



## POLEGATE TOWN COUNCIL BUSINESS PLAN

### 1. Introduction

The Town Council took the decision that it should be more pro active and less reactive. The council decided that to achieve this it needed to have a long term strategy; this was to be in the form of a business plan. A small committee was set up, this business plan is the result of the work carried out by this committee and the Council's qualified clerk.

#### 1.1. What is the purpose of the business plan?

The plan is designed to form a long-term vision for the council to follow; many of the issues identified may take several years and significant amounts of money to achieve. Council has not set any dates or targets for the identified issues as some will take the help and resources of external bodies, and this will be dependant on the available resources.

#### 1.2. Why does the Town Council need one?

It is hoped that this business plan will be a guide to council decision making and will help attract external funding over a number of years to help the council achieve its aims; this could be through limited companies as the council now holds General Power of Competence, with a qualified Clerk.

### 2. Background Information about Polegate Town .

#### 3. The Town Council

3.1. The Town Council consists of 15 councillors

3.2. The Town Council elects a Mayor & Deputy Mayor annually

3.3. The Town Council has appointed a number of committees, some for specific purposes which are dissolved after their projects are completed. There are four main static committees: Finance & Policy, Personnel, Planning and Buildings, Buildings & Land and Business Plan Committee, Age Gym Committee, High Street Toilet refurbishment committee, deed of dedication ceremony committee, Flower Contract Committee, Internal Audit Review and Internal Control Committee, Risk Management Review Committee

3.4. The Town Council has one working group Financial Regulations Working Group

#### 3.5. Staff

3.5.1. There is one full time member of staff - The Clerk, RFO and Proper Officer of the Council.

*3.5.1.1. The clerk is responsible for the general administration of the council and management of staff.*

*All staff are managed by the clerk and the council appoint one or two members of the personnel committee to oversee the safety and wellbeing of the clerk.*

*The clerk is also the RFO (Responsible Finance Officer) She prepares the accounts monthly and adheres to all financial regulations. She advises council on financial, budgetary and legal matters. The clerk is also the proper officer of the council and carries out the legal procedures of the council and advises the council on statutory matters.*

3.5.2. There are two part time office staff who each work 20 hours per week.

One administrative assistant is employed to answer the phones and the reception desk 9am-1pm and to deal with incoming mail, emails and correspondence.

The second administrative assistant is employed to carry out project work as advised by the clerk, contracts, and quotations and to minute committee meetings in the clerk's absence.

3.5.3. There are three manual staff: A Maintenance Person, a litter picker and a cleaner/keyholder.

The Maintenance person carries out most of the maintenance on the town council buildings and land. Occasionally he does areas that would normally be covered by the District Council or County Council that would otherwise not be done.

The litter picker checks and litter picks the parks daily (Monday to Friday). He cleans and checks the pavilion after use. He litter picks areas within the town on a rota basis, based on litter hot spot areas identified by the litter picker and the Town Clerk. He covers an additional 30 minutes per day sponsored by McDonalds to clear as much rubbish as possible in litter hot spot areas.

The cleaner cleans the council office once per week for 3.5 hours.

The keyholder locks the public toilets at the War Memorial Recreation ground at dusk every day (3.5 hours).

### 3.6. Town population

3.6.1. The population of Polegate since losing the watermill ward is 7655 (Census 2011 data). There are 4340 3674 households. This is increasing as more houses are being built. The percentages of population over 65 has now dropped to 30.8% closely followed by the 45-65 age bracket of 26.9%

### 3.7. General power of competence

3.7.1. Following qualification of the clerk, the Town Council adopted the General Power of Competence and can now carry out many duties previously restricted by law. (Ultra Vires).

## 4. Corporate vision

### 4.1. Objectives (as above below **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**)

## 5. Finances and Income, Reserves, Assets

5.1. The Town Council precept is relatively low for a small town at £261,421 per annum. The annual budget at April 2014 is £287,164 per annum. This is largely made up of asset maintenance and running costs (including buildings, land, street furniture, allotments and Highways verge cutting)

5.2. Reserves at April 2014 stand around £138,000 with two large projects of around £20,000 (High Street Toilets) and £57,500 (Street Lighting) to come out of that

5.3. There are a number of Town Council owned assets, mainly land and buildings, which include: 49/51 High Street, Polegate; Pavilion and Field and play area at Wannock Road, Council offices at Wannock Road, Allotment land at Cophall and Brightling Road Leisure Ground. The council rent land for a second allotment at Gosford Way and a play area at Oakleaf Drive.

## 6. Functions of the council

### 6.1. Planning

#### 6.1.1. Development and Plans

6.1.1.1. The Town Council is a statutory consultee only and therefore only passes local comments on planning applications. The majority of planning applications are now permitted development under the new regulations and therefore fewer applications are considered by the Town Council.

### 6.2. Recreation and sport

#### 6.2.1. The council own and maintain a number of pieces of land for sports and recreation

6.2.1.1. Play parks – Oakleaf (rented) and Wannock Road

6.2.1.2. Skate Park – Brightling Road Leisure Ground

6.2.1.3. Playing field – Brightling Road Leisure Ground

6.2.1.4. BMX Track – Brightling Road Leisure Ground

6.2.1.5. Wildflower Meadow and pond with picnic tables – Brightling Road Leisure Ground

6.2.1.6. Basketball Court – Brightling Road Leisure Ground

6.2.1.7. The Town Council rent a piece of land at Brightling Road Leisure ground to a local model Engineering group (Mini Railway).

### 6.3. Open spaces

6.3.1. The Town Council own and manage three areas of open space. Polegate War Memorial Recreation Ground, Brightling Road Leisure Ground and Wildflower Meadow

6.3.2. According to the Kit Campbell report 2008 (amended 2010) PPG17 Wealden District Council there is insufficient open space in the Polegate area and this is being investigated by Wealden District Council as part of the Local Plan (Core Strategy).

### 6.4. Allotments – Cophall (owned) and Gosford Way (rented land)

6.4.1. There is a large waiting list with over 20 Polegate residents plus additional residents from outside the area seeking allotments.

### 6.5. Cemetery

6.5.1. The Town Council do not own a Cemetery. There are few suitable parcels of land within Polegate and the Town Council has consistently requested provision/allocation from the District Council. Many areas of land are unsuitable because of Environment Agency Regulations due to the close proximity to the water course. The Council is actively looking for parcels of suitable land to provide a cemetery. The clerk has carried out considerable research on the potential of acquiring land which is suitable, however the council considered the costs for setting up a cemetery (particularly planning) and these far outweighed the projected use of a cemetery.

### 6.6. Community safety

6.6.1. The Town Council support and fund the local CCTV run and maintained by Sussex Police, which operates in the Town Centre area. The Town Council does not have access to the CCTV footage.

### 6.7. Highways

6.7.1. The Town Council funds the verge cutting in Polegate, and receives funding for 5 cuts from the County Council. It also funds two additional weed sprays in Polegate Town following cuts by East Sussex County Council. These will no longer be supported by the Town Council.

### 6.8. Communications/media

6.8.1. The Town Council operate a twitter feed.

6.8.2. The Town Council does have a Facebook page but has resolved not to use that form of social media at the present time.

6.8.3. The Town Council has an outdated website but has resolved at present not to update the content and style.

### 6.9. Grants

6.9.1. Each year the council allocates a budget for Grants to Local Charities. Grants must adhere to the Town Council grants policy. 2014/15 Grants budget is £4000. The grants have been advertised as available via word of mouth, website, twitter and notice boards. No national charities are supported. In 2015/16 the budget will be reduced to £2000 the same policy will apply.

### 6.10. Buildings and use

#### 6.10.1. Polegate Pavilion

6.10.1.1. The pavilion is used at present by the Cricket and Football Club and by the Targeted Youth Support Service. The charges made to the clubs does not cover the outgoings. Historically the pavilion was erected for changing facilities only and the costs of the water and electricity borne by the clubs. In the past a delegation approached the council and asked for the electricity and water to be converted from a meter to a monthly bill. Over time the increase in the charges have not covered the additional costs to run the pavilion. The building, although maintained, needs substantial investment for refurbishment and issues surrounding the original build cause maintenance problems. The kitchen needs a full

refurbishment and the shower area needs an alteration to the venting system and an investigation in how the flooring can be improved.

6.10.1.2. The Council has resolved to investigate the possibility of handing the building over to a charitable trust with a view to allowing the trust to claim grant funding for refurbishment. This is an ongoing investigation. The building and land is protected by a covenant for use as sports leisure and recreation. To date there have been very few volunteers.

6.10.1.3. The Wannock Office was previously built to provide offices, subsequently the offices were moved to a more central location in the High Street and the offices were commercially rented out to the NHS. When the NHS left the building a Village Green application was submitted by a group of residents who wished to protect the land from future changes/development. Pending the Village Green application outcome, the offices were left empty and attracted council tax and minimal water and electricity charges. The Council tax has since been exempted. The council are investigating the possibility of merging the two buildings in order that the outgoings are reduced. However the clerk has been advised this may actually increase the charges and the possibility of creating a charitable trust, although there appears not to be enough interest to make this feasible. Council has also been advised that as interest dwindles there is a possibility of inheriting the building back but in a dilapidated state. The clerk is therefore looking at alternative ways to finance improvements.

6.10.1.4. The field area has now been dedicated as a Centenary field, but has NOT been registered as a charitable trust.

#### 6.11. Local priorities and community engagement

6.11.1. The local community have major concerns about commuter parking, lack of a free car park and lack of a cemetery. There are a number of people on the waiting list for an allotment although only 21 are from Polegate parish.

#### 7. Review of the plan

7.1. The plan should be reviewed regularly to ensure that it is up to date with the current Corporate Vision

7.2. Ideally all projects should aim to meet at least one of the Business Plan criteria before being considered.

#### 8. Public comments/involvement

8.1. There has been minor public involvement in the Business Plan in that some of the data was taken from the Polegate Regeneration group, Polegate Masterplan and the Brightling Road Leisure Ground consultation.

9. This is a working document.

#### 10. Contact details

10.1. For comments on this document please contact the Town Clerk, Council Offices, 49, High Street Polegate BN26 6AL

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

### Communities

**To engage with voluntary groups in the area with practical support and via grants. To encourage the provision of and use of existing community buildings and facilities.**

**ACTION:** To distribute by the grants system monies to those organisations that qualify for such grants through the grants policy.

**AIM:** The support of local volunteer groups and sports organisations with the work that they carry out, within the Town community.

**ACTION:** To investigate the possibility of sponsorship of the Council flower beds through local businesses.

**AIM:** To improve community spirit and improve the visual appearance of the Town.

**ACTION:** To continue the provision of an allotment competition but to hold on site best produce events. To investigate the possibility of the local gardeners society supporting the event.

**AIM:** To improve community spirit on the allotment and assist local clubs gain active membership.

### Health

**ACTION:** To find suitable land for use as allotments and conduct feasibility study to establish likely cost.

**AIM:** To improve the health of the Town by better exercise and the production of healthy locally produced food.

**ACTION:** To install an age gym and other sporting facilities through the funding from Lottery and other grants.

**AIM:** To provide fitness equipment for older users of the community to encourage physical exercise.

**ACTION:** To improve the nature trail area of the Wildflower meadow by providing signage and additional interest.

**AIM:** To encourage residents to visit and use the Meadow. To provide seating and picnic benches in the meadow and field area. To improve the Meadow with a small nature trail sign. To have signage for the meadow and mini railway area.

**ACTION:** To obtain as many grants as possible to fund such improvements and to use the earmarked reserves to provide seating and picnic areas within the Brightling Road Leisure ground and wildflower Meadow.

**AIM:** To encourage walking as a hobby and as a means of helping people maintain or improve their fitness levels.

**ACTION:** To pursue the possibility of introducing further play areas, in particular skate parks for the beginners .

**AIM:** To provide healthy and safe play facilities, to encourage young people to spend more time out doors and engage in physical exercise. To investigate lottery funding for skate park improvement, ~~tennis facility~~ and BMX improvement at Brightling road.

### Environment

To encourage sustainable lifestyles, a high quality local environment and appearance of the town; to make every effort to prevent dog waste fouling the area.

**ACTION:** To maintain the wooded areas of land within the Wildflower Meadow and Brightling Road Leisure Ground. To maintain the pond and ditch area within the Meadow/wooded area.

**AIM:** To help maintain woodland cover to provide a habitat for a wide range of flora and fauna. To create a facility that can be used for leisure within the Town that will also help to off set global warming.

**ACTION:** To continue to maintain and improve all open spaces owned by the Council.

**AIM:** To help improve the environment of the Town by better use of the available land, the education of residents and the children of the Town through initiatives in our local schools etc. To attract external funding for environmental projects and training.

**ACTION:** To encourage sponsorship of all flower beds, crossroads and gateways to Polegate.

**AIM:** To help improve the environment of the Town by sponsorships and partnerships with voluntary groups and assist advertising for businesses, concentrating on local businesses.

**ACTION:** To encourage shops, traders and households to improve the visual appearance of their properties and surrounding public land.

**AIM:** To improve the overall visual appearance of the Town and instil a sense of community spirit within the residents and shop proprietors.

**ACTION:** To investigate with Highways the possibility of planting small trees or installing wooden posts where there is anti social parking on the verges.

**AIM:** To improve the visual appearance of the Town and enhance the safety of pedestrians.

**ACTION:** To investigate with Highways the possibility of having a 20 MPH zone within Polegate, particularly the High Street

**AIM:** To Improve the safety of pedestrians within the Town

**ACTION:** To investigate with Highways the possibility of providing a crossing near to Guradian Court

**AIM:** To improve the safety of pedestrians particularly within the vicinity of many care homes.

### **Planning**

**ACTION:** To encourage the Planning Authority to support sensible development, maintaining the openness of the Green Belt.

**AIM:** To use the land resources of the Town to ensure that our towns/parishes maintain their individuality, whilst developing a housing strategy to cope with future demand, and that makes the best use of available land and protects the green belt for future generations.

**ACTION:** To keep the Masterplan up to date as a non Neighbourhood Plan, whilst taking views of the public into consideration for future development and improvement of the Town.

**AIM:** To ensure that future generations' desires are incorporated into the plan to revitalise the Town in whatever way possible, within budgetary constraints. Seeking grant funding for projects which are fully supported by the majority of residents and regularly assessing the demographics and needs of the community.

### **Transport**

**ACTION:** To promote the improvement of public transport and encourage its increased use by the general public. To support local transport initiatives' such as the Wealden Bus Alliance Limited and encourage partnerships between the Town Council and transport companies to facilitate a better service to and from Polegate.

**AIM:** To enable those without access to private transport to enjoy a better quality of life, to provide local solutions to local transport problems.

### **Representation and Communication**

**ACTION:** To work towards annual events being sponsored by external voluntary groups

**AIM:** To work with the voluntary groups to ensure that events pay for themselves and voluntary groups are supported in running the event.

**Table 1**

**Budgeted costs including reserves and provisional priority**

**ACTION:** To distribute by the grants system monies to those organisations that qualify for such grants through the grants policy.

**AIM:** The support of local volunteer groups and sports organisations with the work that they carry out, within the Town community.

**£2000 per annum (already in budget)**

**ACTION:** To investigate the possibility of sponsorship of the Council flower beds through local businesses.

**AIM:** To improve community spirit and improve the visual appearance of the Town.

**No costs to council. Beds are ¾ sponsored and possibly fully sponsored following further requests. The sums are accumulated and the maintenance will now be used from that budget plus refurbishment costs placed in an earmarked reserve until carried out.**

**SELF FUNDING AT PRESENT**

**ACTION:** To continue the provision of an allotment competition ~~but to hold on site best produce events. To investigate the possibility of the local gardeners society supporting the event.~~

**AIM:** To improve community spirit on the allotment ~~and assist local clubs gain active membership. (Request for toilet from allotment holders)~~

**FUNDS ALLOCATED IN THE BUDGET FOR 2015/16 (£50)**

**Health**

**ACTION:** To find suitable land for use as allotments and conduct feasibility study to establish likely cost.

**AIM:** To improve the health of the Town by better exercise and the production of healthy locally produced food.

**NO FUNDING SET ASIDE**

**ACTION:** To install an age gym and other sporting facilities through the funding from Lottery and other grants.

**AIM:** To provide fitness equipment for older users of the community to encourage physical exercise.

**S106 FUNDING BEING SOURCED AT PRESENT AND BEING PURSUED BY COUNCIL AT PRESENT**

**ACTION:** To improve the nature trail area of the Wildflower meadow by providing signage and additional interest.

**AIM:** To encourage residents to visit and use the Meadow. To provide seating and picnic benches in the meadow and field area. To improve the Meadow with a small nature trail sign. To have signage for the meadow and mini railway area.

**EAR MARKED RESERVE SET ASIDE FOR THE PLINTH FOR THE WATERCOLOUR LAMINATED PRINT IN PROGRESS**

**ACTION:** To pursue the possibility of introducing further play areas, in particular skate parks for the beginners .



**AIM:** To provide healthy and safe play facilities, to encourage young people to spend more time out doors and engage in physical exercise. To investigate lottery funding for skate park improvement, tennis facility and BMX improvement at Brightling road.

IN PROGRESS COMMUNITY SUPPORT BEING OBTAINED AND POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE FUNDING

### Environment

To encourage sustainable lifestyles, a high quality local environment and appearance of the town; to make every effort to prevent dog waste fouling the area.

CLERK INVESTIGATING CHANGING FROM DOG BINS TO ALL PURPOSE BINS IN ORDER TO PROVIDE THE MAXIMUM WASTE SIZE AND VARIETY FOR THE COMMUNITY – VALUE FOR MONEY – IN PROGRESS

~~**ACTION:** To maintain the wooded areas of land within the Wildflower Meadow and Brightling Road Leisure Ground. To maintain the pond and ditch area within the Meadow/wooded area.~~

~~**AIM:** To help maintain woodland cover to provide a habitat for a wide range of flora and fauna. To create a facility that can be used for leisure within the Town that will also help to off set global warming.~~

**ACTION:** To continue to maintain and improve all open spaces owned by the Council.

**AIM:** To help improve the environment of the Town by better use of the available land, the education of residents and the children of the Town through initiatives in our local schools etc. To attract external funding for environmental projects and training.

IN PROGRESS CLERK INVESTIGATING SOME EXTERNAL FUNDING OPTIONS AT PRESENT

NO FUNDING

**ACTION:** To encourage sponsorship of all flower beds, crossroads and gateways to Polegate.

**AIM:** To help improve the environment of the Town by sponsorships and partnerships with voluntary groups and assist advertising for businesses, concentrating on local businesses.

NO COSTS TO COUNCIL IN PROGRESS ALMOST COMPLETE

**ACTION:** To encourage shops, traders and households to improve the visual appearance of their properties and surrounding public land.

**AIM:** To improve the overall visual appearance of the Town and instil a sense of community spirit within the residents and shop proprietors.

THIS IS A BEYOND THE DIRECT REMIT OF THE TOWN COUNCIL, BUT IS BEING PARTIALLY CHAMPIONED BY WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL VIA THE STREETS AHEAD PROJECT AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY SHOP KEEPERS

NO FUNDING HAS BEEN SET ASIDE FOR THIS

**ACTION:** To investigate with Highways the possibility of planting small trees or installing wooden posts where there is anti social parking on the verges.

**AIM:** To improve the visual appearance of the Town and enhance the safety of pedestrians.

NO FUNDING HAS BEEN SET ASIDE FOR THIS

**ACTION:** To investigate with Highways the possibility of having a 20 MPH zone within Polegate, particularly the High Street

**AIM:** To Improve the safety of pedestrians within the Town

NO FUNDING HAS BEEN SET ASIDE FOR THIS  
EXPECTED COSTS IN THE REGION ON £100,000-200,000 POSSIBILITY OF MATCH FUNDING AND DISTANT  
POSSIBILITY OF BEING INCLUDED IN THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME

**ACTION:** To investigate with Highways the possibility of providing a crossing near to Guardian Court  
**AIM:** To improve the safety of pedestrians particularly within the vicinity of many care homes.  
**POTENTIAL MATCH FUNDING.** £7000 AGREED TO SET ASIDE FOR POTENTIAL OF MATCH FUNDING  
**EXPECTED COSTS TO BE** £25,000-£80,000

### Planning

**ACTION:** To encourage the Planning Authority to support sensible development, maintaining the openness of the Green Belt.

**AIM:** To use the land resources of the Town to ensure that our towns/parishes maintain their individuality, whilst developing a housing strategy to cope with future demand, and that makes the best use of available land and protects the green belt for future generations. Beyond the remit of the

**ACTION:** To keep the Masterplan up to date as a non Neighbourhood Plan, whilst taking views of the public into consideration for future development and improvement of the Town.

**AIM:** To ensure that future generations' desires are incorporated into the plan to revitalise the Town in whatever way possible, within budgetary constraints. Seeking grant funding for projects which are fully supported by the majority of residents and regularly assessing the demographics and needs of the community.

NO FUNDING IN PLACE

### Transport

**ACTION:** To promote the improvement of public transport and encourage its increased use by the general public. To support local transport initiatives' such as the Wealden Bus Alliance Limited and encourage partnerships between the Town Council and transport companies to facilitate a better service to and from Polegate.

**AIM:** To enable those without access to private transport to enjoy a better quality of life, to provide local solutions to local transport problems.

NO FUNDING IN PLACE

### Representation and Communication

**ACTION:** To work towards annual events being sponsored by external voluntary groups

**AIM:** To work with the voluntary groups to ensure that events pay for themselves and voluntary groups are supported in running the event. COMPLETED