Notes from the Battle Town Forum held on Wednesday, 12th February 2020 at 6pm

Topic for meeting: Battle's town centre / High Street

Objectives of the meeting: To collate suggestions for actions that would improve the town centre.

Cllr Glenna Favell welcomed attendees, mentioning that Battle has been chosen to represent the South and South-East in the finals of Britain in Bloom in the Small Town category. She also mentioned that the Council is organising Battle's VE Day Party on Friday 8th May and has applied for a road closure to facilitate a street party.

Glenna then introduced Mr Mickey Caira, Deputy Town Clerk & Business Enterprise Manager at Hailsham Town Council, who described how Hailsham has developed into a thriving centre for residents and businesses.

It was encouraging to learn that Battle has already undertaken some major steps towards achieving similar success regarding the future development of the town. Many important and useful messages were drawn from the meeting. Whilst there are some fantastic measures already in place to help maintain the town, it became apparent that there are also many areas that require improvement. As well as parking, the issue of marketing and communications throughout the town was raised repeatedly, with many delegates suggesting the development of a centralised group to help manage communications between businesses, groups, organisations and voluntary groups within the parish.

Changing groups considered three questions and then discussed how we can work together in the plenary.

Q1. How can we 'talk up' the town?

- *What are we doing well?*
  Independent shops, plenty of events, community events

- *What could we do better?*
  Parking, lack of publicity, lack of marketing, list of local events

Notes: Don't talk it down; information boards (i.e. car parks); regular, solid and managed social media; more support for 'Battle FM'; window stickers for shops/ cars/ homes with a strong logo; creation of shareable content.

Q2. Are there any short-term wins?

- Overarching agreement: need for a directory of online clubs and services – inc voluntary) – online and paper version in library.
- Alternatives such as pop-up shops/ exhibitions. A suggestion to introduce the 'Battle Pound'.
- Need to work on improving first impressions of the town. Bus stops, up to date signage, weeding the pavements.

Notes: Hot desking in empty units; refund parking when minimum spend is achieved; Kino theatre; Town market with free parking; electronic noticeboard e.g. windows of empty shops/ existing shops; stop buses occupying Abbey Green bus stop; 'What's on today' screen in key location.

Q3. What are we already doing in the town centre? What more can we achieve?

- Strong, clear and clean Battle 'brand'. Potentially car stickers etc
- Work to communicate information more effectively, branding, signage (i.e. Car park, Abbey)
- Regular flow of information to the media
- Volunteer groups need more support
- Blue badge guides (volunteers?)
- Social Media.

Notes: Improved parking enforcement; improved bus services; shop loyalty scheme; lack of banks; not enough open in the winter; parking – one free day per week; no tourist office; business and retail community need to work more closely together.

How can we work together?

- Information sharing point for organisations voluntary content
- Broader scope - create a distribution list to help widen the net
- Electronic forum for website

Posters about Fair Trade, which were provided by Year 5 pupils at Battle & Langton School, were on display.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm with an opportunity to network until 8pm.

Green issues will be considered at the next meeting.

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The aim of the Battle Town Forum is to improve the condition of Battle Civil Parish and the facilities available, in the interests of its residents, businesses and visitors.

Its objective is to connect residents, local businesses, voluntary organisations, statutory bodies and sports & leisure groups within the community in order to promote the development of the town.