in marketing by the DMO and individual businesses as well as informing the priorities for product development. In total three destination narratives (reflecting each of the old DMOs) and six thematic narratives (e.g. castles, food & drink, outdoor activities) were produced, as well as one overarching Shared Story™ for the whole area. The narratives were produced with involvement and input from businesses, which helped secure their buy-in to the new organisation and new approach.

The Shared Stories™ are used by VisitAberdeenshire in marketing communications (verbatim on their [website](#) for example). They have also been picked up by Aberdeen airport for use on the walls of the terminal alongside striking images of the area. A Shared Story™ [toolkit](#) was produced to encourage and help businesses use the narratives, associated ‘word bank’ of key words and phrases, and example imagery.



RECOMMENDATION 4 - MARKETING & INFORMATION

As this review has shown, with others best placed to deliver destination marketing and information, through the individual towns and Experience West Sussex, the marketing role for the District Council is limited to providing support for these platforms.

There is however, in our view, still an important role for the Council:

- ▶ Active participation in the Experience West Sussex Partnership, including advocacy for Arun’s tourism propositions and funding to help support destination marketing
- ▶ Support and funding for the 3 destination sites of Arundel, Bognor Regis and Littlehampton specifically tied to certain requirements to ensure professional, high quality and effective destination marketing. This should include:
 - Adopting and rolling out the shared narrative (previous recommendation) which can run through all marketing
 - Help with professional copy writing to give a distinct, appealing character and tone of voice to marketing communications reflecting the destination narrative. (At the moment there is a disproportionate focus on ‘so much to see and do’ , ‘whether you are looking for this or that’ ‘something for everyone’ rather than creating a targeted, distinctive and appealing destination proposition).
 - Support for developing and optimising social media channels
 - Requirement to cross sell to other Arun destinations with appropriate guidance on how this should be done
- ▶ Support for destination PR activity delivered directly or through Experience West Sussex including costs of hosting press visits, production of media packs etc.

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| RECOMMENDATION | ACTIONS |
|---|--|
| Commission destination marketing and information services through other providers. Stop all destination marketing delivery at the District including Sussex by the Sea website. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Funding agreement for Experience West Sussex and aim to get similar support from other authorities ▶ Mothball ‘Sussex by the Sea’ website and promotion as visitor journey covered by other platforms and also stop related social media platforms. |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Cease production of the visitor guide – direct information enquiries and business links via the town sites and social media ▶ Cease the provision / support of Visitor Information Points in Arun ▶ Support press trips and media enquiries using strategic tourism officer |
| RATIONALE | OUTCOMES |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Visitor journey stages covered by other platforms ▶ Limited impact currently ▶ Better outcomes through support for other platforms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Increased scope and impact of EWS activity ▶ Stronger town platforms driving support to local business ▶ Increase numbers of visitor and spend |

RESOURCING THE PLAN

It is possible to support these recommendations within existing resources. Our suggestion for how the funding could be prioritised is as follows:

| RECOMMENDATION | YEAR 1 | YEAR 2 | YEAR 3 (& ongoing..) |
|---|--------|--------|----------------------|
| Strategic Tourism Investment & Management (development) | | | |
| - Strategic Tourism Officer | £35000 | £35000 | £35000 |
| - Annual Development Project | £0 | £0 | £5000 |
| Tourism Strategy | £10000 | £0 | £0 |
| Shared Narrative | £0 | £10000 | £0 |
| Marketing | | | |
| - Town Tourism Support | | £5000 | £10000 |
| - EWS Support | £20000 | £20000 | £20000 |
| | £70000 | £70000 | £70000 |

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There are also other potential funding streams that the council should closely monitor and could be accessed to support tourism activities such as:

- ▶ Grants and funds (Coastal Community, Future High Street, Discover England Fund)
- ▶ Generating more direct income from visitors making use of council assets and commercial premises (through property lease, seafront licenses, event fees, off-street parking etc)
- ▶ Business Investment in supporting public services (e.g. toilets)
- ▶ Shared commercial development (e.g. ADC develop a hotel with an operator similar to [Stockton-on-Tees](#) and [Lincoln](#))

Any one-off allocations could mean that some of these actions are brought forward or additional resources could be allocated to ramp up activity and impact in other areas.

Other projects that could be supported by discrete investments, grants and discretionary spending could include some of the following (the detail of which would be developed through the Strategy process):

| POTENTIAL PROJECTS (ADDITIONAL/ONE-OFF RESOURCE) | ESTIMATED COSTS |
|--|--------------------|
| Seed investment in major tourism events (capable of generating 25k+ visitors) | £20000-40000/event |
| Town Tourism Challenge Fund (e.g. signage/wayfinding, visitor Wi-Fi, seafront showers etc) with match requirements | £10000/town p.a. |
| Accommodation Development Prospectus and marketing | £5000 |

Disclaimer: All information and analysis supplied by Blue Sail Consulting Ltd and our sub-contractors is delivered in good faith and represents our professional judgement based on the information obtained from the client and elsewhere. The achievement of recommendations, forecasts and valuations depend on factors beyond our control. Any projections, financial or otherwise, in this report are only intended to illustrate particular points of argument and do not constitute forecasts of actual performance

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF BOGNOR REGIS REGENERATION SUB COMMITTEE ON 21 OCTOBER 2020

PART A : REPORT

SUBJECT: Economy Group's support to businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic

REPORT AUTHOR: Denise Vine

DATE: 6th October 2020

EXTN: 37846

PORTFOLIO AREA: Economy Group, Place Directorate

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This information paper updates Members on some of the activities undertaken by the Economy Group to help businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Members of the Sub Committee are requested to note the contents of this report.

1. BACKGROUND AND ACTIVITIES:

1.1. The COVID-19 global pandemic has brought about a seismic shift in the lives of everyone the council serves with ongoing implications for health and wellbeing, society and community, and the local economy.

1.2. From March 2020 to the present day, council officers have adapted and reacted to the fast-changing guidance coming from central government both personally and as a council unit. At very short notice, most officers necessarily had to work from home initially with multiple IT and communications issues and find new ways to continue to do their own work plus the immense additional workload impelled by the pandemic.

1.3. The pandemic has affected some services much more than others; some have continued with little interruption to their usual work, while others like the Economy Group have been in the forefront of the response from the outset and have needed to adjust their work priorities accordingly.

1.4. As some semblance of a "new normal" is approaching, and officers are beginning to return to their usual work priorities it is an appropriate time to review the range and volume of work undertaken and the reactivity of the service to keep the public safe and support the safe recovery of the local economy.

1.5. The underpinning foundation of all this work has been working in partnership with all relevant partners across West Sussex to tackle this threat in a co-ordinated and holistic

manner. The success of this approach speaks volumes for the strong working relationships already built up by officers.

1.6. Strategic partnerships - Throughout the pandemic regular contact and liaison has been maintained with our strategic partners. This included weekly conference calls with the County Council and District and Borough Councils across West Sussex, the Local Enterprise Partnership and Coastal West Sussex. This has enabled quick and reactive responses to issues, for example, the collection and distribution of economic data and business intelligence and the preparation of the countywide joint policy regarding the issuing of the Discretionary Grants.

1.7. Business information - As all non-essential businesses closed and the government put in place various support schemes and safety guidance for those that were permitted to continue operating, getting correct information out to businesses regularly in an easy-to-read format was an essential requirement.

1.8. The Arun Business Partnership has over 3000 local businesses on its mailing list and they received weekly electronic bulletins with the most up to date government guidance and information. It also contained regular information about different grant streams and financial support available from all sources to ensure our businesses were able to take advantage of these.

1.9. Working in partnership with the Council's Communications Team, Arun Business Partnership, Bognor Regis Business Improvement District (BID), Littlehampton Traders Association and the parish councils, the same information was circulated to many retail, parade and town centre businesses. Copy was being shared between partners and reused to ensure the same key messages were consistently being shared and circulated.

1.10. Tourism businesses also received the above, plus sector-specific information pertinent to them, working in partnership with Experience West Sussex Partnership, Visit England and Tourism South East. Over this time working relationships have evolved and grown with all these regional and national tourism organisations plus other hospitality sector organisations and destinations; finding how best to help each other and our local tourism businesses. National assurance and advisory schemes have been developed and provided, to share with our local businesses in order to help promote each destination and reassure residents and potential visitors of their safety. Regular updates continue to be sent to hospitality businesses. Latest information is also provided on the tourism website – "Know Before You Go" page and also on the social media channels.

1.11. Early into the lock down, Arun Business Partnership businesses were surveyed to understand the issues they were facing and what help they needed at that time. The most common request was for help and training with setting up websites, developing online sales and electronic payments. This knowledge has been used to inform the funding bid to the Strategic Investment Fund, part of the recovery programme, to provide tailored training to businesses.

1.12. Grant support for businesses - The government launched various grant and loan schemes to support businesses. Some, such as the Large Business Loans for those with turnover more than £45m, was applied for direct to central government, some were distributed via the Local Enterprise Partnerships grant-making schemes such as the Coast to Capital Backing Business Fund which helped people adapt and respond to the

pandemic, and some came to the council for allocation and distribution. The various grants Arun DC has dealt directly with are listed below.

1.13. Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund – this funding stream aimed to help those businesses not in receipt of other business grants who had ongoing property costs and had incurred significant losses during the pandemic. It operated on a pan-West Sussex set of criteria to avoid disputes and was led by the Economy Team. The total value of the fund was £1,539,000 and all but £500 has been awarded. This fund is now closed,

Breakdown by amounts:

| | | |
|--------------------|-------|------------|
| £1,000 | x 6 | = £6,000 |
| £2,500 | x 27 | = £67,500 |
| £5,000 | x 168 | = £840,000 |
| £10,000 | x 45 | = £450,000 |
| £25,000 | x 7 | = £175,000 |
| Total grants = 253 | | |

1.14. Business Support Grants Fund – This was led by the Revenue and Benefits Team. A total of £39,380,000 was made available. As at 10th September this has paid out £29,925,000 to around 2,658 eligible businesses.

1.15. Business rates holiday for retail, hospitality and leisure industry – no Business Rates to be paid in 2020-2021 financial year for all businesses within these sectors. Bognor Regis Business Improvement District levy however, remains payable.

1.16. Small Business Grant Fund – for small businesses with Rateable Value under £15,000 i.e. those in receipt of Small Business Rate Relief. Eligible businesses were contacted and grants of £10,000 were awarded. The Economy Group was involved peripherally in chasing up those eligible businesses that had not returned the required information.

1.17. Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Grants Fund – for smaller businesses with Business Rates valuation under £51,000. eligible businesses were contacted and grants of £25,000 were awarded to qualifying businesses with NNDR £15,000 to £51,000, and of £10,000 for NNDR valued less than £15,000. The Economy Group was involved peripherally in chasing up those eligible businesses that had not returned the required information.

1.18. Reopening the High Streets Safely Fund – £143,718 was awarded to the council by central government, via European Regional Development Fund for spend in this financial year. This enabled us to meet the immediate requirements to deliver and support a safe trading environment for businesses and customers. The focus - the staged reopening of non-essential retail (15th June) and food and drink outlets (4th July), hairdressers and additional measures as they are introduced such as the mandatory wearing of face coverings within retail settings.

1.19. Partnership working has been developed with town and parish councils, Bognor Regis BID and Littlehampton Traders Association. Main expenditure items include: generic and localised social distancing signage across the district, business-facing guidance and information for SME's, generic and localised communications campaigns informing

residents the town centres/parades are open for business and safe, a local radio campaign supported businesses through the introduction of the mandatory wearing of face coverings.

1.20. Two temporary Community Information Officers were funded to cover the initial stages of reopening in a public-facing role to offer guidance and reassurance to residents and visitors and to assist businesses in accessing, understanding and delivering the government 'COVID Secure' guidance. The funding enabled Pier Road in Littlehampton to be closed temporarily for safety reasons – see below. Some town and parish councils requested a direct allocation of the funding to enable them to deliver according to local need – siting public hand sanitisers, producing and delivering localised safety signage and social distancing 'pathways', safe return to shopping communications campaigns and support for SME's.

1.21. An option for an additional business facing Community Information Officer specialising in ensuring COVID Secure measures are in place is being explored. Dependent on the detail, remaining funds will be allocated to enhance local media communications with the public and any immediate support required for SME's around any imminent 'circuit-breaker' measures/restrictions affecting the high streets.

1.22. The temporary road closure of part of Pier Road, Littlehampton was put in place in partnership with West Sussex County Council and their traffic management consultants WSP. This was done on public safety grounds – on busy summer days when many people from the beach came here to buy food and drink, large queues were forming across the two-way road, and people were not able to observe social distancing. The absence of space for social distancing combined with road traffic presented a serious risk to public safety which led to the temporary closure being put in place until the end of September. This involved speaking to traders ahead of the closure to gain their views about a potential road closure and ensuring deliveries in and out could be successfully managed, and many mentioned they had seen near-misses between cars and people, applying to West Sussex County Council for a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order, arranging for traffic signage for the road closure, diversion route and restricted access to neighbouring roads as recommended by WSP and communicating this to traders.

1.23. Rent Holiday – businesses occupying council-owned land or premises were offered a rent holiday via Property and Estates.

1.24. Other centrally distributed financial business support mechanisms that applied to local businesses are listed below:

- Employee furlough – employers could apply for staff to have 80% of their wages paid by central government until the end of October 2020. Arun had the second highest percentage in West Sussex of the workforce furloughed with 33%, take-up, Crawley had 41%. It is expected that as furlough ends, many jobs will be lost.
- Self-employed income support – self-employed people could apply to receive up to £2500 per month for at least 3 months depending on turnover and subject to government eligibility. The take-up rate of the eligible population is now 76% in Arun and rising, and this is the same as the West Sussex average.

- Universal Credit – the main benefit for people out of work or with low earnings – claim rates in West Sussex have more than doubled since March from 27,353 to 59,541, and this is echoed in Arun.
- Impact of COVID-19 on the West Sussex Economy – for more details see Appendix A

1.25. Recovery Planning – As restrictions now hopefully remain lifted, economic recovery plans are being discussed with several key partners and a range of proposals and interventions are coming forward and that the Economy Group are supporting. Some of these are listed below:

- a) Town Centre Recovery Plans are being prepared with partners, such as the Bognor Regis Business Improvement District, for Bognor Regis and Littlehampton.
- b) West Sussex County Council have shared a draft Recovery Framework with Districts and Boroughs.
- c) The council's COVID-19 Recovery Working Party recommendations to Cabinet will be implemented and included in the recovery plans.
- d) Pop-up shops – the council has agreed to support the provision of new Pop-up shops in Bognor Regis and Littlehampton using vacant retail premises in the town centres. COVID-19 restrictions have impacted on the project being delivered but it is hoped this can be progressed again soon.
- e) Support Programme for Independent Retail Businesses – a bid has been submitted, on behalf of six West Sussex D & B Councils including Arun, to the Strategic Investment Fund, to provide specialist training and mentoring support, as well as a grant programme to support refurbishment of shop fronts, for independent retailers.
- f) Youth Works project – a bid has been submitted to the DWP/JCP to deliver intensive support to prepare long term unemployed 18-25 yr olds, with significant barriers to work, for employment opportunities.
- g) Kick Start Scheme – this is a new central government initiative to provide unemployed young people with paid work experience opportunities for 25 hours a week for 6 months. Organisations and councils can become intermediaries to represent employers who are not able to achieve the minimum of 30 placements. ADC is considering taking on this role. Other local organisation such as Sussex Chamber of Commerce and Chichester College have also offered to lead on this, and the council may look to work in partnership with them.
- h) Arun Economic Development Strategy – this was recently approved and provides clear direction for the longer-term economic development of the area. The evidence-based priorities remain the same post recovery and an action plan to support delivery of this will be developed and align with the emerging recovery initiatives.
- i) Arun Business Partnership will continue to be used to communicate with our businesses and understand their business needs.

j) Tourism and Hospitality - sector specific Tourism Recovery Plans and campaigns are being designed by our regional and national tourism partners; Experience West Sussex Partnership, Tourism South East and Visit England / Visit Britain. The council is participating in all these campaigns. The campaigns are designed to encourage residents to 'discover and support local' and visitors who are healthy and able to travel to 'discover or re-discover the area'.

3. OPTIONS:

To note the report

4. CONSULTATION:

| Has consultation been undertaken with: | YES | NO |
|--|-----|----|
| Relevant Town/Parish Council | | x |
| Relevant District Ward Councillors | | x |
| Other groups/persons (please specify) | | x |

5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)

| | YES | NO |
|---|-----|----|
| Financial | | x |
| Legal | | x |
| Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment | | x |
| Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act | | x |
| Sustainability | | x |
| Asset Management/Property/Land | | x |
| Technology | | x |
| Other (please explain) | | x |

6. IMPLICATIONS:

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:

To provide Members with information about the activity of officers during the pandemic.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix A - [Impact of Covid-19 on the West Sussex Economy](#)

Bognor Regis Regeneration Position Statement

| Project/Opportunity | Update September 2020 |
|--|---|
| <p>1. Enterprise Bognor Regis Enterprise Bognor Regis (EBR) comprises a series of commercial/industrial sites co-located north of Bognor Regis straddling the A29. The aim is to make the sites ready and attractive for early development to accelerate business and employment growth, and many pre-planning studies were undertaken which has hastened development. There is limited greenfield commercial land available on this scale within Coastal West Sussex area.</p> | <p>The site is allocated as a strategic employment site in the adopted Local Plan. Landowners of EBR sites are reporting good occupier interest.</p> <p>Oldlands Farm site – Construction work for the Lidl Lidl store has started on site.</p> <p>Saltbox site – Groundwork has started on the site and is progressing well. Steel works for Warburtons are being erected this week (06/10/20).. http://cameracontroluk.com/client/rg/saltbox/index.php</p> <p>The proposed development will deliver £33.7 m of capital investment; provide approximately 30,520 square metres of new mixed-use floor-space and between 500 and 1000 new private sector jobs.</p> <p>This includes a Warburtons Class B8 warehouse for the storage and distribution of bread products and offices. The application also includes two drive-thrus (Greggs and Starbucks); industrial buildings; an Aldi food store and car showrooms for the Richmond Motor Group. The full planning application also includes the provision of the site’s infrastructure comprising access roads and a new entrance from Shripney Road, on-site open space provision, landscaping, drainage works and attenuation ponds. Outline permission was granted for the remainder of the site i.e. flexible delivery of employment space primarily in the form of two warehouses with associated car parking provision and landscaping.</p> <p>The Business Case for the delivery of a £7m WSCC funded Enterprise Centre on one of the sites at Enterprise Bognor Regis is being developed by WSCC.</p> |
| <p>2. Regis and Hothamton sites The Council owns two key regeneration sites at the Regis Centre and Hothamton car park and is seeking to develop them to obtain the maximum</p> | <p>The Council has decided that work on the proposed Pavilion Park on the Hothamton site be ceased, and consultation on alternative options will be undertaken in the future.</p> <p>Work on the Regis site has also been halted until regeneration project priorities have been agreed. A paper on the Regis Site regarding a potential hotel</p> |

regeneration benefit for the town.

was presented to a previous meeting and was deferred by Members.

At the Arun District Council Full Council meeting in September 2020, a motion was agreed that said: This Council recognises the impact Covid-19 continues to have across the District, and in particular the economic uncertainty it has presented. Council notes the continuing opportunity for Bognor Regis to play a major part in the economic growth of the District and the necessary regeneration required to support such growth.

Council believes that the prospects of regeneration of Bognor Regis will be strengthened if proposals are developed through an open and meaningful consultation, and that all prospective developers are given the opportunity to make presentations to the viability of regeneration schemes.

This Council wishes to extend an invitation to any forthcoming, or previous stakeholder, be it a developer, architect, development partner, the Council or community group, to present the merits of their scheme in a presentation, face to face, or virtual, at their earliest convenience. This Council will be open to requests to make such presentations up until and including 13 November 2020. Group Leaders will meet separately to discuss and agree the process in detail.

Officers are instructed to facilitate such arrangements.

The Sir Richard Hotham Project has been renamed Project Sunrise.

Place St Maur and the Sunken Gardens projects

Reports are due to be taken to Cabinet on both the Place St Maur and the Sunken Gardens projects in November this year. Authority was given by Cabinet in March 2020 to proceed with background work to progress the Place St Maur project; this included working up a brief to employ a consultant. During the summer, following a request for expressions of interest to Coast to Capital, a full application was made to fund part of the Place St Maur public realm scheme; this was submitted at the end of August. ADC is waiting to hear whether this application has been successful. Part of the criteria

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| | <p>for this government funding for the project will need to be spent by March 2022, an ambitious timescale.</p> <p>The estimated costs and the timescales for both projects will be set out in the reports to be presented to Cabinet in November.</p> |
| <p>3. Town Centre Initiatives A vibrant and appealing town centre offer of shops, public realm and events is a key draw for both residents and visitors. A Business Improvement District (BID) is in place from April 2018 for 5 years. Work is delivered in partnership with BID Manager, BID Board and Bognor Regis Town Council.</p> | <p>The Council has worked closely with the BID and other councils to get the town centre reopened safely using the £143k Reopening High Streets Safely Fund from government. This money has been used across the district to cover all areas with secondary retail centres or a parade of shops.</p> <p>Bognor Regis Regeneration Board offered some financial support to the BID to promote the town centre locally and regionally with the “Space To...” campaign using the uncrowded nature of the beach and surrounding area as a hook.</p> <p>There is a fine balance to be drawn in terms of encouraging people to come into town whilst at the same time managing social distancing requirements and discouraging larger gatherings of people.</p> <p>Until the COVID-19 restrictions are fully lifted and there is a clear understanding of what social distancing measures are required and how they can be practically implemented, no events will be progressed.</p> <p>Vacancy rates from September 2020 showed a small rise in vacant units since the pandemic started from 9.4% (25/266) in March to 10.9% (29 vacancies) for the core town centre and from 12.2% (49/402) in March to 13.5% (54 vacant) for the wider BID area. In the near future it is likely that the downturn caused by the pandemic, the cessation of furlough and the well-publicised continued demise of national chains will have a negative impact on these figures. During lockdown it was estimated by retail organisations that around 25% of retail outlets nationally may not reopen once lockdown is fully eased. Footfall has held up during the pandemic better than other similar towns but is still down on last year by 20-30%. Work has already started on a Recovery Plan for the town centre, and this will come back to this committee for consideration in due course.</p> <p>The Pop-up shop proposal will progress as planned when restrictions are lifted, and it is practical to do so.</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| | <p>ADC and the BID are working on a Recovery Plan to bring the local community and visitors back into the town. Initially it focused on marketing the town and practical measures to enable shoppers to use the town centre safely, and to attract people to spend the day in Bognor Regis A medium and long term plan is also being worked up.</p> <p>The Royal Hotel construction work is progressing again and now has a show flat presented to a very high standard. The scheme is due for occupation in January.</p> <p>Proposals for a new high-quality two week-long event on the Esplanade and Place St Maur for summer 2021 are on hold. Some of the ADC events money has been made available to Artswork to use for grant-making to generate small arts-based children's events.</p> |
| <p>4. Seafront Regeneration The Seafront Strategy was adopted in 2009 and set out plans to enhance the area. The Seafront Delivery Plan for the central section of the seafront was approved in 2016, with thematic zones and a strategic template for delivery of regeneration initiatives.</p> | <p>The public toilets on the promenade remain closed however the legal dispute around building standards has been resolved and work is taking place on site</p> <p>Temporary toilets were in place for the summer season. The newly refurbished Regis Centre public toilets, which include a wheelchair accessible toilet, are also available to beach users.</p> <p>The Council was awarded £50k from Coastal Revival Fund for heritage reinstatement works to the bandstand which has been matched by the Council. Work including the addition of a new disabled access ramp is underway.</p> <p>Cabinet has resolved that, based on the points made by the COVID-19 Recovery Working Party, the 2016 Bognor Regis Seafront Delivery Plan should be re-examined and a series of deliverable interventions and actions prioritised.</p> |
| <p>5. University of Chichester The University has a campus in both Chichester and Bognor Regis, with strong links with the wider regeneration of Bognor Regis. It has ambitious plans for campus expansion and doubling</p> | <p>The Tech Park was formally opened by the Duke and Duchess of Wessex in Sept 2018.</p> <p>The University submitted a planning application for 176 bed on-campus student accommodation which was approved at the June DC Committee.</p> <p>There is another application for 104 bed student accommodation above Wilkinsons store in London Road which was also approved at the June DC Committee.</p> |

| | |
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| <p>student numbers, and provides facilities for businesses such as hot-desking, meeting space and incubator units.</p> | <p>London Road lorry and coach park - owing to changes in market conditions the Council's preferred bidder withdrew their offer, submitting a revised offer for a smaller development. In order to allow the opportunity to explore options to ensure the Council obtains best value for the site, the revised offer has been rejected by Cabinet, though the decision is subject to review of the decision by Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> |
| <p>6. Butlin's Butlin's has transformed much of their accommodation from chalets into modern hotels. This has changed the type of customer coming to Butlin's, and also what they want to do on holiday. Butlin's is an active partner in the wider town regeneration</p> | <p>The resort reopened in July. Butlin's teams have been working hard adapting their resort to welcome back staying guests. 'Day Visits' have been postponed until 2021. Plans for autumn and winter breaks with an entertainment schedule, shows and activities, ice cream parlours, bars and cafés, brand new (2019) art deco styled pool, firework displays in October and up to Bonfire Night in November. New measures are in place to keep both guests and team safe.</p> <p>These measures include: a reduced number of guests, new social distancing measures, drive-through check ins and stringent, more frequent cleaning procedures, and updated app.</p> <p>All entertainment has now moved back indoors (so there are no longer outdoor stages) however, for safety reasons the indoor venues will be running at limited capacity with social distancing in place, guests are asked to wear a face covering while indoors.</p> <p>Resort Updates also include information on the Track and Trace process, advice from those with bookings travelling from areas with local lockdown restrictions, along with links to the relevant latest UK Government Guidelines. The Butlin's website / social media channels provide regular updates.</p> |
| <p>7. Old Town and Pier The Old Town area around Norfolk Street and Waterloo Square is on the up. Privately funded development will bring new good quality cafes/restaurants. Promotional activity will draw vibrancy and different footfall to this area of the town. The Pier Trust is spearheading</p> | <p>The planning application for the Mud Club and 2-4 Waterloo Square site with commercial ground floor and residential above has been refused. The leaseholder has placed a fairground on the site temporarily.</p> <p>A new Amusement Arcade has opened in the previously closed building, and the award-winning Pinks Vintage Ice Cream are now open on the ground floor of 18 Waterloo Square with two new ADC temporary housing flats above.</p> |

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| <p>plans to safeguard and improve the pier</p> | <p>The Bognor Pier Trust working with the Town Council and Heritage Partnership has launched an attractive series of Heritage Trails across the town.</p> |
| <p>8. Railway Station The Station occupies a key gateway position in the town. It is a listed building, was in very poor repair with vacant commercial opportunities, and is an identified site for improvement</p> | <p>Construction work on The Track Creative and Digital hub at the station is now complete and final fixtures and fittings are being installed with opening planned for later this year. The hub operator Town Square has recruited a Community Manager, and prospective customers are being invited to book up for a tour of the premises.</p> |
| <p>9. Transport and Car Parking Transport is a key element of development within the town as is car parking, and it is essential to ensure co-ordination with, and consideration of these issues as part of the development process. Strategically, proposed future improvements to the A27 at Chichester, Arundel and Worthing, and A29 as part of the Barnham-Eastergate-Westergate housing plans (included in the Local Plan) will significantly enhance the viability of development land in and around the town.</p> | <p>The pandemic has meant that all large-scale events are cancelled for the foreseeable future, and accordingly planning for the partnership-led two-week Esplanade event have been put on hold.</p> <p>The 2-hour free parking agreement for 2020 has been agreed between BID, Bognor Regis Town Council and Arun DC, and discs are being sold. There is now a 3-year agreement in place.</p> <p>Proposals to make the railway station junction more pedestrian friendly have been agreed in principle with WSCC and JWACC. County officers are investigating feasibility, funding etc to develop the project further.</p> <p>A29 – planning for northern section was due to be submitted to planning by WSCC in July/August. Discussions with site promoters indicate that the planning application for rest of the road, strategic allocations and site masterplans are due around Christmas.</p> |
| <p>10. Placebranding and Promotion Bognor Regis is particularly hampered by negative perceptions of the town. The place-branding initiative led by HemingwayDesign will set out to change the narrative and promote the town as a modern, forward-thinking investment destination.</p> | <p>HemingwayDesign led a recent stakeholder meeting to explain the three underpinning values for the Bognor Regis Placebrand drawn from the survey and research findings, and how these key messages should be used.</p> <p>The three values are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A beacon for a bold future - Blue Sky thinking - Ready for fun <p>They introduced the concept of a “brand filter” through which all local decisions must successfully pass and meet, making buy-in from all local agencies an important next step. A local multi-agency group will lead the process from here, with support from HemingwayDesign in the form of an online toolkit of messages and images to promote the town.</p> |

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| | <p>The “Invest in Bognor Regis” website is live. https://www.bognorregisregeneration.com/</p> |
| <p>11. Gigabit West Sussex This is a WSCC project and aims to extend the delivery of ultrafast fibre networks in some public buildings in towns across the county.</p> | <p>The Gigabit West Sussex project (funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) and led by WSCC to install superfast gigabit fibre broadband, is progressing well. Specific public buildings in Bognor Regis received the first phase of installation within the district in early 2019, and installations are nearing completion.</p> <p>WSCC have successfully bid to Government to become a pilot area for the new 75% business rate growth retention scheme. This will be used to deliver ‘Phase 2’ of improving the county’s fibre network and connecting up towns in the county. The County wide officers working group ‘Everything Connects’ is meeting regularly to develop the project programme.</p> |
| <p>12. Wider Economic Strategy/Policy Regional and sub-regional strategy and policy impacts both activity and funding streams for economic development within Arun</p> | <p>The Arun Economic Development Strategy has been approved and is available on the ADC website.</p> <p>Local Authorities and partners across West Sussex have been working collectively, where appropriate, during the COVID-19 restriction period to understand the economic impact of the restrictions, immediate interventions needed to assist businesses and longer term economic recovery measures.</p> <p>The Arun Growth Deal was signed in 2018. This is a joint commitment between ADC and WSCC to align resources to deliver economic growth and unlock opportunities for new homes, infrastructure, employment floor space and rejuvenated town centres. Officers, County and District Council Cabinet Members meet regularly to monitor project progress.</p> <p>The West Sussex Economic Strategy and Coast to Capital (C2C) Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) were launched in 2018. The LEP is currently drawing up a Local Industrial Strategy which is likely to determine future government funding priorities locally.</p> <p>The Coastal West Sussex Partnership Board has a new Chairman and several new business members.</p> |

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| | <p>Arun District Council has become members of the Greater Brighton Economic Board. The Greater Brighton Economic Board (GBEB) currently comprises the local authorities of Adur, Brighton & Hove, Crawley, Lewes, Mid Sussex and Worthing. The overarching aim of the Board is to protect and grow the economy, by coordinating economic development activities and investment at City Region level.</p> |
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