

Asking the right questions

A discussion paper for the Future Economic Recovery of Hastings

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Introduction

The 'After the First Wave' document is a good start to our planning for recovery but what we really need is a Strategy.

We are uncertain of the future, so therefore need to establish a flexible mechanism to allow Hastings to adapt to changing circumstances, yet keep working towards a number of key aims, whatever happens in future months. It is like being opposite Roger Federer on a tennis court – you don't know which way he'll curve the ball, where, or how it will land, but the objective is the same – get it back over the net!

We therefore need to undertake 4 areas of work.

1. We need to identify the TIMEFRAMES in which the current economic planning work is taking place so our own economic planning can feed in appropriately.
2. We need to agree a set of PRINCIPLES, upon which we can all agree.
3. We need to agree a set of QUESTIONS for which we need answers, to identify the planning work we need to do.
4. We need to develop a repository of IDEAS as to how we can deliver results.

Principles

Set out below are some underlying PRINCIPLES upon which we may be able to all agree. I suggest these are:

- 1) That economic development and social wellbeing are linked, but that you cannot have one without the other. Plans must therefore be inclusive, and holistic. Trickle-down big regeneration plans have been debased.
- 2) That a new – AND INNOVATIVE - approach to Hastings' future economic and social development is required. By its very nature, this includes some RADICAL new ideas.
- 3) The new approach should not about statutory services doing things FOR the community, but is about doing things WITH it. This includes both developing programmes and projects, and delivering them.
- 4) Lastly, and most importantly, I believe we need a totally different mechanism for delivering change. This doesn't focus on sectors, but on APPROACHES.

Key to this will be the need to EQUIP and ENABLE, not just RESPOND and CONTROL. This represents, therefore, a very different APPROACH.

Questions

The QUESTIONS we need answers to (and we have many just ready to be answered) all relate to these APPROACHES, eg:

- A) How do we **support and equip** the private sector to energise, seek competitive advantage and grow?
- B) How do we change our agencies to **enable** ideas and organisations to flourish and become successful?
- C) How do we promote our population as **citizens** who feel they have a stake in society and a role in their town's future.
- D) How do we capture what our **communities** want to do and then adapt to enable these things to take place in their neighbourhoods/ sectors?
- E) What do we need to do in the **interim** to ensure the safety and security of our townspeople while such approaches bear fruit.

Ideas

Set out below are some initial IDEAS that might start to answer some of the QUESTIONS:

- A) By conducting a) a town-specific economic review to tease out identified needs of the existing business community, and b) by preparing a report identifying some of the expected impacts of Covid-19 and potential growth opportunities. An entirely new business support structure is therefore required to deliver on the plan.
- B) The local authorities – and other sector support agencies such as HVA – could seek to become **enabling** agencies rather than deliverers of services. All non-core services need to be stripped out and new organisations established to support things like Heritage, Countryside, Parks & Gardens, Arts & Culture. Authorities therefore become commissioners and scrutineers, rather than deliverers and their own auditors.
- C) Education needs to be augmented with citizenship to instil public values in young people from the start, with practical projects required to go out and do good works in the community. The significant upsurge in community spirit must be captured and developed, and new neighbourhood community outreach programmes developed in every area, with the existing set-ups supported to do even more.
- D) Using the above, programmes for identifying local neighbourhood wants and needs must be established. This should then also encompass communities of interest – including Culture & the Arts, BAME communities, LGBTQ, Disabled, Sport, Heritage, . This doesn't then become one single 'Local Plan', this IS the

local plan. The only thing you have to do, then is figure out how one can best support their delivery.

- E) In the meantime, we need to make sure our existing systems are fit for purpose and supported so that they become stronger.
- Food distribution looks toward food production to become sustainable. This could also incorporate other key areas for deprivation/ debt such as fuel and water.
 - The Town Deal Board & LSP could be merged and a new body created based on the community Hub for delivery of the continued response, establishment of the new structures.
 - The existing volunteer networks be supported directly to become sustainable NOW to avoid management exhaustion and volunteer disengagement

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