

## **Neighbourhood Plan Business Workshop**

### **Meeting**

Meeting held on 1 August 2016 at the Woolpack Inn, Herstmonceux

### **Attendees**

Ms F. Bayou, Action in rural Sussex, Mr S. Nash (Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group), Councillor Mrs J. Angear (Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group), Councillor Mrs J. Alder (Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group), Councillor Mrs H. Kenward (Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group), Councillor Mr I. Stewart (Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group), Parish Councillor Mrs C. Stirling-Reed, East Sussex County Councillor Mr L. Keeley, Mrs S. Charlton (Village Information Centre), Mr N. Rodemark (Windmill Hill Garage), Mr D. Tate (Lime Cross Nursery), Mr A. McInnes ( Friends of Herstmonceux Castle), Mrs B. Simmons, (Herstmonceux Integrated Health Centre), Mr G. Love (Greenway Fruit Farm), Mr W. Gower (Sackville Farm), Mr J. Ford ( Lime End Farm), Mr R. Collins (Honda Collins), Mr P. Collins (Honda Collins), Mrs D. Gould (Furnace Brook Fishing Lakes), Mr A. Gould (Furnace Brook Fishing Lakes), Mrs S. Page (The Truggery), Mrs K. Short (Conquerors B&B) Mrs A. Chewter (Bank on Beauty)

### **Meeting**

- Attendees were divided into five tables with a facilitator on each table.
- The following three questions were discussed in detail by each group:
  - i. In what way does the infrastructure and any community facilities help/inhibit the development of your business or make the parish an attractive location for new businesses? E.g. parking, office space, workshop space, broadband
  - ii. How can home workers be supported to improve their business opportunities?
  - iii. Herstmonceux Business Association was set up at the beginning of the Neighbourhood Plan preparation.
    - a) How has this helped your business?
    - b) Are there any ways that the Business Association could support your business?
    - c) Is there an up to date list of businesses?
    - d) Are there networking events?
    - e) Do you receive regular newsletters?
    - f) Is the Association connected to other business organisations in the area or in the county?

### **Feedback point (i)**

- a) Positive aspects – good community health facilities at Herstmonceux Integrated Health Centre including the Vitality Villages Project. NB Since the meeting on 1 August 2016, the programme of community health facilities at the Health Centre, including the Vitality Villages Project, has been selected as a model to be used for other health centres across the district.
- b) Slow Broadband causes problems for businesses.

- c) Some areas have Fibre Optic Services but the service is patchy across the parish. It was suggested that businesses could work together to achieve a better service.
- d) The bus service is poor and unreliable with only an hourly service up to 7pm. No Sunday service.
- e) Preserve the Post Office as a vital service for businesses, especially homeworkers.
- f) Parking in the Wealden District Council (WDC) car park is often impossible, particularly during school hours, as many of the parking spaces are occupied all day by staff from the school. It was noted that Herstmonceux Parish Council has offered to create parking for school staff on the recreation ground at the rear of the school but the school considered that there were too many problems in creating a secure access for staff/pupils by an electronic entry system, and so this proposal was never progressed.
- g) WDC could be asked to introduce a car-parking limit.
- h) An additional car park is needed.
- i) There is a need for managed office units on flexible rental conditions.
- j) There are a number of workshop units but small units could attract new businesses to the parish.
- k) Empty shop units could be used for business use.
- l) Herstmonceux needs to be promoted as a good location for businesses.
- m) Village boundary could be extended to help reduce speed through the parish and to include businesses in the parish. The village needs to promote its identity by improving/possibly reviewing the village entrance from the Hailsham direction. A new welcome sign could be created beyond the Cricketing Lane junction, so that the Truggery (Herstmonceux is the home of Sussex trugs) and Collins Honda (the largest employer in the parish) are included within the Herstmonceux Village. New and improved signage (e.g. Home of Sussex Trugs, Information Centre, parking availability, Herstmonceux Castle, Science Centre) to inform visitors which would encourage a greater footfall into the village.
- n) Herstmonceux should be promoted as an area, not just the main village. Identify its farming and environmental attractions, historic windmill, castle, scenery.
- o) The village needs to be more inviting, planters, better pavement maintenance and signage (street signs and village information map indicating key features such as Science Centre, Windmill and Castle with distances
- p) Rates for small businesses are a problem.
- q) Residents have asked for gas to be connected to the parish.

### **Feedback point (ii)**

- a) Home workers can become more isolated and a forum for homeworkers should be set up.
- b) A forum would be an opportunity for homeworkers to share professional or legal advice on any issues relating to their business or using a domestic property as a business.
- c) Broadband/poor mobile telephone connectivity impacts on homeworkers.

### **Feedback point (iii)**

- a) The Business Association is not currently active.
- b) The owner of a local business and a local homeworker are keen to become involved in re-invigorating the Business Association – following a message

circulation on the Community Facebook site, over 40 home workers have already indicated their interest in a Homeworkers Forum.

- c) A number of businesses were not aware of and had not been contacted by the Business Association.
- d) The Business Association needs to be re-established and be more active in promoting and supporting businesses in the parish.
- e) There need to be regular meetings for all businesses and networking events so that businesses can support each other.
- f) A list of businesses, contact details and regular updates would help businesses keep in touch.
- g) The Business Association should establish links with groups such as Sussex Enterprise which could help in promoting Herstmonceux as a village open to new business ideas.
- h) The parish web site should include details of businesses in the parish and links to the individual businesses.

### **Key Points and Action**

1. **Promote Herstmonceux as a visitor and business area.** The western boundary of Herstmonceux should start beyond the Cricketing Lane/Gingers Green junctions with improved signage and creation of an entrance by planting. Further signage informing visitors of the attractions of Herstmonceux e.g. parking, Information Centre, B&B should be located on the approach to the Honda Collins Garage. Verge side planting, similar to other towns/villages in the area will make the parish more attractive and inviting.
2. **Re-invigorate the Business Association.** It should play an active role in working with businesses, homeworkers, other agencies and organisations to promote Herstmonceux.
3. **Parking** Herstmonceux Parish Council should revisit the discussions with Herstmonceux Primary School and WDC on the use of the public car park. This will provide extra parking for visitors to the village.
4. **Improve infrastructure** such as broadband, mobile telephone connectivity and signage to make the area more attractive to business and visitors.