

CHAPTER 5: Hastings & St. Leonards

Hastings and St Leonards is a town committed to changing itself through regeneration. In 2007 Hastings was ranked as the 29th most deprived local authority area of 354 in England. 21 of the town's 53 neighbourhoods were identified as being in the 20% most deprived nationally. 11 of the town's 16 wards contain one or more of these neighbourhoods, with the highest concentration in Central St Leonards, and 14 of these 21 neighbourhoods were in the 10% most deprived in the country.

Hastings' position has been recognised nationally and has attracted significant resources to support the regeneration process. However, there is still a long way to go and this is emphasised through the key 21 strategic targets set out below.

On the one hand, Hastings has a distinctiveness arising from the natural beauty of its coastline and surrounding countryside, its unique combination of architecture and its urban features. The town offers a blend of historic architecture and monuments, 8 miles of unspoilt beach and around 600 hectares of recreational/open space attracting visitors from all over the world to enjoy its vibrant festivals, superb seafood and other local produce. The town is a special place with an 86,000 community that is fiercely loyal to the town, has a strong identity and a rich cultural and creative life which is reflected in a strong and active voluntary and community sector.

On the other hand, Hastings & St Leonards has:

- Crime rates that are among the highest in the country, including violent crime
- High economic inactivity levels
- Persistently low educational attainment levels
- One of the highest teenage conception rates in the country
- Poor physical and mental health of residents
- High levels of substance misuse and addiction rates

These factors of social and economic exclusion have exacerbated deprivation in all its many facets since the post war period. The economic history of Hastings reflects the rise and decline of a seasonal low-wage economy, predominantly based on tourism and leisure. This has meant the town has not kept pace with economic growth elsewhere in the South East and as a result has faced serious economic decline. Poor infrastructure and transport links reinforce its isolation from the South East's economic hotspots, and have made it more difficult to tackle the town's economic problems.

A major issue for the town is the level of economic participation. Hastings consistently has the highest unemployment rates in East Sussex. The 2001 census revealed that only 64.6% of working age people are economically active. Low rents and house prices have also attracted a large number of economically inactive people and has created a high demand for health care and public services. This has left the town located in the prosperous South East, but with the economic and social indicators of a deprived north eastern city.

In recent years, the people of Hastings & St Leonards have worked in partnership with central government, regional and local agencies to reverse economic decline. Progress has been made, and the quality of life for many has improved. Nevertheless, narrowing the gap between the generally prosperous South East and the many disadvantaged parts of Hastings remains challenging.

Significant investment in the town's physical infrastructure coupled with successful partnership working, concentrated in the most disadvantaged areas, is starting to reverse the severe levels of social and economic exclusion experienced by many residents.

Hastings and St Leonards is becoming an area of opportunity, innovation, creativity and energy, but it will require a sustained level of investment for some time to come if the town and its communities are to fulfil their considerable potential.

2013 - Our 10 Year Vision

In 2003 the Hastings and St Leonards Local Strategic Partnership agreed a 10 year Community Strategy for Hastings, which described a vision and mission, and set 21 targets for improving our town. We revised the strategy in 2006 to take account of the better than expected improvements in some areas and the need to revise targets in others and to ensure the strategy remains relevant.

Our strategy will be refreshed in 2008/09, to ensure it is fit for purpose as a 'Sustainable' Community Strategy. This Chapter therefore reflects our current Strategy and its 2013 time horizon, and should therefore be regarded as an interim position.

Our vision

“The renaissance of Hastings through social, economic, cultural and environmental regeneration.”

Our mission

“To build on the town’s strong community spirit, culture, diverse population and extraordinary natural environment to create a safer, healthier more sustainable and more prosperous place with lasting opportunities for everybody.”

The following sections detail the issues we’re focusing on to deliver the vision for our town and listed are the 21 Key Targets.

The Ripple Effect

Achieving our vision for Hastings isn't going to be easy. We have to overcome complex issues of multiple deprivation experienced by many of our residents. But, by working along-side our partners and local residents, and by focusing on the most deprived neighbourhoods, we have set in motion a ripple of change that will reach every corner of the town, improve overall well-being in Hastings, and thereby raise performance levels across the whole of East Sussex.

The first four of our 21 key targets relate specifically to this ripple effect. In particular, the first target is about 'narrowing the gap' between Hastings and the rest of the South East Region of England, by progressively reducing towards zero the number of neighbourhoods in the most deprived category.

KEY TARGETS

1. Narrowing the Gap

Progressively reduce the number of neighbourhoods in the 10% most deprived nationally.

2. Resident Satisfaction with the Local Neighbourhood

Increase the % of local people satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live.

3. Child Poverty

Narrow the gap between child poverty rates for Hastings and East Sussex as a whole. (Measured as the proportion of children aged under 16 living in households in receipt of Income Support).

4. A Town for the Next Generation

Increase the proportion of young people who think the town is a good place for them to live in.

A Safer Town

Making the town a safer place to live in and work in is one of our biggest challenges and top priorities. Hastings & St Leonards has the highest levels of crime in East Sussex. Although our total recorded crime rate remains above the national average at 142 per 1,000 population for 2005/06, it has fallen from 166 per 1,000 in our baseline year of 2002/03. Our target is to halve the gap between our rate and the national average by 2013/14.

Crime and disorder, anti-social behaviour and communities feeling unsafe all have a tremendously negative impact on our town. This is in terms of quality of life and opportunities for attracting and maintaining regeneration investment.

Crime rates in the town also vary, with the town centres experiencing a higher rate of violent crime, much of which is alcohol related. Substance misuse impacts on crime and we need to significantly reduce harmful use of Class A drugs by targeting enforcement and treatment provision. Efforts are continuing to reduce acquisitive crime by focusing on the most harmful offenders and to build respect in communities by reducing antisocial behaviour and criminal damage. Hastings has one of the highest rates nationally for bicycle crime.

The impact of high crime rates affects different parts of our community. For example, although young people commit the most crime, they are also most often the victims of crime. Residents and businesses have consistently identified crime reduction and more policing as the most important issues in improving their quality of life and business commercial activity and confidence.

KEY TARGETS

5. Community Safety

Progressively reduce the gap between overall crimes rates per 1000 for Hastings & St Leonards and the average for England & Wales.

6. Community Safety

Increase the % of residents who feel safe walking alone in their local neighbourhood at night.

An Economically Successful Town

Despite the South East being the United Kingdom's most robust regional economy Hastings does not share in this prosperity. Reversing the trend of high unemployment, low weekly wages and a low skilled workforce is the focus of considerable regeneration activity by partners.

The Hastings and Bexhill Task Force under SEEDA's leadership has had a high degree of success to date which, in turn, has had a catalytic effect. This has most notably been in terms of the emerging new further and higher education developments, renewed business confidence in the area, and the potential for the new Link Road. Some economic indicators and trends are beginning to move in the right direction after many years of economic and social decline; others are not. Continued investment in the regeneration programme is vital in order to build the momentum required to achieve sustainable economic growth, enable businesses to prosper and address the barriers to worklessness that many local people experience.

Hastings is essentially a small firm economy with some 85% of firms employing ten or fewer employees. We are working to build a working and learning community, making sure that local people have skills to meet the changing local economy needs. We need both to generate new job opportunities through inward investment and support the growth of existing companies. We also need to strengthen key employment sectors such as tourism, creative industries, advanced engineering and construction, and play an active role in the 'knowledge economy'. The inadequate nature of the local transport infrastructure means these new employment opportunities are needed within the urban area so as to minimise the need for travel.

An example of how partners are working to create these opportunities is the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI), which is a ground breaking development linking enterprise and community. The LEGI aims to increase entrepreneurial activity in the local population; support growth and reduce the failure rate of locally owned businesses; attract appropriate inward investment and franchising as well as making use of local labour resources.

The importance of Hastings' position within the regional economy has been recognised and Hastings/Bexhill has been recognised as 1 of the 56 Primary Urban Areas in England and as a Regional Hub in the South East Regional Economic Strategy. The Local Strategic Partnership is continuing to work

with the Hastings and Bexhill Task Force and other partners to make sure local people can share in the opportunities and wealth created.

The low level of skills within the local workforce is a barrier to business productivity and economic growth, and keeps people in a cycle of deprivation. The Government has made Hastings a recipient of Working Neighbourhoods Funds from April 2008, special funding available for the three years, to help tackle issues of economic exclusion and worklessness.

KEY TARGETS

7. Unemployment

Reduce median unemployment in the town to the East Sussex level.

8. Earnings

Increase median weekly earnings to national levels.

A Learning Town

Education is a key tool in supporting the regeneration of our town, raising the aspirations of our young people and breaking the cycle of deprivation. The LSP takes a 'life-long learning' view of education and wants to see a thread of learning from pre-school throughout formal education and into the workplace and adult education.

Our top priority however is closing the gap in secondary school performance, which is not only below the county average but also amongst the worst nationally. Hastings' position for performance at age 16 for GCSE (5 good grades) has declined dramatically from being the 63rd worst out of 388 Local Authorities in 1997/98 to being the 3rd worst in the year 2005/06.

Other areas of concern include primary schools, where attainment levels of 11 year-old pupils have improved but results are still lower than county and national levels. Also of concern are the numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). In Hastings, 11.84% of young people are NEET, which is well above the county average of 8%.

We want to improve access to learning and the diversity of opportunities for all 14-19 year olds. The results from the 2001 Census show that 31.7% of people aged 16-74 in Hastings & St Leonards have no qualifications at all.

The LSP is focussed on ensuring key partner agencies are engaged in the mission to drive up standards in our schools, to build capacity, raise aspiration and offer opportunities and support for our young people.

KEY TARGETS

9a. Education

Increase the % of 15 year olds achieving 5 or more GCSEs A* - C grades or equivalent.

9b. Education

Increase the % of 15 year olds achieving 5 or more GCSEs A* - C grades including English and Mathematics.

An Inclusive Town

An inclusive society is characterised as one that strives for reduced inequality, a balance between an individual's rights and duties and increased social cohesion. Social inclusion is the process by which efforts are made to ensure that everyone, regardless of their experiences and circumstances, can achieve their potential in life. We want:

- Everyone to have an equal opportunity to take part in and benefit from the regeneration of our town
- Our communities and service providers to work together to achieve our shared vision of the future.

Our town has a strong record of community involvement and one of our greatest assets is the local people whose effort and commitment make it a better place to live in. We need to involve more people:

- By improving and promoting opportunities for them to participate in the services that can change their lives.
- Where necessary, by targeting specific individuals, groups or neighbourhoods affected by multiple forms of economic, social or environmental deprivation to ensure their voices are heard.

KEY TARGETS

10. Community Cohesion

Increase number of residents who feel people from different backgrounds live harmoniously in the town.

11. Community

Increase voluntary and community sector activity (including community participation).

12. Community Involvement

Increase the number of people surveyed who feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area.

A Healthier Town

There is a clear link between deprivation and ill health and Hastings has higher proportions of younger and older people than average. The indicators of health are poor when compared with England.

On average men and women in Hastings can expect to live shorter lives than in England as a whole. Rates for teenage pregnancy, the number of hip fractures in people aged 65 and over, smoking rates, the number of people claiming sickness benefit because of mental health problems and the number of people admitted to hospital for alcohol specific conditions are all above the national average for England.

KEY TARGETS

13a. Living Longer, Healthier Lives

Reduce death rates from circulatory disease (coronary heart disease and stroke) in people under 75.

13b. Living Longer, Healthier Lives

Reduce death rates from cancer in people under 75.

14. Teenage Pregnancy

Reduce the under 18 conception rate.

15. Substance Misuse

Increase % of substance misusers retained in treatment for 12 weeks or more.

A Town with a Decent Home for Everyone

Housing issues that are common to many of the coastal towns in the region, are acutely felt in Hastings and St Leonards. In the main these issues relate to:

- The poor supply of affordable housing suitable for a range of needs and consequential issues of homelessness.
- The relatively large and poor conditioned private housing sector.
- A growing disparity between house prices and income ratios, that is making access to home ownership increasingly difficult for those on modest incomes.

Poor housing conditions impact on every aspect of individuals' lives from health through to education and employment opportunities. Hastings has twice the national average level of households living in private rented accommodation (24%) and most of the poorest of this housing is concentrated in the town centres. Hastings has a higher percentage than the national average of private sector homes (39%) that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard and a significant proportion (23%) of these are occupied by vulnerable people. The town has a large stock of difficult to adapt Victorian housing and there is a shortage of sites for new housing within a tight urban area.

A decent home is the foundation for decent quality of life. Our challenges are to match housing need and supply, improve support for vulnerable households, to prevent homelessness and minimise the time people remain homeless. We are committed to delivering improvements to poor living and environmental conditions, to achieve a more effective and lasting use of existing buildings and to deliver affordable housing solutions (within the social and private sectors) that provide a degree of choice for people in housing need.

A key challenge is to tackle energy efficiency and fuel poverty. In Hastings 49% of Non-Decent homes fail the Standard due to inadequate thermal comfort, which equates to 19% of the overall housing stock. 52% of non-decent homes were built prior to 1919. Also 6% of all Hastings households are in fuel poverty, with the highest proportion of these households in the owner/occupied housing sector where income is less than £10,000 per annum.

KEY TARGETS

16a Housing – New Homes

Build 3300 new homes by 2013.

16b Housing – Built on Brownfield land

Ensure 60% of new homes are built on previously developed land (brownfield).

16c Housing – Affordable Homes

Ensure 25% of new homes built as affordable homes for young people and others in need.

17. Housing – Improving Conditions

Improve housing standards within the most deprived wards to reflect the Decent Homes Standard.

18a. Homelessness

Progressively reduce the numbers accepted as homeless per 1000 households.

18b. Homelessness

Progressively reduce the numbers of households in temporary accommodation.

A Town that's Good to Live in

By investing in cultural activity and the town's environment, housing, facilities and public transport infrastructure, we can improve people's quality of life. Our town can become fully inclusive:

- Through celebrating the diversity of cultures among its ethnic minority communities.
- By ensuring its parks and gardens, leisure and cultural facilities and activities are as accessible as possible.

There is a need to use energy and resources more responsibly to protect our environment and make it sustainable. We need to improve the management of our green spaces, wildlife and habitats and our built environment.

We will continue to work with partners to develop and improve the existing transport network for the town. This includes road improvements for access, road safety, traffic management and congestion as well as opportunities for public transport, walking and cycling. Many people without cars can't easily get to work, shops, and health facilities or take part in local leisure and cultural activities.

We recognise the value of arts, sports and cultural activities in terms of health and wellbeing, but also as a tool for economic development and inclusion, made possible through engagement in creative industries, cultural tourism and sporting programmes.

A national survey in 2005/06 showed that Hastings had the lowest participation rate in sport or active recreation of districts in the South East Region, and the 15th lowest of 354 districts nationally. This clear correlation between deprivation and participation rates is being addressed, and progress made, through partnership interventions such as the Active Hastings Community Sport Network.

KEY TARGETS

19. Transport – Bus Travel

Progressively increase the total number of bus passenger journeys.

20. Access to open Space

Increase % of households within 300m of an accessible open space that meet the Council's quality standard.

21a. Waste Recycling

Progressively increase the amount of household waste recycled and composted.

21b. Clean Streets

Increase the % of streets which are clean.

Contact us

To find out more about the LSP and the Hastings and St Leonards Community Strategy contact the LSP Co-ordinator on 01424 451131 or email lsp_coordinator@hastings.gov.uk

Or visit www:hastings.gov.uk/community_strategy