

HASTINGS AND ROTHER TASK FORCE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (SIX POINT PLAN)

★ Urban renaissance

1. The lack of appropriate employment space continues to inhibit the creation of new jobs, business expansion and inward investment.
 - a. Continue to develop new commercial and industrial space to support business diversification and growth, with a particular focus on the urban conurbations of Hastings and Bexhill (including the retail centres), NE Bexhill, Queensway, Ore Valley, Robertsbridge, Marley Lane and Rye Harbour.
 - b. Refurbish or redevelop existing premises that no longer meet modern commercial and industrial needs.
 - c. Continue to regenerate the seafronts and town centres at Bexhill and Hastings, focusing on redevelopment or improvement of sites and premises that are important to the area's economy, including tourism, leisure and cultural regeneration.
 - d. Seek to improve the local housing offer by helping to kick-start new or stalled housing sites, and by improving or enhancing existing residential areas in need of regeneration.

★ Transport

2. The Bexhill Hastings Link Road is vitally important to opening up land for employment and residential development, and will relieve some of the congestion on the A259 between Hastings and Bexhill. However, other strategic road and rail connections and other local transport improvements are critical to long term economic recovery and growth.
 - a. Continue to press for improvements to the A21 north of Hastings.
 - b. Lobby for improved east-west links, and particularly connections to ports and major transport hubs.
 - c. Improve access between A21 and Queensway (Baldslow scheme)
 - d. Improve rail services, focusing particularly on:
 - i) restoration of direct Cannon Street service from Hastings,
 - ii) electrification and dual tracking the Ashford-Hastings line
 - iii) upgrading the electricity supply on the Hastings line to Charing Cross London line to enable a regular 12-car service to operate
 - iv) the creation of a new station stop at Glyne Gap
 - e. Expand bus services within the area to improve local access to jobs and services and as an important element in the growing seafront and night-time economy.
 - f. Support the expansion of London Ashford airport at Lydd.

★ **Skills**

3. Local employers continue to find it difficult to recruit employees with the right skills from the local working age population. Too many of the local working age population are not work-ready, and the number of young people who are not in employment, education or training continues to remain unacceptably high. We also lose some of our ablest young people who leave the area to pursue careers elsewhere.
4. An education system that
 - a. Ensure that every school leaver is equipped with the basic interactive, numeracy and literacy skills and knowledge necessary to function in the workplace.
 - b. Improve and develop networks and other linkages between schools, colleges, University of Brighton and local businesses to promote better understanding of local economy, career pathways and workforce skills development opportunities.
 - c. Increase the number of businesses engaged in work-based training, apprenticeships and graduate training.
 - d. Further and higher education curricula that are relevant to the workforce skills required by local employers.

★ **Broadband**

5. Improvements in the area's digital infrastructure is critical to attracting the type of businesses that the Hastings-Rother area needs to realise its economic potential.
 - a. Lobby for the rollout of superfast broadband across the whole of Hastings and Rother, with a focus on ensuring that all areas are served by both fixed and mobile high speed networks.
 - b. Install optic fibre to the premise (FTTP) on all new developments, focusing particularly on the developments at North East Bexhill, Queensway, Hastings town centre.
 - c. Promote virtual networks between Colleges/University and local business to improve collaboration.
 - d. Gear more local businesses to e-commerce and exploiting the use of ICT and broadband as a strategic business tool.

★ **Enterprise growth**

6. Diversifying the local employment base is important to achieving a balanced and sustainable economy because the area is still overly dependent on the public sector. There are a number of advanced manufacturing and technology companies that trade internationally, but many more small enterprises are struggling in a fiercely competitive environment.
 - a. Support the development of key employment sectors, targeting advanced manufacturing and engineering; creative, leisure and hospitality; and emerging technology industries.
 - b. Promote the area as a centre of excellence in the vacuum technology sector.

- c. Continue to support indigenous enterprise start-up and growth, including access to finance (including grants) and bespoke support services; and promoting business knowledge transfer partnerships and networks.
- d. Proactively market the area for new business investment, promoting a business growth agenda.

★ **Image**

- 7. Perceptions of the area as an attractive and viable business location are still rooted in the past. Hastings suffers from an image as a dilapidated seaside resort, Bexhill is seen as a place to retire and the rest of Rother is primarily seen as a rural locality from which to commute to other places. The poor and inaccurate image of the area discourages the inward investment that is vital to economic growth. These negative images are perhaps even more ingrained in the minds of our own residents and many of our businesses, than with those outside the area.
 - a. Create brand identities for Hastings and Bexhill that promote the towns as desirable destinations for doing business, living and visiting.
 - b. Encourage positive messages about Hastings and Rother, especially within our own communities, as well as beyond .
 - c. Assemble and promote relevant and up to date information on sites, premises and services that attract new investment.
 - d. Promote the area as a desirable and affordable business location, targeting those sectors which will help to diversify the employment base and support growth in the key sectors.

Adopted by Hastings and Rother Task Force, July 2012