



SOUTHWOLD COASTAL COMMUNITY TEAM

Economic Plan

- SUMMARY -



INTRODUCTION

In January 2017, Southwold received confirmation from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) that its bid to become a Coastal Community Team had been accepted. As defined by DCLG:

“A Coastal Community Team (CCT) is a local partnership consisting of the local authority and a range of people and business interests from a coastal community who have an understanding of the issues facing that area and can develop an effective forward strategy for that place.”

The main aims and objectives of a CCT are to boost the local economy by:

- encouraging greater local partnership working in coastal areas
- supporting the development of local solutions to economic issues facing coastal communities
- encouraging the sustainable use of heritage/cultural assets to provide a focus for community activities and enhanced economic opportunities
- creating links to support the growth and performance of the retail sector

An essential requirement for all CCTs is the production of an Economic Plan as a framework for the CCT’s work and objectives in boosting the local economy. Locally tailored, the Economic Plan for the Southwold CCT is output and evidence based and aims to:

- Address challenges and opportunities
- Enhance economic prosperity and well-being
- Set out a programme of actionable initiatives
- Attract future funding and deliver results
- Benefit all living and working in Southwold and Reydon

The Southwold CCT is led by a Steering Group comprising representatives of Southwold Town Council, Reydon Parish Council, Southwold and Reydon Society, Southwold Chamber of Trade, Waveney District Council (accountable body) and other key business and community representatives.

A number of strategic documents for Southwold have been prepared recently including the Town Plan 2013, the Town Strategy 2016 and the Neighbourhood Plan (currently in preparation), all of which have been used to inform the Economic Plan.

In the preparation of this plan a series of 1-2-1 meetings were held with key stakeholders, a public consultation event for the local community was held, a briefing and consultation for local businesses at the Southwold Chamber of Trade AGM, and an online survey was made available to local residents and businesses.



CHALLENGES

Although a highly regarded tourist destination and an attractive place both to live and work, Southwold and Reydon have a number of significant sustainability issues:

- a declining and ageing population, fewer younger people and families
- very high property values and lack of affordable housing
- high commercial rents and an imminent dramatic increase in business rates (as of April 2017)
- majority of jobs and local economy dependent on tourism
- majority of housing stock as second homes and holiday lets
- risk to community facilities such as library and school
- risks posed by flooding and coastal erosion to the local environment, estuary and therefore the Harbour

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This Economic Plan focuses on the issues that have a direct bearing on the Town's future economic success and identifies the following strategic priorities:

1. Maintain and promote the vitality of the High Street
2. Make our visitor economy more sustainable
3. Balance the community
4. Secure and enhance our community and cultural assets
5. Address access, parking and transport issues
6. Preserve our natural environment
7. Diversify the local economy
8. Preserve and promote our local heritage

The Economic Plan is intended to be a live working document which will evolve over time in order to continue to meet the identified strategic priorities.

VISION:

For Southwold to be the successful, vibrant, attractive town on the East Anglian coast, where people want to live, work and visit. To bring together various business, commercial and community interests to inspire and guide a co-ordinated approach to creating greater future economic prosperity for the town.





KEY ACTIONS

The Plan sets out a series of complementary initiatives which collectively can go a long way towards addressing many of the needs of the community and the key challenges that Southwold and Reydon faces. They take into account the particular opportunities and threats the town faces and focus on those things that people see as important or which indirectly support the key strategic priorities.

A programme of 14 actionable initiatives are listed here under the eight strategic priorities:

PRIORITY 1 – MAINTAIN AND PROMOTE THE VITALITY OF THE HIGH STREET

1a. Revitalising the High Street

Project Outcomes

- Creation of a framework and clear plan for strengthening the success of the town's High Street and its independent businesses
- Appointment of a key role to galvanise local businesses and to coordinate and promote relevant activity and events
- Deliver effective promotion of the town to shoppers and visitors including the management of the website and liaison with the Suffolk Coast DMO
- Creation of an event programme to help enliven the High Street and attract more shoppers and visitors outside the main tourist season
- Helping to support the promotion of the town as a year-round retail destination
- Provision of a resource for helping to deliver key elements of the CCT Economic Plan

1b. Promoting Southwold's businesses

Project Outcomes

- Development of a web platform and mobile app to promote the town to residents, shoppers and visitors
- Revitalisation of a strong brand for a known and easily recognised consumer campaign
- More repeat visits to the town by shoppers and visitors
- Support for independent businesses increased and the message of 'buy local' reinforced
- Trade increased to local businesses with increased benefit to the local economy
- Refreshment and extension of the My Southwold guide as an inclusive and effective guide to the town with reference to other CCT initiatives (e.g. the heritage and outdoor trails)
- A united and proactive approach to galvanising the local business community



PRIORITY 2 - MAKE OUR VISITOR ECONOMY MORE SUSTAINABLE

2a. A Destination Management Plan for Southwold

Project Outcomes

- Creation of an essential framework for all the work and collaborative effort that is needed to promote Southwold, extend its tourism season and enhance its visitor experience
- The visitor economy managed more effectively, and its negative impacts mitigated, by developing the Southwold visitor proposition outside the main tourist season
- Bringing together all local businesses and other relevant organisations involved in the visitor economy with a common set of goals
- Identification of relevant trends and opportunities to ensure Southwold's continuing success as a destination
- Identification of what is needed to improve Southwold's visitor offer and consolidate the brand



2b. Promoting Southwold outside the peak tourist season

Project Outcomes

- The visitor economy managed more effectively, and its negative impacts mitigated, by developing the Southwold visitor proposition outside the main tourist season
- Creation of an Marketing Plan to promote off-season breaks and day visits built around events and itineraries related to physical and mental well-being as well as those with a retail or food and drink focus
 - More visits and more support for local businesses out of season through the creation of a year-round tourism market
 - Creation of a new website with current and salient information that helps to catalyse both planned and impulse day visits
 - UK cruise passengers attracted to experience the harbour and the town, and patronise local businesses
 - More visitors enjoying a more rounded experience of Southwold through effective promotion of less well-known aspects of the Southwold visitor offer, e.g. local food and drink, natural environment, etc
 - More people drawn to sample what Southwold can offer in well-being and health and fitness





PRIORITY 3 – BALANCE THE COMMUNITY

3. Training and apprenticeships

Project Outcomes

- Training and apprenticeship programmes developed to support investment in local skill sets
- Gaps in locally-available skills filled
- Recruitment assisted for local employers
- New employment opportunities opened up for younger people in the town
- Increase in out of season employment opportunities
- Removing barriers for both businesses and young people

PRIORITY 4 - SECURE AND ENHANCE OUR COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL ASSETS

4a. Expand community assets

Project Outcomes

- The future of the library secured as its current lease expires
- Extension of the library into a multi-faceted hub and resource centre for the local community and enhancement of the excellent service already provided
- Additional ‘Visitor Information Point’ revenue generating services are explored including event, travel and attraction ticket sales and visitor materials e.g. OS, cycling, walking guides
- More local people use and benefit from the library/community hub
- More community events and learning activities provided
- The mental health and well-being of the town’s community supported and enhanced

4b. Grow Southwold's events programme

Project Outcomes

- Celebration and leverage of Southwold's particular strengths and assets, e.g. local produce and seafood, local artists and creativity
- Provision of learning and enriching experiences for local people and visitors
- Enhancement in the mental health and well-being of the local community
- Increase in visitors and business for the town outside the main tourist season, boosting visitor spend and the local economy
- Increase in Southwold's profile and enhancement of its individual character

PRIORITY 5 - ADDRESS ACCESS, PARKING AND TRANSPORT ISSUES

5a. Edge-of-town car-parking

Project Outcomes

- Traffic congestion reduced with new signage helping visitors find suitable car-parking more easily
- 200 new car spaces provided, increasing car-parking capacity for the town and helping to ease pressures on the town centre at peak periods
- An essential facility provided for the Millennium Trust Wildlife Garden and Visitor Centre
- A new shuttle bus service providing park and ride pick up points at all car parks





5b. Expanding the Southwold and Reydon community shuttle bus service

Project Outcomes

- Procurement of new liveried shuttle bus
- The continuing operation of an essential service for local residents secured and improved
- Shuttle bus service extended and improved
- More visitors using the bus and reducing traffic impact
- More visitors encouraged to discover other parts of the town and its local businesses including the harbour

PRIORITY 6 - PRESERVE OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

6a. Natural spaces Management Plan including a new Wildlife Garden and Visitor Centre

Project Outcomes

- The creation of a Management Plan for the Marshes and Common
- Creation and ongoing maintenance of a Wildlife Garden and Visitor Centre
- Preservation of an important piece of wartime heritage
- More local people and visitors understand and appreciate the natural environment and wildlife of the locality
- Provision of interesting and rewarding volunteering opportunities for local people together with suitable training
- A programme of courses and classes providing learning opportunities for local community
- Health benefits for people exploring self-guided trails through the open spaces and natural environment around the town
- Improved mental health and well-being
- Links created between points of interest such as the Harbour, the denes and new wildlife havens adjacent the Boating Lakes
- The work of local artists supported and showcased in aiding interpretation and discovery

6b. New havens for wildlife

Project Outcomes

- Enhancement of the natural environment and creation of new havens for wildlife
- More local people and visitors understand and appreciate the natural environment and wildlife of the lakes and marshes
- Water levels in the Boating Lakes managed to ensure the future sustainability



PRIORITY 7 - DIVERSIFY THE LOCAL ECONOMY

7a. Feasibility study for redevelopment of available premises in the town

Project Outcomes

- Production of sector analysis and a feasibility study/options appraisal
- Regeneration and best use for development of the town's economy, of disused sites within the town
- Dedicated facilities provided for new businesses which will help diversify the local economy
- New jobs created

7b. Support for a knowledge-based business hub

Project Outcomes

- Creation of a hub for small business in the digital/creative tech sector which will help diversify the local economy and help rebalance the community
- Provision of a Farm-to-Fork Café showcasing local produce and supporting local supply chains
- Learning opportunities created by the Farm-to-Fork Café for the local community in nutrition and associated health benefits
- Provision of a new nursery
- Provision of accommodation for an expanded library
- A building of important historic value to the town regenerated and restored



PRIORITY 8 - PRESERVE AND PROMOTE OUR LOCAL HERITAGE

8. Celebrating Southwold's heritage

Project Outcomes

- Production of a heritage trail leaflet and town map
- More local people and visitors appreciate and value the town's heritage
- Information provided to visitors to enhance the enjoyment of their stay and encourage repeat visits
- A new way of experiencing and enjoying the place which will increase visits outside the peak tourism season
- Local businesses benefited as more people encouraged to explore the town and go beyond the High Street and beach.



DELIVERY

The success of delivering this plan rests in securing the endorsement and active engagement of relevant third parties, many of whom will in any case be directly responsible for some of the initiatives identified. A number of these key organisations will also be directly involved in the delivery of the Economic Plan through their place on the Steering Group and when necessary, smaller working groups will be formed for specific initiatives.

To view the full economic plan please see:

www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/southwold-coastal-community-team







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