

BEXHILL-ON-SEA TOWN COUNCIL

VISIONING EXERCISE REPORT:

I. Introduction:

Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council conducted a closed Visioning Exercise on Wednesday, 20th November 2024, at 6:00 PM. The purpose of the session was to collaboratively identify the goals the corporate body envisions achieving in the future.

The following Councillors were in attendance:

Cllr Byrne; Cllr Carroll; Cllr Drayson; Cllr El; Cllr Goss; Cllr Hunt; Cllr Huseyin; Cllr Peters; Cllr Plim; Cllr Thomas; Cllr Wilson.

This report provides a comprehensive list of the ideas discussed, along with recommendations for their implementation, including proposed timescales and the resources required to bring them to fruition.

2. What was discussed?

All ideas discussed during the Visioning Exercise have been carefully documented and organized into categories for streamlined evaluation. The key topics covered include:

Strategic Vision and Governance:

- Forming a vision that is cohesive with the Town Board's goals.
- Forming a working relationship with Rother District Council.
- Creating a likeness to what the Borough of Bexhill was and how it ran.
- Overcoming fears around raising the precept.
- Utilising the uncapped precept for the betterment of the town.
- Councillors being pro-active against unjust negativity.
- Improving communications with the public.
- Advocating for Sidley and Little Common to become Parish Councils.
- Moving into the Rother District Council Town Hall.

Tourism and Town Identity:

- Forming a unique and historically influenced coastal identity.
- Encouraging tourism with a clean and accessible town.
- Installing a tourism-based activity (such as crazy golf) on the seafront.
- Installing marine-themed activities on the seafront and utilising dinosaur footprints for other themed apparatus.
- A walk-through motor-racing information trail.
- Creating informative QR codes that will tell you about local nature.
- Creating a town app.
- Developing tourist accommodation.
- Encouraging pop-up attractions in empty shops.

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Public Services and Infrastructure:

- Fixing and maintaining the fountains.
- Educating the public on the associated costs with running services.
- Opening the public toilets.
- Installing and maintaining bins in woodland areas.
- The devolution of car parks.
- Developing the bypass near Little Common.
- Building a multi-storey carpark.
- Town Centre Management.
- The pedestrianisation of Western Road and Devonshire Road.
- Installing a tram running from Ravenside along the seafront.

Environment and Conservation:

- Cleaning up the seafront.
- Embracing wildlife and nature in the town's public walkways to heighten mental wellbeing.
- Creating a green economy in the town.
- Maintaining parks and open spaces.
- Funding the groups running parks in woodland areas to revamp them.
- Protecting the seafront by making it a conservation area.

Community and Recreation:

- Installing play equipment on the seafront.
- Creating a themed woodland trail (Gruffalo, fairy, dinosaur, smuggler).
- The lack of activities for children, which is made evident in children using the serpollet to climb on.
- Building a creative space for young people to safely socialise in, potentially a music studio.
- Developing leisure and sports facilities.

Challenges and Political Considerations:

- Councillors using a political sway to ensure the corporate body does not spend money.
- Overcoming fears around raising the precept.

3. The next steps:

Before the council can formally establish an actionable strategy, it must first determine a clear list of priorities. This can be approached in several ways:

- a) ***Category-Based Implementation*** – For example, focusing on all Community and Recreation initiatives first, followed by Environment and Conservation projects.

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- b) **Selective Implementation** – Choosing one or two key ideas from each category and determining the order in which to address them.
- c) **Priority Voting** – Identifying the most impactful or urgent ideas through a voting process and ranking them accordingly.

In the past, the council has encountered challenges by attempting to pursue multiple large-scale initiatives simultaneously, leading to delays due to limited staffing resources. To avoid repeating this process, it is crucial to set practical and achievable priorities while recognizing the constraints of a small FTE team, ongoing council projects, and routine operational responsibilities. Establishing a focused, manageable approach will ensure efficient and effective progress.

4. Ongoing projects:

To better understand the council's current initiatives and integrate new projects effectively, a list of ongoing projects is provided below. It is recommended that the council carefully review and evaluate this list to identify opportunities for reallocating or adjusting resources, ensuring there is sufficient capacity to support the introduction of new initiatives.

Full Council:

- Channel View East Public Convenience.
- Councillor Devices.
- Crazy Golf.
- Devonshire Square Post Office.
- East Sussex County Council Sinkholes.
- Foodbank.
- Leaders Meetings.
- Legal Claim.
- Marketing and Communications Officer.
- Pebsham Play Area Grants.
- Pebsham Play Area Lease.
- Rother District Council Town Hall Ownership.
- Town Rangers.
- Visioning Exercise.
- War Memorial Ownership.

Finance and Audit Committee:

- BACS Payments and Direct Debits.
- Bank Reconciliations.
- Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council Hub Floorplan.
- Budget.
- Community Infrastructure Levy Funds.

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- Grants and Donations.
- Premises Options.
- Reserves.
- Risk Assessments and Registers.
- Staffing.

Amenities Committee:

- Accessibility Working Group.
- Allotment Maintenance.
- Bexhill Museum Public Conveniences.
- Bexhill Wild Domesday Project.
- Bexhill-on-Sea Fountains.
- Bee Stops.
- Bus Shelters.
- CCTV Review.
- Combe Valley CIC.
- Devonshire Square Public Convenience Refurbishment.
- Emergency Plan.
- Grit Bins.
- Little Common Public Convenience Freehold.
- Ownership and Management of Development Facilities.
- Secretary of State Correspondence.
- Sidley Public Convenience Freehold.
- Southern Water Meeting.
- Strengthening Local Relationships.
- Summerhill Allotment Fencing.
- W.Ave Arts Collaborations.
- 'Welcome to Bexhill-on-Sea' Signs.

Engagement and Communications Committee:

- Annual Town Meeting.
- Autism Training.
- Bexhill Carnival 2025.
- Bexhill Day 2025.
- Bexhill-on-Sea Civic History Booklet.
- Christmas Lights.
- Christmas Lights Switch-on Event.
- Civic Awards 2025.
- Councillor Photographs.
- Glyne Gap Roundabout.
- Lamp Post Poppies.
- Mayoral Cushions.
- Module Training.
- Royal British Legion Events.
- Youth Community Grant.

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- Youth Council.

Planning and Development Committee:

- Local Plan Training.
- Neighbourhood Plan.
- Retrospective Planning Training.
- Rother District Council Communication.

Human Resources Sub-Committee:

- Clerk Updates and Check-ins.

5. Resourcing:

Currently, the council is operating with resources equivalent to 4.88 FTE, all of which are working at full capacity. As a result, the corporate body is being asked to prioritize projects to ensure that officers can work as efficiently as possible.

To accommodate new projects, the council has several options: outsourcing and tendering to contractors, recruiting additional staff, or pausing existing projects to make room for new ones. Each of these options comes with its own set of pros, cons, and associated costs.

To support the recruitment of new staff and the achievement of council objectives, the council should explore utilising the upstairs areas of the hub. While this will involve costs associated with making the space a safe and accessible working environment—such as installing safety measures, ensuring accessibility compliance, and creating suitable office facilities—this investment will enable the council to expand its team and take on new projects. By doing so, the council can enhance its capacity to deliver on its goals and better serve the community.