



# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

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**Town Clerk – Holly Goring**

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## YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED TO A MEETING OF UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

on

**Monday 19 December 2022 at 7.00pm**

**Weald Hall, Civic Centre, Uckfield**

### **AGENDA**

Under The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, members of the public are able to film or record during a committee meeting.

#### **1.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members and Officers are reminded to make any declarations of personal and/or prejudicial interests that they may have in relation to items on this Agenda. Should any Member consider that they require a dispensation in relation to any prejudicial interest that they may have, they are asked to make a written application to the Clerk well in advance of the meeting.

Notice should be given at this part of the meeting of any intended declaration. The nature of the interest should then be declared later at the commencement of the item or when the interest becomes apparent.

#### **2.0 STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON MATTERS ON THE AGENDA AT THE MAYOR'S DISCRETION**

#### **3.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL AND WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

#### **4.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

#### **5.0 MINUTES**

5.1 To **RESOLVE** that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on 17 October 2022 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

5.2 Action list – For information only

#### **6.0 COMMITTEE MINUTES**

6.1 To note the acts and proceedings of the following committee meetings:-

- |     |                                   |   |
|-----|-----------------------------------|---|
| (a) | Plans Committees                  | 24 October, 14 November and 5 December 2022 |
| (b) | Environment and Leisure Committee | 7 November 2022                             |
| (c) | General Purposes Committee        | 21 November 2022                            |



- 7.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES**
- (i) The Uckfield Town Centre Regeneration Joint Committee
  - (ii) Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
  - (iii) Gatwick Airport Consultation Group
- 8.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS**
- (i) Civic Centre Working Group
  - (ii) Uckfield Dementia Forum
  - (iii) Uckfield Events Working Group
- 9.0 TO CONSIDER A MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR DAN MANVELL**
- 10.0 TO CONSIDER THE SUBMISSION OF A BID TO PURCHASE LAND KNOWN AS THE DENE, BROWN'S LANE**
- 11.0 TO NOTE THE OUTCOME OF A RECENT INSPECTION OF TWO MATURE TREES ON TOWN COUNCIL LAND**
- 12.0 TO CONSIDER THE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES WITHIN WEALDEN DC'S DRAFT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2023-2033**
- 13.0 TO CONSIDER THE RE-ALLOCATION OF PROJECT FUNDING WITHIN THE 2022-23 BUILDING MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME**
- 14.0 TO CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WEALDEN PARISH REMUNERATION PANEL ON TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES FOR 2023/24**
- 15.0 TO CONSIDER ARRANGEMENTS FOR SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS WITH UCKFIELD VOLUNTEER CENTRE AND WEALDEN CITIZEN'S ADVICE FOR 2023/24**
- 16.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-28**
- 17.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN 2023/24**
- 18.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT ANNUAL BUDGET FOR 2023/24**
- 19.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR 2023-28**
- 20.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS**
- 21.0 SIGNING OF GRAVE CERTIFICATES AND TO NOTE TRANSFERS OF DEEDS OF GRANT**
- 22.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED**
- 23.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**
- 24.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**



**25.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

To consider whether to **RESOLVE** to exclude the press and public (pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960) during consideration of the following confidential business to be conducted:

- 25.1 To consider the draft lease agreement between Uckfield Grasshoppers Football Club and Uckfield Town Council for West Park Pavilion
- 25.2 To consider proposals from Sussex Police for the renewal of the contract for the Town Centre CCTV transmission and equipment charges



Town Clerk  
13 December 2022



# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held  
on Monday 17 October 2022 at 7.00 pm  
in the Weald Hall, Civic Centre, Uckfield

**PRESENT:**

Cllr. K. Bedwell	Cllr. J. Love (Town Mayor)
Cllr. J. Beesley	Cllr. C. Macve
Cllr. D. Bennett	Cllr. D. Manvell
Cllr. B. Cox	Cllr. S. Mayhew
Cllr. H. Firth	Cllr. A. Smith
Cllr. D. French (Deputy Mayor)	Cllr. P. Sparks
	Cllr. D. Ward

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

County Councillor Claire Dowling  
County Councillor Chris Dowling  
Sarah D'Alessio      Assistant Town Clerk & RFO  
Holly Goring      Town Clerk  
Minutes taken by Holly Goring

**Before the meeting started, the Town Mayor led the Town Council in a one minute's silence as a mark of respect for the loss of Mr Mike Skinner.**

**1.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members and officers were reminded to make any declarations of personal and/or prejudicial interests that they may have in relation to items on the agenda. They were advised that notice should be given at this part of the meeting of any intended declaration and that the nature of the interest should then be declared later at the commencement of the item or when the interest became apparent. No interests were forthcoming.

**2.0 STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON MATTERS ON THE AGENDA AT THE MAYOR'S DISCRETION**

There were no statements from members of the public.

**3.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL AND WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**FC.55.10.22** Members **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders to enable County and District Councillors to speak.

Councillor Claire Dowling referred to a question that had been submitted by Councillor D. Manvell about providing assurances for the Leisure Centre due to recent concerns following the decision at Heathfield. Councillor Manvell was advised to direct these concerns to Wealden DC and East Sussex CC as a Town Council. Councillor Dowling wanted to reassure members that she would



do everything she could as a local member but needed the Town Council's support as well.

Councillor Manvell felt that Wealden DC's decision to not renew the contract for the Leisure Centre felt short-sighted particularly when larger scale projects were being considered to improve facilities in Crowborough and Hailsham. All members agreed that the indoor sports facilities currently within Uckfield were limited and would not support the level of population growth anticipated for the town. Councillor Macve also reminded members that a large amount of money which paid for the original construction of the pool at Uckfield Leisure Centre, was contributed by the local community. So the local community had a vested interest in the future of the Leisure Centre, and pool in particular.

A second question was submitted by Councillor D. French who had asked what plans were in place for the Ukrainian refugees in East Sussex whose hosts would not be able to accommodate them after the initial six months. Currently there were 1,235 guests in East Sussex staying with 533 hosts. The support to enable the guests to lead the most fullest of lives whilst here in East Sussex was important. Support was being provided by the County Council to provide them with English language classes, supporting their access to employment and ensuring they had safe and secure accommodation. In response to this, the lead for Adult Social Care agreed a £1.38million package of support back in September, to support those who would be coming to the end of this initial six month period between now and Christmas. The package of support was being developed in association with the borough and district councils. This would involve encouraging hosts to continue providing accommodation with financial incentives (*£1k if they continued to host for a further 12 months, and a further £500 for over 18 months*), if the guest had to find alternative accommodation, the council would provide a number of support measures such as paying for the deposit and the first months rent and acting as a guarantor where necessary. Councillor Dowling referred to the latest e-bulletin from East Sussex County Council which the Town Clerk would circulate to members that evening.

Councillor D. French noted her concerns around the challenges of renting privately and the increasing costs, so there could be difficulties for refugees trying to find suitable accommodation and this was her main concern.

A third question was raised for the attention of District Councillors regarding Southern Water by Councillor D. French. It was advised that the regulators with powers to enforce the actions of Southern Water would be the Environment Agency and Ofwat. Wealden DC invited Southern Water to their Overview & Scrutiny Committee and were due to return, and East Sussex CC had also invited them to their Overview & Scrutiny Committee in November 2022. Councillor Dowling encouraged members to invite Southern Water to a committee meeting, so they could question them direct on issues within the town.

Councillor Chris Dowling wished to mention that the work by South East Water in Lewes Road was due to finish on 21 October 2022. He was told they were on schedule. The contractor due to carry out the traffic calming works was not able to carry out the works now whilst South East Water were still onsite, which was disappointing.



Councillor Bedwell raised her concerns once more for Ridgewood Village Post Office and their difficulties in obtaining compensation from South East Water. Support had been provided but it had not been forthcoming.

A question was asked by Councillor French, regarding Changing Places, to which the Town Clerk clarified that Wealden DC had just launched a funding round, but the Town Council and East Sussex County Council were not ready with the required detail and associated costs required to make an application. Work was therefore underway to prepare for a future round hoped to be opened in 2023.

Councillor P. Sparks wished to follow up on the issues relating to Southern Water. Since the all-party motion was passed at the Wealden DC meeting, dialogue had improved with Southern Water. There were now regular meetings planned with Wealden DC and far more information was coming through. Wealden DC Councillors were still not fully content however with the amount of information coming through planning application statutory responses. Particularly in regard to understanding the water and sewage capacity for new developments. Councillor P. Sparks reminded members of the complexities with the handling of planning applications, and referred to a recent case which had gone to the Planning Inspectorate for appeal.

Councillor P. Sparks advised that the planning application had been approved for the development at the Streatfeild House site. The bulk of the scheme had been approved and they hoped to start work on the scheme next year.

In reference to the recent Wealden DC press release on compliments received. Wealden DC had received 246 compliments in the last financial year, the highest individual category was Waste and Recycling (70), Planning and Building control, (50) and Housing recorded 30. Only 135 complaints had been received, with 98 of those regarded as not justified.

Councillor K. Bedwell noted that she was of the understanding that work had been halted on the Local Plan, whilst Wealden DC awaited further guidance from central government on housing numbers. She had also heard that the Bird in Eye South application had been submitted for appeal direct by the developers, despite not being considered formally at a Wealden DC Planning Committee North meeting. The Town Clerk corrected Councillor K. Bedwell to advise that actually the Planning Policy team at Wealden DC were working incredibly hard behind the scenes on the evidence base documents and studies to support the policies within the Local Plan so it was not accurate that work had been halted. It would be a decision for the District Council as to whether the authority pushes ahead with the Local Plan consultation in its current form or await guidance from the UK Government.

Councillor H. Firth invited feedback from residents that members may have received with regards to water and sewage capacity so she could take this to the Overview & Scrutiny discussions with Southern Water.

**FC.56.10.22** The Councillors were thanked for their input and updates, and subsequently **RESOLVED** to reinstate Standing Orders.



#### **4.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies had been received from Councillors J. Edwards and G. Johnson who due to work commitments and annual leave.

#### **5.0 MINUTES**

- 5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on 5 September 2022 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

**FC.57.10.22** Subject to a slight amendment raised by Councillor Manvell on a description used by Wealden DC in their consultation, members **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Full Council be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

#### **5.2 Action List**

Members agreed to remove the following actions and noted the report:

FC.32.06.19 – Public Space Protection Orders

FC.47.09.21 – Footway links to ‘Land off Mallard Drive’

#### **6.0 COMMITTEE MINUTES**

- 6.1 To note the acts and proceedings of the following committee meetings:-

(a) Plans Committee of the 26 September 2022

**FC.58.10.22** It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committee of the 26 September 2022.

(b) Environment & Leisure Committee of the 28 September 2022

**FC.59.10.22** It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Environment & Leisure Committee of the 28 September 2022.

(c) General Purposes Committee of the 3 October 2022

**FC.60.10.22** It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the General Purposes Committee of the 3 October 2022.

#### **7.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

(i) The Uckfield Town Centre Regeneration Joint Committee

Nothing to report at present.

(ii) Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Nothing to report at present.

(iii) Gatwick Airport Consultation Panel

Nothing to report at present.

#### **8.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM FULL COUNCIL WORKING GROUPS**

(i) Civic Centre Working Group

Nothing to report at present.

(ii) Uckfield – Events Working Group

Nothing to report at present.

(iii) Uckfield Dementia Forum

Nothing to report at present.

#### **9.0 TO NOTE THE REPORT OF THE EXTERNAL AUDITOR FOR 2021/22**

Members were presented with a copy of the Notice of conclusion of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2022 which included the response from the External Auditor. Members felt it was very satisfying that it had all been accepted. Congratulations were to be given to the Assistant Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer and wider team.



Members noted the outcome of the conclusion of the Audit.

**10.0 QUARTERLY PROGRESS UPDATE ON UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL PRIORITIES FOR 2022/23 (Q2)**

Members were presented with an update report from officers on the annual priorities of the Town Council and the progress that had been made towards achieving these priorities.

Members were pleased to see that everything was still moving forward and progress being made, despite some of the challenges that had been experienced with staffing levels during the past year. Members subsequently noted the progress made and contents of the report.

**11.0 TO REVIEW THE 2023/24 PROPOSAL FROM EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL ON THEIR GRASS VERGE CUTTING CONTRACT**

Members were presented with a short report which provided three options for parish/town councils to choose from for the next financial year for grass verge cutting arrangements. East Sussex County Council took a decision back in 2018 to reduce urban grass verge cutting along the public highway to twice a year. This meant the verges would be cut less, if no further contribution was made, the Town Council could pay a contribution to retain five to six cuts per annum or take over the contract entirely for a very small fee. The latter option however would require a great deal of extra work, to plan, obtain machinery, consider staffing levels and take on liability alongside the public highway.

In 2022/23, members had approved the payment of £4,356 for additional cuts to be funded to maintain service standards. The quotation for this option in 2023/24 was £4,442. Members found it most gratifying that the cost increase had only risen by 5%.

**FC.61.10.22** Members **RESOLVED** to advise East Sussex County Council that Uckfield Town Council would be selecting Option 2 for grass verge cutting in 2023/24:

*Option 2 – Extra cuts: Town Councils may fund an additional four cuts to be carried out by ESCC, totalling six cuts (two standard and four extra) over the course of the year. This would cost the Town Council a total of £4,442 for the year.*

**12.0 TO RECEIVE A LETTER OF CONDOLENCE FOR HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN FROM QUICKBORN, GERMANY**

The Town Twinning Association had received correspondence from the Mayor of Quickborn, Germany who wished to give their condolences to the Town Mayor and residents of Uckfield following the passing of Her Majesty the Queen.

Members were very grateful to receive this letter and wished to thank Quickborn for their thoughts and condolences.

**13.0 TO NOTE PROPOSED TELECOMMUNICATIONS UPGRADE ON RIDGEWOOD FARM SITE**

Members had received a report which highlighted that further improvements were due to be undertaken to the base station on the Ridgewood Farm site (south of Boothland Wood). The letter had been received from Waldon Telecom on behalf of Cornerstone. The upgrade would seek to improve communications for 3G, 4G and 5G network coverage. It would also include the replacement of the existing



20m monopole, see the addition of six antennas, two 300m dishes and the removal and replacement of a ground level cabinet and ancillary work.

Members felt that the proposals would not have a huge impact on the skyline as the proposals would fall at the same height. It was also fairly tucked into the corner of the site. It was recommended that the information be sent to the residents closest to the mast.

**FC.62.10.22** Subject to clarifying the county area from Waldon Telecom, members **RESOLVED** to respond with no objection.

**14.0 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE DENE, BROWN'S LANE**

Members were presented with an update from the Town Clerk. This advised that investigations were being undertaken before presenting back to members in December. Members noted the contents of the report and update provided.

**15.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS**

Members noted the report.

**16.0 SIGNING OF GRAVE CERTIFICATES AND TO NOTE TRANSFERS OF DEEDS OF GRANT**

Three deed of grants had been received:

Mrs Amber Maclean

Mrs Margaret Patricia Grant

Mr Steven John McIntosh

**FC.63.10.22** It was **RESOLVED** for three councillors to sign the above deeds of grant.

**17.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED**

None received.

**18.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Town Clerk wished to say a very big thank you to the Assistant Town Clerk & RFO for her hard work in preparing the end of year accounts and financial statements with the Accountant and Internal Auditor, for consideration by the Town Council and External Auditor. This involved having to provide detail for a number of variances between the financial years, and the Town Clerk noted that this past year had seen a number of parishes experience issues with their External Audit, so this was a great achievement. Thank you!

Town Councillors were reminded of their new pigeon holes in the foyer by the Civic Centre lift, and were reminded to check these. The Town Clerk also updated members on staff recruitment.

**19.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Town Mayor, Councillor J. Love wanted to say a big thank you to Councillor Smith for arranging the Food Bank collections. The Town Mayor had participated in one of the collections and it had been absolutely incredible to see the response. Every item on the list had been given by shoppers and Councillor Love wished to formally thank Cllr Smith and Lorraine at the Uckfield Food Bank for their hard work. It was hoped that another campaign could be run in six months time.

The meeting closed at 7.58pm.



# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

## ACTION LIST – FOR INFORMATION ONLY

### FULL COUNCIL

Resolution No.	Details	Date Raised	Action By	Date Complete
<b><u>FC.105.02.17</u></b>	14.0 To sign and seal the byelaws for Hempstead Meadows Local Nature Reserve and West Park Local Nature Reserve Members <b>RESOLVED</b> to sign and seal the byelaws for Hempstead Meadows and West Park Local Nature Reserves.	20.02.17	HG	The Council will be advertising its intention to apply for confirmation once covid restrictions have eased. The byelaws must then be held for at least one month at the offices for inspection by the public, before any representations are reported back as part of the package of information, to DEFRA.
<b><u>FC.95.01.20</u></b>	18.0 To sign and seal the Town Council's byelaws for Hempstead Meadows Local Nature Reserve and West Park Local Nature Reserve Members RESOLVED to: (i) authorise the affixing of the common seal to the byelaws for both Hempstead Meadows Local Nature Reserve and West Park Local Nature Reserve and signing by two named councilors, and; (ii) authorise the Town Clerk for Uckfield Town Council to carry out the necessary procedures and apply to the Secretary of State for confirmation.	20.01.20		
<b><u>FC115.04.19</u></b>	9.0 To consider a motion submitted by Councillor Donna French It was <b>RESOLVED</b> to support the motion put forward, and; “reinvestigate the possibility of part funding a traffic warden; entering into a discussion with Hailsham, Crowborough and Polegate, with a view to joint funding a shared traffic warden, employed via Sussex Police.”	08.04.19	HG	This matter has been raised with the Wealden Inspector of Sussex Police. It is understood that Sussex Police and Wealden DC were due to hold discussions once again. UTC will await the outcome of these.



<u>Resolution No.</u>	<u>Details</u>	<u>Date Raised</u>	<u>Action By</u>	<u>Date Complete</u>
<b><u>FC.30.09.20</u></b>	<p><u>12.0 To review a report by Councillor A. Smith on the need for affordable homes in Uckfield</u></p> <p>After a detailed discussion, it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to request that the Town Clerk write to the Housing Minister Rt Hon Robert Jenrick with a copy of this report and advise Wealden DC's planning department of these discussions along with neighbouring parish councils.</p>	14.09.20	HG	The data is being updated ready for compiling into a letter to the new Minister for Housing.
<b><u>FC.55.10.21</u></b>	<p>Members <b>RESOLVED</b> to approve the motion put forward by Councillor D. French and for staff to make contact with the County Council: <i>"Uckfield Town Council supports the increase in the provision of Changing Place Toilets across the country, and will approach East Sussex County Council to understand if they:</i></p> <p><i>(i) have submitted an expression of interest to central government to draw down funding to the county of East Sussex, and:</i></p> <p><i>(ii) if ESCC have expressed an interest, that Uckfield Town Council lobby for such facilities to be introduced in Uckfield."</i></p>	25.10.21	HG	Having understood the requirements from the recent funding round we now have time to prepare for the next funding round and have the necessary evidence and associated costs available.
<b><u>FC.94.02.22</u></b>	<p><u>11.0 To consider a further motion by Councillor B. Cox, relating to food poverty</u></p> <p>Members unanimously <b>RESOLVED</b> to approve the motion put forward by Councillor B. Cox to:</p> <p><b>What the council still needs to do</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report on the results of the schools' questionnaire and review the recommendations;</li> <li>• Be open to any new ways to offer 'out of term' food for young people and where needed, push the higher tiers of local government to back schemes;</li> <li>• Review and offer a final report on food poverty in March 2023 before the end of the term of this Town Council;</li> </ul> <p><b>Summary.</b></p> <p>Food poverty in Uckfield is an issue that is growing still. However, Uckfield Town Council have done a number of things to help ease the issue. The next year will see some very challenging times and it is important that the Council keep up the work in highlighting and where possible, easing food poverty. A review is needed in 2023 and a final report offered to the Town Council. The attached report within appendix A contains statistics for Uckfield in terms of earnings and age by ward should be offered to our local authorities (District and County) to highlight some local needs.</p>	28.02.22	All	In progress.



<b><u>Resolution No.</u></b>	<b><u>Details</u></b>	<b>Date Raised</b>	<b>Action By</b>	<b>Date Complete</b>
<b><u>FC.102.04.22</u></b>	<p>10.0 Members <b>RESOLVED</b> to:</p> <p>(i) work with Gladman Developments and arrange a meeting onsite to understand the full details of their proposal;</p> <p>(ii) obtain independent advice with regards to drainage engineering within Uckfield and the cumulative impact of the water run-off from proposed development sites into Framfield and Ridgewood Stream, and; (iii) obtain more detail on the proposals for the discharge of water from the northern attenuation pond onto Eastbourne Road.</p>	11.04.22	MF/ HG	The Deed of Easement was signed off by Environment & Leisure Committee on 7 Nov 2022 due to timescales.
<b><u>FC.17.05.22</u></b>	<p>Members <b>RESOLVED</b> to support officers to continue liaising with Gladman Developments to prepare the draft heads of terms for the discharge of water from Land off Eastbourne Road.</p>	23.04.22		<b>NFA.</b>



## **Meeting of Full Council**

**Monday 19 December 2022**

### **Agenda Item 8.0 (ii)**

#### **TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM FULL COUNCIL WORKING GROUPS: UCKFIELD DEMENTIA FORUM**

The Forum had its first face to face meeting recently following the pandemic and although there were limited attendees, it was a valuable updating session discussing all the local support for those living with dementia and their careers.

We spent some time discussing which events or ideas we could develop to celebrate Christmas with some type of musical event considered. However, after careful thought it was considered that a " friendly festive gift bag " would be the best idea being easier to organise and has the potential of reaching a wider audience.

Therefore, with the help of organisations and charity groups within the Forum, a gift bag including puzzles and crafts with a festive theme has now been produced and these are available from the Town Council offices for collection until the 21st December.

We hope that those living with dementia, their carers and loved ones will enjoy working through this pack over the Christmas break.

When we meet again as a Forum in the New Year we will review our plans and actions for 2023 and the opportunities of working alongside the Warm Spaces that have been formed in Uckfield.

Cllr Paul Sparks  
Chair of Uckfield Dementia Forum.



## **Meeting of the Full Council**

**Monday 19 December 2022**

**Agenda Item No. 9.0**

### **TO CONSIDER A MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR DAN MANVELL**

#### **1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 This report sets out a motion submitted by Councillor Manvell in accordance with the Town Council's Standing Orders.

#### **2.0 The motion for consideration**

- 2.1 Councillor Manvell gave written notice of the following motion which was received on 29 November 2022 and before the required deadline:-

#### **2.2 Uckfield Leisure Centre and swimming pool**

*"The Town Council is dismayed that while more (much needed) housing is built, our public services are not just failing to keep up, they are shrinking.*

*Uckfield Leisure Centre is the latest example of a much-loved and well-used community asset facing cuts or closure over the last decade, after the Youth Centre, Post Office, Library, and Children's Centre.*

*We are disappointed that our request to be involved in these discussions in January 2021 (FC.58.01.21) has not been respected. Indeed, it is frustrating to learn about the future of Uckfield's public services through the local media, rather than through proper channels. This is a matter of both public importance and common courtesy.*

*In these circumstances, Uckfield Town Council resolves to:*

- *strongly and publicly urge Wealden District Council and East Sussex County Council to retain Uckfield Leisure Centre and the swimming pool for public use, in the absence of any planned upgrade or replacement;*
- *send the attached letter to the Leaders of Wealden District Council and East Sussex County Council, as well as the cabinet members and portfolio holders responsible, outlining our opposition to any proposal to close Uckfield Leisure Centre and swimming pool, and*
- *add the issue of the Uckfield Leisure Centre to the Town Council's Action List, to ensure:*
  - *communication with Wealden District Council and East Sussex County Council on this issue is started and maintained;*
  - *responses to the Town Council's letter are received, and;*
  - *the strength of feeling among councillors is recorded for the public's benefit.*

#### **3.0 Recommendations**

- 3.1 Members are asked to consider the motion and advise the Clerk accordingly.

Appendices: Appendix A: Proposed letter to WDC and ESCC  
Contact Officer: Holly Goring



To: Cllr. Ann Newton, Leader, Wealden District Council (WDC)  
Cllr. Keith Glazier, Leader, East Sussex County Council (ESCC)  
cc: Cllr. Philip Lunn (WDC, Leisure and Climate Change)  
Cllr. Nick Bennett (ESCC, Resources and Climate Change)



**Uckfield Leisure Centre**

20 December 2022

Dear Cllr. Newton and Cllr. Glazier,



Uckfield Town Council is dismayed by media reports that Uckfield Leisure Centre's future is uncertain. We are especially concerned about the swimming pool, a much-loved and well-used community asset.

We implore you not to go through with this damaging closure.

In the last decade, fast-growing Uckfield has lost both its Youth Centre and dedicated Post Office, with the Library and Children's Centre running reduced hours. We appreciate the difficult financial background to these decisions, having suffered from cuts ourselves. However, we firmly believe that an impactful, community-damaging line is being crossed.

Whilst there is rightly a focus on the cost of energy, leisure is an essential part of family life, good mental health, and physical wellbeing. Uckfield Leisure Centre is an affordable and accessible lifeline for families in a rural hub, with limited transport alternatives. Our more senior residents also benefit from aqua fit exercises. We cannot afford to lose these benefits.

As the only indoor public leisure facility remaining in a growing Uckfield, the swimming pool plays an important role in the educational and social life of our children and young people. Swimming is a vital life skill and is the only sport taught as part of the national curriculum. Without a Youth Centre, the pool is an important social space. A tennis court provides far fewer opportunities for a large number of residents than a swimming pool.

We acknowledge that the school's proposals may seem exciting and could bring benefits to the town. As Town Councillors and representatives of our community, we would welcome this discussion if we believed that leisure facilities in Uckfield were being upgraded.

However, with WDC centralising leisure facilities in Crowborough and Hailsham, we know that this will not be the case. For this reason, we further doubt that adequate funds would be found to relocate the pool.

While the ownership and management of the pool may be between your two councils, it really *belongs* to Uckfield residents. Many locals recall that they substantially helped to pay for it by contributing to the Uckfield Indoor Swimming Pool Trust in the 1980s.

The closure of the pool without an upgraded, fully accessible replacement would not just be a retrograde step, it would be an insult to every one of them.

For these reasons, Uckfield Leisure Centre and pool must be protected. We underscore the strength of feeling on this issue in Uckfield.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr. Daniel Manvell, agreed by Uckfield Town Council on 19 December 2022



## **Meeting of the Full Council**

**Monday 19 December 2022**

### **Agenda item 10.0**

#### **TO CONSIDER THE SUBMISSION OF A BID TO PURCHASE LAND KNOWN AS THE DENE, BROWN'S LANE**

##### **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 Members were informed at the meeting of Full Council on 25 July 2022, that Buxted Parish Council were seeking to dispose of the land known as the Dene, adjacent to Brown's Lane, Uckfield.
- 1.2 At Land Registry, the site is referred to as "Land on the north side of Brown's Lane, Buxted" and sits fairly central within the Manor Park estate providing a beautiful vista from Brown's Lane north east towards the countryside and Buxted Park.
- 1.3 The land was registered as an Asset of Community Value, having been registered by Manor Park & Hempstead Fields Residents' Association. This registration lasts five years and was last renewed by the Residents' Association in July 2021, so the asset remains registered for a further five years. As a result of this, the parish council have had to follow certain procedures to enable eligible community interest groups to register their interest during this disposal process.
- 1.4 Members resolved on 25 July 2022, for Uckfield Town Council to confirm its intention to bid for the land was sent to Wealden DC before the deadline of the initial moratorium period deadline of 3 August 2022.

**FC.38.07.22** *With unanimous support, members **RESOLVED** to task the Town Clerk with writing to Wealden DC to confirm its intention to bid for the land, within the initial moratorium period and before the deadline of 3 August 2022.*

- 1.5 The Town Clerk wrote to Wealden District Council before the deadline and registered the Town Council's initial interest. It was confirmed by the district council that this had been received and accepted. The next stage of the process formed the full moratorium period, which enabled potential bidder(s) to investigate matters relating to the site. If the community interest group then wished to make a confirmed bid, this needed to be submitted by 20 December 2022.

##### **2.0 Further investigations**

- 2.1 The Town Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Town Clerk met with the Clerks of Buxted Parish Council in September 2022 where it was confirmed that the land was considered amenity land.
- 2.2 Maintenance of the land involved grass cutting (they funded 5-6 cuts per annum between April and October) and they had in recent time been approached by East Sussex Highways to address overhanging tree branches. They had not had any further maintenance responsibilities in their time or experience. It was asked whether there were any other facilities onsite to be maintained such as the footpath, but it was uncertain. Grass cutting has cost them less than £500 per annum, and tree works increased expenditure in 2021-22.



- 2.3 Following the meeting it was considered prudent to approach East Sussex Highways to understand if they had responsibility to maintain the subway and footpath across the site. It was also suggested that a check be carried out on utilities on the site.

### **3.0 Legal response**

- 3.1 A copy of the deed and title plan were sent to the Town Council's solicitors on receipt of confirmation from Wealden DC, that Uckfield Town Council had entered the full moratorium period.

- 3.2 They considered the following:

*The title is straightforward, and although the land is subject to restrictive covenants imposed in 1932 they do not prevent to use of the land as amenity land.*

*The land is held by Buxted under the Open Spaces Act, and although it will be transferred to another local Council it will still be necessary to follow the procedure required by that Act. This involves advertising the disposal on two consecutive weeks and Buxted considering any objections received*

*The title states that the land is subject to rights for "quiet recreation". It is not clear how this restriction arises. The wording is more restricted than the use permitted by the Open Spaces Act, and in our view on a strict interpretation would prevent use as a playground or similar.*

*We have looked at the transfers of two of the properties on the Estate and these do not refer to the land at all, nor do they grant rights over it in favour of the adjoining properties. The restriction may arise from the original planning consent but we have not been able to obtain a copy of this.*

*The Transfers of the individual properties contain provisions requiring individual owners to contribute a proportion of the cost of maintaining the footpaths on the estate (but not any across the amenity land). So far as we can see each property owns a proportion of the footpath adjoining their property. There is no obligation on the owner of the amenity land to contribute to the cost of the maintenance of the Estate footpaths*

*We note that there is a lighting column in the photograph and we assume from this that the footpath and the underpass are maintained by the Highways authority who are responsible for the lighting. This needs to be checked with Buxted and of necessary with East Sussex Highways.*

*There is a thin strip of land between the amenity land and Browns Lane which is technically still in the ownership of the Developer. We suspect that they are long gone, in which case title would vest in the Crown. This does not matter provided that the land is highway land. We are not clear as to vehicular access for maintenance purposes*

- 3.3 This supported the previous conversations held with Buxted Parish Council and Uckfield Town Councillors.

- 3.4 The Town Council's solicitors have since sought to undertake the utilities search on the site and it was hoped that the findings of this search would be received before the meeting of Full Council. The Town Clerk would provide a verbal update on this on the night of the meeting.



#### **4.0 Response from East Sussex Highways**

- 4.1 Contact was made with East Sussex Highways to determine their land ownership in the area of the Dene as officers were aware that they might be responsible for the subway and some of the footpath.
- 4.2 East Sussex Highways confirmed that they were responsible for the path and subway that ran underneath Browns Lane only. A copy of a plan indicating the adopted public highway can be found in appendix B. The adopted public highway is shown hatched pink with the considered extent of the highway shown edged with a solid red line. They have advised that the public has a right to pass and repass over the areas hatched pink and they are maintainable at public expense. They also confirmed that although we are not responsible for the remainder of The Dene, East Sussex Highways do own the street lights.

#### **5.0 Response from Ranger**

- 5.1 The Town Council's Ranger undertook a review of the trees located on the land.
- 5.2 The trees all appeared healthy and did not present any concerns. The birch was showing signs of hollowing but the tree was considered vigorous and the hollows were small at present. If massaria of plane were to spread out of its present range (London and Bristol) it might be prudent to include aerial surveys of the plane trees on site. Further information on massaria can be found here:  
[https://www.trees.org.uk/Trees.org.uk/media/Trees-org.uk/Documents/FC/Massaria\\_Disease\\_of\\_Plane.pdf](https://www.trees.org.uk/Trees.org.uk/media/Trees-org.uk/Documents/FC/Massaria_Disease_of_Plane.pdf)

#### **6.0 Submission of bid**

- 6.1 The deadline for the submission of a bid during the full moratorium period is 20 December 2022. Confirmation has been sought on whether such submission needs to be sent before 20 December or can be sent on the day itself until close of play.
- 6.2 The UK Government guidance recommends that a business plan and confirmation of finance is provided with the submission of a bid. The intentions of the Town Council are believed to be clear and simple as the Town Council is keen to see this land preserved as an important open public space, so a brief draft paper has been attached at appendix C for members' approval. This is the proposed submission if members are satisfied and happy to proceed with the submission of a bid.

#### **7.0 Recommendations**

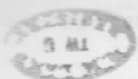
- 7.1 Members are asked to
- (i) note the contents of this report in particular the correspondence from the Solicitors and East Sussex Highways;
  - (ii) confirm if they wish to proceed with the submission of a bid to Wealden DC, for the land known as the Dene, Brown's Lane;
  - (iii) confirm the amount they wish the Town Council to bid for the land;
  - (iv) confirm that they are satisfied with the contents of the proposed submission documentation (attached at appendix C).

**Appendices:** Appendix A – Copy of the Title Deed and Plan  
Appendix B – East Sussex Highways mapping  
Appendix C – Proposed draft submission documentation

**Contact Officer:** Holly Goring



## H.M. LAND REGISTRY

Division 1.  
Registered 17.2.1972

TITLE NUMBER SX141343

This register consists of 4 pages

## A. PROPERTY REGISTER

containing the description of the registered land and the estate comprised in the Title

ADMINISTRATIVE AREA  
(County, County borough, etc.)

PARISH OR PLACE

SUSSEX

BUXTED





The Freehold land shown and edged with red on the plan of the above Title filed at the Registry registered on 3 February 1967 being land on the north side of Browns Lane.

## B. PROPRIETORSHIP REGISTER

stating nature of the Title, name, address and description of the proprietor of the land and any entries affecting the right of disposing thereof

TITLE ABSOLUTE



Entry number	Proprietor, etc.	Remarks
1.	BUXTED PARISH COUNCIL care of The Old Orchard, Ringles Cross, Uckfield, Sussex, registered on 17 February 1972.	Price paid £1. 
2.	RESTRICTION registered on 17 February 1972:-Except under an order of the registrar no disposition by the proprietor of the land is to be registered unless made in accordance with the Open Space Act 1906 or some other Act or authority.	



TITLE NUMBER SX141343

## C. CHARGES REGISTER

containing charges, incumbrances, etc., adversely affecting the land and registered dealings thereon

Entry Number	The date at the beginning of each entry is the date on which the entry was made on this edition of the register.	
1.	17 February 1972-A Conveyance of the land tinted pink on the filed plan and other land dated 27 May 1932 made between (1) William Henry Abbey (Vendor) and (2) Basil Ionides (Purchaser) contains covenants particulars of which are set out in the Schedule annexed.	
2.	17 February 1972-A Subsidiary Vesting Deed of the land tinted blue on the filed plan and other land dated 22 July 1932 made between (1) William Henry Abbey (Vendor) (2) Guy Temple Montacute Larnach-Nevill, Patrick Kirkman Hodgson and Isabel Nellie Larnach-Nevill and (3) The said Isabel Nellie Larnach-Nevill (Purchaser) contains covenants particulars of which are set out in the Schedule annexed.	
3.	17 February 1972-The land is subject to rights to use and maintain drains sewers watercourses gutters pipes cables and wires therein.	
4.	17 February 1972-The land is subject to rights of user for the purpose of quiet recreation.	



# H.M. LAND REGISTRY



TITLE NUMBER

CV 1 1 1 7 1 7

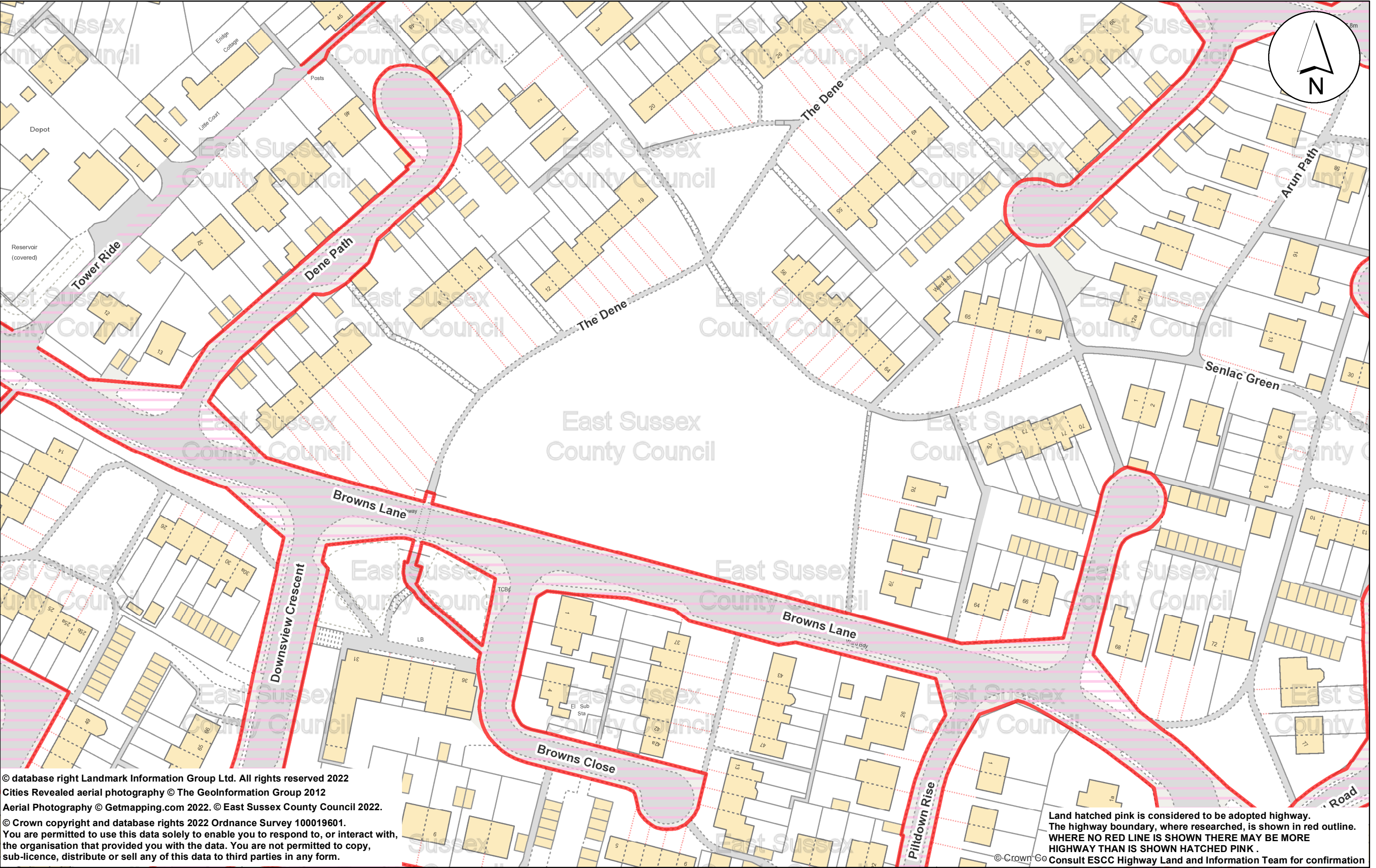
TITLE NUMBER SX141343

Page 3.

## C. CHARGES REGISTER—continued.

Schedule of restrictive covenants	Remarks
<p>The following are particulars of the covenants contained in the Conveyance dated 27 May 1932 referred to in the Charges Register.</p> <p>COVENANTS by Purchaser to observe and perform the following stipulations namely ..... not at any time thereafter to use or suffer to be used the conveyed premises or any part thereof or any building erected thereon for the trades of a Licensed Victualler Tavern Keeper or Vendor of malt or spirituous liquors or for the sale manufacture or storage of ale beer wine or spirits or any other alcoholic or excisable liquors or for the purpose of a private or other club.</p>	
<p>The following are particulars of the covenants contained in the Subsidiary Vesting Deed dated 22 July 1932 referred to in the Charges Register.</p> <p>COVENANT by the Purchaser with the Vendor and his successors in title that the Purchaser and her successors in title and assigns:-</p> <p>(i) WOULD at all times thereafter pay a fair proportion of the expense of keeping in repair so much of the roadway forming part of Ordnance No.1609 coloured yellow on the said plan and leading from Brown's Lane to Views Wood as lay between the points "A" and "B" shewn on the said plan.</p> <p>(ii) WOULD pay a fair proportion according to user (other than for farming purposes ) of keeping the private roadway known as Brown's Lane partly coloured brown on the said plan and extending thence in a South easterly direction from Southern Railway line to the main Uckfield-Framfield Road in good repair and condition and in estimating such proportion the use of the said private roadway for building operations should be taken into account and the proportions as between the Purchaser and others liable to contribute towards the maintenance of the said private roadway should be settled by the Vendor's Surveyor whose decision should be final and whose costs should be paid in such proportion as they might decide</p> <p>(iii) TO perform and observe the covenants and restrictions contained in the Second Schedule thereto.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>THE SECOND SCHEDULE above referred to</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>FIRST PART</u></p> <p>NOT at any time thereafter to use or suffer to be used the property thereby conveyed or any part thereof or any building erected thereon for the trades of a licensed victualler tavern keeper or Vendor of Malt or Spirituous liquors or for the sale manufacture or storage of ale beer wine or spirits or any other alcoholic or excisable liquors or for the purpose of a private or other club.</p>	<p>The roadway coloured yellow referred to is now known as Tower Ride.</p> 





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Aerial Photography © Getmapping.com 2022. © East Sussex County Council 2022.  
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You are permitted to use this data solely to enable you to respond to, or interact with,  
the organisation that provided you with the data. You are not permitted to copy,  
sub-licence, distribute or sell any of this data to third parties in any form.

Land hatched pink is considered to be adopted highway.  
The highway boundary, where researched, is shown in red outline.  
WHERE NO RED LINE IS SHOWN THERE MAY BE MORE  
HIGHWAY THAN IS SHOWN HATCHED PINK .  
Consult ESCC Highway Land and Information Team for confirmation

## The Dene Browns Lane Uckfield

Author: NJR HLIT

Scale: 1:1,000

Date: 11/11/2022

East Sussex County Council  
County Hall  
St Annes Crescent  
Lewes





SA 141343

ANCE SURVEY REFERENCE	COUNTY	SHEET	NATIONAL GRID	SECTION
	SUSSEX	XL 4		D

1/1250 Enlarged from 1/2500

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## **Meeting of Full Council**

**Monday 19 December 2022**

### **Agenda Item 11.0**

#### **TO NOTE THE OUTCOME OF A RECENT INSPECTION OF TWO MATURE TREES ON TOWN COUNCIL LAND**

##### **1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 Members of Environment & Leisure Committee were advised on 7 November 2022, that the Town Council's Ranger had unfortunately identified evidence of fungus at the base and root plate of a very large veteran beech tree on West Park Recreation Ground. This tree had been a key feature of the ground's history, and often used by residents to shelter under during the summer months.
- 1.2 Members were informed that a further tree inspection would be undertaken shortly, so the outcome of this would be presented to Full Council in December, in case an important decision needed to be taken.
- 1.3 Concerns had also been raised by a resident and the landlord of their property (Wealden DC) with regards to the health of a Sweet Chestnut tree, in a section of Downlands Copse owned by Uckfield Town Council near to the multi-use games area. This survey report includes feedback on this tree also.
- 1.4 The inspection was undertaken on 22 November 2022, and is available to view in appendix A of this report.

##### **2.0 Recommendations from the Tree Inspection**

- 2.1 The inspection report clearly sets out recommendations for the Town Council for each tree:

###### **(i) Mature Beech Tree at West Park Recreation Ground**

###### **Recommendations**

Due to the presence of *Meripilus giganteus* on this tree and given its location, it is recommended that this tree be subject to regular inspections. These inspections should be in the form of regular visits (by council staff) during the autumn months, starting in September, to assess the extent of any fruiting bodies of *Meripilus giganteus*, with photographic evidence being taken. Contractors and/or council staff should also refrain from mowing the grass under the tree and out to the dripline and alter the barriers currently in place in order to deter or limit public access. This will reduce damage to roots and prevent the removal of any fruiting bodies. This will allow a clearer understanding as to the possible extent of the colonisation of this tree by *Meripilus giganteus*. A further detailed inspection should be undertaken by November 2023 or sooner if the area adjacent changes use or following an extreme weather event.

Recommended remedial work for this tree.

1: Remove the 'hung up' branch (as soon as is practical).

2: Remove major deadwood, reduce the end weight of the lower south facing limb by approximately 2 metres and cut back some of the branches which are starting to encroach over the carparking. This work is of low priority and should be undertaken within 6 months of this report.



(ii) Sweet Chestnut Tree at Downland Copse

**Recommendations**

At the time of this survey, this tree did not contain hazard features that require remedial tree surgery work. It is recommended that this tree be visually inspected (by council staff) for the presence of fungal pathogens (ground and aerial, on the south facing limb over the adjacent garden) during September or October 2023. A further detailed inspection should be undertaken by November 2024 or sooner if fungal pathogens are observed in 2023, the garden area changes use or following an extreme weather event.

**3.0. Recommendation**

- 3.1. Members are asked to note the contents of the tree inspection for the two mature trees and recommendations from the report.

**Appendices:** Appendix A: Tree Inspection report

**Contact Officer:** Holly Goring



# Tree Inspection

## Beech tree and sweet chestnut in Uckfield



J P Cornford



### **1.1 Instruction:**

This report is related to a tree inspection of two mature trees in the town of Uckfield, East Sussex, under the ownership of Uckfield Town Council. The survey was requested by Neal Matheson on behalf of Uckfield Town Council. The survey was conducted on 14.11.2022 and this report was completed on 22.11.2022. The beech tree is located at West Park Recreation Ground and the sweet chestnut (previously surveyed as tree number 1668) is located in a small wooded area at the rear of Downlands Avenue.

### **1.2 Rationale of inspection:**

This survey was commissioned due to concerns over the condition of both trees. It had been identified by Neal Matheson that the beech tree in West Park had a fungi species present at the base and the sweet chestnut had recently shed a limb over a neighbouring property.

### **1.3 Survey methodology**

This survey was conducted as a visual ground-based survey. No specialist decay detection equipment was used (other than a probe and sound hammer, to assess any decay or cavities present). The root network of both trees were not excavated as part of this survey. Each tree was assessed at the base for decay fungi and evidence of cavities. The ground around each tree was assessed for the presence of decay fungi on the anchorage root areas. Stem and crown condition was assessed for evidence of dieback, major deadwood, aerial fungi, tight (included) unions and cavities.

This survey was carried out with the following best practice guidance:

- The National Tree Safety Group (NTSG) guidelines in *Common Sense Risk Management of Trees* (2010)
- The Arboricultural Associations, Fungi on trees, *An Arborists Field Guide* (2011)
- Hazards from Trees, a General Guide by *David Lonsdale* (2000).
- Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) by *Claus Mattheck and Helga Breloer* (1994)

### **1.4 Limitations:**

Trees, being living organisms, are subject to change and best practice dictates that they should be inspected on a regular basis (subject to recommendations) for reasons of safety. Although every effort has been made to detect defects that could result in harm, no guarantee can be given to the absolute safety of any individual tree. For example, extreme weather conditions can cause damage to apparently healthy trees. The recommendations stated within this report are in the context of the current condition of the trees (at the time of inspection) and the current usage of the areas; any further change in use of any area indicated or any extreme weather event, should result in a further re-inspection.

It is unknown to the author if any of the trees surveyed are covered by any protection orders or whether they contain the presence of protected species such as bats (it is illegal to carry



out remedial work on trees containing bats or bat roosts, without permission). A bat survey was not carried out as part of this survey. This survey furthermore does not suggest that the trees requiring remedial work are in anyway 'safe' to climb, in order for contractors to carry-out aerial tree work. Contractors are recommended to carry out their own visual hazard inspection and complete a written risk assessment prior to commencing any remedial works. The author will therefore not accept any liability, for failure to comply with relevant permissions, damage to protected wildlife or habitat(s) or to the health and safety of contractors and/or the general public, caused during recommended remedial works. The author will also not accept any liability for injury to persons, or damage to property, caused by the trees within this report, due to the recommendations in this report not being adhered to or any injury to persons or damage to property, which occurs during or following any extreme weather event.

## 2.0 Survey data

Species	Ht (m)	Age	DBH (cm)	Crown Spread	General condition
Beech	25	Mature	130	North 10.5m South 12m East 9.6m West 11m	A very large and mature tree, adjacent to the carpark and pavilion and to the rear of two properties. The tree is weighted towards the adjacent carpark. The tree has an area of grass underneath, that is occasionally used by the public for walking, although there is no direct public access. The ground appears slightly compacted and is mown on an ad-hoc basis. The tree is in good overall condition with no signs of dieback within the crown. There has been some previous tree surgery carried out and as such there are several wounds on the main stem. There is a fungal pathogen ( <i>Meripilus giganteus</i> ) present at the base.
Sweet chestnut	24	Over Mature	Multi-stem x 3 80, 70 and 60	North 8m South 12m East 10m West 8.5m	This is a large and old coppice stool, which has three large stems. The tree is located in a small wooded area with no direct public access underneath. The area appears to be used by the public on an ad-hoc basis. The tree is also adjacent to the end of a garden of a nearby property. One of the stems is leaning and weighted over and towards the end of a neighbouring garden and in a recent storm, shed a large limb. This area of the garden at the time of this survey, contained no structures or evidence of regular use. The tree is in a good condition for its age, with no crown dieback and no fungal pathogens being observed during this survey.



## **2.1 Detailed observations and recommendations**

### **Beech**

#### **Root area and lower stem**

The root area of this tree showed some minor signs of compaction, but not of any consequence. There is some occasional public access under the tree, which appears to be on an ad-hoc basis. There was no indication of root lifting or subsidence present. The lower buttress roots at the southwest and southern points did contain the fruiting bodies of *Meripilus giganteus* (see figs 1 and 2), however, these fruiting bodies were relatively small. No decay was observed at the locations of these fruiting bodies. The author was informed by the council staff present, that this year was the first time *Meripilus giganteus* fruiting bodies have been observed on this tree. N.B Trees with large or masses of multiple fruiting bodies of *Meripilus giganteus* are considered most significant (The Arboricultural Associations, Fungi on trees, *An Arborists Field Guide* 2011).

The buttresses of this tree all appeared to be structurally sound, but a sound test was made on the lower stem and buttress area to identify any other possible decay or cavities present. This test proved negative. There was however one small sinus cavity on the stem at the south east point, where a probe was inserted, to a depth of 30cm.

#### **Stem**

There were a number of wounds on the stem from previous tree surgery, with one notable large wound at 3m on the western side. This wound did not show signs of significant decay. The tree is also co-dominant at 7m and, although the union at this point is tight and slightly included, it had no evidence of any cracks on this union to indicate possible weakness.

#### **Crown.**

The crown of this tree was in good condition, with no signs of dieback present. The tree is however weighted towards the carpark and the lower crown branches overhang into the carparking area. The main south facing lower limb did have some signs of possible subsidence with some cambial congestion and minor cracks on the underside of the limb. There was some major deadwood within the crown and one major hung-up branch on the eastern side.

#### **Recommendations**

Due to the presence of *Meripilus giganteus* on this tree and given its location, it is recommended that this tree be subject to regular inspections. These inspections should be in the form of regular visits (by council staff) during the autumn months, starting in September, to assess the extent of any fruiting bodies of *Meripilus giganteus*, with photographic evidence being taken. Contractors and/or council staff should also refrain from mowing the grass under the tree and out to the dripline and alter the barriers currently in place in order to deter or limit public access. This will reduce damage to roots and prevent the removal of any fruiting bodies. This will allow a clearer understanding as to the possible



extent of the colonisation of this tree by *Meripilus giganteus*. A further detailed inspection should be undertaken by November 2023 or sooner if the area adjacent changes use or following an extreme weather event.

Recommended remedial work for this tree.

1: Remove the 'hung up' branch (as soon as is practical).

2: Remove major deadwood, reduce the end weight of the lower south facing limb by approximately 2 metres and cut back some of the branches which are starting to encroach over the carparking. This work is of low priority and should be undertaken within 6 months of this report.

## **2.2 Detailed observations and recommendations**

### **Sweet Chestnut**

#### **Root area and lower stem**

During the survey, no fungal fruiting bodies were observed on the ground or at the base of this tree. The base of this tree did have a small cavity on the western side and a larger wound with minor decay on the northern side. The tree is multi-stemmed at 1.5 metres with tight stem unions. The south facing stem union is included, with a rib and a very thin fissure on the western side and a solid union with no defects on the eastern side (see fig 3 and 4).

#### **Stem**

This tree has three large stems. The south facing stem is weighted and leans over the end of the garden of an adjacent property. The central stem leans slightly to the rear of the adjacent property and wooded area and the third north facing stem leans towards the wooded area and path. There was some minor deadwood present on the stems, but this is not a hazard. There were also some minor wounds and a larger older wound on the central stem that had occluded well.

#### **Crown.**

The crown of the south facing stem, shed a limb during a recent storm, which landed in the adjacent garden. There is evidence from the debris recovered, that this was due to a cavity within this branch and it contained some decay (brown rot). No fungal pathogen was observed during this survey, but this decay mode is consistent with *Laetiporus sulphureus* fungi, which is common on sweet chestnut. The branch failure has left a broken limb remaining. This limb although damaged, has no further signs of potential failure. There is, however, a small woodpecker hole on the western side of the main south facing branch. No dieback was observed within the crown and only sparse deadwood was present.



## Recommendations

At the time of this survey, this tree did not contain hazard features that require remedial tree surgery work. It is recommended that this tree be visually inspected (by council staff) for the presence of fungal pathogens (ground and aerial, on the south facing limb over the adjacent garden) during September or October 2023. A further detailed inspection should be undertaken by November 2024 or sooner if fungal pathogens are observed in 2023, the garden area changes use or following an extreme weather event.

## 3.0 Images for use in follow up surveys

### Beech tree

Fig 1

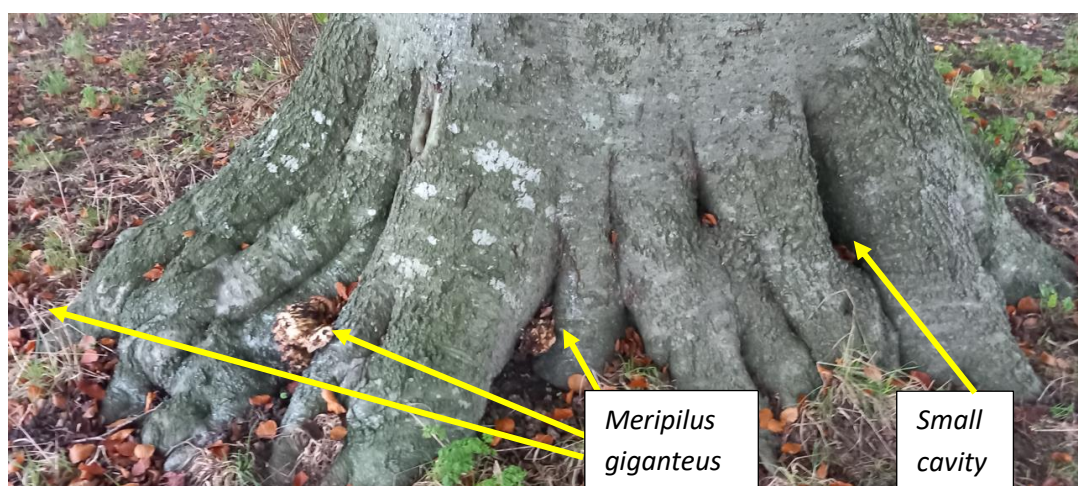


Fig 2





## Sweet chestnut

Fig 3

Fig 4



*Union  
from the  
West*

*Union  
from the  
East*

### 3.0 The Author

#### Qualifications

Higher National Diploma in Forestry, Arboricultural Association Technicians Certificate in Arboriculture, City and Guilds Craftsman in Tree Surgery. City and Guilds (NPTC) Chainsaw Assessor. Certificate in Further Education instruction and teaching.

#### Experience

Twenty-five years within the Land-based sector focusing on Forestry and Arboriculture practice and training. Positions held included; Tree surgeon, Countryside Ranger, Forester, Head Forester, Lecturer in arboriculture and forestry, Consultant Arborist and Chainsaw Instructor and Assessor.



## **Meeting of Full Council**

**Monday 19 December 2022**

### **Agenda Item 12.0**

#### **TO CONSIDER THE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES WITHIN WEALDEN DC'S DRAFT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2023-2033**

##### **1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 Wealden District Council have been preparing a new Economic Development Strategy. The purpose of the strategy is to inform the work programme of the service area for the short, medium and longer term.
- 1.2 The Town Council has already participated in early consultation exercises with consultants Iceni, and now we are being asked to consider the strategic priorities outlined in the draft Strategy, in more detail.
- 1.3 The strategy works across five priority themes:
  - Vibrant Places;
  - Enterprising Wealden;
  - Skills and Employment;
  - Visitor and Cultural Economy;
  - Net Zero Wealden.

These five priority themes appear to cover the key elements of the economy that are important to Uckfield – in terms of supporting a vibrant and thriving economy, a vibrant High Street, tourism, supporting learning and development to improve keep the unemployment rate low, and encouraging alternative technologies and industries into the area.

- 1.4 They are keen to understand our views on the strategic priorities outlined from page 20 onwards within the document. The deadline for comments is Friday 23 December 2022.
- 1.5 In the New Year, Wealden DC plan to finalise the document, with the aim of publishing a final version in March.

##### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the contents of the Strategic Priorities within the draft Economic Development Strategy from page 20 onwards and advise the Clerk if they wish to provide feedback before the deadline.

Contact Officer: Holly Goring





# Economic Development Strategy 2023-2033





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## *Our vision for the Wealden Economy is...*

... An economy that is successful and provides skilled job opportunities and progression; and is balanced in terms of achieving climate change objectives, sustainably revitalising and maintaining town centres; and protecting the unique built and natural heritage that makes Wealden an attractive place to live, work and visit.

## *A changing economic, policy and delivery context*

Wealden has a diverse economy characterised by a high number of SMEs and highly qualified workforce, but GVA and jobs growth has been below the national average over the past decade.

The economic impacts of Covid-19 have been less harsh in Wealden compared to other local authority areas, although businesses are now facing the challenges of workforce and skills availability, supply chain disruption and rising costs. During the pandemic, digital transformation accelerated massively – and this, plus technology adoption is an ongoing challenge for local enterprises. Although town centres and high streets have shown resilience, there remain continuing challenges in terms of maintaining vibrancy, attracting visitors and retaining commercial floorspace.

Wealden is currently within the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) area. Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPS) are going to be restructured in the future, the future mode of operation of SELEP is uncertain. Districts in East Sussex have been allocated UK Shared Prosperity Funds, and are expected to provide a Local Investment Plan which details how these funds will be spent, including collaborative arrangements. Between now and July 2023, projects with European funding will cease to operate.

## *This strategy sets out five priority themes*

The five priority themes and main opportunities and challenges reflect Wealden's unique characteristics as a place. These five themes are summarised as follows.

**1. Vibrant places: for Wealden's town centres to adapt to contemporary needs, providing a place for residents and visitors to enjoy and maximising income for businesses**

*Opportunities:* Quality of place is a fundamental strength of Wealden and its town centres which can be built on; *Challenges:* Preserving and enhancing towns' function as service centres and their heritage whilst adapting to modern needs.

**2. Enterprising Wealden: to maintain a resilient and growing business base**

*Opportunities:* High rates of entrepreneurship and a highly qualified workplace; *Challenges:* Constraints on availability of workforce, skills and premises are affecting business performance and growth.

**3. Skills and employment: to provide the workforce and develop the working practices to help employers succeed**

*Opportunities:* Highly qualified jobs and a workforce with low rates of unemployment; *Challenges:* Workforce and skills supply deficiencies means that businesses must evolve HR practices, working methods and digital transformation to keep ahead

**4. Visitor and cultural economy: to support the recovery of the Wealden tourism sector and seek to increase spend above pre-pandemic levels by encouraging visitors to stay longer all year round. Develop and promote Wealden as a high-quality destination, whilst seeking to protect and enhance its special qualities.**

*Opportunities:* Working with partners and stakeholders to continue to build on the Explore Wealden brand and a unique selling point (USP) for Wealden; *Challenges:* The need to align Explore Wealden with wider pan-Sussex aspirations to ensure Wealden is part of a wider joined up partnership delivering complimentary activity.

**5. Net Zero Wealden: to reduce the CO2e emissions of businesses operating in Wealden's economy**

*Opportunities:* A clear opportunity to provide high quality business support to help businesses significantly reduce emissions; *Challenges:* Due to historic large reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in Wealden, new interventions are more complicated to achieve, meaning it is unlikely that the historic rate of emissions reductions in the District will continue without large investment.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## A vision for Wealden

### *Our vision for the Wealden Economy*

*An economy that is successful and provides skilled job opportunities and progression, and is also balanced in terms of achieving climate change objectives, sustainably revitalising and maintaining town centres, and protecting the unique built and natural heritage that makes Wealden an attractive place to live and visit.*

### ***This document details Wealden's economic development strategy***

This document presents the draft economic development strategy for Wealden. It has been formulated by an analysis of available economic and social evidence, an analysis of employment land provision and demand, and by consultation with business organisations and local stakeholders.

Reflecting the 2019-2023 Corporate Plan, this economic development strategy is shaped around the existing vision for the future of Wealden.

### ***Wealden has a diverse economy characterised by a high number of SMEs and highly qualified workforce***

Wealden is a diverse district that supports a range of manufacturing industries, professional services activities, construction, land based industries including viticulture and tourism and the visitor economy.

Although Wealden's workforce has high qualifications attainments, many residents work outside of the borough, and local GVA and employment growth has been below the national average.

In addition, Wealden has an ageing population and workforce, and recruitment, retention and skills shortages are pressing issues for the district's employers.

Going forward the ambition is to ensure that the economy is successful and provides skilled job opportunities and progression, but is also balanced in terms of achieving climate change objectives, sustainably revitalising and maintaining town centres, and protecting the unique built and natural heritage that makes Wealden an attractive place to live and visit.

### ***With the resilience and adaptability to meet the economic challenges facing the UK***

The UK economy, like many other countries, is facing the challenge of recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic along with the need ensure rapid digital transformation and technology adoption, as well as the additional impacts of the Ukraine war, disruption of supply chain opportunities and rise in costs and prices.

A key challenge for Wealden is to support its businesses, communities and residents through these times of change, and to build resilience and adaptability.

### ***This document sets out the context and main priorities and actions for the Wealden economy in a ten-year strategy***

We set out the strategy according to five priority themes: Vibrant Places, Enterprise, Skills and employment, the Visitor and Cultural Economy, and Net Zero Wealden.



## 2. WEALDEN AS A PLACE AND ECONOMY

### Wealden – the place

Wealden is the largest (by land area) of five districts in East Sussex, with the other districts comprising of Lewes, Rother, Eastbourne and Hastings. Wealden District covers two main upland areas: the section of the High Weald within East Sussex; and covers the eastern end of the South Downs, and the Pevensey Levels. The River Ouse, some of the tributaries of which originate in the district, is the border with the Lewes District; and the River Cuckmere is wholly in Wealden. The English Channel to the south is interrupted by Eastbourne. The River Rother rises on the Weald and flows easterly to the east of Rye Bay.

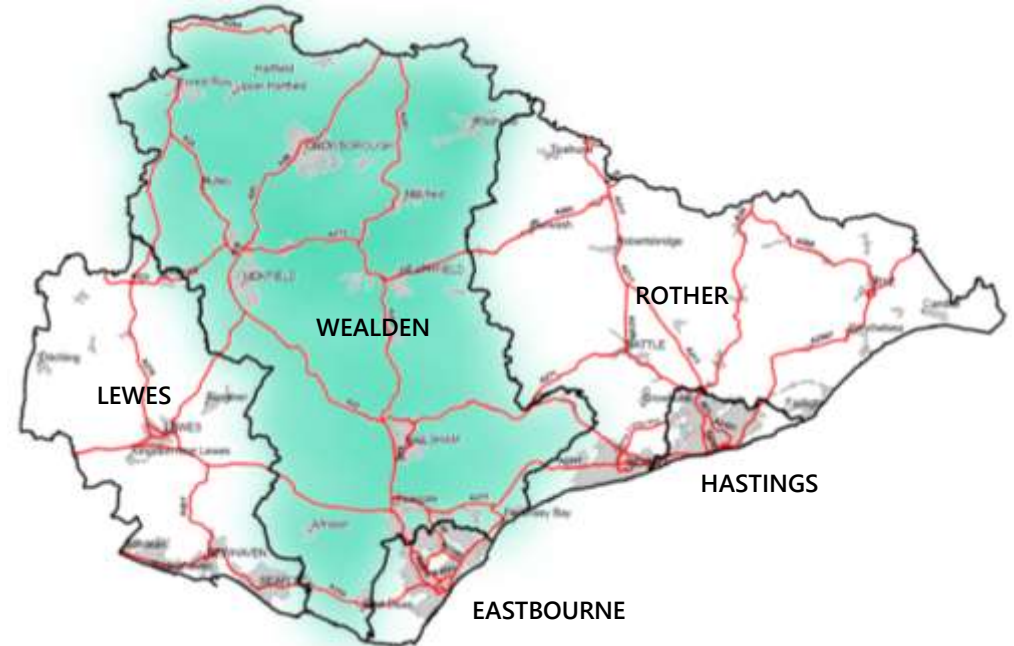
The major trunk road is the A22, London to Eastbourne; it is crossed by the A26 Maidstone–Lewes road at Uckfield; and the A267 Tunbridge Wells to Eastbourne road. There are also three west–east roads: the A259 coastal route; next inland is the A27 Pevensey–Brighton trunk road; and further to the north the A272 cross-country route to Winchester. The East Coastway Railway Line serves Eastbourne and Hastings from Brighton and Ashford, and has two stations serving different sides of Pevensey in the district. The other railway line is the Oxted Railway Line which services Uckfield Railway Station from London Bridge.

Major landmarks include the Seven Sisters and Cuckmere Haven along the coast; and the Long Man of Wilmington. Roman fortified hills can be found in the north of the area. Wealden has 33 conservation areas including include Alrington, Cowbeech, Crowborough, Danehill, East Hoathly, Five Ashes, Hailsham, Hartfield and Uckfield. The district also has Herstmonceux Castle, Pevensey Castle, and Ashdown Forest is to the north of the Weald and is the home of Winnie the Pooh.

### Major settlements

Wealden's largest town (according to the 2011 Census) in terms of population is Crowborough (population: 21,600) followed by Hailsham (21,000), Uckfield (15,200), Polegate (9,000) and Heathfield (7,700).

MAP OF WEALDEN DISTRICT



### Industrial estates

Wealden is served by over 20 industrial estates, offering workspace for both traditional and modern industries. Major new commercial premises are being developed at Knights Farm, Ridgewood and Ashdown Business Park.



## ***The Wealden District Corporate Plan***

This economic development strategy has been developed within the framework for the Wealden District Corporate Plan (2019-2023), which sets out 8 aims:

1. Ensure development meets future needs, with associated investment in infrastructure
2. Ensure that Wealden is Carbon Zero by 2050 at the latest
3. Improve access to essential services for all our communities
4. Promote a better quality of life for Wealden people through activities that improve health, resilience and well-being
5. Generate ongoing sources of income to reinvest in local priorities and optimise funding from external sources
6. Support our local businesses, tourism sector and entrepreneurs to achieve a locally sustainable economy
7. Work with partners to regenerate our diverse market towns, creating jobs and attracting investment
8. Protect and enhance Wealden's unique natural environment and heritage

## ***South East Local Enterprise Partnership***

The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) is one of 38 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in England, established to provide the clear vision and strategic leadership to drive sustainable private sector-led growth and job creation in their area. Strategic priorities include Business resilience and growth, UK'S global gateway, Communities for the future, and Coastal catalyst

## ***East Sussex Growth Strategy and Team East Sussex***

Over recent years, The County (East Sussex) Growth Strategy has influenced economic thinking in Wealden. More recently, East Sussex County Council produced an economic recovery plan, and in 2021 'East Sussex Reset' – which identified six missions: Thinking local, acting local; Building skills, creating jobs; Fast-forwarding business; Better places, fuller lives; Cleaner energy, greener transport; and The future is digital.

Team East Sussex (TES) is the local federated board for the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP Ltd). Membership of Team East Sussex is made up of business, local authority, social enterprise and education representatives from across the county. Four of the TES members also hold the position of Company Director of SELEP Ltd.

## ***Local business representative organisations***

The membership organisations operating across Wealden include the Sussex Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, Crowborough Chamber of Commerce, Hailsham Chamber of Commerce, Heathfield Chamber of Commerce, and Uckfield Chamber of Commerce.



## Wealden – the economy

### *Wealden has a diverse economy characterised by a high number of SMEs and highly qualified workforce*

Wealden's economy is characterised by a good track record of growth, although this has slowed in recent years. There are high levels of entrepreneurship, and a growing business base. Wealden has a strong manufacturing and engineering presence and specialisms, with major employment growth in business and professional services. Residents have high levels of qualifications attainment and there are historically low levels of unemployment.

Wealden is an attractive place to live and work, with a high quality natural environment and historic heritage, rural settlement patterns, villages and market towns make Wealden an attractive district to live and work. In 2019, the total value of tourism was £368 million. This included nearly half a million overnight stays and just under six million day trips. The visitor economy is clearly important and is developing.

Recently, Wealden has experienced less of an economic impact due to Covid-19 compared to the national average, although it is not clear whether levels of business indebtedness and the repayment of Covid loans will be an issue in the future.

### *Low rates of growth in the past decade*

Wealden experienced high rates of growth between 2000 and 2010, but this has tailed off in recent years to lower than average growth rates. The trend prior to Covid-19 and Brexit was one of high rates of enterprise ownership, but a decline in growth and low GVA sectors and businesses in the local economy, offset somewhat by high earning commuters.

### ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE – KEY FACTS

GVA PER HEAD 2020:	Wealden: £40,324 South East region: £61,980 England: £58,995
GVA GROWTH 2002-2020:	Wealden: 4% South East region: 30% England: 29%
WEEKLY MEDIAN FULL-TIME WORKPLACE EARNINGS 2021	Wealden: £531.30 South East region: £635.00 England: £613.30
EMPLOYMENT GROWTH 2000-2021	Wealden: +9,700 jobs (18%)

### *The business base is larger (on a per capita basis) but has grown more slowly than the national average recently*

There are 8,585 active businesses in Wealden. The district has a high business density – with 94 businesses per 1,000 working-age residents, higher than the national average (England = 67). There is a higher presence of microbusinesses compared to nationally. The business stock has grown by 16% over the last ten years – a lower rate of growth than England (31%) and South East England (22%). Survival rates are very similar to the national average.



## BUSINESSES – KEY FACTS

NUMBER OF ACTIVE BUSINESSES 2022	Wealden: 8,585
NUMBER OF BUSINESSES PER 1,000 WORKING-AGE RESIDENTS 2022	Wealden: 94 South East region: 71 England: 67
RATE OF GROWTH OF BUSINESS STOCK 2010-2022	Wealden: 16% South East region: 22% England: 31%

### *Manufacturing maintains a strong presence, but construction employs the highest total number of employees*

**We're mostly talking about 15% retail and the remaining part of the economy is a mixture of manufacturing and service industries and other non-retail outlets"**  
(Quote from local chamber of commerce)

Manufacturing has maintained a presence in Wealden, and in particular, has had a recent high demand for premises. Although the general trend is towards higher capital intensity and lower employment – it must be acknowledged

that the manufacturing sector has halved in size since 2000. Wealden's manufacturing sector lost 3,400 jobs between 2000 and 2021 – with a total of 4,100 jobs remaining in 2021. Manufacturing employment is strongest in food, wood products, printing and reproduction of recorded media, fabricated metal products, computer, electronic and optical products and machinery and equipment.

In absolute terms (total employment), the largest sector in Wealden is Wholesale and Retail Trade (8,700 employees) and Construction (8,300 employees) followed by Health and Social Care (8,000 employees).

### *Agriculture remains a significant employment specialism*

Relative to England, the largest employment specialism in Wealden is by far Agriculture, forestry and fishing. However, in absolute terms this sector is one of Wealden's moderately sized sectors (1,700 employees). Viticulture and wine tourism has often been referred to by stakeholders as growth opportunity, as

identified in a 2018 study (Wealden Viticulture Feasibility Study) – with Sussex becoming one of the UK's largest wine producing regions. The Wine Standards Board 2016 report lists 26 vineyards, 24 vineyard owners and 5 wineries in Wealden although the sector is dominated by two wine estates – Rathfinny and Bluebell – who between them own two thirds of the planted area. Although the sector is in its early development, there is much commitment to developing wine tourism and its role in promoting Wealden as a visitor destination.

### *The major source of jobs growth has been in business support services, professional services and other services*

In Wealden, between 2000 and 2021, the Health and Social Care and Professional, Scientific and Tech sectors saw the greatest employment growth (+3,100 and 3,000 employees, reaching a total of 8,000 and 15,800 employees in 2021 respectively) followed by Administrative and Support (+1,900 employees, reaching a total of 4,000 employees in 2021), other service activities (+1,300 employees, reaching a total of 3,200 employees in 2021), Education and Transport and Storage (both with +1,200 employees, reaching a total of 5,700 and 2,300 employees in 2021), Accommodation and Food Services (+1,100 employees, reaching a total of 4,800 employees in 2021), and Arts and Entertainment (+900 employees, reaching a total of 2,700 employees in 2021).

It is business and professional services that are more likely to create value and well-paid jobs compared to other sectors. It will be important for the strategy to consider what can be done to encourage retention and growth.

### *Wealden's businesses have been considered to have been resilient over the events of recent years*

**Our high street has been resilient during the Covid-19 pandemic. We've had a small turnover of businesses but in the main they seem to have weathered the storm"**  
(Quote from a town council)

Wealden is considered to have a diverse and resilient economy, largely based on SMEs. Covid-19 has had relatively little impact on existing village and town centres.



## ***Labour and skills shortages are a real risk***

Wealden is near other employment centres that already provide jobs for a significant number of commuters. Labour shortages may impact the current social care sector as well as aspirations for hospitality and viticulture. Higher paid workers commute outside the district for jobs. What are the prospects for locating more of Wealden's jobs nearer home, in the district? What do they need to encourage this?

## ***Unemployment is comparatively low***

The claimant rate was 2.2% in October 2022 (compared to 2.8% in October 2021) (UK=3.6% in October 2022). There were 2,015 claimant unemployed in Wealden in October 2022 – 560 lower than the total in October 2021 – although it is acknowledged that claimant unemployment rose significantly from a very low base pre-covid.

## ***There is a lack of labour supply for hospitality and tourism and other sectors due to Brexit***

Businesses are having problems replacing EU staff who have left. Also there are labour supply issues for agriculture and viticulture. This is an issue for all skill levels of jobs. Brexit also may provide further problems for agriculture and viticulture once full customs and export checks and licencing are introduced from 01 January 2022.

## ***Adequate supply of digital skills is a concern***

In Wealden, there is much agreement that more intervention is needed in digital skills, especially in retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. Some support may be needed to encourage business owners to generate sales online. There is a need to support start-ups with digital business advice and implementation.

### **EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS – KEY FACTS**

WORKFORCE QUALIFICATIONS 2021 - % OF WORKING AGE RESIDENTS WITH NVQ4+ QUALIFICATIONS	Wealden: 39% South East region: 45.2% England: 43.2%
WORKFORCE QUALIFICATIONS 2021 - % OF WORKING AGE RESIDENTS WITH NO QUALIFICATIONS	Wealden: 1.8% South East region: 5% England: 6.4%
ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION RATE - % OF WORKING AGE RESIDENTS IN WORK OR ACTIVELY SEEKING WORK IN 2022	Wealden: 83.3% South East region: 80.9% England: 78.8%
RATE OF GROWTH OF RESIDENT WORKFORCE (WORKING AGE POPULATION) 2008 to 2022	Wealden: 8% South East region: 17% England: 8%
NUMBER OF CLAIMANT UNEMPLOYED, October 2022	Wealden: 2,015 South East region: 161,125 England: 1,303,055
CLAIMANT UNEMPLOYMENT RATE October 2022	Wealden: 2.2% South East region: 2.9% England: 3.7%



# Wealden – the national and local policy context

## *Economic challenges facing the UK*

The emergence of the UK economy from the Covid-19 pandemic, the impacts of Brexit and the latest crisis in the Ukraine highlight a number of major economic challenges.

Risk, uncertainty, labour and material shortages and rising energy costs will be important factors in business investment and location decisions going forward. Additional costs for businesses and consumers: the operating environment will become more challenging due to business indebtedness, the changes to overseas market access, increasing energy costs and exporting and custom rules, and the need to adjust salaries to retain and attract labour.

Additional tax burden on workers and businesses, as tax rates rise to cover the additional costs the Covid crisis has brought to the NHS, the Adult Care System, and UK government. Real estate market uncertainties. There is general uncertainty about the level of activity amongst office workers, consumers, and tourists/visitors, and what the post-covid-19 future looks like.

Supply chain and labour uncertainties: securing access to supply chain and labour needs will be major factors for investment and locational decisions in the next few years.

Brexit may bring new trade and market opportunities, and perhaps opportunities to 'onshore' market activities that were previously supplied from overseas. Businesses may need assistance and help in realising the Brexit benefits.

The climate change challenge will mean there will have to be some radical changes to how markets, businesses and consumers make decisions and operate. How we produce goods and services, transport them and consume them will have to change significantly – whether this is through renewable energy, circular economies, electric vehicles, or recycling.

There is a need for innovation in order to respond to the economic challenges. This innovation should be inclusive meaning enables as many people as possible to contribute to and participate in innovation and its spill overs. Inclusivity is often inherent in locally led innovation. This strategy seeks to maximise locally led and inclusive innovation.

## *UK policy response*

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) post-Brexit successor to the European regional funds. Up until implementing Brexit and until they expire in 2023, ESIF have been the largest single source of local economic development funding in the UK for several areas of intervention. These include business support, enterprise promotion and green economy schemes and incentives. Significantly for Wealden, the UKSPF will be allocated to local government at the district, boroughs and unitary level.

The recent Levelling Up White Paper also cast uncertainty over existing initiatives but recent clarifications have confirmed that LEPs can continue if local partners wish to do this, and that the primary source of capital grant funding will be the Levelling Up Fund.

Wealden District Council has been allocated £1,172,127 in UKSPF over the three years 2022/23 to 2024/25. Other allocations in East Sussex are: Eastbourne (£1m), Hastings (£1m), Rother (£1m) and Lewes (£1m). East Sussex County receives a £2,523,442 in UKSPF – allocated as expenditure for the Multiply Adult Numeracy Programme, but receives no other UKSPF allocation. UKSPF funded initiatives at the county-level will have to be jointly funded by the Districts and Boroughs. Guidance specifies a minimum level of capital funding in each year (10% to 20%), but with the flexibility to utilise revenue funding for further capital project uses if desired.

The next step is for Wealden District Council to develop a local Investment Plan for the UKSPF allocation and consult with local stakeholders and MPs, and to seek approval from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). An interventions list has been published which supports many initiatives and services for economic development and regeneration without the need for a detailed business case.

## *Local recovery plans*

Developed by Team East Sussex (TES) in direct response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Economy Recovery Plan focuses on businesses, skills and employment in a post Covid-19 landscape. The plan also supports other activities being progressed at a local level, including climate change and health



and wellbeing initiatives. More recently in 2021, Team East Sussex produced 'East Sussex Reset' – which identified six missions: Thinking local, acting local; Building skills, creating jobs; Fast-forwarding business; Better places, fuller lives; Cleaner energy, greener transport; and The future is digital.



### 3. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

#### Summary

This section sets out five priority themes for the strategy, outlined below, with the main opportunities and challenges summarised.

<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Challenges</i>
<b>Vibrant places:</b> Quality of place is a fundamental strength of Wealden and its town centres which can be built on.	<b>Vibrant places:</b> Preserving and enhancing towns' function as service centres and their heritage whilst adapting to modern needs.
<b>Enterprising Wealden:</b> High rates of entrepreneurship and a highly qualified workplace.	<b>Enterprising Wealden:</b> Constraints on availability of workforce, skills and premises are affecting business performance and growth.
<b>Skills and employment:</b> Highly qualified jobs and workforce with low rates of unemployment.	<b>Skills and employment:</b> Shortage of supply of workforce and skills means that businesses must evolve HR practices, methods of working and digital transformation to keep ahead.
<b>Visitor and cultural economy:</b> Working with partners and stakeholders to continue to build on the Explore Wealden brand and a unique selling point (USP) for Wealden.	<b>Visitor and cultural economy:</b> The need to align Explore Wealden with wider pan-Sussex aspirations to ensure Wealden is part of a wider joined up partnership delivering complimentary activity
<b>Net Zero Wealden:</b> A clear opportunity to provide high quality business support to help businesses significantly reduce emissions.	<b>Net Zero Wealden:</b> Due to historic large reductions in CO2 emissions in Wealden, new interventions are more complicated to achieve, meaning it is unlikely that the historic rate of emissions reductions in the District will continue without large investment.



## Vibrant places

### *Unique and diverse offer*

**"We have wonderfully preserved villages and rural areas, which are quite vibrant, with restaurants, attractions, and that's quite a sought after USP for visitors – to visit somewhere that's really lovely and unspoilt with a lot of heritage." (Quote from local town council)**

Wealden has an incredibly diverse range of towns and villages – from the high quality retail and food offer of some towns, to visually stunning villages. Many of these towns and villages have successfully navigated through the Covid-19 pandemic and have survived and thrived.

A unique strength of Wealden District is both the vibrancy of town and village life, and the knowledge, energy and commitment of town and parish councils and local chambers of commerce. There is an opportunity to harness and work together to enhance and develop the district's towns and villages.

### *A backdrop of uncertainty*

Town and village centres across the UK are struggling to understand their futures, and to put in place plans in the face of this uncertainty. The part retail has to play in town centres is likely to continue to change. Overall, the amount of retail floorspace is likely to continue to contract. However, high-quality, independent shops may come to the forefront – something which can already be seen in many of Wealden's towns. Large stores are less likely to be viable.

There is also likely to continue to be a greater emphasis on creating an experience and providing more than just retail. This could be through more leisure and cultural attractions, high quality events and pop ups, and provision for children and young people. Towns should be a place to enjoy spending time and socialising.

There is very little vacant commercial space in Wealden's town centres and a considerable amount has been converted to residential. Whilst residential can play an important role in the vitality of the modern town centre, a core of commercial space should be retained.

Communities, organisations, and town centres will have to remain agile in terms of responding to the new economic environment as it becomes clearer what kinds of activities and demands are relevant to the town centre. A toolkit of approaches, initiatives and support – that can be flexed as needed – would seem

a sensible approach. However, the fundamentals of quality of place will continue to attract residents, businesses, and expenditure in town centres.

**"We do need more business premises and more opportunity for business premises... there's very few available units in the high street and as soon as premises on the industrial estate becomes vacant, they are quickly snapped up." (Quote from local chambers of commerce)**

### *Need to balance the needs of car users and pedestrians*

Towns in Wealden tend to experience high volumes of traffic (especially at peak times). Whilst there is good support for free parking and vehicular access, there is also demand for traffic calming measures and a greater focus on pedestrians.

### *Vibrant places - opportunities*

Quality of place is a fundamental strength in Wealden that along with the right town centre offer will attract footfall and spending.

Creation of a diverse offer in town centres complementing the strong retail offer and heritage assets of towns

Growth of the night-time economy for both residents and visitors

Integration of the town centre and visitor economy agenda to maximise value for money through the creation of town identities and strong connections with other towns, attractions and accommodation.

### *Vibrant places - challenges*

Preserving and enhancing towns' function as service centres and heritage and culture whilst adapting to modern needs and the needs of the visitor economy

A lack of commercial premises which has been made worse by conversion to residential.

Balancing the needs of car users and pedestrians in order to maximise enjoyment of and spending in town centres.



# Enterprising Wealden

## *8,585 enterprises in Wealden in 2022*

Wealden is a district of SMEs and high rates of business ownership. There were 8,585 enterprises in Wealden in 2022 – the equivalent of 94 enterprises per 1,000 residents, higher than the Southeast regional average (71) and average for England (67). Wealden businesses experience lower closure rates, and higher survival rates. Understanding where Covid-19 debts may be a problem and putting in place support and advice would seem to be appropriate.

### *Focus on business retention and expansion*

Wealden has some distinctive inward investment strengths – including and established manufacturing presence and growth in business and professional services; a highly qualified workforce; and high quality residential locations. Whilst there have been recent development and provision of high quality, new employment sites – demand is high, and there is little available sites and premises to accommodate a medium to large new investor (e.g. 50+ jobs).

Given the constraints on providing the sites and workforce skills to accommodate large Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) projects, an appropriate focus would be on assisting and retaining existing businesses in the district – helping with their growth needs, and business transformation issues – including digital transformation. This includes helping them to access commercial premises in new sites at Knights Farm, Ashdown Business Park and Ridgewood Developments.

### *The future is digital*

There is a significant opportunity for Wealden to capitalise on its good digital connectivity and make further improvements which allow all residents to benefit from innovation. The whole district is covered by 4G by at least one provider and 82% of the district is covered by all four providers compared to just 69% across the UK<sup>1</sup>. Whilst current 5G coverage in Wealden is limited, two providers have committed to reaching nationwide coverage by 2028. In terms of fixed broadband, access to full-fibre broadband is better than on average across the UK for both residential and commercial properties. Digital and technological transformation continues apace in many sectors, and this will increase the

demand for IT, digital and STEM skills even more. This transition has accelerated during the Covid-19 pandemic and is reshaping industries, value chains, business models, customer experience and service operations.

### *Transition to new funding priorities and mechanisms*

There are significant funding uncertainties in enterprise support. ERDF ends in June 2023. Growth Hub Funding from Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) for 2022/23 is 50% of the value of 2021/22 funding and will cease completely in March 2023. There is an urgent need to consider priorities, continuity plans and funding sources from April 2023. Continued, or new county-level services will likely have to be jointly funded by East Sussex Boroughs, as the county has no UKSPF allocation.

### *Enterprise opportunities*

Continued high rates of entrepreneurship provide the turnover, critical mass and potential for peer support and supply chain development

Changes to business location decisions mean that Wealden has the opportunity of making potential gains from businesses relocating from London

Cementing place as a leading area in the provision of digital infrastructure building on strong existing provision

Supporting businesses to maximise the use of strong digital connectivity, boosting productivity

### *Enterprise challenges*

Awareness of support continues to be a challenge, with many businesses unaware of existing support services or who to contact

Lack of workers and skills are hitting service industries and the visitor economy in particular

Premises: there is a significant lack of supply commercial premises

Digital transformation is a key requirement to compete in the market now and in the future

<sup>1</sup> Ofcom Connected Nations 2021



# Skills and employment

## Highly qualified workforce

Wealden working age residents are highly qualified. With 39%, with NVQ, 4 plus qualifications or equivalent in 2022, similar to the national average. 63.4% of working-age residents have an NVQ three or equivalent as the highest level of qualification, which is again similar to the UK average of 61.5%. Only 1.8% of working age residents have no qualifications. Compared to the UK average of 6.6%. Many residents out commute to jobs, but there may be opportunities from encouraging business growth, recruitment and retention within the district.

## Highly skilled jobs

The jobs that are based in Wealden are more highly skilled than average – as there is a larger share of manager, director and senior officials jobs based in the district.

## Skills and labour shortages – particularly for visitor economy

**"We've got very, very low unemployment. So actually recruiting staff is quite, quite difficult." (Quote from local chambers of commerce)**

Many employers are facing staff shortages in Wealden, with its low unemployment rate, poor transport connectivity, and high house prices. These are all acting as a barrier to

recruitment. It is unlikely that these labour supply factors will change, and solutions are more likely to be found by adapting recruitment and HR practises, and implementing investment in equipment, automation, IT and digital transformation.

## Digital, STEM and Green Skills for All

Digital and technological transformation continues apace in many sectors, and this will increase the demand for IT, digital and STEM skills – both widely within the workforce and in terms of specialist skills.

Wealden, along with the rest of the UK, faces a 'green skills gap'. This refers not only to skills for specialist sustainability related jobs but also, and arguably more importantly, for all jobs – everyone will need to be able to work through a green lens in order to transform business-as-usual.

## Employer recruitment and HR practice

There is a need to work more closely with employers to ensure that they are deploying HR policies and procedures that will help to attract and retain talent, such as engaging with apprenticeships, leadership development; digitalisation; salary and workplace benefit programmes, work-life balance, flexible working practices, support with travel to work and commuting and change management.

## Skills and employment opportunities

Highly qualified workforce that could be available to deploy in growth opportunities

Highly skilled jobs mean that the Wealden economy can support high value added activities and wealth creation

Digital transformation is a game changer for skills and employment – from the provision of remote learning to the ability to implement flexible and remote working

## Skills and employment challenges

Skills and labour shortages: continue to be a challenge

Keeping ahead with HR practice to attract and retain workers and key staff

Digital and STEM: ensuring that the provision of skills keeps pace with demand and the transition in the economy

Closing the 'green skills' gap will be crucial in supporting the transition to Net Zero.



# Visitor and cultural economy

## *An established visitor destination*

Wealden is a high-quality visitor destination with a diverse offer. The visitor economy is underpinned by the district's natural assets which include the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, South Downs National Park and Birling Gap. Wealden also has a range of special places and strong cultural attractions including those based around the arts and wine. Wealden is the second largest contributor to East Sussex's Visitor Economy and the tourism sector accounts for around 11% of jobs in the District<sup>2</sup>. This reflects the high rating of the District's accommodation and attractions.

## *Establish target markets and branding*

Visit England developed a new visitor segmentation in 2016, based on a combination of what matters to visitors, their holiday behaviour, and demographics.

Through this Wealden have established target markets to which tourism marketing and development should primarily be focussed towards. These are 'Country Loving Traditionalists' and 'Aspirational Family Fun'. These markets compliment the Sussex wide priority markets identified in 2021, they are higher spending markets and as such offer some balance in terms of seasonal spread of visits and for which Wealden has an established offer.

Based on these target markets, Wealden District Council has established a strong brand – Explore Wealden – which is centred around Nature, Places and Culture.

**"Wealden has some real opportunities in terms of exploiting eco or green tourism food and gastronomy and local vineyards. We could explore more of these opportunities – such as wild camping, woodland activities, and sustainable forestry activities." (Quote from local town council)**

## *A cross-authority approach*

It is rare for visitors to consider themselves as visiting Wealden<sup>3</sup> and many potential visitors have not even heard of Wealden. They are much more likely to visit and think of themselves as visiting Sussex, 1066 Country or the South Downs or towns such as Hastings or Eastbourne. Across Sussex, authorities have shown themselves to be broadly supportive of tourism development. However, the approaches of the various authorities and tourism organisations have been fragmented. Wealden work closely with 1066 Country, which include Hastings and Rother authorities, but 1066 Country could cover more of Wealden's attractions and there is a need to work closely with other neighbouring authorities across Sussex in order to ensure cohesion in the promotion of the wider area and hence Wealden.

The development of the area's tourism offer would also benefit from being co-ordinated across a wider area in order to distribute the impacts of tourism and avoid over competition between attractions.

## *Increase overnight stays*

Around half of visitors to Wealden come from the local area and the number of overnight stays in the district is limited. Just 8% of all visits are by overnight visitors but these make up 30% of spend<sup>4</sup>. Day visitors spend less but have a disproportionately higher impact. Furthermore, when visitors stay overnight, 66% stay with friends or relatives with only 29-34% in paid accommodation, limiting local spend<sup>5</sup>.

**"I would say it's an established visitor destination – but mainly for people from in and around East Sussex. People don't tend to travel far to visit Wealden." (Quote from local chamber of commerce)**

<sup>2</sup> Based on latest (2014-15) data.

<sup>3</sup> 1066 Visitor Study

<sup>4</sup> Blue Sail

<sup>5</sup> Blue Sail



### ***Visitor and cultural economy opportunities***

A strong visitor offer in terms of nature, places and attractions which can be better utilised through effective marketing and management

Potential to drive the development of cross authority (1066 and/or Sussex) branding and offer development for the mutual benefit of Wealden and Sussex's visitor economy.

Potential to develop a USP for Wealden which complements Explore Wealden, 1066 and Sussex level branding and simultaneously capitalises on but protects the built and natural heritage of the area

### ***Visitor and cultural economy challenges***

A lack of serviced accommodation and accommodation with green tourism accreditation limits the scope of the tourist market. There is also difficulty engaging with and promoting accommodation businesses.

A lack of awareness of Wealden as a place and what it has to offer amongst potential visitors

Lack of clarity over the offer that Wealden has and where its lies within a wider context amongst those seeking to promote Wealden.

Branding - developing an understanding of when to use Explore Wealden branding and when it is more appropriate to use 1066 or Sussex level branding

Ensuring Wealden's target markets are reflected in 1066 and Sussex marketing and projects

Poor public transport coverage inhibits the linking of destinations and attractions.

Preventing over-tourism, given the need to protect natural assets and heritage, and managing resident perceptions of over-tourism.

Labour shortages continue to be a challenge given the affluent resident population and low paid nature of work.



# Net Zero Wealden

## *The transition to the Net Zero economy will accelerate over the next 10 years*

The transition to Net Zero (CO<sub>2</sub>e) is simply unavoidable over the next 10-30 years. Any local area which embraces and plans for this, is preparing for the future.

Wealden District Council have declared a Climate Emergency for the district to be Net Zero by 2050 and will pursue efforts to bring this date forward if possible. A Climate Emergency Plan has been produced for the district which sets out a number of priority areas for action and specific actions for reaching Net Zero. A number of these have been prioritised by Wealden's Cabinet.

Whilst current WDC targets and actions are positive, they may not be sufficient given the fact that East Sussex's carbon budget will be exceeded without a 13% per annum reduction in CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions (from February 2020). Wealden decarbonised at just under 4% per annum between 2005 and 2020 and will find it harder to keep up this rate without the same impacts from grid decarbonisation. All possible decarbonisation measures need to be implemented, rapidly and at scale.

## *A holistic approach is needed*

All interventions to promote economic growth/success should contribute to achieving Net Zero ambitions. Furthermore, when planning and implementing interventions which contribute to net emissions reductions, other environmental benefits should be recognised and maximised (i.e. protecting and enhancing natural capital).

## *Businesses will need to transition to Net Zero models and markets...*

Non-domestic buildings currently account for 10.3% of Wealden's CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions<sup>6</sup>. In this sector, electricity accounts for around 39% of fuel consumption but petroleum products and gas account for around 37 and 20% respectively<sup>7</sup>. A small amount of coal is also used.

<sup>6</sup> Scope 1 and 2. Based on 2020 data.

<sup>7</sup> Based on 2017 data.

Overall, around half of emissions reductions since 2005 have been due to reduced fuel consumption<sup>8</sup>. This will need to be much greater in the future.

There is currently very little guidance or support regarding how Wealden's businesses can work to becoming Net Zero. This strategy will focus on actions which will help businesses in their transition.

## *... and this makes commercial sense*

Reducing CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions and generally becoming a greener business can often make commercial sense. Increased energy efficiency can lead to reduced costs, good environmental credentials can increase sales and green investment may attract subsidies and grants. More should be done to make green investment make more commercial sense, more frequently.

## *The reliance on car transport means that a transition to Electric Vehicles and alternative fuels will need to take place over the next 10 years*

Nearly half of Wealden's CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions<sup>9</sup> are related to the transport sector. Whilst many areas of transport provision are out of the direct control of Wealden DC, the council can influence East Sussex CC and the national government. More directly, the council, working with local businesses, can support the provision of No or Low Emission Vehicle infrastructure including EV charging points (which can support the visitor economy and rural resilience). The council can also encourage behavioural change.

## *Net Zero opportunities*

Wealden is a rural district which is heavily wooded meaning that types of land based activities such as sustainable land use and, forestry activities can contribute to offsetting emissions. There is significant scope to reduce fuel consumption and transition towards a greater proportion of electric fuel

<sup>8</sup> Based on 2005 – 2017 data.

<sup>9</sup> Scope 1 and 2.



consumption (including through the implementation of renewable energy generation) in non-domestic buildings.

Whilst the climate impact of Wealden's businesses is relatively small, it has a **responsibility to be a Net Zero leader by setting more aspirational targets and providing high quality support for local businesses**, as well as influencing other local authorities and national government to do the same

### ***Net Zero challenges***

If 'Business As Usual' continues, the CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions of local businesses are likely to increase due to growth. If historic rates of emissions reductions continue this is likely to be too slow.

Balancing economic development with the imperative to reduce CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions and protect and enhance natural assets and ensuring residents share equally in the benefits which stem from natural capital.

An ageing agricultural workforce leading to the loss of skills and knowledge and poor economic conditions (wages, housing affordability, workspace availability, rural services) limiting the recruitment and retention of workers.

Lack of economic **value in land-based products** (including higher value locally sourced wood products), **increasing costs of land management and uncertainty in agri-environmental funding**. This constrains innovation towards better sustainability.



## 4. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The headline priorities and aims are outlined below. The rest of this section details specific short-term and long-term actions.

**Vibrant places:** for Wealden's town centres to adapt to contemporary needs, providing a place for residents and visitors to enjoy and maximising income for businesses

**Enterprising Wealden:** to maintain a resilient and growing business base

**Skills and employment:** to provide the workforce and develop the working practices to help employers succeed

**Visitor and cultural economy:** to seek to develop Wealden as a visitor destination within East Sussex and increase tourism spend year on year

**Net Zero Wealden:** to reduce the CO2e emissions of businesses operating in Wealden's economy



## PRIORITY 1: VIBRANT PLACES

**Aim: for Wealden's town centres to adapt to contemporary needs, providing a place for residents and visitors to enjoy and maximising income for businesses**

<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Actions</i>
<p><b>1.1 Increase time and money spent in town centres</b></p> <p>This will reflect the value residents and visitors get from town centres in terms of enjoyment and access to goods and services. This will be achieved by taking the opportunities and overcoming the challenges identified above.</p> <p><b>KPIs (Key Performance Indicators)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Number of vacant retail units</li> <li>(ii) Number of events hosted</li> <li>(iii) Number of stalls at local markets</li> </ul>	<p><i>Short-term 2022-25</i></p> <p><b>1.1 (a) Produce and implement town centre / place shaping initiatives where appropriate:</b> - These should build on existing strategies and masterplans where available. This should focus on towns which currently prioritise cars over pedestrians and look to address key challenges and opportunities. Identify opportunities to bid for external funding to support delivery (including from the Levelling Up Fund Round 2, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Brownfield Land Release fund).</p> <p><b>Who?</b> In partnership with town councils.</p> <p><u>Examples of practice</u></p> <p>Cornwall Toolkit <a href="https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/pt10xbv1/place-shaping-toolkit-final-2.pdf">https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/pt10xbv1/place-shaping-toolkit-final-2.pdf</a></p> <p><b>1.1 (b) Repurpose large un- and under-used town centre units:</b> - Work with property owners to identify opportunities to re-purpose town centre units. Encourage (including through planning policy and engagement) the provision of small units and affordable units which are suitable for local, independent businesses and community organisations (particularly for provision for young people). Consider the possibility of the council buying/leasing space for these uses.</p> <p><b>Who?</b> In partnership with town councils, property owners, local businesses, and community organisations</p> <p><i>Long-term 2022-32</i></p> <p><b>1.1 (c) Develop town centres toolkit:</b> Work with partners to create a one-stop-shop for high streets comprising guidance, good practice for planning design, transport, and public safety, inspirational ideas and case studies, and a guide to available funding or financial vehicles for high street regeneration. The concept would provide a platform of tools and resources to allow towns and high streets to customise solutions.</p>



**Who?** In partnership with ESCC, town councils, property owners, local businesses, and community organisations

Examples of practice

Cornwall Council provides a £4m Town Centres Revitalisation Fund to support towns in Cornwall to develop investment proposals. It was in response to the Vitality of Towns Inquiry which concluded in September 2019. The fund supports feasibility work, reducing car dependency, options appraisals, sustainable and active travel, workspace opportunities, new community greens and event spaces, and town centre vitality action plans.

Transport for London provides a design toolkit to help planners, engineers, designers and other practitioners create high quality streets and public spaces. Includes guidance on streetscape, cycle infrastructure and accessible bus stops.

**1.1 (d) Introduce regular monitoring** - Monitor the number of vacant units, number of events hosted and number of stalls at local markets. Where resources are available monitor footfall, dwell-time in and the amount money spent in key town centres on a regular basis. Survey to understand the drivers behind these metrics i.e. why people visit the town centre.

**Who?** In partnership with Town Councils and data collectors/analysts if required. See <https://www.highstreettaskforce.org.uk/support-directory/> for information of data collection.

**1.1 (e) Develop and implement initiatives to make the most of culture and heritage within town centres:** such as heritage trails, related festivals and events, place branding, heritage skills development including Heritage Lottery Fund project development and applications.

**Who?** In partnership with town councils, property owners, local businesses, and community organisations

Examples of practice

High Street Heritage Action Zone projects which are designed to 'unlock the potential of high streets across England, fuelling economic, social and cultural recovery and breathe new life into it for future generations.'

For example, the Plymouth high street project aims to enhance awareness of 20th Century architecture through public engagement, and a programme of cultural activities to celebrate the area's cultural heritage.

**1.1 (f) Support the provision and connection of improved walking and cycling links:**



- Prioritise and support the provision of walking and cycling links and particularly links between the Cuckoo Trail and the Sustrans cycle route and towns and villages (supporting the joining up of attractions and places as part of the Visitor Economy priority and the Net Zero priority). This is being proposed in Hailsham through the Aspires project. This should include:

- Actively inputting to ESCC walking and cycling strategies; and
- Strengthening of planning policy and work with developers to ensure new developments provide safe walking/cycle access to town centres.

**Who?** In partnership with town councils, local businesses (particularly those in the visitor economy) and developers.

#### **1.1 (g) Support the implementation of electric vehicle (EV) charging points:**

There is strong demand for EV charging points in Wealden and a number of planned schemes (e.g. there are currently 10 charging units in Uckfield, Wealden District Council are working closely with the EV provider to add additional EVCP's in Uckfield and throughout the wider district). These will be important to future proof transport provision in a car reliant area and mitigate the impacts of driving, supporting the Net Zero and Visitor Economy priorities. This should include:

- Support for implementation of EV charging points in planning policy.
- Identify enterprises (including public sector) in the District with large fleets and / or car parks and work with them to support investment in EVs and charging points where appropriate. A strategy for supporting each enterprise should be produced and actions for the both the enterprise and council should be set and agreed upon

**Who?** In partnership with town councils, local businesses (particularly those in the visitor economy), developers and East Sussex SPACES (Strategic Property Asset Collaboration in East Sussex) group.



## PRIORITY 2: ENTERPRISING WEALDEN

### Aim: to maintain a resilient and growing business base

Objectives	Actions
<p><b>2.1 Maintain and enhance the provision enterprise support and increase awareness and local use within Wealden</b></p> <p>Enterprise support is currently provided under the umbrella of Business East Sussex (The East Sussex Growth Hub), which provides an information, diagnostic and brokerage service to businesses. Businesses are referred to specialised support, advice and sources of grants and loans – many of which are provided by EDEAL Enterprise Agency. These services are at risk, as European Funds end in June 2023, and Growth Hub funding has been cut by 50% for 2022/23 and will end in March 2023.</p> <p>The UK Shared Prosperity Fund may provide some opportunities to retain some business growth and advisor services. Wealden District Council has been allocated £1,172,127 in UKSPF over the three years 2022/23 to 2024/25, and the other East Sussex boroughs &amp; districts have been allocated £1m each. East Sussex County Council has not been allocated UKSPF funds, apart from for Adult Numeracy. UKSPF supports collaboratively-funded initiatives at the county-level – and any such activities will have to be jointly funded by the districts and boroughs.</p> <p>It is essential that Wealden District Council reviews current provision with partners in East Sussex, and produces a recommendation on what needs to be retained for Wealden businesses in order to inform the future allocation of UK Shared Prosperity Funds, and local authority funds.</p> <p>This could also take into account alternative provision of enterprise information, support and advice – such as that provided by the <a href="#">British</a></p>	<p><i>Short-term 2022-25</i></p> <p><b>2.1 (a) Continue to support existing enterprise support agencies and initiatives:</b> The Eastbourne and District Enterprise Agency (EDEAL) is contracted until 2025 to continue providing services and grants to Wealden’s businesses and residents. Businesses should continue to be referred to these sources of support and advice. The monthly newsletter to businesses should continue to be supported in terms of growing the readership and reach amongst Wealden’s businesses and communities and keeping them informed about the changing enterprise support landscape and provision.</p> <p><b>Who?</b> In partnership with East Sussex County Council, local authorities and business representative organisations.</p> <p><b>2.1 (b) Continuity plan for enterprise support from 2022 and plans for enhanced provision of start-up support:</b> undertake a review of what to continue and enhance once European Funding ends and reduced Growth Hub funding (with funding likely to completely end by April 2023) – including aspects of enterprise support services, start-up and growth information and advice, grants and loans. Emphasis on start-up support is particularly important to Wealden, given the potential to encourage this amongst skilled residents who commute out to work in other areas.</p> <p><b>Who?</b> In partnership with East Sussex County Council, local authorities and business representative organisations.</p> <p><u>Examples of practice</u></p> <p>Hull and East Yorkshire Growth Hub has recently conducted a large scale survey and focus groups with local businesses and enterprise support providers to identify key priorities for enterprise support from 2022 onwards, that will be used to inform the post- EU funding landscape.</p> <p><a href="#">Stoke and Staffordshire LEP</a> have considered future risks, continuities and options for their Growth Hub. In particular, there are contractual commitments due to renew in 2022 and risks associated with maintaining service levels.</p>



[Library](#) – which is also reliant on European Funding and a central BEIS grant and is looking for new partners and operating models.

#### KPIs

- (i) Number of available of funds / business support programmes
- (ii) Value of funds available
- (iii) Number of Wealden businesses accessing funds and using business support
- (iv) Total amount of funding awarded to Wealden businesses

#### *Long-term 2022-32*

**2.1 (c) Participate in developing successor programmes to Growth Hub and ERDF funded enterprise support services and resources.**

**Who?** In partnership with East Sussex County, local authorities and business organisations.

## **2.2 Focus on the existing business base and business retention**

The prospects of landing large-scale inward investment and jobs from multinational companies is remote. Wealden does not have the workforce, large sites or infrastructure. What Wealden does have is a vibrant business base, and range of SMEs and microbusinesses which are agile and are successful – as well as a pipeline of commercial premises being developed at sites such as Knights Farm, Ridgewood and Ashdown Business Park.

Another key factor is the rural nature of Wealden, and that this influences the types of businesses present in the district, and what kind of assistance they require. There is an opportunity to create a tailored offer to existing businesses to help retain and grow the business base.

In particular, research on rural business growth suggests that rural businesses have more support and advice needs in exporting, regulatory issues, workforce skills, improving working practices and leadership skills, improving efficiency and productivity and capital investment.

#### KPIs

- (i) Business density (businesses per working age resident)
- (iii) Business start-ups / closures
- (iii) Business count by ward (urban vs rural)
- (iv) Employment by ward (urban vs rural)

#### *Long-term 2022-32*

**2.2 (a) Review business growth and retention and explore opportunities for a District wide inward investment delivery model.**

**Who?** In partnership with East Sussex County, local authorities and business organisations.

#### Examples of practice

This could adapt the current Locate East Sussex offer, and could also utilise [insights and lessons](#) from The University of Newcastle's Centre for the Rural Economy and The Centre for Rural Innovation. In particular:

- rural firms are more likely to be exporters than urban firms
- regulatory issues are more of a concern for rural businesses
- rural firms are just as likely as urban firms to be planning increase in workforce skills
- rural firms are less likely to be considering instituting new working practices or improving leadership skills
- rural firms are more than twice as likely to seek advice to improve business efficiency or productivity
- more rural firms seek larger funds for capital investments in machinery and buildings

[Invest in Dorset](#) has a suite of promotional brochures and marketing messages which are based on quality of place – including the themes of Smart (sites with digital infrastructure and business clusters), Wellbeing, Natural, and Living.



## 2.3 Assist businesses with addressing workforce and skills supply issues, including developing technological solutions

Wealden District has high levels of workforce skills and low unemployment, and is part of a wider functional economy and labour market area. Out-commuting is high. This means that the district must enhance the existing workforce, and ensure that local employers have access to local residents that wish to work locally. It also means that businesses will need to continue to adapt to cope with labour shortages, via the implementation of new technologies, business models and capital investment. Technological and digital transformation is key, and will also enhance business resilience and performance – contributing to further economic growth.

### KPIs

- (i) Number of Apprenticeship / NVQ starts
- (iv) NVQ skills level by ward / number of apprenticeships completed

### Short-term 2022-25

#### 2.3 (a) Employer workforce development initiative

**Who?** In partnership with East Sussex County Council, local authorities, education providers and business organisations.

##### Examples of practice

The [Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland](#) is probably the most comprehensive rural skills strategy currently active in the UK. Actions to date have included the development of a Digital Skills Board comprising of representatives from across the public and private sector.

The New Anglia Skills Deal supported employers, alongside training providers, to seek funding for project proposals that address a gap in – or barrier to accessing – training provision. New Anglia LEP also provides an [Apprenticeship Toolkit](#) for Employers and advisory support.

### Long-term 2022-32

**2.3 (b) Business productivity and digital improvement initiative** which applies digital technologies to improve productivity and to address challenges of labour and skills shortages.

**Who?** In partnership with East Sussex County Council, local authorities and business organisations.

##### Examples of practice

[The Eastern Agri-Tech Growth Initiative](#) was established in 2013 to support the development of new and innovative ideas within the Agri-Tech sector. It offers the Agri-Tech Growth Fund, grant funding of between £10,000 and £150,000 to support product development and improve agricultural productivity; and a Research, Development and Prototyping Fund which helps to support the research and development of new products or processes with grants of between £10,000 and £60,000. The Eastern Agri-Tech initiative has supported a wide range of businesses, including food and drink producers and growers, bespoke equipment and chemical manufacturers and innovative IT companies who supply to the agricultural sector.

[Norfolk County Council's Go Digital](#) initiative offers support for small and medium sized businesses in Norfolk. Businesses can learn how to better use digital tools to identify business opportunities and help their business grow.



## 2.4 Employment sites and premises

There is no doubt that the current supply of employment land and premises is constrained in Wealden, however there are large development sites in the pipeline, some of which have been recently delivered. The lack of supply and turnover in premises means that business expansion and site consolidation is also constrained. However, Wealden faces some significant barriers to establishing more employment land and premises – including a lack of sites, AONB protections, protected uses, infrastructure constraints, and developer interest.

### KPIs

- (i) Employment floorspace delivered as a percentage of need
- (ii) Commercial vacancy rates (optimum 5-10% or agents reporting sufficient supply)
- (iii) Additional employment sites developed in Wealden

### Short-term 2022-25

**2.4 (a) Explore the case for an employment sites and premises marketing document or strategy.**

**Who?** Wealden District Council, working with East Sussex County Council and local partners.

This would involve the business- and investor- friendly presentation of Local Plan policies in relation to employment land, and would consider the potential from A22 Growth Corridor Infrastructure Improvements and Employment Space.

#### Examples of practice

The [Opportunity Mid Sussex](#) website is a good example of how to present opportunities for growth alongside promotion of the area as a place to live and visit. The online resource is easy to update and is engaging for businesses

[Invest in Dorset](#) have combined their strategic employment growth sites with digital infrastructure and growth opportunities in an interesting way.

**2.4 (b) Conduct a rural enterprise premises study** that helps to increase the understanding of current rural property use, enterprise needs and demands, and the barriers to refurbishment and conversion of existing buildings for enterprise use.

This would involve a small-scale review of rural enterprise accommodation needs (demand) and provision (supply).

**Who?** Wealden District Council, working with East Sussex County Council and local partners.

**2.4 (c) Develop employment sites within the District and enhance the existing industrial estates**, this should include:

- **Development of Knights Farm employment site** in central Wealden, providing start up and expansion opportunities for businesses

**Who?** Wealden District Council, development partner

- **Develop Council owned site on Farningham Road industrial estate** in Crowborough

**Who?** Wealden District Council

- **Improvements to existing industrial estates**, take forward the recommendations from the 2019 industrial estate review; improvements included signage, access, reducing congestion and improving safety, creating sense of place, sustainable travel provision including facilities onsite to enable this (i.e secure bike parking)

**Who?** Wealden District Council, business organisations, business owners



## PRIORITY 3: SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT

**Aim: to provide the workforce and develop the working practices to help employers succeed**

<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Actions</i>
<p><b>3.1 Helping employers improve recruitment, HR practice and skills</b></p> <p>Wealden faces constraints to accessing workers and skills due to low unemployment rates, high property prices, rurality and poor transport infrastructure. Many of the solutions to these constraints are in improving the HR and recruitment practices of employers, increasing agile and flexible working, and in developing new business models and implementing new technologies.</p> <p>Wealden also particularly needs to focus on green skills including green construction as recognised through Objective 5.4 (b) under Priority 5: Net Zero Wealden.</p> <p><b>KPIs</b></p> <p>(i) Establishment of LSIP</p>	<p><i>Short-term 2022-25</i></p> <p><b>3.1 (a) Workforce Development</b></p> <p><b>Who?</b> In partnership with East Sussex County via Skills East Sussex, local authorities, education and training providers and business organisations..</p> <p><u>Examples of practice</u></p> <p><a href="#">Cumbria LEP</a> has developed a suite of initiatives to support workforce attraction and retention, such as incorporating career and job opportunities into place marketing campaigns, strengthening inclusive growth across education and training curriculums, and developing a more effective careers strategy and service.</p> <p><b>4.1 (b) Support the development and roll out of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)</b></p> <p><b>Who?</b> In partnership with the Sussex Chamber of Commerce (local delivery agent)</p>
<p><b>3.2 Continue to support apprenticeships</b></p> <p>Supporting employers to create apprenticeships for young people and adults, and supporting access and participation will help to resolve some of the labour needs of Wealden employers, and help to address workforce retention.</p> <p>Apprenticeships supported should include those providing green skills including green construction.</p> <p><b>KPIs</b></p> <p>(i) Apprenticeship / NVQ starts</p> <p>(ii) NVQ skills levels by ward (urban vs rural)</p>	<p><i>Short-term 2022-25</i></p> <p><b>3.2 (a) Continued support of apprenticeships.</b> Continue to work with Skills East Sussex to promote apprenticeships and support employers and young people.</p> <p><b>Who?</b> In partnership with East Sussex County via Skills East Sussex, local authorities, education and training providers and business organisations. Engaging with Sussex-level initiatives such as Department for Education's local Strategic Development Fund.</p>



### 3.3 Continue to support careers and youth entry into jobs

Young people who choose not to go to university will continue to require careers advice and assistance with accessing work, and progressing in employment. Particular areas of support include mobility and access to employment, as well as careers education and work placements.

#### KPIs

(i) Claimant count for under 25s

#### Short-term 2022-25

**3.3 (a) Continued involvement with County youth support programme.** Continue to work with Skills East Sussex to support youth services including Careers Information Advice and Guidance, Work Experience, Work Readiness, Digital Badges, Employability Passports, and working with employers and schools.

**Who?** In partnership with East Sussex County via Skills East Sussex, local authorities, education and training providers, Department for Works and Pensions (DWP), business organisations and the Careers Enterprise Company.

#### Examples of practice

[Hertfordshire Enterprise Advisor Network](#) provides Enterprise Advisors that are matched to specific schools. Supported by a team of Enterprise Coordinators, Enterprise Advisers meet with the Careers Leader at their matched school at least three times a year to discuss how the school can develop its careers education programme in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks (the national framework used to assess the quality of a school's careers education programme) and the skills needs of local employers.

[Hertfordshire Careers Hub](#) enables greater collaboration between clusters of schools by linking Careers Leaders, Enterprise Advisers and our Cornerstone Employer Group (a network of local businesses). Since joining the Hertfordshire Careers Hub, Cluster 1 schools have made excellent progress against the Gatsby Benchmarks – the national framework used to assess the quality of a school's careers education programme.



## PRIORITY 4: VISITOR AND CULTURAL ECONOMY

**Aim: to seek to develop Wealden as a visitor destination within East Sussex and increase tourism spend year on year**

<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Actions</i>
<p><b><i>4.1 Develop Wealden's marketing to reach a larger but targeted audience and draw more heavily on the marketing and visitors of the surrounding area</i></b></p> <p><u>Cross Authority Working</u></p> <p>Wealden sits within an area of huge cultural/historical and environmental importance; its location within this area has resulted in a very rich tourism offer. Wealden should use the draw of this wider area to support its visitor economy. It is important that Wealden collaborate with neighbouring authorities and destination areas to create an integrated visitor and cultural economy offer.</p> <p>Wealden have a strong offer with its new branding Explore Wealden and should look to align this with the marketing of 1066 Country (and increase the breadth of places and attractions in Wealden which are marketed under this brand) and/or the Sussex Tourism Leadership Group. These brands have or can be developed to have an international reach. The key will be to ensure that Wealden and its businesses and attractions are adequately promoted within this wider marketing.</p> <p><u>Utilisation of Explore Wealden</u></p> <p>Survey findings suggest that only 8% of visitors are using websites to find things to do. Furthermore, websites are useful for existing visitors but there is a need to drive people to the website and attract new visitors. There is a need for innovative marketing towards Wealden's target markets. This should be through the use of social media – particularly Facebook (aimed at 'Country Loving Traditionalists') and Instagram (aimed at 'Aspirational Family Fun'). It will be important to</p>	<p><i>Short Term 2022-25</i></p> <p>4.1 (a) Develop the Explore Wealden brand to include a focus on 'eco-tourism'. See 4.3 (c). Include in branding and marketing materials.</p> <p><b>Who?</b> In partnership with a marketing consultant/designer and local visitor businesses and attractions</p> <p><i>Long Term 2022-30</i></p> <p>4.1 (b) Engage with stakeholders to assess the potential to expand the marketing (and general work) of the Sussex Tourism Leadership Group to market Sussex and hence Wealden. From here, Wealden should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support in building and implementing a well evidenced visitor marketing strategy (and wider visitor strategy) for the area;</li> <li>- Ensure Wealden's, businesses , USPs and target markets are well represented;</li> <li>- Help businesses to contribute to and make the most of the strategy and resources provided (i.e. they should be encouraged to align with the strategy this way in order to benefit from the area's branding);</li> <li>- Include businesses and attractions on appropriate Steering Groups;</li> <li>- Particularly promote more overnight stays within Wealden;</li> <li>- Promote events within Wealden;</li> <li>- Promote overall investment within the visitor economy;</li> <li>- Recognise that successes and investment elsewhere can contribute to Wealden's success and spread the negative impacts of tourism across a wider area.</li> </ul> <p><b>Who?</b> In partnership with East Sussex County Council, Team East Sussex, West Sussex County Council, neighbouring local authorities, Sussex Modern, 1066 Country.</p>



ensure that this does not replicate or undermine any social media marketing done at a 1066 County/Sussex level.

#### KPIs

- (i) Day / overnight visitor ratio
- (ii) Visitor spend and visitor numbers (aim to maximise spend whilst increasing and then holding numbers to a sustainable levels)
- (iv) Explore Wealden website views
- (v) Number of businesses featured on the Explore Wealden website
- (vi) Number of businesses adopting Explore Wealden brand/logo
- (vii) Social media followers
- (viii) Likes/Comments per social media post
- (vii) Mentions of Wealden and its attractions in 1066/wider Sussex marketing

**4.1 (c) In addition to social media promotion done at a 1066/Sussex level invest in social media marketing of Wealden and the Explore Wealden website using the Explore Wealden brand.** This should:

- Provide timely information on events;
- Be something which businesses and attractions within Wealden can promote themselves through;
- Include mechanisms for visitors to advertise Wealden themselves (e.g. use of visitor photography/videos and stories and by encouraging visitors to share);
- Particularly promote more overnight stays within Wealden.

This should complement and not replicate or undermine marketing done at a 1066/Sussex level, which should be given primacy. For example, itineraries to better link places and attractions should be marketed at a 1066/Sussex level to promote cross authority fertilisation of the sector and prevent over-tourism.

**Who?** In partnership with local visitor businesses and attractions.

#### Example of practice

Jersey is “probably the best and most strategic approach to PR and social media of any UK destination. Recognising that they not only need to ‘tell a story’ but they also need to give a ‘story to tell’. A recognition that there is greater mileage in getting others to advocate on your behalf and help them do it well.” (Blue Sale)

Facebook - <https://en-gb.facebook.com/VisitJersey/>

Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/visitjerseyci/?hl=en>

**4.1 (d) Regularly update the Explore Wealden website to ensure that the information it provides is up to date and accurate.** This should also:

- Provide timely information on events;
- Provide a stream of ‘journalistic style articles’ to inspire key markets;
- Use visitor videos and photography and encourage businesses and attractions to contribute;
- Suggest itineraries to better link places and attractions;
- Particularly promote more overnight stays within Wealden.

**Who?** Wealden DC and Wealden’s visitor businesses and attractions

**4.1 (e) Continue to update and publish a visitor guide.** This should be done bi-annually as opposed to annually and print should be doubled.



	<p><b>Who?</b> In partnership with Wealden's visitor businesses and attractions</p> <p><b>4.1 (f) Introduce 'years of' in which marketing</b> (and events and research [outlined below]) is focussed on a specific theme (e.g. The Year of...Wine, History, Nature).</p> <p><b>Who?</b> In partnership with local visitor businesses and attractions</p>
<p><b>4.2 Strengthen partnership working to benefit from funding and cross boundary campaigns and projects</b></p>	<p><i>Short Term 2022 – 2025</i></p> <p><b>4.2 (a)</b> Continue to support the 1066 Country Destination Marketing Partnership (DMP) as a strategic tourism partner and look to maximise impact for our tourism businesses, and thus more greatly contributing to and benefitting from their strong brand and offer. From here Wealden should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure Wealden's businesses, USPs and target markets are well represented by 1066 Country;</li> <li>- Help businesses to contribute to and make the most of 1066 Country resources (i.e they should be encouraged to align with 1066 branding;</li> <li>- Include businesses and attractions on the Steering Group.</li> </ul> <p><b>Who?</b> In partnership with 1066 Country</p> <p><b>4.2 (b)</b> Continue to support Sussex Modern and look to maximise impact for Wealden and its businesses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue to support marketing campaigns to help raise the profile of Wealden/Sussex</li> <li>- Support funding bids where appropriate in order to seek maximum benefit</li> </ul> <p><b>Who?</b> Sussex Modern, East Sussex County Council</p> <p><b>4.2 (c)</b> Seek to be represented at the Sussex Tourism Leadership Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand how to best work and resource tourism at County Level</li> <li>- Align Explore Wealden with Sussex based campaigns and initiatives</li> </ul> <p><b>Who?</b> East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, Brighton &amp; Hove City Council, Local Authorities, 1066, Visit Eastbourne</p>
<p><b>4.3 Develop Wealden's visitor offer and USPs to align with its target markets, opportunities, challenges and wider strategies</b></p>	<p><i>Short Term 2022-2025</i></p> <p><b>4.3 (a)</b> Explore options with partners for sustainable travel across the District to link visitor attractions with towns and transport hubs and allow people to bring bikes on board. Could link with bike hire destinations.</p>



There is a lack of overnight stays in Wealden. One reason for this is likely to be the lack of serviced accommodation (particularly hotels) in Wealden, limiting the visitor market. There is an opportunity for the provision of more 'destination hotels' (which generate their own demand).

Existing provision in Wealden primarily consists of self-catering accommodation and camp sites with some B&Bs and small hotels, but there is scope for more of this, including the provision of more 'unique stays'.

In general, visitors are likely to experience a quality, boutique and personal yet affordable stay in Wealden. However, there is a lack of accommodation with a sustainability accreditation (such as the Green Tourism accreditation) when compared to other destinations.

Eco-tourism would be a good USP for Wealden to develop. Wealden's visitor economy is underpinned by its natural assets (particularly the Ashdown Forest, the coast and other hotspots) which need to be protected, including for the sustainability of the visitor economy, but which can be further capitalised on in a sustainable manner. People with an interest in nature are likely to be interested in protecting it and eco-tourism is generally a high-end product which attracts higher spending visitors such as those in Wealden's target markets. Furthermore, surveying suggests that around half of residents wanted to see more attractions in the area but that they wanted them to be in keeping with the current offer.

Another clear USP for Wealden is wine. Wealden's warm climate and lime chalk soil has made the District key to England's viticulture sector and it now has over 20 vineyards including the Rathfinny Estate.

As well as developing individual places and attractions, it is important to provide better links between them. This should be done both in terms of physical connectivity (i.e. more and improved public footpaths and cycle routes, public transport and electric vehicle charging infrastructure) and information provision (itineraries [see actions under 5.1], mapping and building business/attraction networks).

Events do and should contribute significantly to Wealden's visitor offer. There is a key role for Wealden DC to provide a framework in which for events to take place.

**Who?** Wealden District Council, Sussex Tourism, 1066 Country and a private provider.

*Example of practice*

[The Mountain Goat's](#) 525 Cross Lakes Experience provides a minibus service which links with other attractions and other transport services offering a car-free day out in the Lake District. This example highlights the potential for this action to provide a commercial opportunity.

**4.3 (b) Help to facilitate event delivery** within the District :

Engage with organisations (businesses, groups of businesses, community organisations, town/parish councils) who may be able to provide events focussing on organisations which use local suppliers and workers. Support the provider where appropriate and where resources allow.

**Who?** In partnership with businesses, groups of businesses, community organisations, town/parish councils

*Long Term 2022-30*

**4.3 (c) Encourage planning policy to more strongly support the development of low-carbon, eco-friendly, non-serviced accommodation and serviced accommodation throughout the District.** This should include support for adding accommodation to existing attractions and agricultural diversification. This could be aided through the production of a tourism SPD. [Visit Britain / Visit England](#) provide tourism planning guidance.

**Who?** Wealden District Council

**4.3 (d) Consider the need to link visitor attractions and locations when planning public transport and right of way improvements.** This should be done in consultation with visitor businesses and organisations

**Who?** Wealden District Council/wider area tourism organisation, a private provider, East Sussex County Council.

**4.3 (e) Ensure plans to implement EV charging points consider the needs of the visitor economy (i.e. by placing at/near to key attractions and towns)**

**Who?** Wealden District Council, landowners

**4.3 (f) Support accommodation providers and attractions in providing EV charging points.** This should be reflected in planning policy, through the provision of funding application support (for example to the [Workplace Charging Scheme](#) and the [EV charge point grant](#) and the general provision of advice.

**Who?** In partnership with visitor attractions, businesses and accommodation providers



Cross Authority Working will also be important in the development of Wealden's visitor offer. The offer developed should build on and complement Wealden and the wider area's existing offer, preventing over tourism in certain hotspots, spreading benefits and preventing over competition.

#### KPIs

- (i) Increase in serviced accommodation bedspaces
- (ii) Increase in accommodation with green tourism accreditation
- (iii) Number of new tourism businesses (also consider quality and alignment with target markets)
- (vi) Number of improvement schemes to footpaths/cycle ways
- (vii) Number of EV charging points

### **4.4 Continuously manage and monitor Wealden's visitor economy to help maintain a quality offer**

Once Wealden's marketing and visitor offer has been refined it will be important to maintain a quality offer and retain visitors. This will include maintaining basic services such as toilets, parking, signage, rights of way and ensuring Wealden is clean and tidy.

To do this it will be important to understand what visitors, businesses, attractions and residents think.

In order to continue to develop Wealden's marketing approach and visitor offer in the future, up to date information is required regarding the visitor economy and accommodation provision.

#### KPIs

- (i) Resident/visitor issues raised regarding tourism assets/infrastructure
- (ii) Frequency of website updates

**4.3 (g) Establish Polegate as a gateway town for sustainable access by walking, cycling, public and community transport into the South Downs National Park.** This action supports the visitor economy strategy and reflects a similar strategy for Lewes town. This should include:

- The provision of bus/minibus services (potentially hop-on-hop-off) to key attractions within the national park.
- The provision/improvement of walking and cycling routes between Polegate and the national park. These should link to key attractions and be well signposted and marketed.
- Include more walks/cycles on the South Downs attraction map within Wealden (link these to Polegate).

**Who?** In partnership with ESCC, the South Downs National Park, Polegate Town Council and local businesses/attractions.

**4.3 (h) Support a sustainable visitor economy by providing support, training and if possible, finance for visitor businesses, attractions and accommodation to gain a sustainable and/or green tourism certification.** Examples include the [Global Sustainable Tourism Council](#) and the [Green Tourism Certificate](#).

**Who?** In partnership with visitor attractions, businesses and accommodation providers

#### *Short Term 2022-2025*

**4.4 (a) Set up a visitor business network.** This should encourage more joined up working between businesses and facilitate shared learning and knowledge.

**Who?** Local Chambers of Commerce and local partnerships

#### *Long Term 2022-2025*

**4.4 (b) Undertake regular monitoring of the District's visitor economy and accommodation provision.** This should:

- Monitor progress towards the Aim, Objectives and Actions set out in this strategy;
- Include data on supply of accommodation and attractions;
- Include data on occupancy levels which should be used to inform planning applications;
- Include business, resident and visitor engagement and feedback;
- consider use a suitable data collection tool such as (T-Stats which is used by Visit Cornwall amongst others) which allows monthly monitoring and provides inputs for a robust economic model.

**Who?** Wealden District Council or Sussex DMP/1066 Country and a private sector provider



- (iii) Number of social media updates and information on events (also consider quality and timing)
- (iv) Number of visitor economy business network members
- (v) Number of visitor economy businesses accessing business support

4.4 (c) Provide visitor economy specific business (including recruitment and employment, planning, growth and start up, demand analysis, branding and social media marketing) support as part of the actions identified in the Enterprise and Skills and Employment sections above. This should be in alignment with Explore Wealden, 1066 Country and/or Sussex level branding, target markets and strategy.

Who? In partnership with ESCC

4.4 (d) Work to ensure all council services (e.g. toilets, parking, signage, rights of way) are well maintained.

Who? In partnership with ESCC



## PRIORITY 5: NET ZERO WEALDEN

**Aim: to reduce the CO2e emissions of businesses operating in Wealden's economy**

<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Actions</i>
<p><b>5.1 Support the Districts businesses to become Net Zero in any business support delivery</b></p> <p>This should emphasise the benefits both to the environment and the businesses (including reducing costs, attracting custom, keeping up with regulations). Standalone Net Zero business support could be provided if necessary or this could be the basis for further business support. The idea is to provide business support in one place and help business understand the linkages between business, society and the environment.</p> <p>Training provision should make the most of existing programmes and funds (e.g. Carbon Trust Green Business Fund, Energy Efficiency Grants for East Sussex Businesses, Rural Community Energy Fund) and should provide support in applying for such programmes and funds. Educate businesses in and encourage the use of financing models such as Energy Performance Contracting, Power Purchase Agreements, Leasing of Roof Space and Co-operative models.</p> <p>Guidance and business support should particularly look to help businesses to achieve sustainability certifications and in particular certifications regarding carbon neutrality.</p> <p><b>KPIS</b></p> <p>(i) Number of businesses engaged in business support</p> <p>(ii) Number of businesses engaged in business support which have gone on to achieve Carbon Neutral accreditations.</p>	<p><i>Long-term 2022-32</i></p> <p>5.1 (a) Develop and implement a programme of business engagement and support which offers practical tools and advice on working towards becoming a Net Zero business. This should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make the most of existing programmes (e.g. Wealden could build a relationship with organisations such as the Carbon Trust and refer businesses) and fill in any gaps in training provision.</li> <li>- Refer businesses to subsidised energy audits where available, support the continuation of this at County level</li> <li>- Support (and potentially grants/loans) to help businesses become Carbon Neutral certified (See <a href="https://carbonneutral.com/how">https://carbonneutral.com/how</a> or <a href="https://www.carbontrust.com/what-we-do/assurance-and-certification/carbon-neutral-certification">https://www.carbontrust.com/what-we-do/assurance-and-certification/carbon-neutral-certification</a>)</li> </ul> <p><b>Who?</b> In partnership with external providers of support and local businesses</p> <p>5.1 (b) Identify enterprises (including public sector) in the District with large fleets and / or car parks and work with them to support investment in EVs and charging points where appropriate. Help identify and unlock sources of funding.</p> <p><b>Who?</b> In partnership with East Sussex Strategic Property Asset Collaboration in East Sussex (SPACES), local businesses and organisations</p> <p>5.1 (c) Build on lessons learnt from the Unlocking Diplocks project – a project to accelerate the uptake of renewable energy and low carbon technology in a multi-tenure industrial estate. This should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Further development and roll out of the project within the Diplocks industrial estate</li> <li>- Roll project out to the older industrial estates across the District</li> </ul> <p><b>Who?</b> Wealden District Council</p>



## 5.2 Support and deliver a package of improvements to support net zero targets

### KPIs

(i) number of EV charging points installed

**5.2 (a) Improve access to sustainable travel options from town centre locations**, this could include improving access and signposting to the cuckoo trail from nearby town centre locations

**Who?** Wealden District Council, Sustrans, Chambers of Commerce, Town Councils

**5.2 (b) Support development of walking and cycling routes** across the District. Feed into the East Sussex County Council Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan when out for review to identify further schemes for inclusion, particularly focused on strengthening the walking element of the plan and including schemes which provide greater priority for people cycling and walking within key centres.

**Who?** Wealden District Council, East Sussex County Council

**5.2 (c) EV charging points delivered in town centre locations**, support the climate change team to meet targets of EV charging points within town centre locations

**Who?** Wealden District Council

**5.2 (d) Support accommodation providers to adopt sustainable practices and products**, visitors are now more than ever conscious about their impact on the environment whilst on holiday, the advancement of new technologies has made it easier for visitors to obtain the information they need to make a more conscious decision about their holiday. There are opportunities therefore to:

- focus Explore Wealden brand on more eco-tourism (see 5.1a)
- explore the adoption of a national green accreditation scheme for accommodation providers or additional promotion for eco-tourism within the District
- explore options for sustainable travel across the District (linked to 5.3 a)
- encourage the use local produce to reduce food miles

**Who?** Wealden District Council, South Downs National Park, Tourism South East, 1066 Country, Sussex DMP

## 5.3 Increase levels of local spending by the public sector and businesses

Increasing the proportion of spending at local businesses is likely to decrease CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions and other negative environmental impacts whilst keeping more money in Wealden's economy Furthermore, if through this strategy and the Climate Emergency Action Plan,

### Short-term 2022-25

**5.3 (a) Enabling a greater awareness of local supply chain procurement.** This could include working with our partners to disseminate information around the benefits of utilising a local supply chain. To be considered:

- working with Chambers of Commerce and Town Councils to encourage more local procurement and supply chains within the local and District network
- utilizing existing channels to increase awareness amongst the business community



<p>Wealden's businesses can reduce their CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions and other environmental impacts this will further increase the sustainability of supply chain spending.</p> <p><b>KPIs</b></p> <p>(i) Proportion of public sector spend within Wealden / East Sussex</p>	<p><b>Who?</b> Wealden District Council, Chambers of Commerce, Town Councils, business organisations</p>
<p><b>5.4 Support Net Zero contributing businesses</b></p> <p>Encourage net zero contributing businesses to locate in Wealden and support start-ups and existing business with these aspirations. Such businesses could be 'normal' businesses whose operations are Carbon Neutral and/or business who provide products/services which contribute to a net zero economy (e.g. Manufacturers of wind turbines).</p> <p>To do this Wealden needs to create the conditions which such businesses need to be successful including the provision of sustainable premises, green skills and high-quality digital connectivity.</p> <p>This is an important action as attracting net zero contributing businesses to Wealden will help develop green local supply chains thus helping to building a green business eco-system.</p> <p><b>KPIs</b></p> <p>(i) Proportion of businesses with Carbon Neutral accreditation</p> <p>(ii) Number of businesses which contribute to Net Zero economy</p> <p>(iii) Proportion of new build commercial space which has a 'best in class' sustainability rating (e.g. BREEAM rated outstanding or excellent)</p>	<p><i>Short-term 2022-25</i></p> <p><b>5.4 (a) Support businesses in applying for the Project Gigabit vouchers to support economic growth with less need for travel and to support Smart energy technology</b> - Identify eligible business, support businesses (and residents if necessary) to form groups and apply for vouchers. This could be included/advertised as part of business support programmes.</p> <p><b>Who?</b> In partnership with local business</p> <p><i>Long-term 2022-32</i></p> <p><b>5.4 (b) Encourage training providers and educational institutions to work with businesses to provide technical and commercial training in Net Zero skills.</b> For example, this could include supporting construction companies to develop retrofit skills.</p> <p><b>Who?</b> In partnership with local colleges and construction businesses</p> <p><b>5.4 (c) Lobby ESCC to continue investing in digital connectivity in Wealden to support economic growth with less need for travel and to support Smart energy technology.</b> This could be through providing match funding for central government infrastructure investments and continuing to provide top up funding for those applying for the voucher scheme.</p> <p><b>Who?</b> In partnership with ESCC</p> <p><b>5.4 (d) Work with farmers and foresters to reduce CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions, sequester more carbon, and protect and enhance natural assets whilst developing and diversifying their businesses</b> - The aim should be to find solutions which benefit the environment whilst being profitable, through a combination of farming, payment for the provision of public goods and/or diversification (e.g. into the visitor economy or the processing of food). This is likely to work best identifying clusters of farms with similar characteristics. Testing could then take place on one farm within a cluster – this should include: benchmarking of net carbon emissions and natural capital, developing an understanding of real market opportunities; business planning and implementation to test the market. These lessons can then be filtered down to farms within the cluster or other clusters.</p>



This work should also encourage environmental responsibility outside of what is being paid for.

**Who?** In partnership with South Downs National Park, High Weald AONB, agricultural and forestry businesses and associations

Example of practice

Similar projects to this are being undertaken by the [South Downs National Park](#) (Also see detail on the [farm cluster approach](#) and [the origins of the scheme](#))

**5.4 (e) Investigate the possibility to provide a financial incentive to businesses to improve their energy efficiency** -Undertake study to determine the best way to implement such an incentive and implement findings. This should consider the potential to link business rates to EPC/DEC ratings.

Example of practice

[Stroud District Council](#) undertook a feasibility study of linking business rates with energy efficiency and hence carbon emissions.

**Who?** In partnership with local businesses

**5.4 (f) Encourage targeting of improved sustainability standards on a certain percentage of new build commercial space, subject to financial viability.** For example by using the BREEAM certification. The targets should increase over time as adapting such building methods becomes more widely viable.

**Who?** In partnership with developers

**5.5 (g) Identify clusters of Net Zero contributing businesses in Wealden** (i.e. in what sub-sectors are existing Net Zero contributing businesses in Wealden concentrated?) **and market these businesses in order to attract inward investment**, including through the employment sites and premises marketing document/strategy recommended in action 2.4(a). This draws upon the fact that businesses are attracted to locations where similar businesses are located due to the potential to benefit from agglomeration and spill over effects.

**Who?** Wealden District Council, working with East Sussex County Council and local partners.



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**DMP** – Destination Marketing Partnership

**European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF):** Over half of EU funding is channelled through the 5 European structural and investment funds (ESIF). They are jointly managed by the European Commission and the EU countries and focus on the 5 areas of research and innovation, digital technologies, supporting the low-carbon economy, sustainable management of natural resources, and small businesses. Since the UK formally left the EU on 30 December 2020, ESIF is available for projects until June 2023, then this source of funding will expire.

**EV** – Electric Vehicle

**Growth Hubs:** are local public/private sector partnerships led by the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). They join up national and local business support so it is easy for businesses to find the help they need. South East Business Hub, run by SELEP, provide three local Growth Hubs – one of which is Business East Sussex.

**KPI's** – Key Performance Indicators

**Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs):** are locally-owned partnerships between local authorities and businesses. Between 2011 and 2020 LEPs were HM Government's preferred strategic and delivery body for local economic development and regeneration initiatives in England. In early 2022, HM Government notified partners that LEPs would be integrated into devolved institutions, and in the absence of these would continue to be supported

**NVQ** – National Vocational Qualification

**SME's**- Small and medium-sized enterprises

**South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP):** is the Local Enterprise Partnership covering the area of East Sussex, Essex, Kent, Medway, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock.

**SPD** – Supplementary Planning Document – expands or adds details to policies included within a Local Plan

**STEM** – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

**UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF):** This is the UK Government's intended replacement for ESIF funds. Initial guidance was released in February 2022, with detailed guidance on the role, use and amount of funds issued in April 2022

**USP** – Unique Selling Point