



# STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

REPORT 3/18

15 JANUARY 2018

The purpose of this paper is to ask Members to consider a draft for a summary document of the Town Council's Strategic Plan.

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**No. DETAILS**

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**1) BACKGROUND**

- a) The Town Council formally adopted its Local Strategic Plan in Minute 103/16 of its meeting of 11 July after consideration of Report 44/16 for that meeting.
- b) The Plan developed out of the approach and activity of the Town Council over the previous five years in responding to the challenges and opportunities the town presented.
- c) The work of the Town Council's Community Development Officer and Economic Development Officer had enabled close connectivity with and awareness of both the town's rich voluntary sector and detailed research into its economic base.
- d) The Town Council's successful application to join the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) Our Place Programme in 2014 provided funding and framework for building on these foundations by engaging both residents and public agencies in planning for the future.
- e) The year's programme culminated in the development of an Operational Plan that was accepted by the DCLG in 2015 year.
- f) The programme also funded a town-wide Our Place Survey with a six-page questionnaire delivered to every home and over 600 completed responses received providing clear qualitative and quantitative evidence of the town's priorities.
- g) Building on this work the Town Council's Economic Development Officer took on the task of drafting a strategic framework based on studies of the Strategic framework documents of over 50 local authorities involved in embedding the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- h) The initial draft document was considered at a Saturday morning Seminar for Members on 27 February 2016.
- i) In response, the format of the Plan was revised to consist of set of Core Strategy Statements with documents based on it for each of the three major developmental areas with Social Objectives, Environmental Objectives and Economic Objectives.
- j) This document set was discussed at an informal meeting of Members on 4 July 2016.
- k) The documents are available on the Town Council's web site by following [this link](#).

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**2) A SUMMARY**

- a) The Plan provides the high level strategic framework for the Town Council's work.
- b) Its necessary length and complexity means that a summary document will be more effective in communicating with residents, partners and funders.
- c) Nick Cox has prepared a draft for that summary document, a copy of which is attached to this Report.

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**3) RECOMMENDATION**

Members are recommended to consider, amend as agreed and adopt a summary of the Town Council's Local Strategic Plan.

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# Taking Our Communities Forward



## Capitalising on Island-Wide Tourism

In terms of Island tourism, the Island Railway Line between Ryde and Shanklin, is estimated to carry over a million passengers a year, of which many are tourists. The Island itself is also reported to have around 2.36 million visitors a year with a further 300,000 arriving by private boat or yacht. With this magnitude of annual tourism potential and spending power capability, it would seem essential from a business perspective to capitalise on these yearly trends and make every effort to attract more visitors to Ventnor.

### The Past is Not Our Future

In the past Ventnor attracted a diverse range of visitors which helped to build a lucrative economy in which to do business; and tourism was supported by a comprehensive railway network across the Island. For the working family or person, holidays were about access and affordability. The freedom to holiday abroad was invariably out of their reach. This is not so today, and Ventnor has to compete in the global tourism marketplace as a viable holiday destination.

### Expectations of Modern Holidaymakers

The aspirations of modern holidaymakers have changed with the escalation in earnings, lifestyle expectations and perceptions of what makes a good holiday. Low-cost travel to world-wide destinations has increased dramatically and people have become more aware of competitively priced package holidays abroad. Consequently, it would be a poor local tourism strategy to expect modern-day families and singles to visit Ventnor simply to walk through the town and meander along the esplanade for a week, when they could easily purchase an all-inclusive, four-star family package holiday abroad for far less or equivalent cost; and that is despite many Island hospitality venues including the Solent travel costs in their Isle of Wight holiday deals.

### A New Model for Local Tourism

Achieving a profitable tourist economy is not so much about expensive marketing campaigns but more intuitively about:

- Common sense linked with local business expertise;
- The determination to succeed by local proprietors;
- A get-up-and-go-attitude to improve local tourism.

These motivations are cited in the strategy; and the fact that no one outside of Ventnor is coming to our rescue, suggests that it is up to us to improve our own local tourism offerings.

## Local Conversation Required

Although there will be advertising efforts made throughout the year for the Island as a whole, these may not affect or even have an impact on local retailing and hospitality. In reality, Ventnor needs to become more ambitious about its local tourism and relentless in creating the best modern seaside resort on the Isle of Wight. Making it fashionable, attractive and affordable for local residents, Island visitors and world-wide tourists. However, there are concerns that need a local conversation to prevent Ventnor becoming the poor relative to the Island's tourist economy, such as:

- What makes a super and competitive holiday for any family or person wanting to stay in Ventnor?
- What does Ventnor have to offer the frequent visitor for interest, activity, relaxation and pleasure?
- Can Ventnor proactively attract more visitors from the very lucrative Island-wide tourism economy? and;
- Can Ventnor plan and organise more local events to boost its local retail, hospitality and leisure sectors?

It is not unfair to raise such concerns. Other quality seaside resorts along the South coast of England such as: Hastings, Brighton, Bournemouth, Poole and Weymouth, have also faced a decline in tourism but have bounced back simply by understanding what makes their resorts special for tourism and strategically improving their seaside offerings, services and presentation. Ventnor too, needs to bounce back if it is to have any secure future. Our visionary strategic objectives aspire to increasing local tourism through the collaboration of local retailers, restaurateurs, café and pub proprietors working together using their specialist skills to attract more visitors. Thereby creating a resort that excels in retailing, culinary excellence and community-based tourism, all year.

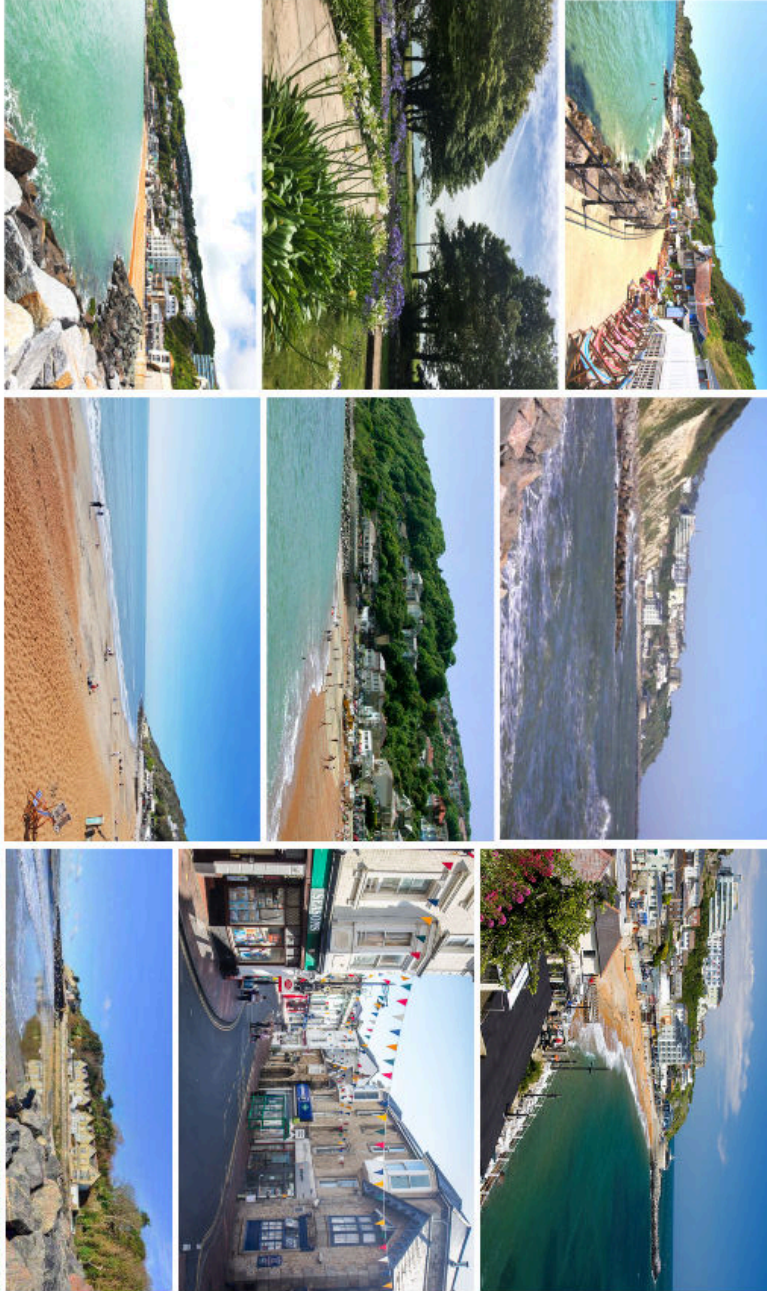
### Our Local Future is Bright – We Believe So

Ventnor is a business, and has been for over a century. More specifically, the focus of Ventnor continues to be tourism, cultural advancement and commercial growth. To sustain these socio-economic qualities, entrepreneurial initiatives and regenerative investments are required to continue Ventnor's transformation into a modern-day seaside resort and increase its ability to benefit our Island's economy. The Town Council is committed to this goal in the strategy plan; as too, taking Ventnor forward into a brighter future.

# Transforming the Future of Ventnor



***‘In partnership with the residents of Ventnor to enable and secure a sustainable economic, social and vibrant cultural future for our seaside town.’***



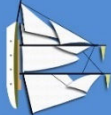
### Our Vision for Ventnor

***“The Perfect place, the perfect home, and the perfect lifestyle in the perfect environment. Where our local communities do it for themselves and for their future.”***



### Our Ambitions for the Future of Ventnor are simple...

***“To create a high quality 21<sup>st</sup> century seaside resort that is loved by local residents and visitors, and attractive to commerce and financial investment. A location on the Isle of Wight that is both viable and profitable for our local businesses, trades and community initiatives; powered by innovative, well-planned sustainable economic growth, community capacity building and social advancement, and environmental conservation. With our local businesses, trades, public service providers and volunteers working together using their skills and expertise to create a transformed, cohesive, engaged and prosperous community that is open to socio-economic regeneration, social equality, protecting human freedoms and easing deprivation; while aiming for economic supremacy using modern marketing and business practices.”***





# Overview of Our Strategy for Local Economic, Social and Environmental Regeneration



## Welcome to Ventnor

We are pleased to present an overview of our local strategy plan for Ventnor on the Isle of Wight taking us up to 2025. The strategy plan follows the guidelines provided by the UK National Planning Policy Framework to achieve sustainable development. Blending hospitality, tourism, business and trade economies alongside community and social priorities, and environmental conservation. The linking of economic, social and environmental attributes produces an integrated and workable local strategy plan based on self-preservation and sustaining our diverse local communities; and allows us to build a strong, cohesive and inclusive community in which to live, work and operate businesses and trades.

## Our Strategic Purpose

The future strategy aims to overcome and resolve certain economic, social and environmental obstacles that continue to hold back our communities. By careful management of a range of strategic local projects over time: retail, hospitality, leisure and tourism can be reinvigorated; personal health, wellbeing and isolation can be addressed; inequalities, social vulnerabilities and safeguarding can be resolved; and the environment around us maintained and protected.

## Managing Our Strategy

Our local strategy plan is for everyone: the very young, youth, families and singles living and working locally, and visitors to Ventnor. The strategy builds upon previous work in local economic analysis and community development, alongside community engagement and surveying residents; supported by 3 important underlying strategic processes:

- Developing reliable business and service partnerships;
- Fostering and securing local community cohesion;
- Promoting sustainable environmental planning.

These processes enable us to deliver the objectives and goals defined in the plan and fulfil the vision for Ventnor.

## Ventnor Council Commitment

The local strategy plan is our commitment to the diverse communities that make up Ventnor for building a better, more vibrant and prosperous place in which to live, work and visit. It captures the shared role and aspirations of the elected Town Council and our communities. The strategy is both practical and modern in its approach for improving the prospects and preservation of Ventnor as a seaside resort.

## Vision 1: Protecting Our Natural Environment

The vistas surrounding Ventnor make our location one of the most beautiful areas to live and visit on the Isle of Wight. Facing almost due south, and sheltered by the towering Downs from undesirable winds, the town enjoys agreeable temperatures throughout the year with rainfall less than anywhere in the UK. Our living ecosystem supports an array of habitats for animals, birds, fish, plants, trees and other forms of species; and our natural surroundings contain many biological building blocks required for human life. We are in essence, an integral part of our natural environment and dependant on its planetary and ecological capabilities for land development, agriculture, deep-sea fishing, food production, forestry, earth materials and natural resources.

## Ecological Benefits of Ventnor

Ventnor is constantly invigorated by fresh sea air full of negative hydrogen ions that benefit personal wellbeing, sleep and helping to reduce anxiety and depression. The trees, foliage, shrubs and plants release oxygen through photosynthesis, as do our grassy cliffs and green spaces. Ventnor has the highest amount of health-giving sunshine in the UK and is known for its natural springs. In effect, our local ecology needs to be protected both now and for the future. Hence this vision pursues ecological preservation and environmental conservation to fully safeguard our local countryside, wildlife and marine life; monitor pollution and climate change; and forward-thinking on renewable energy.

### Supporting Vision 1: Environmental Objectives

- To conserve our local countryside, wildlife and marine life.
- To preserve our natural ecosystem and local biodiversity.
- To safeguard rural, farming and horticultural businesses.
- To manage climate change and global warming locally.
- To facilitate integrated sustainable energy management.
- To monitor natural resources, land use and coastal areas.

### Supporting Vision 2: Community Objectives

- To ensure local community infrastructure improvements.
- To provide affordable and liveable local accommodation.
- To generate employment and improve employability.
- To achieve healthier, beneficial and stress-free lifestyles.
- To promote positive and healthier sustainable workplaces.
- To cultivate social cohesion in our local communities.
- To deliver health and wellbeing through recreation.
- To ensure personal safety and community protection.
- To preserve local heritage and cultural diversity.
- To affirm the equality, inclusion and respect for women.

## Vision 2: Improving Social Circumstances

The four extensive communities of St Lawrence, the Town Centre, Lowtherville and Bonchurch that form Ventnor are rich in dependable and productive qualities; life knowledge, selfless volunteering and workplace expertise. Our strategy captures these social attributes and experiences; and linked with the requested community priorities gathered during community engagement, help define a set of sensible and achievable social objectives and goals relevant to our communities. Our social strategic plan deliberately targets infrastructure improvements and affordable and liveable housing; employability and local jobs; healthier family lifestyles; social inclusion, integration and advancement; the safeguarding of vulnerable children and adults; gender equality especially in the workplace; youth work; and finally, provision and access to local recreational facilities.

## Community Involvement Against Poverty

Our social strategies are at the heart of everything the Town Council does and hopes to achieve. To nurture a more equal community that is resilient, caring, has pride in itself and promotes true citizenship. Paramount is the reduction of social deprivation familiar to many local families and single people. But our social vision can only be accomplished by the continued volunteer relief efforts given by local people; supportive partnerships with public service providers; and social interventions by the Town Council - working together to improve the lives and opportunities for local residents.

### Supporting Vision 3: Business Objectives

- To guide and enhance local business regeneration.
- To stimulate local retailing, hospitality and leisure.
- To achieve business and community profitability.
- To manage co-ordinated destination management.
- To motivate local community-based tourism.
- To develop local culinary-oriented tourism.
- To deliver leisure and cultural event tourism.
- To engage in integrated and sustainable transport.



Fig. 1.

The environmental, community and economic objectives form the core of our local strategy plan for Ventnor. These objectives were selected after consultation with local residents during community engagement meetings between 2015 and 2016. Projects and action plans, have or need to be, developed to achieve these objectives over time thus enabling us to attain the defined strategic goals and vision for Ventnor. Although these objectives are flexible they cannot be achieved without the consent and collaboration of our local retailers, hospitality proprietors, local clubs, associations and volunteers working together, and with their Town Council for a better future.

## Vision 3: Achieving Real Business Growth

Our economic strategy is regenerative in nature with solid ambitions for business and trade investment and expansion; affordable and flexible transport; regeneration of retail and hospitality; and local destination management interlinked with attractive service offerings. Our flexible economic goals and objectives aim for a stronger focus on co-operative and inclusive economic growth, improving financial margins and delivering more regular local events. All of which requires:

- Having a motivated local business and trade network;
- Using technology to analyse supply and demand;
- Merchandising, customer targeting and branding;
- Being business-smarter than anyone else; and
- Gaining customer service excellence accreditation.

## Be Confident in Ventnor

The Town Centre and Esplanade have had a downturn in their businesses due to recessionary forces with lower football and profit margins. The impact of out-of-town supermarkets providing parking, petrol and total shopping convenience, has created a challenge for our town centre. Online shopping has also greatly impacted our high street increasing to 13% in 2014 and a predicted 18% by 2018 for total retail sales in the UK, and continues to rise\*. Consumer demographics and behaviour has changed and their ability to use the Internet to browse and purchase. Even though the supermarkets and Internet appear to undermine our high street, they lack that one-to-one relationship Ventnor does so well. Fortunately, our seaside town still maintains its appeal, natural beauty and rugged coastline; its clean and tidy beach, and diversity of restaurants, cafés and pubs, and cultural events. These positive aspects make Ventnor what it is today – Loved!

## Local Entrepreneurs

Local proprietors, professionals and tradespeople continue to service our communities even in very difficult times. The economic strategy fully recognises their contribution as entrepreneurs in their own right, and their investment and expertise to sustain our local economy, often providing careers, jobs and apprenticeships. The Council is in contact with the Island Regeneration Programme and can provide guidance to businesses and trades needing capital funding, workforce expansion and business opportunities, as well as future local regeneration projects by Ventnor Town Council.

