

# *Innovation, Inclusion, Inspiration*

## **Rother's Economic Regeneration Strategy 2010 – 2015**

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**Foreword** by Cllr Carl Maynard, Leader, Rother District Council

*Welcome to Rother District Council's Economic Regeneration Strategy. The Council's commitment to regeneration is supported in many ways: not only by delivering projects such as Elva Business Centre and Bexhill seafront; but also through providing key services such as planning and housing; and by supporting and working in partnership with others to ensure that we are working to common goals.*

*A great deal has been achieved already, and there has been significant investment by the Council and others through projects such as Sure Start, the new Bexhill High School, support to our rural businesses through the European LEADER funding programme and others. The work of the Hastings & Bexhill Task Force to develop the local economy has borne fruit through major investments such as the establishment of the University Centre Hastings, and providing facilities and support to develop businesses in high growth sectors including advanced manufacturing, environmental technologies and digital media.*

*Most importantly, we have a role to play in acting as an advocate for the communities we represent and to plan for their long-term prosperity. This Strategy sets out the role that the Council will play in helping to shape the economy of Rother in the future, and supporting the businesses and people who rely on it."*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carl Maynard', with a large, stylized flourish above it.

Councillor Carl Maynard  
Leader of the council

# **1. Introduction**

*Welcome to Rother District Council's Economic Regeneration Strategy. This Strategy sets out the role that the Council will play in helping to shape the economy of Rother and supporting the businesses and people who rely on it.*

**The Purpose of this Economic Regeneration Strategy is:**

- **To identify the Council's overall approach towards the local economy;**
- **To establish the priority areas in which the Council will use its influence and resources to support the local economy;**
- **To identify how the Council's activity will dovetail with other agencies**
- **To provide a framework within which the Council and its Partners can measure its success.**

The Council's role in economic regeneration sits within a wider strategic and policy framework that includes other local authorities, the Regional Development Agency and many other statutory bodies.

**Appendix 1** to this Strategy summarises the characteristics of the local economy and the challenges they present. It also presents a summary of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that influence the local economy. This is not exhaustive and no doubt there are others that could be added, but it is intended to highlight the key issues that this strategy seeks to address.

**Appendix 2** sets out the wider policy context, within which this Strategy sits. It describes the relationship with the East Sussex Sustainable Community Strategy (Pride of Place), with the Council's Corporate Plan and with the emerging Local Development Framework.

**Appendix 3** contains a glossary of terms.

## **2. Our Vision**

*“Economic development and regeneration are areas of growing responsibility for local government. They are large and complex areas (so much so that we need two different, but overlapping terms to cover it all), encompassing activities like support for enterprise and growth, skills training, action on worklessness, and the physical development and regeneration of regions, towns, and neighbourhoods – but also a lot more. They cross over into other core local government functions like planning.*

*They also involve collaboration and partnership working with businesses, the third sector, and various statutory national bodies, and linking policy on place shaping with policy on labour markets to ensure local residents benefit from growth in the economy.*

***At heart, local economic development is about securing the livelihoods and working lives of local people both now and for the future.”***

*(source: Local Government Information Unit)*

**We want Rother to be a place where people who live & work here can be more prosperous and enjoy a high quality of life. The Council’s Corporate Plan 2006 - 2016 sets out the following vision for Rother District in 2016:**

***To achieve a better quality of life in Rother: we want to see ...***

- *Greater economic prosperity with a skilled workforce gaining greater access to well paid employment*
- *Our local communities building greater capacity to identify and resolve their own challenges*
- *A place of greater vibrancy with a more youthful demographic profile, supporting economically active lifestyles*
- *Greater tolerance and understanding of diversity in our communities*
- *Inequalities, isolation and deprivation tackled, with an increase in respect and a decrease in crime and anti-social behaviour*
- *Our residents housed in decent homes*
- *More leisure and cultural opportunities as a basis for healthy community life*
- *The outstanding assets of countryside and coastline valued more highly for their contribution to our quality of life*

In order to achieve this, it’s essential that we promote the health of the local economy. It is no coincidence that the most economically deprived areas also suffer from the poorest health, the worst housing, highest levels of crime and lower life expectancy. Economic prosperity therefore lies at the heart of creating ‘safer, stronger communities’. Economic regeneration

describes the process whereby through investing in the local economy, the community as a whole can benefit. Lastly it is vital that regeneration both acknowledges and advances key environmental objectives for the area with respect to protection of the natural environment and the biodiversity of the area, lowering carbon emissions and more effective use of natural resources.

**This strategy therefore has at its heart the following themes:**

- 1) **Innovation** – Encouraging enterprise to flourish
- 2) **Inclusion** – Tackling inequalities to improve opportunities for all
- 3) **Inspiration** – To provide leadership, communicate our successes and build confidence

### **3. What's Already Happening?**

A great deal is already being done by a number of different agencies and organisations to support and develop the local economy.

The Council is one of the partners in the Hastings & Bexhill Task Force, which was established in 2001 to bring together the principal decision-makers in Hastings and Rother District Councils, the County Council, Members of Parliament, and strategic agencies including the Regional Development Agency. The Task Force has overseen the delivery of significant projects to stimulate the local economy, the result of a Government commitment to support a programme of investment into the local economy, based on a 'five-point plan'. The Five Point Plan has the following themes:

- Transport Improvements
- Urban Renaissance
- Excellence in Education
- Business Development
- Broadband Connectivity

Below is a brief summary of the main achievements in recent years. This list is not exhaustive, however it does illustrate the commitment from the Council and its partners to invest in economic regeneration. **This work will only prove to be successful if there is a continued commitment to build on their achievements for the long term. This strategy therefore sets out the Council's long-term commitment to supporting economic regeneration, and will hopefully assist in building and maintaining the strong partnerships that are needed to bring about and sustain change.**

#### Hastings & Bexhill Task Force

- The area's first University, the University Centre Hastings, is now successfully established, providing 3,500 sq m of education space. It is now producing graduates and aims to provide 2,000 student places by 2012;
- The Creative Media Centre has been established, providing 1,874 sq m of serviced accommodation to stimulate new businesses in creative sectors such as film & digital media;
- Broadband availability has been rolled out throughout East Sussex and the Broadband Centres and E-Biz Centre advised over 370 businesses and assisted nearly 1,000 individuals;
- The East Sussex Enterprise Hub, with presence at Hastings and Eastbourne, has directly assisted 70 innovative and advanced technology businesses, and created a network of over 750 clients across East Sussex;
- The Innovation Centre at Hastings opened in 2006, providing 765 sq m of workshops and 1,600 sq m of offices in serviced accommodation, which is now over 80% occupied;
- Sussex Coast College has moved into new premises at Station Plaza in Hastings town centre;

- The adoption of 'Leading from the Front', a strategy for seafront development for Bexhill and Hastings from Herbrand Walk to Rock-a-Nore
- The Enviro 21 Business Park is under construction at Queensway, Hastings, providing 16,000 sq m of space to encourage leading-edge environmental technologies, creating up to 500 jobs
- Modern office space has been created at the Priory Quarter to attract major employers

#### Bexhill – Hastings Link Road

- The Bexhill-Hastings Link Road has been granted planning consent (subject to legal agreement) and currently awaits a ministerial decision regarding funding. If approved this will enable the development of 1,200 new homes and 50,000 sq m of business space at North East Bexhill and improve access to Bexhill from north Hastings and the A21.
- Ongoing lobbying to support the implementation of the Baldslow Link that would connect the Link Road to the A21.

#### Education

- The University Centre Hastings has opened
- The new Further Education College at Bexhill has opened
- The new Further Education College at Hastings has opened
- A new High School is being built at Bexhill, due to open in 2010
- A new primary school has been built in Rye
- 8 Children's Centres created in Rother through the Sure Start programme
- A new vocational Skills Centre is being built at Bexhill
- Two academies are planned in Hastings

#### Rural Economy

- The Leader Plus Programme completed in December 2008, leveraging in over £7m to support projects benefitting local communities:
- The successor RDPE Leader programme is now underway, with a further £2.4m of grant funding to assist rural businesses

#### Business Networks

- The East Sussex Enterprise Hub supported the development of advanced technologies and businesses;
- Ten Sixty-Six Enterprise has supported many small businesses through its work for Business Link and other project activity;
- The 'ProfitNet' networks supported by the University of Brighton have enabled businesses in many sectors to meet and share experiences, discuss problems and opportunities and learn from each other.

## Culture & Tourism

- The De La Warr Pavilion has been refurbished and relaunched as a major centre for contemporary arts;
- The refurbishment and extension of Bexhill Museum has been completed;
- A new swimming pool has been built at Rye;
- A long-term strategy for improvement of facilities at Camber has been devised and adopted
- The development of the Jerwood Gallery at Hastings Old Town is underway;
- The Pebsham Countryside Park has been created
- The refurbishment of Bexhill seafront is underway, with support from the Govt's 'Sea Change' programme
- The refurbishment of the Colonnade and Rowing Club at Bexhill Seafront is planned for completion in 2011

## Sites & Premises

In addition to the work led by the Task Force referred to above, achievements include:

- Development by Rother District Council of 2,200 sq m of start-up workshops and incubator space at Elva Business Centre (Sidley Goods Yard):
- The Rye Partnership's refurbishment of workspace at Rye Fisheries
- Successfully resisting the loss of strategic employment land at Robertsbridge through planning appeal
- The Council leading a partnership approach to secure road junction improvements at Marley Lane, Battle to open up employment sites for future development with the potential to provide up to 8,000 sq m of business space and up to 300 jobs



## **4. Our Strategy**

The health of the local economy is largely governed by national, and indeed global factors, and the recent recession has illustrated the influence that global events have on local prosperity. The Council cannot of course single-handedly create or maintain a healthy economy. However, through its powers, duties and responsibilities it can influence the local economic climate indirectly across a broad range of issues. It can act:

- As an advocate – on behalf of the community as a whole
- As a service provider and legislator – using its powers and its practices to support the needs of the economy
- As a partner and enabler – working with others
- As an employer
- As a deliverer of projects

The Council's strategy for supporting economic regeneration over the forthcoming five-year period 2010 -2015 is described under the three themes of **Innovation, Inclusion** and **Inspiration**. It sets out **how** the Council can support these activities, working together with the other partners and agencies who also have a role to play in delivering our objectives.

## 1.0 Innovation – Encouraging Enterprise

Fundamentally, it is businesses that create employment and generate wealth. The role of the public sector in economic regeneration is to help create conditions in which businesses can thrive and want to invest. The Council will contribute to this through the following actions:

<b>1.1</b>	<b>Promote business support and advice</b>
<b>Why?</b>	Businesses that take advantage of advice and guidance, particularly in their early years, are more likely to survive. Business support services can help to develop management skills, help access to grants & finance, to expertise and to contacts. There is also a specific need to help local businesses and enterprises more environmentally sustainable. We also recognise the importance of micro businesses and home-based businesses, the significant contribution made from the voluntary sector and the potential for social enterprise. The Government has recently carried out a comprehensive review of business support in order to make services simpler and more accessible to the customer.
<b>How is this achieved?</b>	By providing advice through the national 'Solutions for Business' portfolio, including 'pre-start' business advice By facilitating networking and contacts Through the provision of grants and loans to businesses and small organisations By identifying specialist sources of support
<b>Who else is Involved?</b>	Business Link Ten Sixty-Six Enterprise Schools, FE Colleges and Universities Business membership organisations Capitalise Business Support Central Government departments Third Sector Organisations BETRE East Sussex Social Enterprise Network

<b>The Council's Role</b>	<b>As an advocate:</b>	We will continue to encourage the take-up of business support activities & services that are on offer and act as an advocate of these services
	<b>As a service provider &amp; legislator:</b>	N/A
	<b>As a partner and enabler:</b>	<p>We will support outside organisations that help to support services to local businesses and enterprises, where appropriate and monitor these arrangements through service level agreements to ensure that our financial support is directed to meet local business needs</p> <p>We will continue to signpost business support services through the Council's website</p> <p>We will help to promote new and existing services and initiatives wherever possible.</p>
	<b>As an employer:</b>	N/A
	<b>As a deliverer of projects:</b>	We will directly commission business support activity to meet local priorities and needs where identified

<b>1.2</b>	<b>Improve Transport and Communications</b>
<b>Why?</b>	<p>Access to markets and suppliers is vital to business success; however, transport and ICT infrastructure is regularly cited as a constraint for businesses in Rother and East Sussex. There are plans to improve sections of the A21 and to upgrade the rail link between Hastings and Ashford. However infrastructure schemes take many years to come to fruition and are vulnerable to budgetary constraints. We would like to support transport and communications initiatives that reduce journeys and journey time, carbon production and resource consumption and others that increase broadband speeds, use of local products and services and encourage carbon efficient transport.</p>

<p><b>How is this achieved?</b></p>	<p>By making the case for strategic transport improvements in national, regional and local policies          By promoting &amp; encouraging the use of new technologies to maintain competitiveness          By pressing for greater availability of super fast broadband within the district          By campaigning for improved and better integrated public transport          By supporting and promoting local resources          By promoting alternative transport and communication methods</p>	
<p><b>Who else is Involved?</b></p>	<p>Central Government          Local Authorities          Hastings &amp; Bexhill Task Force          Members of Parliament          Local Strategic Partnership          Businesses and their representative organisations (Chambers of Commerce, etc.)          Rother Transport Group</p>	
<p><b>The Council's Role</b></p>	<p><b>As an advocate:</b></p>	<p>We will continue to support lobbying for investment into strategic transport infrastructure, including improvements to the A21, the A259/A27, and the Hastings – Ashford rail link</p> <p>We will lobby for investment into ICT infrastructure</p> <p>We will continue to promote the ‘Enviro 21 Corridor’ concept for the A21</p> <p>We will continue to support delivery of the Bexhill-Hastings Link Road and the Baldslow Link</p> <p>We will lobby for the provision of a rail halt at Glyne Gap</p> <p>We will continue to lobby for improved rail and bus services and resist proposals to reduce service coverage or frequency</p>
	<p><b>As a service provider &amp; legislator:</b></p>	<p>We will ensure that Local Development Framework policies relating to transport and ICT infrastructure reflect and anticipate the future economic needs of the district.</p>

		We will press for advanced ICT infrastructure to be provided in new major developments through our planning policies
	<b>As a partner and enabler:</b>	<p>We will maintain and develop close working links with relevant partners, including the Hastings &amp; Bexhill Task Force and Local Strategic Partnerships</p> <p>We will develop and support a local transport strategy for Bexhill &amp; Hastings</p> <p>We will engage with partners in the development of strategies and project plans in relation to the County Council's emerging Local Transport Plan</p> <p>We will work with partners to identify the priorities for investment in our road and rail infrastructure, and to minimise the negative effects resulting from delays in the decision-making process</p>
	<b>As an employer:</b>	We will consider options for asset sharing with other agencies
	<b>As a deliverer of projects:</b>	We have recently completed improvements to the junction of the A21 & Marley Lane, in partnership with SEEDA, the Highways Agency, ESCC and landowners.

<b>1.3</b>	<b>Work to ensure a supply of suitable business premises</b>
<b>Why?</b>	Any business needs premises from which to operate; whether that be from home, an office, shop or factory. Lack of suitable premises is regularly cited as a constraint by businesses and this is supported by the Employment Land Review carried out for the LDF. Much of the commercial property stock in Rother is old and there has been little modern commercial property built over the past decade due to low prevailing values. In rural areas, there is the risk of a gradual loss of local employment, leading to stagnation and 'dormitory' villages with few services; increasing the need for local people to travel further to access services and work thereby adding to carbon use, congestion and placing more barriers in the way of local people finding work
<b>How is this achieved?</b>	Providing for future needs by ensuring that planning policies support the provision of new business accommodation

	<p>By enforcing existing planning policies that protect employment sites</p> <p>By direct public sector-led development</p> <p>By helping to overcome barriers that prevent commercial development from taking place</p> <p>By encouraging and assisting inward investment</p>	
<b>Who else is involved?</b>	<p>SeaSpace</p> <p>Private Landowners &amp; developers</p> <p>Public sector landowners</p> <p>Regional and Local Planning authorities</p> <p>Parish councils</p> <p>Locate East Sussex</p>	
<b>The Council's Role</b>	<b>As an advocate:</b>	We will promote the benefits of employment-led development to the local community, particularly in rural areas
	<b>As a service provider &amp; legislator:</b>	<p>We will ensure adequate provision for employment land and premises through the Site Allocations Development Plan Document in the Local Development Framework</p> <p>We have adopted the Supplementary Planning Document for North East Bexhill.</p> <p>We will continue to enforce Local Plan policies supporting the retention of employment sites, such as the former Northbridge Mill site at Robertsbridge</p> <p>We will continue to manage our own commercial property portfolio and review the Council's Asset Management Plan</p>
	<b>As a partner and enabler:</b>	<p>We will work with landowners and SeaSpace to secure the development of commercial premises at North East Bexhill in accordance with the Supplementary Planning Document</p> <p>We will work with landowners to encourage commercial development at Marley Lane, Battle</p> <p>We will work with landowners and developers to try to overcome barriers to commercial development throughout the district</p>

		We will continue to support Locate East Sussex to promote inward investment
	<b>As an employer:</b>	N/A
	<b>As a deliverer of projects:</b>	We have recently completed the development of workspace at Elva Business Centre, Sidley, and have removed a significant barrier to development at Marley Lane through the provision of the new road junction. The Council will consider further projects should suitable opportunities arise.

<b>1.4</b>	<b>Encourage the development of knowledge based businesses, particularly in digital media, advanced engineering, and environmental technologies.</b>	
<b>Why?</b>	The transport infrastructure serving Rother does not favour industries that rely on the transportation of goods and products. Knowledge based industries, however, can export their services and expertise worldwide through the internet. These businesses are therefore net generators of wealth for the local economy and can help to develop new career opportunities for local people in the future. As these businesses develop and grow, they will retain more highly skilled people and help to sustain more growth into the future.	
<b>How is this achieved?</b>	By providing targeted support to knowledge-based sectors By providing 'incubator' spaces for small businesses By investing in the skills base needed to support the high-growth sectors By facilitating access to markets, to finance, to research & development facilities By having access to super fast broadband	
<b>Who else is involved?</b>	SeaSpace Innovation & Growth Teams Local Authorities Further & Higher Education establishments East Sussex Adult Learning & Skills Partnership Third Sector Organisations	
<b>The Council's Role</b>	<b>As an advocate:</b>	We will continue to support the Hastings & Bexhill Task force in the delivery of the 'Five Point Plan' and lobby for the funding needed to maintain

	<p>delivery into the future</p> <p>We will lobby for investment into ICT infrastructure</p> <p>We will continue to promote the 'Enviro 21 Corridor' concept for the A21</p> <p>We will support the development of skills escalator initiatives equipping local people to take up local opportunities</p>
<b>As a service provider &amp; legislator:</b>	<p>We will ensure that the development of high growth businesses is reflected in our strategic planning through the Local Development Framework</p> <p>We will ensure that Local Development Framework policies reflect and anticipate the future economic needs of the district. relating to ICT infrastructure</p> <p>We will press for advanced ICT infrastructure to be provided in new major developments through our planning policies</p>
<b>As a partner and enabler:</b>	<p>We will work with East Sussex Innovation &amp; Growth Teams and monitor their benefit for Rother businesses</p> <p>We will work with SeaSpace and others to maintain support targeted at knowledge-based sectors, to maintain the momentum generated through the work of the East Sussex Enterprise Hub</p> <p>We will continue to engage with the Hastings &amp; Bexhill Task Force and HBRL Ltd. in the delivery of projects, e.g. the Innovation Centre, the Creative Media Centre, the Enviro 21 Business Park, and the University Centre Hastings.</p> <p>We will look to support partnership initiatives that will assist the development of a technology and knowledge based sector in Rother</p>
<b>As an employer:</b>	N/A
<b>As a deliverer of projects:</b>	We have recently completed the development of workspace at Elva



		Business Centre, Sidley, and have removed a significant barrier to development at Marley Lane through the provision of the new road junction. The Council will consider further projects should suitable opportunities arise.
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<b>1.5</b>	<b>Support the visitor economy</b>	
<b>Why?</b>	Tourism brings approximately £240m to the local economy each year and supports the equivalent of over 4,000 full-time jobs. Tourism therefore brings additional wealth into the local economy, provides business and career opportunities, supports local supply chains and helps to create a positive image for the area as a whole.	
<b>How is this achieved?</b>	<p>By promoting the area to visitors</p> <p>By providing visitor information services that meets customer requirements</p> <p>By maintaining and improving the range and quality of the tourism offer, including attractions, accommodation and customer service</p> <p>By aligning business development and support services with potential tourism growth areas</p> <p>By working in partnership to develop new products and services particularly those that use, protect and promote Rother's natural environment</p>	
<b>Who else is involved?</b>	<p>Hastings Borough Council; Wealden District Council</p> <p>Tourist sector businesses</p> <p>Tourism South East</p> <p>Visit Britain</p> <p>1066 Country Marketing</p> <p>Business development organisations</p>	
<b>The Council's Role</b>	<b>As an advocate:</b>	<p>We will promote the importance of the tourism industry when considering policy issues at regional and national level</p> <p>We will continue to lobby for resources to support the development of the tourism sector</p>

		<p>We will encourage businesses in the tourism sector to take advantage of new technologies to improve competitiveness</p> <p>We will promote and encourage customer service training</p>
	<p><b>As a service provider &amp; legislator:</b></p>	<p>We will review the delivery of Tourist Information services when the current contracts expire in 2012, having regard to customer demands in the future</p> <p>We will help maintain and update the 1066 Country website and regularly review content and functions</p> <p>We will continue to act as Rother's Data Steward for the Destination Management System</p> <p>We will commission research and collect data to inform future strategic planning and service delivery</p> <p>We will continue to deliver related services such as public conveniences, car parking, parks and gardens, leisure services and museum services.</p> <p>We will support, encourage and promote festivals and events that help to attract visitors</p> <p>We will ensure that the Local Development Framework encourages the provision of new quality accommodation</p>
	<p><b>As a partner and enabler:</b></p>	<p>We will provide funding and officer time to support the 1066 Country Marketing campaign</p> <p>We will continue to work in partnership with local stakeholders involved in the local marketing campaigns in Bexhill, Battle and Rye.</p> <p>We will continue to participate in regional and sub-regional networks, such as Tourism South East, Destination Performance UK and the Sussex</p>

		<p>Tourism Partnership</p> <p>We will encourage initiatives to increase visitor numbers particularly where they support other local priorities e.g. health and well-being, bio-diversity or local food.</p>
	<b>As an employer:</b>	N/A
	<b>As a deliverer of projects:</b>	<p>We will invest in the Council's own assets and attractions through the Council's Corporate Plan, including:</p> <p>The 'Next Wave programme at Bexhill Seafront</p> <p>Camber Central Car Park (as part of the Camber Visitor Management Initiative)</p> <p>The De La Warr Pavilion</p> <p>Bexhill Museum</p> <p>Egerton Park</p> <p>Pebsham Countryside Park</p>

<b>1.6</b>	<b>Improve the vitality of our town centres</b>
<b>Why?</b>	<p>Our urban centres are a focal point for commercial and social activity, as well as centres of employment. Total retail spend by Rother residents exceeds £440m per year. They provide vital services to local people and they are often seen as a measure of the prosperity of an area. They are also of vital importance to perceptions of quality of life and can be showcases for environmental and social good practice. The quality and variety of shops, restaurants and places of entertainment is important to residents, to visitors, and to investors.</p>
<b>How is this achieved?</b>	<p>By having clear, evidence-based strategies for our town centres to become economically, socially and environmentally sustainable</p> <p>By use of planning, licensing and other regulatory powers</p> <p>By close collaboration between landowners, businesses and public sector agencies</p>

<b>Who else is involved?</b>	East Sussex County Council Property Owners Town Centre businesses Rother Crime & Reduction Partnership Statutory service providers	
<b>The Council's Role</b>	<b>As an advocate:</b>	We will promote the importance of our town centres and lobby for the resources needed to maintain the public realm to a high standard  We will engage with our businesses, partners and customers in developing strategies for our town centres
	<b>As a service provider &amp; legislator:</b>	We will develop sustainable strategies for our town centres through the Local Development Framework  We will use our statutory powers to minimise the impact of derelict and poorly maintained premises  We will maintain and enforce the Council's Conservation area policies  We will commission research and collect data to inform future strategic planning and service delivery
	<b>As a partner and enabler</b>	We will maintain and build upon our working relationships with landowners, businesses and statutory bodies, including highway authorities  We will continue to work with partners to reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and petty vandalism  We will support, encourage and promote festivals and events that help to attract customers
	<b>As an employer:</b>	The Council has a dedicated staff team to deal with fly-tipping and graffiti as a result of its 'Sense of Place' Corporate Plan project.
	<b>As a deliverer of projects:</b>	We will invest in the Council's own assets and attractions through the Council's Corporate Plan, such as the 'Next Wave programme at Bexhill Seafront; Egerton Park; Bexhill Museum

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## 2.0 Inclusion – Tackling Inequalities

It is important to ensure that investment in our local economy results in a better quality of life for those who are less well off, and that all members of our community are able to take advantage of opportunities. The Council will contribute to this through the following actions:

<b>2.1</b>	<b>Seek to improve education and skills levels, particularly among young people</b>	
<b>Why?</b>	People need the skills to meet the demands and challenges of the future, and businesses need people with the right skills to enable them to flourish. The availability of skills, particularly in knowledge-based industries, is a key factor for businesses in making decisions about future investment or location. Investing in our education is fundamental to enabling the local economy to develop, and to reducing levels of worklessness and benefit dependency.	
<b>How is this achieved?</b>	<p>By investing in our educational facilities</p> <p>By developing closer relationships between the education sector and businesses</p> <p>By making the most of the aspirations of our young people and raising awareness of local career opportunities</p> <p>By support skills development in key sectors</p> <p>By promoting lifelong learning</p> <p>By developing vocational learning</p> <p>By recognising and supporting the link between volunteering, skills development and work readiness</p>	
<b>Who else is involved?</b>	<p>East Sussex County Council</p> <p>Skills Funding Agency</p> <p>Local Strategic Partnerships</p> <p>East Sussex Adult Learning &amp; Skills Partnership</p> <p>Businesses and their representative organisations</p> <p>Business Link</p> <p>Training providers</p> <p>Social Landlords</p> <p>Third Sector and Voluntary Organisations</p>	
<b>The Council's Role</b>	<b>As an advocate:</b>	We will continue to make the case for investment in the local education system in both Rother and Hastings, building on the successes of Bexhill High School, The University Centre Hastings, Bexhill College and Sussex

	<p>Coast College.</p> <p>We will support the planned extension of the University Centre Hastings, and encourage further expansion in Bexhill</p> <p>We will support the planned redevelopment of Rye College.</p> <p>We will continue to champion the importance of education and help to actively promote and celebrate successes and achievements</p> <p>We will promote work-based training</p> <p>We will support targeted skills development initiatives</p> <p>We will champion the role of volunteering in developing skills and work readiness</p>
<b>As a service provider &amp; legislator:</b>	<p>We will plan for future provision through the Local Development Framework, including the planned redevelopment of Rye College</p> <p>We will implement and regularly review the Council's Strategy for Young People</p>
<b>As a partner and enabler:</b>	<p>We will use the Council's website to signpost people to learning providers</p> <p>We will promote and support sector skills initiatives (such as Welcome Host for hospitality sector) and help to identify and secure funding where appropriate.</p> <p>We will work with our partners to monitor progress</p> <p>We will help to raise awareness among young people of local career opportunities</p>
<b>As an employer:</b>	<p>We will continue to develop our own staff through appraisals and supporting staff training</p>

		We will maintain our policy of offering apprenticeships and work experience opportunities to young people
	<b>As a deliverer of projects:</b>	N/A

<b>2.2</b>	<b>Help to overcome barriers to work &amp; training, particularly for young people</b>	
<b>Why?</b>	Many of those who are out of work face huge difficulties in being able to find and maintain a job. This might be due to one or more of a number of reasons, for example caring for young children; being able to get to and from work; discrimination or fear of discrimination; or a lack of basic skills. Overcoming these barriers is a huge challenge, but where successful can lead to renewed confidence and independence; benefitting the local economy and lessening the burden on the benefits system in the long run.	
<b>How is this achieved?</b>	<p>By providing advice and guidance to those who need it</p> <p>By supporting organisations, such as social enterprises, that help to overcome barriers to work</p> <p>By ensuring that the relevant agencies work together effectively to deliver a co-ordinated approach to help people into work</p> <p>By promoting equal opportunities</p> <p>By developing new models for collaboration of service delivery in rural communities</p>	
<b>Who else is involved?</b>	<p>Rother Voluntary Action &amp; voluntary sector organisations</p> <p>Social enterprises</p> <p>Job Centre Plus</p> <p>Businesses and their representative organisations</p> <p>Social Landlords</p> <p>Rother Race Action Forum</p> <p>East Sussex Disability Association</p> <p>Education Establishments</p> <p>Connexions</p>	
<b>The Council's Role</b>	<b>As an advocate:</b>	We will lobby for resources to support organisations that provide services to those who have difficulties finding work or training



	<b>As a service provider &amp; legislator:</b>	We will review our procurement policies to encourage contractors to take on local apprentices
	<b>As a partner and enabler:</b>	<p>We will help to co-ordinate interventions and ensure joined-up working through the Local Strategic Partnership</p> <p>We will continue to identify funding opportunities and deliver projects, (such as the Trailblazer project)</p> <p>We will encourage the development of social enterprises</p> <p>We will direct and refer people to advice and support through our Customer Help Points and the Council's website</p> <p>We will implement and regularly review the Council's Strategy for Young People</p> <p>We will work with partners to identify local needs through Local Strategic Partnership and other partnership arrangements such as the Hastings &amp; Bexhill Economic Alliance, Social Landlords and the East Sussex Work &amp; Skills Plan</p>
	<b>As an employer:</b>	<p>We will ensure that our own recruitment procedures promote equal opportunities</p> <p>We will maintain and renew the Council's Investors in People status</p> <p>We will seek to provide apprenticeships as an integral part of the Council's recruitment procedures</p>
	<b>As a deliverer of projects:</b>	<p>We will maintain and review Equalities Impact Assessments for our projects</p> <p>We will seek to provide skills &amp; training opportunities through the delivery of projects.</p>

<b>2.3</b>	<b>Ensure that there is an adequate supply of affordable housing</b>	
<b>Why?</b>	<p>The availability of housing that people can afford is one of the principal factors that affect the ability of people to move in or out of the area. The draft Local Development Framework Core Strategy illustrates that in Rother, a low income household needs 16 times their annual income to buy a house. Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation shows that Rother is ranked in the top 30 'least affordable' districts in Great Britain. In addition much of the old council housing stock has been sold in Rother under the Right to Buy and this has left many communities with little or even no affordable housing for their young people seeking a home of their own. The result can be devastating for some areas where there are no longer enough children to keep the school open, not enough people to use the village shop leading to its closure and in some areas even the pub can be under threat. The villages become full of older people with no young people to help them to create a vibrant community. This in turn affects our ability to encourage young people to remain and to seek work, as well as our ability to support key services such as health and social care, where wages are traditionally low. The informal social and care networks and family support networks that are essential elements in Rother's rural areas with limited facilities are undermined if young people are unable to afford to live there. Mixed communities are more sustainable and self-supporting and use a greater range of services and therefore affordable housing contributes to the sustainability Rother's communities. Affordable housing can bring other benefits to Rother, such as sports amenities, car parking facilities or premises for a community shop, as facilities may be provided as part of the housing project.</p>	
<b>How is this achieved?</b>	<p>By enforcing our Local Plan Policies for the provision of affordable housing  By planning for future provision through the Local Development Framework  By maintaining close relationships with developers and Social Landlords to facilitate the delivery of affordable and sustainable housing  By continuing to make the case for the importance of affordable housing</p>	
<b>Who else is involved?</b>	<p>Social Landlords  Landowners  Developers  Homes &amp; Communities Agency  Parish Councils</p>	
<b>The Council's</b>	<b>As an advocate:</b>	We will continue to champion the need to provide affordable housing in

<b>Role</b>		Rother
	<b>As a service provider &amp; legislator:</b>	<p>We will ensure that our Local Plan policies for affordable housing are enforced</p> <p>We will plan for future provision of affordable housing through the Local Development Framework</p> <p>We will implement and review the Council's Affordable Housing Strategy and Private Sector Housing Strategy</p>
	<b>As a partner and enabler:</b>	We will continue to maintain close working relationships with developers, landowners and Social Landlords
	<b>As an employer:</b>	N/A
	<b>As a deliverer of projects:</b>	N/A

<b>2.4</b>	<b>Help improve the vitality of our most deprived and isolated areas</b>
<b>Why?</b>	There are areas in Rother where economic and social disadvantage is especially acute; in particular Sidley and central Bexhill, and parts of Rye and Salehurst. Some of our rural communities have difficulties in reaching basic services such as food shops and healthcare. This is a particular problem for those without the use of a car, especially the young and the elderly, where public transport services are poor.
<b>How is this achieved?</b>	<p>By improving the delivery of public services to deprived neighbourhoods and rural areas</p> <p>By reducing crime and the fear of crime</p> <p>By maintaining facilities such as rural shops and post offices</p> <p>By developing local community assets and enterprises</p> <p>By encouraging the provision of local employment</p> <p>By helping local communities to help themselves</p> <p>By encouraging targeted volunteering and job creation initiatives</p>
<b>Who else is</b>	All public services including Health, Police, Education, Social Care, Public Transport

<b>involved?</b>	East Sussex County Council Parish councils Voluntary organisations Funding bodies Businesses	
<b>The Council's Role</b>	<b>As an advocate:</b>	<p>We will continue to lobby at a national and regional level for resources to help deliver services and support projects that benefit our disadvantaged communities</p> <p>The Council has a member nominated as its 'Village Shops Champion' to represent the interests of village shops and post offices</p> <p>The Council will resist the loss of local services such as public transport and post offices to rural and disadvantaged communities.</p>
	<b>As a service provider &amp; legislator:</b>	<p>We will maintain and administer the Council's Community Grants scheme</p> <p>We will continue to plan to maintain sustainable local communities through our forward planning policies in the Local Development Framework</p>
	<b>As a partner and enabler:</b>	<p>We will continue to support and administer the Local Strategic Partnership</p> <p>We have supported the preparation of Local Action Plans across of Rother, including Bexhill, and will work with the Local Strategic Partnership to support the implementation of local priorities identified in the Local Action Plans</p> <p>We will support the implementation of the County-Wide Youth Homelessness strategy</p> <p>We will maintain and develop our working relationships with the Police, the Health Service, the County Council, Rother Voluntary Action and other key agencies</p>

		<p>We will support outside organisations that help to support services to local communities, where appropriate and monitor these arrangements through service level agreements</p> <p>We will continue to act as Accountable Body to the WARR Partnership and the rural LEADER programme</p>
	<b>As an employer:</b>	We will continue to employ the staff required to administer the WARR Partnership's LEADER programme, as accountable body
	<b>As a deliverer of projects:</b>	<p>We will continue with the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan projects for Community Involvement and Support to Volunteering</p> <p>We will continue to take forward the Camber Visitor Management Initiative as one of the Council's Executive Priorities</p>

## 3.0 Inspiration – Leadership and Communication

A great deal is already being done to support and develop the local economy. Creating and sustaining confidence is vital to successful communities, whether it be amongst businesses to stimulate investment and employment; or amongst local people to make best use of their own skills and talents.

<b>3.1</b>	<b>Promote a positive image for the area</b>	
<b>Why?</b>	Rother has many successful and innovative businesses operating and has a good many reasons why it is a good place to live and do business. Confidence is an important factor in economic success. We need to market and promote the benefits of the area to encourage businesses to invest, to take on additional employees, or to relocate into the area.	
<b>How is this achieved?</b>	<p>By having a consistent communications strategy that is adopted by all of the principal partners listed below</p> <p>By emphasising and making best use of our competitive strengths</p> <p>By having clear, consistent and focused messages</p> <p>By using our political influence</p> <p>By increasing knowledge of and information about Rother based businesses</p> <p>By celebrating our successes and achievements to as wide an audience as possible</p>	
<b>Who else is involved?</b>	<p>Other Districts and Boroughs</p> <p>East Sussex County Council</p> <p>Businesses and their representative organisations</p> <p>SeaSpace</p> <p>Further &amp; Higher Education – Bexhill College, Sussex Coast College, University Centre Hastings</p> <p>Locate East Sussex</p>	
<b>The Council's Role</b>	<b>As an advocate:</b>	<p>We will encourage our partners to embrace and adopt a consistent approach to communications</p> <p>We will encourage businesses to share successes and help to raise awareness of these both locally and further afield</p>
	<b>As a service provider &amp;</b>	We will use our own communications team to publicise successes

	<b>legislator:</b>	We will continue to promote a positive image for the area through our support for tourism (see 1.5 – Support the Visitor Economy)
	<b>As a partner and enabler:</b>	We will continue to support Locate East Sussex to promote inward investment  We will share information with our partners and take advantage of joint PR opportunities  We will support initiatives increasing the information about local businesses particularly to enable local support of local businesses
	<b>As an employer:</b>	Through ensuring effective use of staff to deliver projects and initiatives benefitting the local community
	<b>As a deliverer of projects:</b>	We will develop and implement communications strategies for Council projects

<b>3.2</b>	<b>Raise awareness and aspirations among the local community, particularly our young people</b>
<b>Why?</b>	There is a need to raise awareness among our young people of the many career opportunities that are, available in Rother, and of the steps that are being taken to invest in our economic future, to encourage more of our aspiring young people to develop their careers here rather than move elsewhere.
<b>How is this achieved?</b>	By celebrating our successes and achievements with young people By engaging young people with our businesses from an early age By encouraging stronger links between Schools, Colleges and businesses
<b>Who else is involved?</b>	East Sussex County Council Businesses and their representative organisations SeaSpace

	Connexions service Skills Funding Agency Further & Higher Education – Bexhill College, Sussex Coast College, University Centre Hastings Third Sector organisations Local Partnerships for Children	
<b>The Council's Role</b>	<b>As an advocate:</b>	We will champion the successes of our businesses, and of our young people  We will encourage businesses, schools and colleges to engage with each other to raise awareness of career opportunities
	<b>As a service provider &amp; legislator:</b>	N/A
	<b>As a partner and enabler:</b>	We will support the development of a Young Enterprise Centre
	<b>As an employer:</b>	We will maintain our policy of offering apprenticeships and work experience opportunities to young people
	<b>As a deliverer of projects:</b>	We will encourage our tenants at Elva Business Centre and elsewhere to engage with local schools and colleges

<b>3.3</b>	<b>Work in partnership with others to influence decisions</b>
<b>Why?</b>	The Council plays a unique role in the local community. People look to their local council to provide basic services; but also to provide leadership in shaping their community for the future; and to represent their interests in other areas that impinge on their quality of life. With our electoral mandate we can try to influence decision-making in many areas that have an impact on the communities that we represent.
	By having a clear and consistent vision of what we want By having a strong and effective communications strategy By ensuring that we make the Council's voice heard among other decision-makers



	By forming strong partnerships to achieve shared objectives	
<b>Who else is involved?</b>	Members of Parliament Members of the European Parliament Local Politicians Senior Officers Business and Community Leaders Local Strategic Partnerships Town and Parish Councils	
<b>The Council's Role</b>	<b>As an advocate:</b>	We will seek to maintain strong lines of communication with outside bodies such as the Strategic Rail Authority, Government Departments and agencies, Local Enterprise Partnerships, etc. to represent the interests of Rother  We will ensure that Rother's voice is heard in the relevant strategic and political forums  We will use this Economic Regeneration Strategy to articulate the economic aspirations and priorities for Rother
	<b>As a service provider &amp; legislator:</b>	We will periodically review, maintain and update our Corporate Plan and other Council strategic documents such as the Local Development Framework, the Economic Regeneration Strategy, the Housing Strategy, Young People's Strategy and others.  We will ensure that our strategies are consistent with and complementary to the objectives of the East Sussex Sustainable Community Strategy
	<b>As a partner and enabler:</b>	We will continue to commit to partnership working and try to be a 'good partner'  We will continue to be represented on, and support the Hastings and Bexhill Task Force, Hastings and Bexhill Regeneration Limited, and the Hastings

		<p>&amp; Bexhill Economic Alliance</p> <p>We will continue to administer and support the Rother Local Strategic Partnership and to work with the East Sussex Strategic Partnership</p> <p>We will help to monitor and review our Local Action Plans, working with our local Town &amp; Parish councils and their communities.</p>
	<b>As an employer:</b>	<p>We will maintain our reputation as a good employer through the implementation of the Council's Workforce Development Plan</p> <p>We will maintain and renew the Council's Investors in People status</p>
	<b>As a deliverer of projects:</b>	<p>We will lead by example through the delivery of our Corporate Plan projects; such as Elva Business Centre, the Camber Visitor Management Initiative; the 'Next Wave' seafront improvements</p>

## **Appendix 1 – Economic Context**

This Appendix sets out the local economic context and the challenges it presents. The information is drawn from a range of sources, much of which has been gathered to inform the preparation of the Local Development Framework. For more extensive information please visit the Rother website, [www.rother.gov.uk](http://www.rother.gov.uk) or East Sussex in Figures [www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk](http://www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk)

Rother contains a number of prosperous areas and communities, particularly in the north of the District where access to London is much better, and west Bexhill which is characterised by larger and more expensive housing stock. However, by comparison with more prosperous areas of the South East, many local jobs are low paid and there is a perception that career opportunities are limited. This leads to a tendency for higher-skilled young people with aspirations to move away, taking their spending power, skills and energy with them.

Rother, along with most of East Sussex, has for many years lagged behind the rest of the South East in its economic performance. Most of Rother falls within the Hastings Travel-to-Work Area and the two districts are economically co-dependent. Our nearest neighbour Hastings Borough is one of the most economically deprived towns in the South East and ranks among the more deprived in the country. Poor transport infrastructure highlights issues around the availability and affordability of public transport; and the difficulties of travelling on an obsolete road network is frequently cited as a constraint by local businesses.

All of this has led to a decline in business opportunities and a leakage of the higher-skilled workforce.

Long-term changes to the global economy will undoubtedly make themselves felt in Rother. The recent recession and the subsequent squeeze on public spending will further threaten the local economy which is dependent on small businesses and with a high proportion of public sector employment.

### ***Population & Demographics***

The District comprises the coastal town of Bexhill-on-Sea and two market towns, Rye and Battle; and covers a large rural hinterland of 200 square miles.

Rother has an unevenly dispersed population of over 87,000. Almost half the population, approximately 41,600 people, live in Bexhill-on-Sea. The other principal towns in the district, Battle and Rye, are considerably smaller, with populations of 6,200 and 5,000 respectively. The rest of the population is distributed across the rural parts of the district, centred on a number of village settlements.

Rother has a large elderly population and this is forecast to rise with an increasing proportion of the population over the age of 65. It is projected that by 2026, 53% of those in employment will be over the age of 45.

The number of residents that are economically inactive due to permanent sickness or disability is higher than in the surrounding areas.

Whilst the beauty of this largely rural and coastal area makes it an attractive place to visit, it is often not seen as a first choice for young people to live and work in.

### ***Employment and Income Levels***

Compared to the national average, Rother District has a low percentage of people in higher professional managerial occupations, lower managerial professional and intermediate occupations. This most likely reflects the fact that Rother does not have many large employers that need or can support senior professional staff.

Rother has the lowest number of high value jobs in East Sussex as a proportion of its workforce and almost a third lower than the South East average. Rother also has a relatively high percentage of small employers and own account workers and a higher than national average number of jobs in personal service or sales (retail).

Rother has a significantly higher than national average of residence based earnings but a significantly lower than national and county average of workplace based earnings. This reflects a divide between those who commute to much better paid jobs outside Rother (typically in London and Brighton) as opposed to those who are employed within the district.

The average earnings figures for the District mask a clear divide between income levels in the commuter belt in the north of the District and those on the coast in Bexhill and Rye. Rother contains a number of prosperous areas and communities, particularly in the north of the District where access to London and Tunbridge Wells is much better. Census data indicates that Bodiam, Brightling, Burwash, Dallington, Etchingham, Ewhurst, Ticehurst and Whatlington have a high percentage of higher professional and managerial positions, whilst Bexhill, Camber, Rye, and Icklesham have a very low percentage.

In large parts of Bexhill, Rye and Eastern Rother jobs are predominantly low paid low skill in nature, often in retail, public services or the health economy, or in small firms and micro businesses. There are few opportunities for younger or professional people to remain, and a high cost of house ownership. This contributes to a migration of younger people and their associated spending, skills and energy leaving a higher proportion of the population with specific needs and problems.

The combination of low income levels and high house prices has made Rother the least affordable district in East Sussex to purchase a house and in excess of the regional and national average. The knock on effects of low paying jobs and unaffordable housing is to drive economically active younger people out of the District.

Rother has a relatively high proportion of people on fixed incomes – i.e. the retired, together with those who are out of work or dependent on benefits. 13.1% of working age population in Rother are claiming key benefits, compared to a South East average of 9.6% and a GB average of 13.9% (2008)

### ***Barriers to Employment***

For those who are not currently economically active, there are a number of factors which can influence their ability to find work.

- Access to childcare, including after-school provision
- Debt and financial awareness
- Literacy and Numeracy Skills
- IT skills
- Low self-esteem / confidence
- Awareness of training opportunities
- Cost of training
- Health problems
- Addiction
- Criminal record
- Age Discrimination – for young and old

### ***Education & Skills***

Whilst Rother has some high-performing state schools and a thriving private schools sector, the average level of educational attainment in Rother is lower than that for the South East, with only 20.9% of the working age population (17 – 64) holding a NVQ level 4 qualification (compared to a regional average of 30.5%), and 10% with no formal qualifications at all.

Schools in East Sussex overall have a lower than average performance at Key Stage 4 when compared to the rest of England (% of 15 year old pupils achieving 5+A\*-C (and equivalent) including English and maths GCSEs). In Hastings in particular, average performance is amongst the worst in the country.

The East Sussex Business Survey 2007 cites difficulties in recruiting staff with appropriate specialist or technical skills as a key business constraint, second in importance only to energy costs.

Rother has a lower than average proportion of people with access to the internet (62.3% of adults in 2008 compared to a UK average of 66.5% and a SE Average of 70.5%)

Improving educational attainment and basic skills levels is therefore acknowledged as a priority.

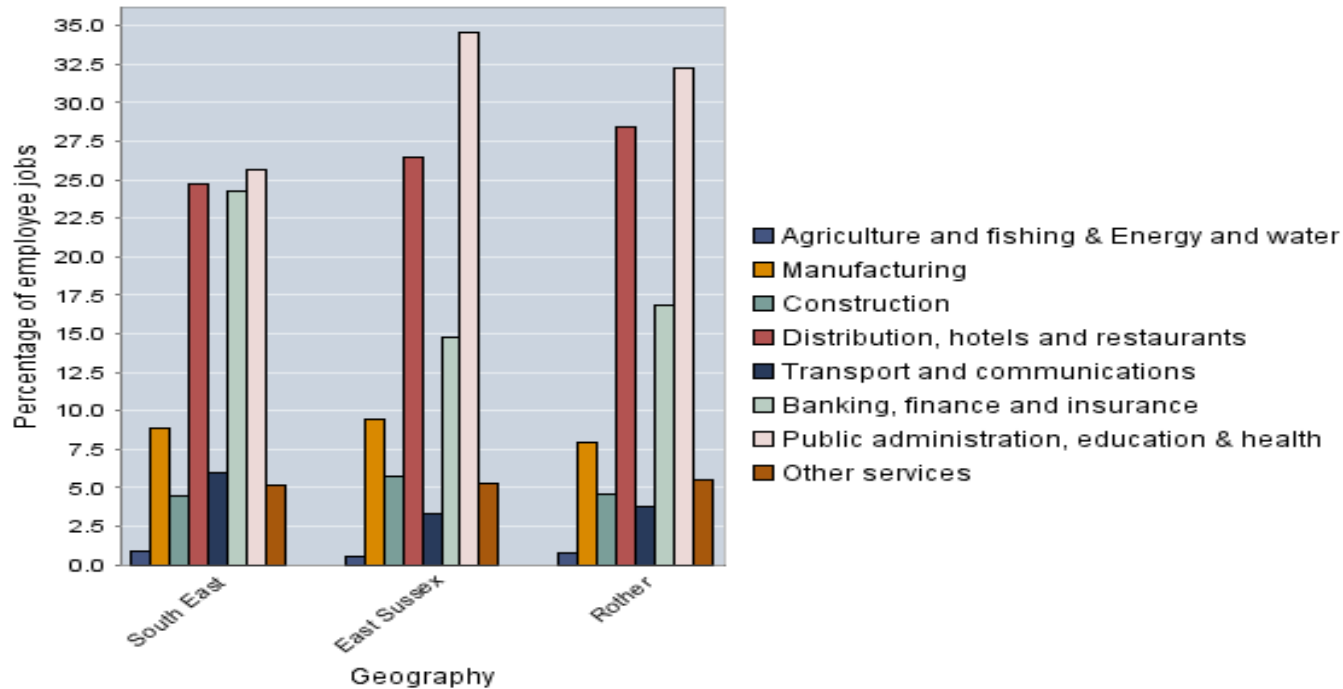
### **Economic Activity**

The past decade has seen a period of sustained economic growth, yet this has not really benefitted Rother (or East Sussex) relative to other parts of the country.

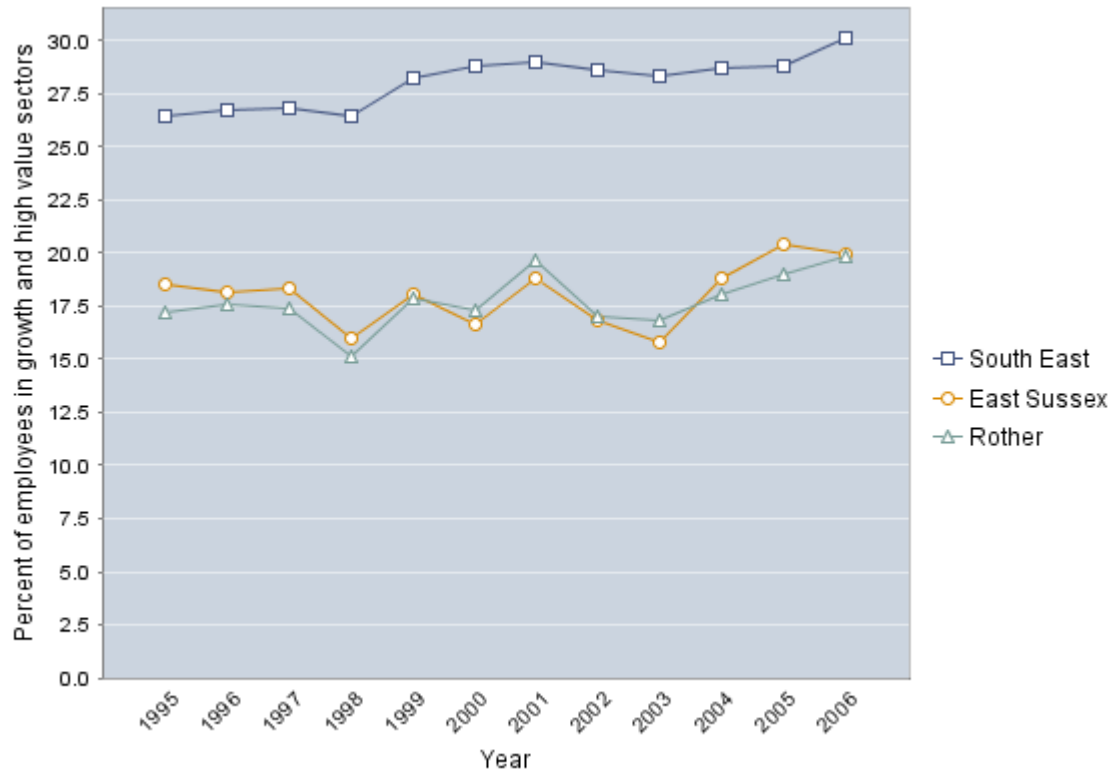
Overall the business base is relatively small, with only marginal growth in VAT-registered businesses in the last 10 years. There are some 34,000 jobs in Rother compared to 38,000 in Hastings (2006) and weekly average earnings are significantly lower than those for the South East as well as East Sussex. A significant proportion, 35% of local jobs, is part time. 21% of the working age population is described as economically inactive, compared to a SE average of 18%

A breakdown of employment sectors is set out below. The business base locally does not currently contain a high proportion of companies in growth sectors. There is a general lack of quality sites and premises, coupled with ageing stock.

### **Employment by industry, 2006**



## Employment in growth and high value added sectors, 1995-2006



Growth and high value-added employment includes employment in the following sectors:

- Finance and advanced business services : banking, insurance, financial services:
- Computer and related activities:
- Business services such as legal services and accounting.
- Manufacture of computers, radios, TVs, communication equipment etc., telecommunications;
- R&D, higher education;
- Video, radio and television activities, publishing and reproduction of recorded media and libraries etc;
- High Tech Manufacturing: electrical/electronic engineering including telecommunications, aerospace, precision instruments and pharmaceuticals;
- Cultural Industries : include recreational and cultural activities e.g. radio and television and libraries architecture, advertising, publishing, reproduction of recorded media, photographic activities, computer software and specialised retailing.

## ***Barriers to Business Growth***

Surveys of businesses have indicated the following as key barriers to growth:

- Access by road
- Quality of available business space
- Skills gaps – in technical and skilled trades, and in customer handling skills
- Staff retention

In the recent recession access to finance has also proved a major constraint and the effectiveness of government interventions to ensure greater lending by banks has been questioned. It remains to be seen how effective the measures prove in the long term. Locally, the Capitalise Business Support fund managed by Ten Sixty-Six Enterprise offers loans to small businesses who have been turned down from conventional sources.

## ***Transport***

Transport links in the area are not well developed limiting people's ability to access jobs and training. Fewer than 8% of the working population in Rother travel to work by public transport, compared to 15% nationally. Whilst the distance between the coast and Central London is some 60 miles, journey times by rail between Bexhill and London are the same as those from Manchester (200 miles) or Cardiff (150 miles). Improvements to road and rail infrastructure are constrained by geographical factors and the high proportion of land that is subject to environmental designations.

Whilst some improvements have been made or are planned to the A21, road links both North / South and East / West remain relatively poor and act as an inhibitor to business growth.

Local public transport infrastructure is also poor, particularly in the rural areas, which restricts the mobility of labour and particularly affects those on low incomes, young people, and the elderly.

## ***Hastings Travel-to-Work Area***

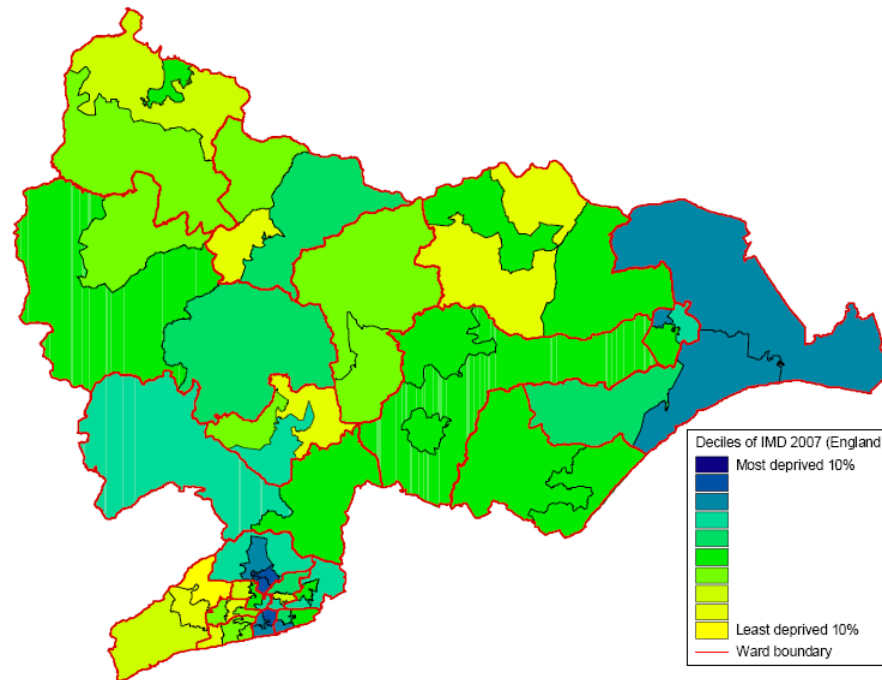
As stated in Section 2 of this document, Rother's economy is inextricably linked to that of Hastings. Hastings is the main centre of population around which the district of Rother sits, however Hastings is one of the most deprived communities in the South East, suffering from high levels of unemployment and benefit dependency, a low skills base, poor educational attainment and low average levels of income. The performance of Hastings' economy in the future will therefore be a key factor in determining the economic fortunes of Rother.



## Local Deprivation

Below is a map setting out the results of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2007 for Rother. The Index of Multiple Deprivation provides a relative ranking of areas across England according to their level of deprivation. It brings together 37 different indicators which cover specific aspects or dimensions of deprivation: Income, Employment, Health and Disability, Education, Skills and Training, Barriers to Housing and Services, Living Environment and Crime. These are weighted and combined to create the overall Index of Multiple Deprivation. The majority of the data underpinning the IMD 2007 dates from 2005 although some data covers a number of years, for example an average of 2003-2005.

Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2007 – Rother super output areas



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As well as providing an overall score reflecting the extent of multiple deprivation, the IMD 2007 also ranks the scores for all of the 32,482 lower layer Super Output Areas (SOAs) in England. Super Output Areas have between 1000 and 3000 people living in them, with an average population of 1500 people. In most cases, these are smaller than wards, thus allowing the identification of small pockets of deprivation. A rank of 1 represents the most deprived SOA, and a rank of 32,482 the least deprived area.

The map above shows the rankings for SOAs in Rother by grouping them into deciles. Nationally, each decile contains 10% of the SOAs in England. Policy making and special assistance often focuses on providing extra support to areas that fall within the lowest deciles - to SOAs that are amongst the worst 10% or worst 20% in the country.

Within Rother, particular issues of note are:

Child Poverty: Sidley contains child poverty indices equalling or exceeding those in Hastings. Child poverty is also a serious issue in Central Bexhill, Sackville, and St Michaels (Pebsham).

Education: 3 LSOA's are in the worst 10% nationally, and 6 in the worst 20%. Sidley, Central Eastern Rother and Rye have significant issues around education deprivation. In Bexhill the areas mirror the areas with significant other social and economic deprivation issues.

Earnings: Rother has a significantly higher than national average of residence based earnings but a significantly lower than national and county average of workplace based earnings. This would reflect a divide between those who can commute to much better paid jobs outside Rother (typically in London and Brighton) as opposed to those who are employed within the district. This has a knock on effect for the configuration of transport infrastructure as well as quality of life issues for individuals and families that commute to work. There is a clear divide between income levels in the commuter belt in the north of the District and those on the Coast in Bexhill and Rye

Overall, Bexhill has seen a decline of an average of 9% in its IMD 2007 rankings since the previous Index was published in 2004. This indicates a relative worsening of socio-economic issues when compared to the rest of England. There are indications that the "pockets" of deprivation are widening and encompassing larger parts of the town, whilst more affluent parts of the town maintain a status quo. Sidley, St Michaels, Old Town and parts of Central Wards in Bexhill have experienced a large decline in their ranking.

Rural Rother has shown an average 7% decline in its ranking in overall deprivation indices. Rye and Eastern Rother have a particularly large decline in their ranking.

It should be borne in mind however that deprivation is a relative measure. A worsening in the ranking does not necessarily reflect a worsening in absolute terms; but that in the measures by which the IMD is calculated (Income, Employment, Health and Disability,

Education, Skills and Training, Barriers to Housing and Services, Living Environment and Crime) Rother's position relative to other parts of the country has not improved. The characteristics of the local economy as summarised above, and the constraints affecting it, has meant that Rother has not reaped the rewards of the sustained economic growth of the recent decade to the same extent as other parts of the country.

### ***Impact of the Recent Recession***

The recent recession has already resulted in higher levels of unemployment, higher numbers of business failures and fewer business start-ups, as a result in the fall in consumer spending and consumer confidence.

The drop in house values has put a hold on development and housing development has effectively stagnated.

A squeeze on public spending means that there will be even greater pressure on Local Authorities and other public services to limit spending whilst retaining high standards of service delivery.

Locally, the relatively high proportion of people on fixed incomes together with high public sector presence, means that to date Rother may have been less affected by the recession than other parts of the South East. However, the underlying weaknesses of the economy remain and in particular, the recession will affect those on low incomes or not in employment. It is now considered inevitable that the Government's response to the recession will necessitate a squeeze on public sector spending that could have damaging consequences affecting the local economy and could mean that the effects of the recession will persist locally even once the UK economy as a whole is recovering.

### **The 'Rother in Profile' LDF Spatial Portrait identifies the following key drivers for change in the future:**

- Population and migration trends

The anticipated rate of population growth is lower than the national or regional average, but the proportion above retirement age is set to increase.

- Emerging housing growth requirements

South East Plan requirements seek 6,600 additional dwellings for Rother by 2026, the majority of which are expected to be provided in Bexhill and the Hastings Fringes

- Local housing need

Efforts to make housing more affordable for local people need to be considered alongside regeneration initiatives that will increase local earnings.

- Climate change agenda and use of resources

Climate change will have an increasing impact on flood risk and there is an expectation that energy efficiency and renewable energy sources will play an increasingly important role

- Regeneration initiatives and employment trends

The business base locally does not currently contain a high proportion of companies in high growth sectors. Local initiatives, led by the Hastings & Bexhill Task Force, have sought to promote high growth sectors through targeted investment in accordance with the Five Point Plan.

- Infrastructure Programmes

Water supply and road infrastructure give rise to greatest concern. The Bexhill Hastings Link Road is the most significant element as key to releasing employment potentials, and the A21 is identified for improvements over time. The establishment of the University Centre Hastings, together with the new Bexhill College, the new Hastings College and Bexhill High School should improve local skill levels.

- Technology

Advances in technology will continue to accelerate. Whilst the district is fully broadband-enabled, there is an urgent need to invest in the next generation of ICT infrastructure to maintain competitiveness. Increasing use of ICT is likely to lead to more flexible working practices, including homeworking.

- Changing Arrangements for Service Delivery

Increased use of the internet for shopping and other services has implications for traditional retail centres. Changes in working and consumer practices have knock-on effects to areas such as childcare requirements, travel patterns, physical access to facilities.

The impact of the recession and its aftermath should perhaps also be added as a driver for change, due to the effects that a future squeeze on public spending might have on local employment.

## **SWOT Analysis**

*Below is a summary of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats influencing Rother's economy*

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Excellent quality of life with a rich cultural offer</i></li> <li>• <i>Business accommodation cheaper than most areas of S.E.</i></li> <li>• <i>Geographically close to London, Brighton, and mainland Europe</i></li> <li>• <i>Connectivity with economically more active areas (Gatwick, Tunbridge Wells, Ashford)</i></li> <li>• <i>Area attractive to lifestyle businesses and 'downsizers'</i></li> <li>• <i>Small business economy not dependent on single sector</i></li> <li>• <i>Presence of high-value and knowledge-based businesses</i></li> <li>• <i>Strong partnerships (Hastings BC, Task Force, 1066 Country)</i></li> <li>• <i>Strong and diverse tourism sector with capacity to expand</i></li> <li>• <i>Significant heritage and natural assets</i></li> <li>• <i>Availability of business support and training</i></li> <li>• <i>Active local communities</i></li> <li>• <i>Some high-performing schools</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Road and Rail infrastructure poor – unduly long journey times</i></li> <li>• <i>Poor public transport, particularly in rural areas</i></li> <li>• <i>Coastal towns have limited catchment</i></li> <li>• <i>Demographic profile with low proportion of 18 – 40's</i></li> <li>• <i>Low skills base</i></li> <li>• <i>Low average earnings</i></li> <li>• <i>Ageing building stock</i></li> <li>• <i>Small businesses predominantly trading locally and vulnerable to economic downturn</i></li> <li>• <i>Strong public sector employment presence, economy less able to capitalise on economic growth</i></li> <li>• <i>Service sector predominant, supporting relatively low-paid jobs</i></li> <li>• <i>High proportion of retired / fixed incomes limits wealth creation</i></li> <li>• <i>Some poorly performing schools (in Hastings in particular)</i></li> <li>• <i>Low commercial property values / poor viability for new development</i></li> <li>• <i>Poor IT connectivity</i></li> <li>• <i>Un-coordinated training environment – too many agencies</i></li> </ul>

### **Opportunities**

- *Changing working patterns – increasing homeworking*
- *Greater importance placed upon work-life balance and quality of life*
- *Investment into business & skills infrastructure (Innovation Centre, UCH, Schools & FE colleges)*
- *Potential to expand high growth sectors*
- *Link Road / A21 corridor improvements enabling housing and employment growth*
- *Continued focus on Hastings as target for intervention / funding*
- *Diversification in rural areas*
- *Cultural dividend (DLWP, Jerwood)*
- *Image of coastal towns changing*
- *Use of new technologies to maintain competitiveness*
- *Emerging Local Development Framework*
- *Use of internet to develop business opportunities*
- *Better links between education and businesses*
- *Wide skills base of the newly retired*

### **Threats**

- *Cuts in public sector spending*
- *Low commercial property values leading to lack of development*
- *Loss of employment land*
- *Loss of competitiveness through lack of investment in ICT infrastructure*
- *Delays in achieving housing growth due to current recession*
- *Tourist industry vulnerable to currency fluctuations*
- *Area-based approached to regeneration funding largely excludes Rother*
- *Dependence on Hastings as economic driver – risk of continued failure*
- *Competition from other local economies with higher skills levels*
- *Negative perceptions of the area*
- *Loss of services to rural areas*

## **Appendix 2 - Policy Context**

This strategy sits within the context of a hierarchy of National, Regional and local strategies, including the East Sussex Sustainable Community Strategy and the Council's own Corporate Plan.

### **National & Regional Perspective**

Rother sits within the South-East Region, which is one of the most prosperous regions in the UK. Since 2000 the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) has been responsible for developing a Regional Economic Strategy for the South East, and the most recent of these was published in 2006.

The Regional Economic Strategy 2006 focused on the need for the South East to remain competitive in a global economic market, and had three underlying themes: Global Competitiveness; Smart Growth; and Sustainable Prosperity.

The Strategy also acknowledged that the geography of the South East region also defines different economic characteristics, and sets out priorities that are relevant to each. The three defined areas are: the Inner South East, (those areas which are closely linked to London and the M25 corridor); the Rural South East, and the Coastal South East.

For more information on SEEDA and the Regional Economic Strategy, visit their website [www.seeda.co.uk](http://www.seeda.co.uk)

Until recently this sat alongside a South East Plan which provided a regional spatial strategy that supplanted previously adopted County Structure Plans. However, the new Coalition government has taken early steps to disband regional bodies and strategies.

### **Impact of the New Administration**

Following the General Election in May 2010, the Coalition government has discarded existing regional economic and spatial strategies; and the Regional Development Agencies will be disbanded and replaced by sub-regional Local Economic Partnerships (LEP's). At the time of publication it is unclear how these will be configured and what powers or resources will be available to LEP's, pending a Government White Paper.

The Government has pledged to significantly reduce public spending in order to halve the national budget deficit by 2016. A Comprehensive Spending Review is due to be announced in the Autumn of 2010, and whilst the detail of this remains uncertain, it is likely that funding for regeneration activity and transport projects, as well as Local Authority budgets, will be subject to significant cutbacks. The South East is likely to lose out by comparison to other regions such as the North East and North West where there is more widespread deprivation; this will present a significant challenge to deprived parts of the South East, such as Hastings. The

economy of Rother is closely tied to that of Hastings and this represents a significant risk to the regeneration of the area. Government spending cuts will also inevitably have an effect on the ability of the Council and its partners to deliver services in the future.

### **The East Sussex Sustainable Community Strategy (Pride of Place)**

'Pride of Place,' is the integrated Sustainable Community Strategy for East Sussex 2008-2026. It draws upon and unites the Community Plans prepared by all of the Districts and Boroughs in East Sussex. Its vision is to create places where everyone can prosper, be safe and healthy, and live in a high quality environment.

The main objectives are to create and sustain:

- A vibrant, diverse and sustainable economy
- Great places to live in, and enjoy, and
- Safe, healthy and fulfilling lives.

Within 'Pride of Place' the vision and broad objectives for Rother are:

- Community Safety
- Children and Young People
- Enterprise and Skills
- Culture and Leisure
- Waste and Recycling
- Health
- Housing
- Transport

Delivery against the Community Strategy priorities within Rother is monitored by the Rother Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), which brings key organisations together to produce plans which embrace issues of importance to local people.

The County Council is currently developing its county-wide **Local Economic Assessment** which is a recent statutory duty for all upper-tier Local Authorities and is due for completion by March 2011. This will be used to inform a review of the County-wide Economic Development Strategy. The County Council is also leading on the East Sussex Work & Skills Plan and a Child Poverty Assessment, all of which will inform the County's Economic Development Strategy, 'Pride of Place', and the new Integrated Regional Strategy.



## Rother District Council Corporate Plan

Rother's Corporate Plan 2006-2016 draws on local and national concerns, establishes the policy priorities and key actions for the Council as a whole over a 10-year period. Every other Council plan or strategy feeds from and into it. The Corporate Plan therefore provides a focus to the approach that the Council will take in supporting the objectives of the Community Plan, including those relating to the local economy.

### Rother District Council Performance Planning Framework



The Corporate Plan sets out the Council's vision for the future of the District and the specific ways in which we as a District Council will both lead and contribute to the achievement of this vision.

The Corporate Plan Vision is to see:

- Greater economic prosperity with a skilled workforce gaining access to well paid employment
- Our local communities building capacity to identify and resolve their own challenges
- A place of greater vibrancy with more youthful demographic profile, supporting economically active lifestyles
- Greater tolerance and understanding of diversity in our communities
- Inequalities, isolation and deprivation tackled, with an increase in respect and a decrease in crime and anti-social behaviour
- Our residents housed in decent homes
- More leisure and cultural opportunities as a basis for healthy community life
- The outstanding assets of countryside and coastline valued more highly for their contribution to our quality of life

The Council's **Local Plan** sets out the planning policy context for development within Rother. The Council is currently developing its **Local Development Framework (LDF)** which will in due course replace the Local Plan. The LDF will set out the Council's long-term economic, social and environmental objectives and relate these into a spatial strategy which will guide the use of land and resources.

The LDF draft Core Strategy sets out the following Aim & Objectives for the local economy:

**Aim:**

**To secure sustainable economic growth for existing and future residents, and provide greater prosperity for all**

**Objectives:**

**To improve educational attainment**

**To increase skill levels**

**To increase the business base and overall productivity**

**To expand the range of job opportunities**

**To improve the balance of homes and jobs**

**To increase local earnings relative to living costs**

## **Hastings & Bexhill Task Force and the Five Point Plan**

In 2001 the Government committed to supporting a Five-Point Plan prepared by the Hastings and Bexhill Task Force, which comprises Hastings Borough Council, Rother District Council, East Sussex County Council, South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), Government Office for the South East and English Partnerships.

The Five Point Plan addresses the following themes:

- Transport Improvements
- Urban Renaissance
- Excellence in Education
- Business Development
- Broadband Connectivity

The ten-year regeneration plan for Hastings & Bexhill has been stimulated by funding from government sources to start the programme and act as a catalyst for private investment. This initial money comprises:

- £38m administered through SEEDA
- £15m from English Partnerships
- £3.5m from Higher Education
- £10m from other public sources, mainly the European Union
- Up to £34m for the Building Schools for Future programme
- £210m for Bexhill – Hastings Link Road and A21 improvements
- £10m Lottery Funding

The Task Force established an Urban Regeneration Company, SeaSpace, to lead on delivery of a number of major infrastructure projects, brief details of which are outlined in Section 3 of this strategy.

## **Appendix 3 – Glossary of Terms**

1066 Country:	A Partnership of Visitor Attractions, Accommodation providers and Local Authorities which works to promote the Rother and Hastings area under the ‘1066 Country’ brand.
BETRE:	Business Excellence Through Resource Efficiency; a free advisory service to East Sussex small and medium sized businesses on how to cut utility costs, environmental impact and work towards a low carbon economy.
ESCC:	East Sussex County Council
ESDA:	East Sussex Disability Association; a registered charity which provides advice, information and practical support to disabled people in overcoming any barriers they encounter.
HBRL:	Hastings & Bexhill Renaissance Limited - The Urban Regeneration Company for Hastings & Bexhill
ICT:	Information & Communications Technology
IMD:	Index of Multiple Deprivation
INTERREG:	European Funding Programme aimed at promoting cross-border collaboration between EU member states
LDF:	Local Development Framework: replaces the Structure Plan / Local Plan system of plan-making and sets out how development and change across the district is to be managed.
LEADER:	European Funding programme for rural areas, administered by a local partnership
LEP:	Local Enterprise Partnership; a sub-regional public/private partnership to set economic regeneration strategy, replacing Regional Development Agencies.
LSP:	Local Strategic Partnership: bringing together public sector, private sector and voluntary sector organisations to develop, implement and monitor plans for improvements in the quality of life of Rother communities.
SeaSpace:	The trading name of Hastings & Bexhill Renaissance Limited

SEEDA:	South East England Development Agency: the Regional Development Agency covering the South East
SOA:	Super Output Area – a geographically defined area of consistent size with a typical population of around 1500, used as a basis for analysing census and other data .
TIC:	Tourist Information Centre
Trailblazer:	A programme of advice, guidance and skills development aimed at reducing homelessness, or the risk of homelessness, by working with people on the housing register
WARR:	Wealden and Rural Rother Partnership