

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

Findings to date and Recommendations

1 Introduction

1.1 The working group (WG) was set up with the following terms of reference:

- To help the Council understand the organisations involved in economic development and/or the promotion of Rye, their main activities/objectives – and the extent to which they co-ordinate & collaborate.
- To determine how it might best contribute to:
 - (a) The promotion of Rye as an attractive place in which to live, work, visit or study.
 - (b) Appropriate and sustainable economic development for the benefit of all.

1.2 The WG comprised Cllrs Gilbert (Chairman); Fiddimore; Rivett; Erswell; Prewer; and Rogers - although not all members were able to attend all meetings. The Clerk was present at the meetings.

2 Current Situation

2.1 There are a number of organisations in the town with an interest in business, namely:

- The Rye Chamber of Commerce – a business membership organisation, currently looking for more members and directors.
- The Rye Partnership – a business and community organisation, currently looking to focus more on business and economic development, but with a reduced staff and directorship.
- Hotel & Caterers – A relatively inactive organisation promoting hotels and catering in the town. There have been suggestions in the recent past that it should merge with the Chamber.
- Rye Bay Marketing – A not-for-profit company that promotes events and businesses in Rye. Publishes the *Rye Guide*.
- Rye Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group – A group of Town Councillors and community members, appointed by the Town Council to oversee the development of a Neighbourhood Plan.

There would appear to be minimal liaison between these stakeholders (including the Town Council) – and a number of them would appear to be constrained by limited participation.

External organisations with an interest in Rye's economy include:

- 1066 Marketing – a marketing campaign funded by Hastings BC and RDC to promote (primarily to visitors) Hastings and the '1066 area'.
- RDC's Regeneration department.
- ESCC's Economic Development & Skills division – a source of business grant funding.
- Let's Do Business
- Locate East Sussex & Kent

2.2 There are of course the businesses themselves, and a selection of these were visited by Cllrs Fiddimore and Gilbert to understand the current trading environment and what the Town Council could do, if anything, to assist them. Summary of common responses:

- 2.2.1 Parking in the town, the lack of enforcement (need for traffic warden) and dangerous parking.
- 2.2.2 Rye not being 'family friendly'.
- 2.2.3 The loading bay helps (when it is not being abused).

- 2.2.4 Festivals and the Kino are a big asset for the town.
- 2.2.5 More taxi-cabs are needed.
- 2.2.6 The Strand would benefit from more lighting and signage.
- 2.2.7 By and large, business is generally better this year.

3 Working Remit

3.1 The WG held three sessions: firstly to ascertain what areas Members felt should be investigated; secondly, to share these findings and decide on their viability; and thirdly, to prioritise what should be put before full Council.

3.2 The subjects following were suggested for investigation:

How to market Rye on line and with an events co-ordinator; improving tourism; improving the Chamber of Commerce; business rates; ability to report faults in the town to the appropriate council; better information for all on planning; making Rye shops and facilities more family friendly; the need for a traffic warden; the introduction of a town lottery; creating more artists live-work studios; developing a marina for Rye; making improvements to the Strand; encouraging more commercial filming in Rye; pedestrianisation in the town; improved transport links.

Members took on several of these subjects, researched their viability and talked with lead professionals in (and where appropriate, outside) the town.

4 Outcome

4.1 Recognising that not all subjects are viable or pressing, Table 1 outlines and prioritises suggested objectives and timescales.

4.2 Appendix 1 summarises the case for a 'reinvigorated' Chamber of Commerce and suggests what forming a Rye Business Group (title to be agreed) might entail.

Appendix 2 suggests what the role of Business & Town Promotion Officer might encompass and the desirable skills/experience to be sought.

Appendix 3 sets out a strategy to support marketing the town (including recommendations for the WG to consider further).

Appendix 4 sets out the opportunities a town lottery could bring.

Appendix 5 outlines the suggested terms of reference for a re-established working group.

5 Recommendations

5.1 To note the work and findings of the WG.

5.2 To host a meeting in the New Year – with a view to facilitating the emergence of a new, vibrant business group for the Rye area.

5.3 To progress the role of Business & Town Promotion Officer [*working title*].

5.4 To further research the benefits and practicalities of providing a Town Lottery.

5.5 Lobby RDC(HBC) to devolve filming authority powers to RTC.

5.6 To amend the WG's remit (including confirming its membership) to enable it to continue to oversee the implementation of adopted Recommendations and formulate further proposals that meet the Councils overarching objectives (see **1.1 (a-b)**).

Table 1 Suggested Priorities

Project	Task	Key mile stones	Lead Clir
Short-term priorities 1 Chamber of Commerce (Business Rye) – facilitate re-launch	Invite all Rye businesses and sole traders, plus guests, etc to a launch at the Town Hall to get (A) nominations of interest for a new Chamber of Commerce (title tba), & (B) Use the event to promote the working group and developing businesses in Rye. (C) Invite Hastings & Tenterden Chambers along too to explore working with them	1 – Launch in early February 2016 after personal visits/letters to as many businesses as possible. 2 – New chamber running by Easter 2016. 3 – Joint events with Hastings & Tenterden by Summer 2016.	RG
2 Appointment of a Business & Town Promotion Officer	See Appendix 2 – Suggested Duties	1 – Advertise for role March 2016 2 – Appointment by May 2016 3 – Get website up and running June 2016 4 - Promote weddings over summer 2016 (to generate funding towards the new post and support/facilitate festivals)	JE - website HRWG - employment
3 Improvements to the Strand	To clean up the Strand gateway into Rye, making the town more welcoming - and utilise the space.	1 – Work with EA to tidy its land 2 - Call a meeting of all land owners & other stakeholders at the Town Hall in Spring 2016 3 - Work with partners on a cohesive strategy on water frontage.	AR
4 Filming – devolved powers	To increase commercials, TV & film making in Rye	1 – Lobby RDC(HBC) to devolve filming administration and promotion to the Business & Town Promotion Officer Easter 2016	BF & JE
5 - Town Lottery	To create a quarterly lottery for local people to benefit town (esp Landgate Tower) & charities	1 – To work up deliverable scheme & present to RTC in summer 2016	JE

Priorities outside the WG's remit			
Traffic Warden parking enforcement	To improve the turnover of on street parking spaces in Rye, reduce congestion and tackle dangerous parking.	1 – Town meeting with PCC 2 – Partnership working with other local councils 3 – Secure funding 4 - Continue pressure on PCC.	Full council
For consideration at a later date			
Transport Links - improving	To improve public transport co-ordination (eg taxis from the railway to Camber, co-ordinated bus routes, more train carriages, link roads etc)	Continue to work with ESCC, RDC and other relevant stakeholders (eg MLAG, Sussex CRP)	
Marina Development	To construct a new marina for Rye to attract visitor income.	To wholeheartedly support any appropriate development that may come before RDC planning in order to increase jobs, footfall and spend in the town - and new homes.	
Pedestrianisation	To consider pedestrianising the High Street & Strand, at certain times, to increase trade.	If there is sufficient interest from residents to revisit this at a later date	
Start-up Business Rates	To lobby RDC for preferential rates for start-ups	To work with RDC to ensure the best interests of Rye business are served whenever possible	
Infrastructure	To publicise Fix My Street (East Sussex) – means of reporting faults.	To ensure the website remains clear and easy for residents to use to report issues	
Planning	To alert local people to planning issues that may affect them	To ensure RDC's planning web pages are user-friendly.	
Family Friendly Rye Creating an Artists' live-work quarter	Rye seems unwelcoming to families with pushchairs and teenagers To build on Rye's historic creativity and offer attractive live-work space	To support appropriate development whenever before the planning committee	

APPENDIX 1 – Re-launching the Chamber of Commerce: considerations

Introduction

One of the working group's early priority tasks was to investigate how a small Chamber of Commerce could be reinvigorated and be of more benefit to the town's businesses. During August, Cllr Gilbert contacted representatives from the Hastings, Tenterden, Rye and Battle Chambers.

Current Situation in Rye

Flagging membership; too few people remaining to take on tasks; Chamber offer to members has become unattractive.

Suggestions (for existing Chamber members, potential new members and interested parties)

1. **PARTNERSHIPS:** Become a branch of a wider community of business (eg a 1066 partnership including Rye, Rye Harbour, Hastings, Bexhill, Battle, Ashford & Tenterden). The benefits of this are:
 - a. Bigger voice on important local topics.
 - b. Shared information.
 - c. Shared B2B (business to business) opportunities and networking.
 - d. Greater fundraising opportunities.
2. **STRUCTURE:** Have a board of chairman, treasurer, secretary and events secretary. The membership secretary needs to be very proactive and look for opportunities outside the box to sign up members- they should share data with sister branches. Every board member should have a job description. They should be willing to attend council/committee meetings to voice opinions and feedback information (to theirs and other branches, which in turn could help share the load).
3. **MEMBERSHIP:** Have a diversity of members. A record should be kept of who comes to what events to see what works. Initially businesses should be invited to an event at the Town Hall in person, with a brochure of benefits, to encourage them to join and find out about the working group. Encourage members to give as well as take, eg help with community events, school governors etc.
4. **MEMBERSHIP FEE:** Average-appears to be £80 - could include free display tree at Xmas and an advert in the Rye Festival or Bonfire night programme.
5. **BENEFITS:**
 - a. Have 9-10 monthly meetings a year, spread around Rye, with and without speakers (outsiders such as MP, school, council etc), preferably all with refreshments, making them opportunities to do business. Ascertain whether after work or breakfasts work best for members. Always invite sister 1066 branches along to widen their B2B networking. Offer a community slot to charities and not-for-profit organisations.
 - b. Have additional offers such as trips around the museum, church tower, school etc at meetings. Offer charity events like golf-and summer soirées – maybe support the Mayor's charity each year? Like Hastings, ask the charities to do the admin work if they benefit from the profits.
 - c. Have quarterly business meetings for the board.
 - d. Offer a page on the website including what's on listing, discounts to members etc. The website also to include a bi-monthly newsletter visible to all.
 - e. Consider a loyalty scheme.
 - f. Avoid offering discounts that other members can offer as it causes conflicts.
 - g. There must be enough benefits for members to feel worth joining.
6. **LAUNCH:** Invite all businesses and sole traders to an event to find out more and have an active Chamber group there to help enthuse those attending. Ask Tenterden & Hastings delegates to attend too.

APPENDIX 2 - Business & Town Promotion Officer

A Business Development Officer, Town Manager, Town Events Co-Ordinator and similarly titled roles have previously been suggested during discussions within the Town Council and with the Chamber of Commerce. To date, the precise nature of the role and its funding has yet to be agreed. There are many good reasons to create such a post: to bring large-scale business investment into the town, to bring in visitors by maximising the promotion of the town, and to create local employment opportunities.

The Town Council currently has £15,000 set aside that could be utilised to support this role. This provision would go some way towards funding the first year of a part-time post – allowing more time to source match – and revenue – funding.

Along with the Town Steward appointment, it would demonstrate that Rye is innovative, business-minded and looks after its businesses and residents – with the potential to become a model of excellence throughout the south-east.

Suggested Purpose of the Role

To promote Rye as **the** place to live, visit, work and do business - by delivering inward investment and greater footfall to the town.

Suggested duties

- To work with relevant enterprise partners (eg Locate East Sussex & Kent, ESCC, RDC, the Chamber of Commerce, Let's Do Business, Rye Partnership) – and on their own initiative - to attract business investment into Rye & District.
- To signpost businesses, especially new ones setting up or established businesses looking to expand, towards the services and support they need which is available locally.
- To promote the town (especially its festivals and attractions) as an important visitor destination.
- To promote the town as a venue for TV and commercial filming.
- First point of contact for the media.
- To advise organisers of new/existing festivals.
- To promote the availability of the Town Hall for weddings, other ceremonies and other appropriate uses (in order to help fund the post).
- To work with the Chamber of Commerce to update regularly the Town's new website of businesses, what's on, town meetings etc.

Note The post holder would be expected to act in the best interests of the town as a whole and not particular interest groups or organisations – unless doing so would serve the town's best interest (as determined by RTC).

Possible Terms

- Part time (initially 3 days a week).
- Employed by RTC and reporting to the Town Clerk.
- Located at the Town Hall, but must be prepared to travel and work evenings and weekends if required around festivals/press campaigns/filming etc.
- Salary of £25k (pro rata at £15k per annum – *some additional funds would be needed for employer's on-costs eg NI, travel expenses etc – this would need to be costed*). Time would be divided as required, especially if working with a major investor, but could be considered approximately 1.5 days on business development, 0.5 days on events promotion/facilitation - and 1 day on tourism & promotion.
- Holidays, pensions, sick leave etc, as per RTC's standard Town Hall terms and conditions.

Economic Development Working Group

Online & Digital Marketing

As a result of an initial meeting of the working group it was decided to investigate the current situation with regard to online & digital marketing that focuses on Rye and the organisations that are currently in existence.

To complete this task a questionnaire was circulated to the following organisations which was designed to gather information pertaining to the motivations, effectiveness and opinions of these marketers in order for RTC and the EDWG can fully understand the online & digital marketing channels currently in place.

The Organisations that were sent the questionnaire were:

	Site URL	Replied
Rye Bay Marketing Ltd.	http://visityebay.co.uk	Yes
1066 Country Marketing	http://visit1066country.co.uk	Yes
Rye Chamber of Commerce	http://www.ryechamber.org.uk	Yes
RDC Regeneration	http://rother.gov.uk	Yes
Web Tech Design	http://ryesussex.co.uk	No
Rye HOTCATS	http://www.ryeguide.co.uk	No

All of the organisations that replied to the questionnaire are thanked for taking the time to respond and this shows a willingness, at least initially, to cooperate in the discussion. The replies can be made available to any member of the EDWG upon request. Please note however that some of the information contained may be confidential and therefore should not be discussed outside of the confines of the EDWG meetings.

As expected there has been some push back on being involved in this process this is due to a feeling of unease that RTC are asking the question "What is happening with regard to marketing in Rye?" this is coupled with a general fear of working closely with another organisation and therefore possible advantage being gained from the sharing of information or ideas.

"Why should we? We have been doing this in Rye for Years!"

This has been the response of at least one of the agencies on the list and the general feeling here is that involvement in a discussion means interference from RTC and this is not desirable.

General Thoughts

Having read through the replies and in speaking to a section of the responders it is my opinion that in general there is a willingness to do better and that having TC involved in this process is a positive thing. However, I am acutely aware that each one of these organisations is a silo and that they are fiercely trying to protect their little piece of the marketing pie and that whilst the intention of each of the organisations is to server Rye and to benefit the town, they have traditionally acted autonomously and steered clear of cooperative discussions or working environments.

It is also immediately obvious that the offerings out there are focus more on the tourism industry rather than anything else. This is self evident with both Rye Bay Marketing and Web Tec Designs' offerings as the focus is accommodation, and activities in Rye rather than business development or economic development.

There is also a fairly consistent duplication of content across websites and other digital channels in Rye which begs the question which one is best, and also who is visiting / consuming which services that are available for Rye.

There seems to be a lack of focus and some confusion as to which is the right place to get information about the town and the organisations out there are all vying for the right to boast that they are in fact the official online destination for the town with most of them already saying this.

All in all, we are in a situation whereby, in my opinion, the message is disjointed at best and inherently confusing for the general public as to what they should be looking at, where they should be looking at it and why there are so many places online to get information.

There is no incentive in any of the platforms currently available for business to engage with the town and to the casual observer all we have to offer is tourism.

Recommendations

One of the singular threads in the responses received from the organisations in this process is the need to coordinate the marketing efforts through a singular point of control or to put it in better terms to have a specialised person or persons to aid in the marketing of Rye in all facets. This singular point of contact should be independent and not concerned with the business aspects of marketing the town.

The first recommendation therefore falls in line with the other task set which was to investigate the possibility of a RTC employee put in place to handle the marketing and communications for the town in general and to act as an independent liaison between all of the organisations in the town or concerned with marketing the town to increase effectiveness of the outbound marketing activities specifically targeted at the economic development of Rye.

The second recommendation is to have a content aggregation portal which feeds directly from the other sites in the town that would act as a singular point of entry both for tourists and businesses in the town and interested in the town. This portal should identify and display any content listings or any other information gathered from the other platforms and act as a pass through to them.

More than this though there is an opportunity to build upon information and diversify the focus in such a way that incentivise business to consider coming to the town and also to give more information to potential new residents and indeed existing residents a like.

A couple examples of this could be a section dedicated to listing available commercial spaces and associated costs for businesses and a jobs board allowing local business to advertise posts and roles available for free in a centralised location.

Off of the back of this central focused portal there could then be a Rye Town app created which mirrors the main content and that of other organisations but also provide useful information to residents and tourists alike, such as a geo location based map showing local businesses and destinations as well as such things like refuse collections, train times, bus times etc.

With something like this in place the third recommendation is to have a business / commercial group set up and run by local business owners which is concerned with oversight on the marketing activities of Rye and chaired by the marketing / communications employee. This should be voluntary, free and should meet regularly to ensure continuity, effectiveness and engagement. This group should include a representative from all organisations that currently market Rye to ensure engagement and transparency.

Conclusions

It is clear that due to the ingrained skepticism within these organisations that the process of uniting will be a difficult one however I believe that there is an appetite for this to happen and that there is a general "What is good for Rye is good for us" mentality and that with proper engagement and process that the marketing of the town could be made to be much more successful and would also move us closer to a less silo based environment.

Potential Costs

There maybe costs associated with all of the recommendations above and as such I have included a table of potential costs for some of the resources for clarity.

	Type	Estimated Cost
Rye Town Portal	Web Site	£6,500 + £150 p/a
Rye Town App	iOS & Android App	£10,000
Marcoms Coordinator	Salary	£18,000 p/a

Economic Development Working Group

Rye Town Lottery

As a result of an initial meeting of the working group it was decided to investigate the possibility of a Rye Town Lottery.

To complete this task I did some research calling on a friend who runs a gambling company and also multiple discussions with the UK Gambling Commission.

General Thoughts

There is a possibility for Rye to have a Town lottery however there are great many hoops to jump through to achieve this, generally anything connected with gambling even seemingly innocuous activities such as a lottery are fraught with pitfalls and can be a minefield once started.

However if done correctly this idea could certainly benefit not only RTC but the the general town population. As such therefore I feel that this warrants further investigation and discussion as with a little bit of effort it could be something that can be instantiated within a acceptable timeframe.

Recommendations

For Rye to have a lottery we will need to progress in the following manner.

1. A Small Society Lotteries Licence to be sought, this is not an official licence however more akin to a registration for best practices purposes.
2. A Remote Lotteries Licence this will be required if the intention was to sell tickets to the lottery using an online or electronic method.
3. A Prize Matrix will need to be planned, built and agreed upon. This essentially sets out the cost to the player of a ticket, the prizes given on for a successful ticket and the levels thereof.
4. Lottery type. An obvious one however very important, we would need to decide on the type and to be precise the number of Numbers to be drawn. Initially the optimum would be 3-4 only.
5. Engage with a local solicitor. This is required as they will need to be charged with performing a physical draw when required. This ensures that RTC do not have to get into messy licencing and compliance for and electronic draw.
6. Profit provision. Based on the matrix as mentioned in point 3. RTC will need to make a decision as to what percentage of the profits taken will be used for local good causes or local development, the minimum here would be 20% as per the terms of the Gambling Commissions licensing requirements.
7. A body setup to curate, control and ultimately run the town lottery.

Potential Costs

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	Type	Estimated Cost
Rye Town Lotto	Web Site	£6,500 + £150 p/a
Licencing & Costs	Miscellaneous	£977 + £16 p/a
Solicitors Fees	Legal	Unknown
Initial prize fund	Direct costs	£5,000 – £10,000

APPENDIX 5

Terms of reference for a reconstituted Economic Development Working Group

Working remit

- To continue the work of the 2015 Working Group (based on the existing terms of reference).
- To oversee the implementation of the adopted recommendations from 2015.
- To take further instructions from the Full Council.
- To explore any matter the group considers to be relevant to further the economic development or the promotion of the town.
- To continue to work with – and where appropriate support - other partners, such as RDC, RP, ESCC, 1066 Country and Chamber of Commerce.

Membership

- A maximum of six councillors [*expressions of interest remain from Cllrs Erswell, Fiddimore, Gilbert & Rivett*].
- The Town Clerk.
- Quorum is three elected members.
- A Chairman will be elected at the first meeting in 2016.

Status

- The working group has no delegated authority, and will report to the Full Council.

Time Scale

- To meet at least six times in 2016
- To present updates to the Full Town Council at least four times in the year.

Recording

- A record of proceedings will be taken by The Town Clerk, in conjunction with the Chairman of the group.

Public Attendance

- As a working group (where there is the potential for business-sensitive information to be discussed) the public has no legal right to attend; however, the group will consider attendance requests from the public – and will invite third parties to attend and advise it as and when required.