

## **GB communications strategy and plan September 2020 to July 2021**

### **OVERVIEW**

Greater Brighton - the fully-functioning economic area centered around the city of Brighton & Hove - has made great strides in recent years.

The City Region, which stretches from Brighton north to Gatwick and along much of the Sussex coast, continues to expand. With the addition of Arun District Council last year, it is now home to more than one million residents and 40,000 businesses with the economy growing steadily year-on-year for the past decade.

But growth is not the only focus. Greater Brighton continues to move beyond its remit of bringing government investment into the area; taking a leadership role on key strategic issues which have a crucial role to play in the lives of current and future residents. An inward investment strategy, which could create thousands of new jobs, and an ambitious infrastructure programme focussed on developing resilience around natural resources are being driven forward at a strategic level through a partnership approach.

Crucially, the stories emanating from Greater Brighton and its members are also being told in an accessible and more engaging way. This means more and more people - from CEOs through to active citizens - are becoming aware of the Greater Brighton project too. Crucial to this has been the recruitment of an expanded team of experienced business managers and enhanced communications function, provided by Adur & Worthing Councils.

But the COVID-19 pandemic means Greater Brighton can no longer operate on a business as usual footing. There is great instability, government uncertainty, a likely recession bringing large-scale unemployment and many thriving sectors - such as aviation and creative arts - left reeling due to the impact of social distancing.

Brexit and devolution also continue to loom, with both potentially having major impacts on residents and businesses, as well as the identity of the region moving forward.

With this in mind, the Greater Brighton communications function is advocating a shift in emphasis for the coming year with 12 months of work focussed on four broad themes.

At the heart is the work the Greater Brighton is doing around Economic Recovery. This will be supported by three key broad and interconnected themes: Resources for our growing economy; Infrastructure for our growing economy and Skills for our growing economy.

To reflect the board's increasing role as a regional leader in the locality and support the proposed inward investment strategy, increased emphasis will be placed on messaging to decision makers - be that in government, business or within the Greater Brighton network.

This will complement the work being done by local authorities (recovery in individual areas), business representatives and Coast to Capital LEP (funding, business support) and educational establishments (R&D, skills) - all of whom are represented on the Greater Brighton board.

## **COMMUNICATIONS SO FAR**

The communications function of Greater Brighton is delivered by the team at Adur & Worthing Councils. Since 2018 there has been an increased emphasis on building the narrative of the City Region which has raised the profile of Greater Brighton's work at a regional and national level.

This includes:

- **Front foot external communications**, with content and analysis produced quickly and to a high-standard ...
- ... this includes **high-quality photographs and videos**...
- ... which generates **regular coverage in regional and trade publications**
- **Creation of a 12 month media plan** with the GB chairman
- **Strategic support and commissioning of quality materials** for strategic projects, such as the GB10 water and energy plans
- **Developing a team of experts** to provide analysis and collective commentary on strategic subjects, such as Adam Tickell's article on social enterprise in The MJ
- **Organising site visits** for GBEB leaders to major investment projects
- **Quick insightful analysis** on major policy issues
- **Support and coverage of major events**, such as GB workshops and conferences
- **Regular client contact** with councillors, GB business manager and other officer support staff, which includes face-to-face meetings
- **Produce regular content for the Greater Brighton website**
- **Attendance and promotion of GBEB meetings**
- **Established and run dedicated Greater Brighton social media channels**

The communications plan for 2020/21 will continue much of this work as it gives a strong foundation to develop a strategic outreach programme with economic recovery and green growth at its heart.

## **IMPACT OF COVID**

An enhanced approach is suggested for one simple reason: the COVID-19 pandemic.

The introduction of a UK lockdown in March meant that in a matter of weeks the Greater Brighton economy suffered a jolt that it has not experienced for a century. The ONS predicts an 11 percent loss of productivity in the next 12 months, a figure replicated elsewhere in the UK.

A Hatch report commissioned by Greater Brighton noted that since March an estimated 7,700 businesses have had to temporarily close while, like elsewhere in the UK, around a third of workers aged 18-24 have been furloughed or lost their jobs.

Among the hardest hit sectors are manufacturing (estimated £770 million losses in 2020 – 23% total value), education (£638 million – 38%), arts & entertainment (£148 million – 42%) and wholesale and retail trade (£431 million – 21%).

With no support, the region's estimated year of recovery to achieve pre-COVID Gross Value Added (GVA) levels, the measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, is 2028.

But, the report suggested that if GVA growth was doubled, then Greater Brighton could get back on track within three to five years – but this would require a number of sectors to continue to develop.

Communications will be crucial to driving the development and encouraging collaboration between senior leaders, particularly in advocating positive ways forward, promoting a strong vision for the area and developing strategic networking opportunities for those who have the power to lever in investment and present a strong united case for investment.

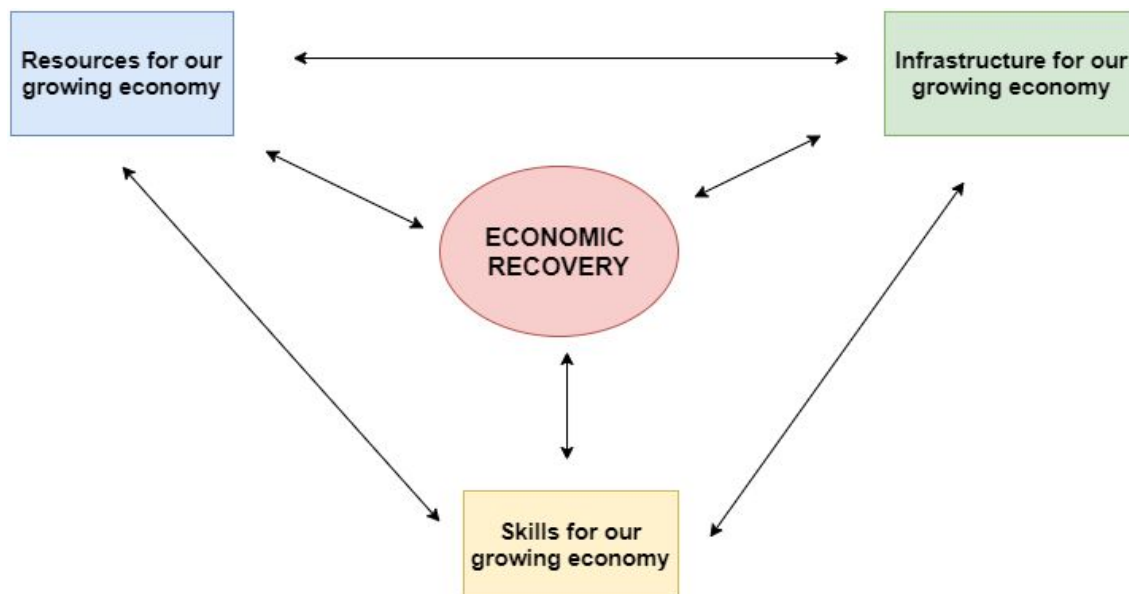
## **THEMES AND FOCUS**

The devastating impact of COVID-19 and lockdown has meant that the pandemic has been the continuous strand of much of the board's work programme since April and will continue to be the focus for the next 12 months. This means there is a strong requirement for the communications strategy to be built around Greater Brighton's COVID response and subsequent recovery.

Around the core theme of economic recovery (which includes promoting green growth), it is proposed that three interconnected areas of focus are developed, namely:

- Resources for our growing economy
- Infrastructure for our growing economy
- Skills for our growing economy.

These have been developed after discussion with the Greater Brighton Chairman and business managers and reflect the priorities and work programme planned for the year ahead.



Each will have a period of focus on throughout the year, as outlined in the activity section of this report.

Other key themes are likely to emerge in the coming year including Brexit and the government's devolution agenda. While it is important that Greater Brighton has a stance and view on both of these topics, these will be developed on an ad hoc basis after liaison with the chairman and Greater Brighton business managers.

## AUDIENCE

### Primary

- Greater Brighton members
- Greater Brighton stakeholders
- Future investors

### Secondary

- Greater Brighton businesses
- Partner communications teams
- Regional and trade media
- Government - regional and national

### Tertiary

- Greater Brighton residents

## **PLATFORMS**

Greater Brighton has a series of channels on which it can promote its own content (website, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn) as well as an extremely successful approach to pitching and placing content into regional and trade publications. This focus on earned and owned content will remain for the coming year.

This year will see specific focus on LinkedIn, as this will enable Greater Brighton to reach senior stakeholders directly, participate in strategic conversations and promote a collective voice to its partnership approach.

Work will include revamping the company page and making use of the groups / showcase pages option, so that the four key themes mentioned above have an online presence. This will also allow the experts developed last year greater opportunity to advocate, lobby and generate discussion on their chosen topics. The pages will be actively promoted by the GB business managers (training can be provided by GB comms).

This approach will also encourage Greater Brighton content to be shared beyond the owned channels. Renewed focus will also be turned to revamping the dedicated internal channel to communications colleagues in an effort to encourage their organisations to share Greater Brighton content and aims.

Due to a lack of a marketing budget, there is little scope (and little to be gained) in developing paid for content, unless for specific large-scale campaigns.

## **ACTIVITY**

To draw out the themes, it is proposed that the communications strategy places focus on each of the four key themes throughout the next year

During the period of focus, each theme will have a key activity at the board, lobbying issue, topic for partner promotion and a site visit or profile to a business which is either growing or recovering well from COVID.

Due to the pandemic, an agile approach to communications activities will be required. For this reason, some activities may be brought forward, delayed or cancelled. But the table below gives an indication of activities planned for the next 12 months.

This is in addition to the ongoing activities, such as promotion and attendance of board meetings, social media management and website curation.

Weekly client meetings with the Greater Brighton business managers will ensure the comms function is kept abreast of any emerging issues or priorities. There will also be ongoing regular discussions with Greater Brighton chairman, members and advocates at a range of formal and informal settings, such as GB officer programme board and networking events.

This plan will be fluid and change according to ongoing priorities. It will be reviewed formally every three months, along with regular client contact with chairman, leading board members and business managers.

<p><b>QUARTER ONE - Sept to Nov</b>  <b>Theme - Economic recovery</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chairman kick off video and interview</li> <li>• Key activity at board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ COVID recovery plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ New website section</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Lobbying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ BML mainline</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Partner promotion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Green Infrastructure New Deal</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Profile <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Staycation business</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Creation of new LinkedIn groups</li> <li>◦ LinkedIn training with GB business managers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>QUARTER TWO - Nov to Jan</b>  <b>Theme - Resources for our growing economy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key activity at board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ GB10 launch - Oct 20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Launch video</li> <li>■ Video segments for social</li> <li>■ New website section</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Partner promotion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ GB10 pledges</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Lobbying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Kelp forest</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Site visit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Southern Water / South Downs National Park</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Profile <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Independent food growers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>QUARTER THREE - Feb to Apr</b>  <b>Theme - Infrastructure for our growing economy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key activity at board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ GB10 launch - Oct 20</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Partner promotion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Manor Royal - beyond aviation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Lobbying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Green transport schemes</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Profile <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Digital gaming business</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Site visit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Hydrogen fuel facility at Ricardo</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>QUARTER FOUR - Apr to July</b>  <b>Theme - Skills in our growing economy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key activity at board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Skills / jobs - link to recovery plan</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Partner promotion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Creative arts</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Lobbying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Funding for the arts / festivals</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Profile <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Medtech / pharmaceuticals</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Site visit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ University of Brighton innovation hub</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## FURTHER INFORMATION

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