

CROWBOROUGH HEALTHCHECK AND ACTION PLAN



Putting Crowborough First

Crowborough is currently undertaking a Healthcheck leading to a Local Action Plan that will be adopted by all organisations and public sector providers working in the town and its surroundings. Similar exercises are taking place in market towns across the country, for example in East Grinstead, Hailsham and Uckfield locally.

The Crowborough Healthcheck is led by a partnership of organisations and interests within Crowborough including the town and district councils. Advice and support is being provided by Action in rural Sussex, who have extensive experience of market town healthchecks.

It is important that **EVERYONE** gets involved – individuals, businesses, community groups and service providers. Initially, four working groups have been meeting to examine how the town is working under four headings:

- 1 Environment
- 2 The Local economy
- 3 Transport and accessibility
- 4 Social and community

This document summarises the work so far and includes a questionnaire that we would like you to complete and return to us.

The groups and meetings so far have identified some key issues faced by the town. We need you to tell us whether you think that these issues are the right

ones and raise any other issues that you feel are important.



YOUR VIEWS ARE IMPORTANT so please send the questionnaire back to us or post it in one of the places named at the end of the questionnaire.

You can also download a copy of the questionnaire and take a look at the summary report so far on our website at:

www.crowborough.info

You can also complete the questionnaire on line if you wish.

Questionnaires and additional consultations are also taking place with local retailers, young people and older people's groups looking at their particular needs. These will be incorporated into the final analysis that will help to determine future actions.

Events and information

A series of events have been organised to promote the questionnaire. Members of the partnership will be on hand to answer your questions:

Fri 17 June 9 am–7pm in the town centre

Sat 25 June 9 am–2pm at the entrance to the Farmers' Market

Sat 9 July at the Crowborough Summer Fair

You can return your questionnaire at the above events or to the following places:

Wealden DC offices, Crowborough Town Hall, Crowborough Library, Safeway, Waitrose, Roan Cards and Jarvis Brook Bakery

There are two information points about the Crowborough Healthcheck and Action Plan. One at the reception of Wealden District Council offices and library and the other at Crowborough Town Hall in the Broadway.

For more information you can also contact **Ieuan Sherwood** at Action in rural Sussex on 01273 405448

Action in rural Sussex

CROWBOROUGH PARTNERSHIP WORKING WITH ACTION IN RURAL SUSSEX

RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRE AS SOON AS YOU CAN BEFORE TUESDAY 12 JULY 2005 AND ENTER OUR PRIZE DRAW

FIRST PRIZE: £100, SECOND PRIZE: £50

Summary of issues identified..



Environment

Crowborough is surrounded by the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and has the ancient Ashdown Forest on its doorstep. It occupies the high point in the area and was developed in Victorian times precisely because of this location and environment.

Cars and traffic now tend to dominate the town to the detriment of pedestrians and cyclists and there are some areas where the conflict between pedestrian and the car user are very apparent – Whitehill and Jarvis Brook in particular, as well as the town centre.

Environmental issues

Gateways to the town

The approaches to Crowborough give visitors their first impression and provide residents and those who work in the town with a sense of belonging.

How can these approaches be improved, particularly the railway station?

Do you agree that this should be a priority?

How about the entrances to Crowborough by car – do you get a good impression on entering the town?

Does it feel welcoming?

Town centre redevelopment

One of the biggest areas of change in the next few years will be the town centre. There are already plans to improve the town centre with better signage and improved facilities. However there are also commercial redevelopment issues to be resolved and planned which will cause disruption to services and life in the town.

Do you agree that the town centre environment needs to be improved? Are there certain facilities that you would like to see in the town centre? If so include these on the questionnaire.

Maintenance of tree cover and sites of particular natural beauty

Tree cover is an important feature of Crowborough and should be maintained throughout the town and the surrounding countryside. Sites of particular interest such as those at Crowborough Ghyll, the former quarry and Limekiln Forest should be managed and protected for the benefit of local people and visitors.

Do you agree with the need to maintain the natural environment in and around the town?

Are these the sites that you think are important – are there others?



The local economy

Crowborough currently enjoys low unemployment and is not over dependent on any one employer, both of which are positive features. The town also has a large number of small businesses, particularly in the town centre and the trading estates. The town should be supporting the growth of small businesses and the development of local trade and enterprise. The town centre retailers are an important part of any market town and in Crowborough there are real threats to these because of the uncertainty over the future plans for different town centre sites. This is the biggest challenge – to maintain and enhance the role of the town centre; to make it attractive so that residents and businesses use it more; to encourage a sense of pride and belonging that translates itself into support for local businesses. In addition visitors could also help to maintain local businesses and enhance the local economy but at the moment there is no focus on tourism promotion within the town.

Economic issues

Encouraging local businesses

Crowborough is already a centre of small businesses. The challenge is to provide relevant and valued support to these businesses while at the same time encouraging an enterprise culture and trading between local businesses to mutual benefit.

How can the town best support its local businesses and an enterprise culture?



Training and skills development

The survival and development of many local businesses is dependent on attracting the right knowhow and skills. Crowborough should be ensuring that these skills are available locally. It should also be encouraging the right skills amongst the young and those returning to work. Local people should not have to travel far for a good job and career.

How can we encourage further direct links between the schools and local businesses and how can we provide the right training and skills development in the town to suit local businesses? Are there some businesses that are unique to the town that require particular expertise and skills?

Business support and development

We are also asking local businesses about what could be done to support retailers and service sectors in the town. We need to know if this is generally supported. Networking, joint promotions and increased use of the internet can help all businesses to develop and grow – and also provide greater choice for local residents.

Do you feel this type of support is important for local businesses?

The town centre

The redevelopment of the town centre will be challenging to everyone but particularly to businesses that need to survive throughout the period of change

Is there support for a town manager during the time of the redevelopment to provide direct assistance, to promote businesses and to liaise with those who are managing the redevelopment projects?

The farmers' market

This has become a successful feature of the town centre. A regular location in the town centre is important if it is to be successful. It also helps increase the overall number of shoppers in the town

Do you use it and would you like to see this more often?

Future business site development

Local employment and business development have always been an important feature of market towns.

Do you support the idea of more business sites?

Where should they be?

Tourism and visitors

Crowborough could do more to attract visitors and tourists. The proximity to Ashdown Forest and its location within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty plus the Conan Doyle connection makes it a place that many people would visit. Currently there is no concerted tourism strategy.

Do you feel that Crowborough should develop opportunities for tourists and visitors?



Transport and accessibility

The biggest issue concerning local public transport in and around the town is the need for better links between the different services – particularly bus and rail. There are particular congestion points and black spots that affect the movement of cars through and around the town. Poor and illegal parking and poor signposting in some areas do not help. There is strong support for the retention of free car parks in the town centre. Improved access for pushchairs, wheelchairs and those with mobility needs would be welcome, particularly in the town. There are opportunities to make improvements but the exact difficulties have to be identified.

Transport and accessibility issues

Better links between the bus and rail services

This is a priority as is the need for better signage and bus stop facilities around the train station.

Do you agree with the need to improve facilities and services for both buses and trains?

Evening train service

Is there a demand for a later evening train service from London? If so, the Partnership can press for this.

Do you support the call for the later train service?

Free car parks

Do you consider that there is a need for free car parks to help attract people into Crowborough to use the shops and facilities?

Pavements and footpaths

Pavements in many parts of Crowborough are in poor condition or narrow or both. The pavements and footpaths are important to pedestrians and help road safety.

How could pavements be improved, and where?

Social and community

Crowborough is a market town that offers services and facilities to the surrounding area. These include health and hospital facilities, schools and the emergency services. Each of these offer generally good services but there are concerns that these will come under greater pressure with the development of further housing in the area and with the ageing population. Crowborough also has a range of community and voluntary groups, clubs and societies. However the town itself is sorely lacking in a focus for community meetings and cultural events as it has no central meeting place. Facilities for outdoor sport and recreational activities are below the accepted

standards for the population because development is restricted by the protected landscape that surrounds the town. Access to affordable housing is an issue here as it is across the south east but there is a strong desire to provide local homes for local people. Population trends mean that the town and the villages around will grow older in the next decade. Certain social groups have particular needs that should be met within the town – for example, children, young people and the elderly. There are particular issues relating to anti-social behaviour and fear of crime that also must be solved locally.

Social and community issues

Affordable housing

The availability of housing at a price or of a type that is suitable for the local population is a key issue that Crowborough shares with most of the south east. There are ways in which communities can identify and provide houses for rent or shared ownership through housing associations or where developments can include smaller lower cost housing rather than large detached dwellings.

Are you or a member of your family experiencing housing difficulties which means that you are living in unsuitable accommodation? Do you think more affordable housing should be provided in Crowborough either for rent or purchase?

Multi-purpose community hall

There are few towns the size of Crowborough that do not have a community meeting place and centre for activities. Such a development would greatly enhance the facilities and services and social life in the town and would also enhance the town centre.

Do you support the need for a multi purpose community centre within the town? What features do you think it should include?

Voluntary and community sector activities

There is a need for better co-ordination of activities between organisations within the town and for better networking.

Do you see a need for better networking and co-ordination? – perhaps a community diary or the development of a website to encourage this?

Children's facilities

There is a recognised shortage of out of school childcare within Crowborough especially day nursery care. There are many organisations in the town and it is thought that the development of a network could help to stimulate this further. Premises and recruitment problems are also experienced in the childcare sector

Do you need childcare or day nursery facilities?

Would you like to see more in the town?

Could an overarching childcare network involving the private, community and public sector help to address these issues?

Recreational and playing field facilities

The shortage of recreational and playing fields for organised sports in particular is well known in the town. Groups have to travel elsewhere for these facilities

Do you experience difficulties in finding facilities for sports and recreational activities? Which ones in particular?

Services for young people

The partnership is consulting with young people directly to find out what their needs might be. However the survey work has already identified the absence of informal youth services is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Are you a young person or do you have children who can tell the partnership what facilities and services they would like in Crowborough and what particular issues young people face in accessing service, jobs, training or recreational and leisure activities?

Services for older people

The proportion and overall number of older people (over 60s) in our communities are rising. The challenge is to meet the needs of the active elderly, as people are not only living longer but are more active than previous generations. It is also to provide for the needs of the elderly frail and infirm. They need both adequate and suitable accommodation and local activities and services.

Do you agree that the local health service should concentrate on improving services for the elderly particularly concentrating on helping people stay independent?

What additional services would you like to see?

Anti-social behaviour

Crowborough has a low crime rate but there is concern about the increase in anti-social behaviour, vandalism and petty crime in the town. The high profile of such activities does also increase the fear and perception of crime which in turn has an impact on people's lives

Have you suffered from anti-social behaviour or petty crime and do you consider its reduction a priority?

Are there particular areas where this is a real problem in the town?

RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRE AS SOON AS YOU CAN BEFORE TUESDAY 12 JULY 2005 AND ENTER OUR PRIZE DRAW

FIRST PRIZE: £100, SECOND PRIZE: £50