Update on the High Street

Cllr Ranger and Cllr Bedford became the High Street representatives in 2021 and have actively been working to secure a relationship with the traders. They have both visited most High Street shops to introduce themselves and to ask what help and support the traders require from the Pariah Council.

What has been achieved so far:

- A relationship established with several traders.
- Attending the traders meeting in preparation for the Santa Sunday event.
- Assisting the traders to secure funding from Mid Sussex District Council, Welcome Back Fund for the Santa Sunday event. A total of £3,595 was awarded and funded the following: £2,395 for the entertainers, £1,000 for marquee hire and £200 for the event first aider/paramedic.
- Approaching High Street shops to sell the parking discs for Trinity Road car park.
- The Safe Place project has been launched and training given to the High Street shops who wanted to be involved.
- Submitting interest in the Welcome Back Fund for the below activities:

Mid Sussex Welcome Back Fund Information:

A Welcome Back Fund was introduced by Mid Sussex District Council in 2021 to assist the safe reopening of the High Street and to increase footfall and the 'shop local' agenda. The Parish Council submitted interest in the three areas that were available to us:

Activity	Funding available
Events programme i.e. outdoor cinema or other outdoor type event such as markets to promote footfall	£4,000 per Village
Art Trail or similar, to promote footfall and high street appeal	£8,000 per town
Shop window vinyl prints to enhance the appearance of vacant units/shop parades	£2,000 per Village (dependant on number of vacant units)
Village action plans to help identify a future programme of action to support the long-term viability of these centres	£4,000 per village

Actioned already from Welcome Back Fund:

- Santa Sunday (December 5, 2021) – This was regarded as a success with the additional lighting, marquees, snow machine and entertainment. Gill from Ashley & Thomas rallied the traders for Super Sunday and is keen to revitalise the Traders Association. MSDC WBF funded a major part of this. A total of £3,595 was awarded and funded the following: £2,395 for the entertainers, £1,000 for marquee hire and £200 for the event first aider/paramedic.

Planned work from Welcome Back Fund but not actioned yet:

- Vinyl shop front covering on the empty units in the High Street that make it look occupied and full of people. An empty unit currently gives the impression of a business having failed and being deserted. Rather than have the current view into an empty unit, the "trompe l'oeil" (to deceive the eye) gives a stunning effect of a busy retail unit. Design shop £385 + Print and Instal £200 (ex VAT). The Clerk has written to the owner of 113 and 115 High Street (Miram and Raven) to ask for permission to put attractive vinyls on the empty shop windows but has not had a reply. The Nationwide have improved their shop front since last year and intend to sell it.

- Streetlamp banners to dress the High Street. Hurstpierpoint High Street does normally have bunting during the two weeks arts festival in September each year. Christmas Lights also hang across the High Street from early December to early January each year. Both these examples create delight and atmosphere in the High Street. The use of banners on street lamps (permissions required) promoting the shop local message would provide a similar excitement. 8 x £132 = £1,056 (ex VAT).
- Promotional shopping bags to be given away to promote use of the local shops. Possibly partnering with Hurst Re-Think, an environmental campaign group, using a promotional strap line such as "Think Hurst First" the design of the printing on the bags would encourage shoppers to use their high street shops before travelling further afield. £3.21 per unit x 1000 Bags = £3,211 (ex VAT).
- A village action plan to help identify a future programme of action to support the long-term viability of Hurstpierpoint. The Action Plan will have a specific focus to "Support local authorities to develop plans for responding to the medium term impact of Covid-19 including trialling new ideas particularly where these relate to the High Street". While the Action Plan is funded by the WBF and will be procured centrally by MSDC, who will oversee, manage and sign-off the commission, they support the work of the Parish Council and as such, the successful commission will work closely with us to deliver the Action Plan. The Action Plan will need to identify the challenges for the location, specified with input from us, Ward Councillors and key stakeholders such as businesses. Consideration will need to be given to the individual character and nature of the village centre with the Action Plan required to identify viable, deliverable and realistic short, medium and long term actions, that will provide direction and help to future proof the centre.

Art Trail – can we claim these funds?

- We've approached MSDC to ask if we could claim any funds under the 'art trail or similar to promote footfall' line. Hurst Rethink (a local environmental community group set up to drive sustainable change) have approached us about their project which would be production of a village shopping map showing all the best places for purchasing sustainable products. We are hoping to put together a 'think Hurst first' shopping trail which could all come together with the map, reusable jute shopping bags, and leaflets/discount vouchers from the Traders. MSDC thinks the proposal for the art trail sounds good in principle. MSDC will be requesting a funding update so that they can allocate any unspent funding toward projects that fall outside of the original framework. With that in mind we have been asked to let them know any indicative costings, if we know them, and they then can advise whether we can progress.

Areas that have been highlighted as issues:

- Several shops do not have online presence which during the pandemic caused businesses to close or struggle especially when the nation was told to stay at home.
- Consumers may never return to the High Street due to working at home and the new online culture.
- High operating costs with low foot fall.
- The traders do not actively work with other groups in the village such as Hurst Festival, Hurst Re-think etc… and building this relationship would be very valuable.

Areas the Parish Council could consider supporting in the future:

- No more removals of ATM's
- Advertising the two free car parks
- Advertise Hurstpierpoint as a visitor/tourist destination– connecting to the Heritage Trail
- Support businesses with signage and advertising – making it clear to residents if support the High street or potentially lose it.
- More pedestrian events in the High Street

Further information will be brought to the Community Engagement Meeting – 13th January 2022.