

Strategic Priorities for Haywards Heath Town Council 2025-27

This paper builds on the green paper which the Town Council adopted in June 2023.

In addition to the commitments made in the 2025/26 budget to community outreach and engagement and the continued management of its day-to-day operation, there are several strategic initiatives which the council should look to progress.

The Town Council should focus on the delivery of the following key projects over the next twenty-four months. Some of these were envisioned in the green paper but now at the halfway stage of the term of this council it is right to take stock of the wider context including proposed changes to local authorities announced by the government and refocus on projects that the Town Council wants to prioritise for its remaining term.

1. Local government reorganisation and devolution.

- 1.1 Central government's announcements in the autumn of 2024 underlined the importance of the strategic approach which the Town Council adopted in the green paper in 2023. Haywards Heath Town Council should be championing the interests of the town's residents generally in seeking to support the vitality of the town.
- 1.2 The Council should seek to involve itself in the governance and management of local public realm assets. These include Victoria Park, Clair Hall and Park, Beech Hurst Gardens as well as the numerous smaller parks and parcels of land around the town.
- 1.3 There are contracts with WSCC and MSDC and potential new collaborative initiatives in which the Town could work with the new, to be created, unitary body and combined Sussex wide mayoral authority.
- 1.4 Devolution of powers from central government to the new authorities should include engagement including through local town, parish and neighbourhood councils to inform and educate their communities to ensure they benefit from the changes in Health Services, Transport and Housing etc.
- 1.5 The town council should work with neighbouring towns and parishes in common cause and to help parishes provide services using the town's resource on an appropriate remunerated basis where relevant.
- 1.6 Allocated but unspent S106 money currently held at MSDC and WSCC should be spent locally to the benefit of the town and HHTC should seek to advance the plans for these funds, ensuring that the town benefits and that they are not lost sight of in the reorganisation of those councils.

2. Clair Hall development

- 2.1 MSDC moved forward with procuring a cinema operator and plans to create a food and drinks venue in a new Clair Hall. The likely development of the site will also encompass additional community space and the Town Council has already indicated its interest in partnering with

the participants and working with MSDC to help ensure the success of the scheme and to be potentially involved financially.

- 2.2 A HHTC Clair Hall working group has been set up and this group should in due course work with MSDC and others to help shape the future Clair Hall and look to get the best for the town community in terms of local services and facilities. This may include bringing to the council proposals to invest in the capital and underwrite revenues of the venture with necessary and appropriate involvement of the Town Council in the governance.

3. Hurstwood Lane development

- 3.1 HHTC is a material participating body in the build out of the Hurstwood Lane development. Alongside the housing and much needed new local school, the town will gain additional assets: a new burial ground, allotments and country park.
- 3.2 A working group under the council's Policy and Finance Committee should be formed to oversee this project and review how the council can best support these new assets and the responsibilities that go with them. The council will need to create a financial budget and an operational plan for their management.

4. Footpaths and Cycle routes around town

- 4.1 Footpaths and Cycle routes around Haywards Heath and into the surrounding countryside need mapping and improved signposting. Encouraging the use of paths and connecting people to the town's key assets and amenities including shops and local open spaces etc.
- 4.2 The council should create an interactive map on the council website and publish maps around the town.
- 4.3 Many footpaths, twittens, cycle routes need to be tidied up and aligned with popular walking routes. There is opportunity to create safe and clear crossing points where footpath / cycle ways meet roads. Some road crossing points need to be made safer for pedestrians by installing signage / lighting etc.
- 4.4 Lighting improvements are needed for some footpaths and cycle routes.
- 4.5 An active Haywards Heath plan could benefit from the initiative to encourage and support the use of the footpaths and cycle ways around the town.

5. Public Transport

- 5.1 Review with the providers the local provision of services into and around the town. Particularly for the remoter parts provision of regular services to the town centre and station are important to reduce car journeys, provide assistance to those without cars and help support the local economy.

6. Streetscape and upgrade to the town centre

- 6.1 WSCC has allocated significant amounts of S106 funds to improving the centre of Haywards Heath. The town centre needs to be attractive to users providing an attractive shopping

environment that will continue to draw a strong footfall from the community and be attractive to retailers and other businesses.

7. Business in Haywards Heath

- 7.1 The council should reach out to the larger businesses in our community alongside working with the business association (HHBA) and look to draw larger business into active policies for the town.
- 7.2 The council should follow up the initiative from MSDC to help stimulate a Business Improvement District (BID) to discuss with participants ideas for the improvement of the town's commercial attraction and progress local economic plans. These ideas should dovetail with the upgrade of the street scene and improvements to travel in and around the town.

8. Communications

- 8.1 Following on the successful upgrade of the council's website, review all aspects of the council's public communications from newsletters / circular emails and website news column to leaflets, notice boards around town and council leaflet information in the town hall to ensure that these are fit for the future, costs effective and meet the needs of the town community.
- 8.2 Working with partners including the business community to promote the town and local events and activities that help demonstrate the vitality of the town and draw in visitors to Haywards Heath.

9. Accreditation

- 9.1 HHTC aims to obtain an accreditation to demonstrate that it is one of the best local Councils in the country through the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Local Council Award Scheme.