

Rother District Council Corporate Plan 2021 / 22

– Bexhill Heritage responses to the consultation

1. How much to you agree or disagree with having an objective for the climate emergency?

Strongly agree

2. Do you agree or disagree that the following actions will help deliver this objective?

	Answer
New Local Plan (2019-39) has higher bio-diversity policies for developments than required by national standards	Strongly agree
Some of Rother Community Grants and Community Infrastructure Levy on infrastructure projects reducing carbon emissions.	Strongly agree
Recycling household waste increased to 53%	Strongly agree
Managing our green spaces to maximise carbon reduction effectiveness, including a plan for green assets.	Strongly agree
Electric Vehicle charging points put in appropriate Rother District Council car parks	Strongly agree
Plan to ensure all RDC assets are carbon neutral or carbon offsets scheduled equally over 2021-2030.	Strongly agree
Incentivising parish and town councils to adopt climate emergency policies.	Strongly agree

3. Please tell us anything else you wish the Council to take into account in relation to the climate emergency objective and its proposed actions.

Making it a requirement that officers and members take a longer view of the impact of their decision-making. If we're serious about responding to the climate emergency, we must consider the impact of decisions on the lives of future generations. Officers and members should adopt a 'legacy mindset' i.e. what are our grandchildren likely to think of the decisions they made in 2021? As a start, members and officers may like to set aside a small sum for training local decision-makers in how to encourage such a 'legacy mindset' and promote 'intergenerational justice'.

4. How much do you agree or disagree with the Corporate Plan having the objective of financial stability?

Strongly agree

5. How much do you agree or disagree that the following actions will help deliver financial stability?

	Answer
Property investments generate net extra income of £3.449m by 2025	Agree strongly
Maximising income from RDC assets	Agree strongly
Devolving assets, services to parish, town councils, etc.	Agree strongly

Increase amount of business rates generated.	Agree strongly
Reorganise Council's structure: reduce cost, greater efficiency.	Agree strongly
Look into creating shared services with other orgs.	Agree strongly
Generate income, improvements in service delivery	Agree strongly

6. Please tell us anything else you wish the Council to take into account in relation to the objective of financial stability.

We recommend also that assets be devolved, where appropriate, to local charities and community organisations such as Bexhill Heritage. Such a strategy is effective with regard to financial stability but also enhances community cohesion.

7. How much do you agree or disagree with the objective of increasing supply of affordable housing?

Strongly agree

8. How much do you agree or disagree that the following actions will help deliver the objective to increase supply of affordable housing?

	Answer
Ensuring schemes are progressed by developers (85 in 2021, 106 in 2022, 118 in 2023)	Strongly agree
Work with landowners + Registered Providers to begin delivery on 2 stalled sites (30 affordable rent homes)	Strongly agree
Direct development of 61 affordable rent homes by our company: Alliance Homes (Rother)	Strongly agree

9. Please tell us anything else you wish the Council to take into account in relation to the objective to increase supply of affordable housing and its proposed actions.

We strongly support strategies to increase the supply of affordable housing but such strategies should be implemented with the following in mind:

1. Schemes should be considered with the longer-term needs of future generations in mind as well as the need for additional housing in the short term. (See our response to Objective 1 - climate emergency.)
2. Ensure that strategies to increase affordable housing respect the town's heritage assets. We strongly support schemes in which heritage assets are converted for residential use and so preserved for future generations.

10. How much do you agree or disagree with the council having an objective to reduce the housing list.

Strongly agree

11. How much do you agree or disagree that these actions will help deliver the objective to reduce the housing list?

	Answer
Increase supported housing options to meet identified temporary accommodation needs for homeless.	Strongly agree
Increase the number of adaptations made to the homes of disabled people and support them to sustain their accommodation through the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)*.	Strongly agree
Support those at risk of homelessness to sustain their accommodation through the provision of Discretionary Housing Benefit.	Strongly agree
Direct development of new homes through the Alliance Homes (Rother) delivery vehicle to increase the supply of housing in all tenure types across the District.	Strongly agree
Improving access to the private rented sector through the Rother Tenant Finder scheme	Strongly agree
Support most vulnerable households with multiple, complex support needs to access accommodation through multi-agency service delivery.	Strongly agree
Deliver effective social housing allocations through a revised Housing Allocations Policy for Rother. The Rother Local Plan to prioritise affordable housing for those in Band A Council Tax properties.	Strongly agree

12. Please tell us anything else you wish the Council to take into account in relation to the objective for housing list reduction and its proposed actions.

(The response below is similar to our response to Objective 3) We strongly support strategies to reduce the housing list but such strategies should be implemented with the following in mind:

1. Schemes should be considered with the longer-term needs of future generations in mind as well as the need for additional accommodation in the short term. (See our response to Objective 1 - climate emergency.)
2. Ensure that strategies to reduce the housing list respect the town's heritage assets. We strongly support schemes in which heritage assets are converted for residential use and so preserved for future generations.

13. How much do you agree or disagree with having an objective to bring Rother above the five-year housing supply.

Strongly agree

14. How much do you agree or disagree that the following actions will help delivery the housing supply objective?

Answer

Deliver new Local Plan with policies to speed up planning process, incentivise smaller sites, etc.	Strongly Agree
Get planning permission on Council-owned land and land owned or purchased through Alliance Homes (Rother).	Strongly Agree
Working with Sussex Community Housing Hub and Registered Providers to bring forward applications on rural exception sites.	Strongly Agree
Attracting higher wage business to new employment sites and incentivising businesses with higher wages to Bexhill and rural areas, which will support further housing demand. Ensure Local Plan reflects housing mix which supports needs of incoming businesses.	Strongly Agree

15. Please tell us anything else you wish the Council to take into account in relation to the objective for housing supply.

(The response below is similar to those made for Objectives 3 and 4. We strongly support strategies to increase housing supply but such strategies should be implemented with the following in mind:

1. Schemes should be considered with the longer-term needs of future generations in mind as well as the need for additional housing in the short term. (See our response to Objective 1 - climate emergency.)
2. Ensure that strategies to increase housing supply respect the town's heritage assets and their setting. We strongly support schemes in which heritage assets are converted for residential use and so preserved for future generations.

16. How much do you agree or disagree with having an objective for an empowered organisation?

Strongly agree

17. How much do you agree or disagree that the following actions will help deliver the objective for an empowered organisation?

	Answer
Review and amend organisational structure	Strongly agree
Reduce the number of complaints through improved self-help and the digitalisation of services	Strongly agree

18. Please tell us anything else you wish the Council to take into account in relation to the objective for an empowered organisation.

We agree that this objective is fundamental. There is nothing more important than seeking to support and engage potentially resourceful local groups, organisations and households in projects and programmes of community development. We suggest that the title of this objective be changed from 'Empowered Organisation' to 'Empowered Community' in order to reflect the Council's commitment to community cohesion through community action.

19. How much do you agree or disagree with having an objective for a fairer society?

Strongly agree

20. How much do you agree or disagree that the following actions will help deliver the objective for a fairer society?

	Answer
Develop an anti-poverty strategy for the District by 2021	Strongly agree
Improve employment access and readiness among vulnerable homeless groups: 40 supported by 2022	Strongly agree
Improve levels of physical activity among residents experiencing socio-economic deprivation and poor health outcomes	Strongly agree

21. Please tell us anything else you wish the Council to take into account in relation to the objective for a fairer society

Loneliness is one of the main issues in Bexhill. It's a major driver of poor mental health in the town, especially among older people. We suggest that addressing this issue be included in the Council's action plan alongside its commitment to improve physical health. Bexhill Heritage would like to work alongside the Council and other voluntary groups in developing this strategy.

22. How much do you agree or disagree with having the objective of development of Rother's economy?

Strongly agree

23. How much do you agree or disagree that the following actions will help deliver the development of Rother's economy?

	Answer
Key actions in Rother's Economic Recovery Plan: 500 more rural homes with ultrafast broadband, 15 new sustainable tourism events by 2023	Strongly agree
Completion of Council-led commercial developments increasing employment levels in the district: 15,000 sq. metres by 2023.	Strongly agree
Develop new space for growth of creative sector in the district: Bexhill Studios	Strongly agree

24. Please tell us anything else you wish the Council to take into account regarding the development of Rother's economy?

Bexhill Heritage strongly supports this objective and wishes to play a significant part through the development of Bexhill's former bandstand.

25. How much do you agree or disagree that the Council should have an objective for an open council?

Strongly agree

26. How much do you agree or disagree that the following actions will help deliver the objective of an open council?

	Answer
Live-stream all formal public Council meetings on accessible platforms by	Strongly

2021	agree
Develop a customer service strategy - improving accessibility to all services and customer services standards. Ensure equality of access to meet the diverse needs of residents	Strongly agree
Modernise the Council by updating the constitution by 2022	Strongly agree
Annual residents survey on needs and experiences	Strongly agree

27. What else would you like the Council to take into account in relation to the objective for an open council?

We recommend that the Council should also develop a strategy to engage and work alongside local groups and organisations in reviewing its operational effectiveness.

28. How much do you agree or disagree with the Council having an objective for a town council for Bexhill-on-Sea

Strongly agree

29. How much do you agree or disagree that the following actions will help deliver the objective of creating a town council for Bexhill-on-Sea?

	Answer
Draft the Community Governance Order to establish a town council	Agree strongly
Appoint interim administrator to set up initial governance structure, including election	Agree strongly
Work with new town council to identify and agree assets and services to transfer from Rother District Council	Agree strongly
Work with interim administrator on appointment of permanent town clerk after May 2021 elections	Agree strongly
Conduct election of town council	Agree strongly

30. Please tell us anything else you wish the Council to take into account regarding the creation of a new town council for Bexhill-on-Sea?

The Town Council has a critical role to play in engaging with local groups and organisations in the town, and helping to release their potential for community benefit. Town Councillors should see themselves as facilitators and coordinators rather than providers. A focused community partnership and development strategy will be key to the Town Council's success. We recommend that Town Councillors should be encouraged to access best practice through a focused induction programme. This is an important prerequisite for a successful Council and should be included in the plan.

31. Please tell us anything else you would like the Council to take into account that has NOT been covered under our 10 objectives.

This is an ambitious and exciting plan. Remember to take people with you by building on their goodwill, and their huge potential to engage and contribute. Bexhill Heritage will support the Council in any way that's consistent with our charity's agreed objectives.

32. Are you answering this questionnaire as

Representing the views of a local charity or voluntary group

38. Name of the organisation you are representing?

Bexhill Heritage

39. Your position in your organisation (e.g. Chairman, Secretary, Manager)

Trustee and Vice Chairman

40. Your name

Stephen Johnson