

Project Documentation - Initial Project Proposal Document
Project: Midhurst Vision
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1. Purpose of Document

The purpose of this document is to justify the undertaking of the project based on the estimated cost of delivery and the anticipated benefits to be gained.

2. Project Description

To work with partners to consult on, review and refresh the Midhurst Vision, adopting the approach taken by the Chichester Vision to ensure full buy-in from all relevant partners.

A key partner will be the Midhurst Town Team Community Interest Company (CIC) (fully functional from Autumn 2017) supported by the Rural Towns Co-ordinator and working closely with Midhurst Town Council.

3. Background

The first Midhurst Vision was published in 2009. The process enabled often disparate groups to work together, establishing a common vision and creating the ability to attract external funding. This helped them to make physical improvements to the town and provided advice for the traders. The project was able to raise funds via SEEDA and more recently as part of the Mary Portas work. Projects which emerged from the Vision have included shop front improvement scheme, retail consultancy advice, developing markets, improved signage, more benches and street furniture, and the development of the first version of Midhurst Town Team.

Since the Midhurst Town Team was constituted in 2013, the town has had an effective forum for local businesses, community groups and local people, to help to bring the town together and develop projects that improve Midhurst's prosperity for all the community.

Results have been:

1) To keep the shop vacancy rate down on the High Street - Midhurst vacancies have reduced from 14% in 2009 to less than 1% now.

2) Making town promotions easier to achieve, for example Christmas street banner and promotional leaflet with traders contributing and helping with distribution.

3) Encouraging new businesses to choose Midhurst, by demonstrating that the town works well together. One business owner, also trading in Chichester, compared the Town Team in Midhurst to having the BID in the city. It gives potential businesses the confidence to set up in Midhurst

4) Developing a baseline of high street data by investing in Noggin foot flow sensors for Midhurst, in partnership with CDC.

5) Influencing trading enhancements in the town. For example, the Town Team invested in Christmas lights in 2016 to include West Street.

Midhurst Town Team has recently established itself as a Community Interest Company, with a board of directors and a local stakeholder consultation group from all over the town. The aim is to fund raise to become a sustainable organisation. Other existing groups and organisations will be working under the broader umbrella of the Midhurst Town Team CIC, for example Visit Midhurst.

Whilst much work has been completed, the changes to people's shopping patterns, the ability to shop online, and the development of newer facilities and amenities in neighbouring towns, have set further challenges. Therefore, many traders in Midhurst continue to find generating footfall and maintaining dwell time in the town a significant issue.

4. Outcomes to be Achieved

Midhurst Vision will help create a new future role for the small market town as a driving force for innovation and self-sufficiency. The town will continue to be a vibrant place to do business and will be more attractive to visitors and will understand clearly how dynamic its future might be.

Outputs and outcomes:

Engaging local people in imagining a positive future for the town, and engendering ownership of the Midhurst Vision approach will be an ongoing process during the first half of the Vision development. It will result in a structure that enables continued involvement in the development of improvements to the town (the Vision process will be used to recruit wider membership of the Town Team stakeholder group). As a result the Stakeholder group attendance will increase and the variety of backgrounds and interests of stakeholder group will broaden.

Retain and create businesses and encourage local employment – by identifying gaps in the market, barriers to progression and barriers to local employment, the Vision will create the vehicle for an ongoing dialogue between the Town Team and Town Council to be receptive to the needs and challenges of the changing role of the market town. Employment and business development will be a central part of the work of the CIC, will create a regular forum and action plan. Regular monitoring of footfall via the 'Noggins' and feedback of results to focus priority on and evaluate business enhancing events.

Present the town in a positive and forward thinking way – demonstrating that engagement in the Vision creation is high – ongoing throughout the process.

- Larger scale complimentary attraction for the town centre will be created, for example a regular market space defined in the Town Centre for larger scale markets, with the infrastructure in place, therefore encouraging bigger and more attractive markets 3 or 4 times a year.
- Responsibilities for infrastructure and development of events in the town will be established.
- Taking full advantage of existing events calendar will be improved, for example MADhurst; Christmas Street party; Cowdray Ruins opening season; Polo.

5. Timescales

The project will commence in April 2018.

It is proposed to conduct surveys with residents and businesses within the first 3 months of the project and to conduct participation workshops in the town to refresh the vision and encompass what has been learnt from the surveys. This will take place in partnership with the Midhurst Town Team CIC's strategic planning process.

It is anticipated that the project will take 12 months to deliver.

6. Project Costs and Resources

	Costs (£)	Source
One-Off	Venue costs in kind from the MTC to be confirmed £10,000 – Audit, workshops, and development of Vision £2,500 – Artwork & Printing	Midhurst Town Council Midhurst Town Team
Revenue		
Savings		
Services to be involved in the project delivery	Economic Development, Community Engagement Team for consultation, Planning Policy, Estates and PR	

7. Benefits vs. Cost

The project will support the continued vitality of the town and sense of place and deliver an action plan to ensure that the appearance, sense of place, vacancy rates remain low and that Midhurst continues to have a mix of retail and small businesses.

The project will also link to the Employment Land/Inward investment project and the new strategy for the visitor economy and Cultural Strategy so that these projects can be mutually supportive in their aims.

The project will enable Midhurst Town Team CIC to develop into a delivery organisation formed of local people and businesses that has a positive impact on the vitality and vibrancy of Midhurst into the future.

8. Identify Risks

Without a refreshed plan the town may suffer from a lack of partnership approach by local government involved in supporting the town. Midhurst is experiencing competition from neighbouring towns and needs to remain competitive to sustain its local community.