



**Hawkhurst Business Recovery Plan –
From impact of COVID-19.
Draft
A transition to a new business environment.**



Version 1	22.5.2020
Version 2	3.6.2020
Version 3	9.6.2020
Version 4	10.6.2020
Version 5	3.7.2020
Version 6	13.7.2020

1 Introduction

Hawkhurst has experienced the same economic disruption as other parts of the country due to the need to address public health concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to restrict public movement to contain the virus.

One of the Parish Council's strategic objectives is “to be business friendly”

In late February 2020, Hawkhurst Parish Council circulated a business survey to 125 local businesses. The response was disrupted by the COVID 19 outbreak so is not statistically valid (15 responses) but a summary of key points are:

- vast majority independent shops
- healthy mix of health and beauty, leisure and entertainment and food and drink
- typical number of employees under 7
- three main challenges; lack of parking, congestion and limited ICT connectivity
- Hawkhurst USP – “Quality shops in a Wealden village”
- things to improve – more parking, reduce business rates, reduce congestion and improve ICT connection

2. Hawkhurst – Background research

Hawkhurst Parish Council commissioned some research in late 2019 which has highlighted several important points

Mosaic analysis - The most notable factor is the split in the population: Country Living – 47.9% and Rural Reality 43.5%

Country living is Well-off owners in rural locations enjoying the benefits of country life (6% of UK households). Country Living are well-off homeowners who live in the countryside often beyond easy commuting reach of major towns and cities. Some people are landowners or farmers, others run small businesses from home, some are retired and others commute distances to professional jobs.

Rural reality Householders living in inexpensive homes in village communities (6% of UK households). Rural Reality are people who live in rural communities and generally own their relatively low cost homes. Their moderate incomes come mostly from employment with local firms or from running their own small business.

The table below compares Hawkhurst to Tunbridge Wells and Kent

Area	Country Living	Rural Reality
Hawkhurst	47.9%	43.5%
Tunbridge Wells	14.7%	7.9%
Kent	8.5%	7.3%

In some respects, Hawkhurst is a village of two “economic communities”.

The full mosaic analysis report is available on <https://hawkhurst-pc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Hawkhurst-Sandhurst-Mosaic-summary.pdf>

Demographic information (Hawkhurst and Sandhurst ward) - is summarised below

Hawkhurst, from an analysis point of view, is made up of three Lower Super

Output areas: (see map on page 4 of report)

Village West – 014B (the Moor and surrounding area)

Village East – 014C (Highgate)

Village Rural – 014E (The surrounding rural area)

Age – Hawkhurst has a higher proportion of residents aged 9 -19, 35 – 54 and 85 and over than compared to Kent overall.

Housing – The housing numbers have shown significant growth for a village of this size over the recent past.

House prices – The lower quartile house prices for Rural and Village East areas are similar but significantly higher than Village West or Tunbridge Wells.

When lower quartile house prices are related to the lower quartile income the challenging situation is illustrated in the table below;

Lower quartile housing affordability index			
Area	2017	2018	
Rural	15.1	13.3	
Village East	15.5	14.7	
Village West	15.4	15.5	
Tunbridge Wells	13.5	13	
South East	10.6	11.6	

Employment – the three highest employment sectors are: Education (20%) Retail (15%) and Health (13.3%)

Deprivation – Is a measure of a number of factors and each area of Hawkhurst varies within the national landscape.

Health – When compared to Kent, Hawkhurst as a whole is considered healthier with 83.9% saying their health was good or very good as against 81.6% on Kent as whole. However, resident claiming health related benefits is higher than in Kent.

The full Social Demographic Report is available on <https://hawkhurst-pc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Hawkhurst-Parish-Report-Dec-2019.pdf>

3. Impact of COVID 19

All high streets in the country are currently in crisis mode and government and local government are funding, where possible, to support businesses.

There will be many factors that are beyond the Parish and local business's control, not least being the protection of the nation's health following public health guidelines versus impact on the national and local economy; restoring public confidence to come back into businesses, village centres, retail and hospitality venues.

The new business environment is going to look very different to what was known pre-COVID-19. The Association of Centre Management (ATCM) had originally predicted that the high street would change radically over the next five years and are now stating that this has been condensed into five months. Many of the changes to consumer behaviour and business practice may not revert to pre-COVID-19.

Hawkhurst's public has previously demonstrated its loyalty to supporting local facilities – the Kino Cinema being an excellent example of this. Being able to return to the Kino to full operational mode will be one of the key factors to the recovery of the village centre's local economy.

However local businesses have stepped in the COVID 19 crisis to support the community – Tesco and Waitrose have shown flexibility and their staff have worked tirelessly. Stevens farm and park Farm butchers have supported the Hawkhurst Community Group effort to help local residents.

Some general national observations;

In the community

- some will be much poorer, or in deeper debt through income loss they can't recover
- a WPP survey suggests around 10% of earners have already lost all income
- many older people, in forced isolation, will be in desperate need of contact
- many on fixed or stable incomes will have been unable to spend it, so well in credit
- there's a much bigger network of community volunteers, and neighbourhood contacts
- many more people have learned how to work from home, and may want to avoid public transport

In business

- some will be unable to recover from a long period with no income, especially those in personal services which depend on contact, like hairdressers, beauty salons, nail bars
- some will have been able to adapt, by supplying services in new ways without contact
- there has been a step-change in the proportion of retail spending over the internet – estimated by McKinsey to be up from 25% to 35% in the last week of March 2020
- technical / professional / ICT service businesses have probably held up reasonably well

Hardest hit businesses nationally have been hospitality, leisure, recreation, most retail except food, and personal services, which were compulsorily closed. Transport has also lost most of its income, for instance a reported 90% reduction in passenger usage in Kent.

Consumer confidence is key to people returning to the Colonnade and shopping in Hawkhurst.

A recent national survey is illustrated below.

Ipsos Mori Poll April 2020			
Q. Imagine if the lockdown measures end in the next month, how comfortable, if at all, do you think you will feel doing each of the following in the same way as you did before the Coronavirus pandemic began?			
<p>Almost two-thirds (62%) of Britons are comfortable with the idea of meeting friends and family outside of their household, however a third remain sceptical (33%). Around half are comfortable when it comes to shopping; 51% would be at ease with shopping in a supermarket while 49% are happy to go to other shops.</p> <p>However, a further 43% say they will feel uncomfortable shopping in other shops. Four in 10 (39%) would feel uncomfortable shopping in supermarkets.</p> <p>Despite being most willing to attend large public events and bars / restaurants, young people are least likely to be comfortable with meeting friends and family outside of their households. While two-thirds (64%) of those aged 35-75 would be happy doing so, only 57% of 18-34-year olds are at ease with this.</p> <p>Half (49%) of those who are currently employed feel comfortable going back to work, a third (35%) would be nervous to do so. When parents / guardians think about sending their children back to school, more feel uncomfortable than comfortable about doing so. Almost half (48%) express unease while 41% say they would be happy to send their children back.</p>			
	Very / fairly comfortable	Not very / Not at all	Net comfortable
Meeting with friends and family outside your household	62%	33%	+29%
Shopping in supermarkets	51%	39%	+12%
Shopping in other shops	49%	43%	+6%
Going to your place of work	41%	48%	-7%
Going to bars and restaurants	29%	61%	-32%
Using public transport	21%	61%	-40%
Going to large public gatherings such as sports or music events	17%	67%	-50%

4. Recovery Plan

The Parish launched a business survey in 2020, which has been a derailed by COVID 19. The aim had been to follow up with a forum and a potential Hawkhurst Business Partnership;

Therefore, working in partnership with TWBC Business Economic Unit, we feel inviting local business to a virtual meeting to discuss a Hawkhurst Recovery Plan is essential for a sustainable recovery.

It would operate in a transparent and inclusive manner, all meeting details published, and anyone can attend any meeting either virtually or in the future in person. It could consist of the following membership potentially

Representatives from:

- large Local Businesses representative?
- independent Businesses representative?
- home working representative?
- Kino?
- Tesco / Waitrose?
- Rotary?
- Hawkhurst Parish Council?
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council?

Initial thoughts are 4 key themes

What have we've got?

- Audit - identify what shops and services are there in the Parish.
- Promote - publicise the business list and contact details on line, in advertising and distribute an annual business guide to every household, feature one business in every edition of the parish newsletter.

Environment - make Hawkhurst a pretty place to shop and spend time

- hanging baskets
- village in bloom
- ensuring the signs, bollards etc are clean and repainted
- removing pointless signs and clutter
- identify shopfronts that need enhancing and offer grants to encourage high maintenance.
- a best shop front award / most imaginative display / customer service awards / good grub guide
- Use empty shops windows to promote – events, arts etc rather than look empty

Access

- a convenient car park guide to the village to publicise that unlike Tunbridge Wells we have free parking - the two public ones and that you can park for two hours in Waitrose / one and half in Tesco's.???
- can we clarify the current parking on the high street – seems a mix of lines either illegal for pop-in shopping.

- install the Puffin traffic signal phasing of lights ay Highgate Crossroads – to help improve traffic flow
- can we identify any other potential car parks?
- promote Hawkhurst as a shopping destination in the local area - only a short bus ride away from the delights of a coffee and slice of carrot cake in Hawkhurst.
- 20mph speed limit near primary school
- a pelican / pedestrian crossing by Tesco?
- Mobile speed cameras to enforce speed limits

Business support

- a TWBC business adviser to support local business to upgrade their websites, assist with their marketing, assist with identifying national and local grants and applying for them, challenging rateable values etc.
- coordinate the pooling of some services - for example shops that want a local delivery service to connect with customers - could post-Covid informal deliveries be structured to support all Hawkhurst businesses
- ICT upgrade to make Hawkhurst connected – for business, for home working and for quality of life

The national recommendations for Recovery Plans are in three stages – see below.

<p>Stage 1 Rescue 4- 8 weeks</p>	<p>The Government, Kent County Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Hawkhurst Parish Council support local business by providing information to enable financial assistance where it is available.</p>
<p>Stage 2 Reopen 2 – 6 months</p>	<p>We need collectively to think of ideas to encourage footfall back to the “colonnade” and other shopping areas in the village.</p> <p>Putting in place plans and ideas ready for post-COVID-19, rather than thinking about them when we reach this stage.</p> <p>Innovation should be encouraged.</p>
<p>Stage 3 Recovery 7 months onwards “The New normal”</p>	<p>Working together on good ideas and plans to encourage people back to our high streets. Putting Stage 2 into action.</p> <p>Establishing what the ‘new normal’ is going to be for the colonnade and how businesses will work within this.</p> <p>In the short time that COVID-19 has impacted the UK businesses have shown their creativity and ability to adapt and this might need to continue in the future.</p>

4. Draft Recovery Action plan

The aim is to restart Hawkhurst' social and economic life, we need to recognise some big changes which will have happened, as we ease out of lockdown. The action plan is based on the previously identified phases.

Rescue – 4 – 8 weeks				
No	Action	Who	When	Update
1	Social distancing measures	Range of local businesses	18.3.2020	Ongoing, working well adapted and improved
2	Business rates relief	Gov't / TWBC	18.3.2020	Ongoing
3	Variety of business grants / loans support	Gov't / TWBC	18.3.2020	Ongoing to support the
4	Volunteer support	HCSG set up and doing outstanding work	18.3.2020	Ongoing
5	Support local business – HPC as landlord gave Kino defer rent. Use local shops where possible – Wealden Ad, Sustainable Print etc	HPC HCSG	1.4.2020	HCSG - website showcasing local businesses HCSG - newsletter showing casing local businesses
6	Promotion of business grants	TWBC / HPC	Website updates	Ongoing
7	Acknowledge huge debt we owe to local key workers, volunteers and businesses	TWBC / HPC	Summer Parish Newsletter	Chairman's newsletter May 2020 and July 2020

Reopen – 2 – 6 months				
No	Action	Who	When	Update
1	Set up virtual Hawkhurst Business Partnership (HBP)	HPC / TWBC	30 th June	Invite as many businesses as possible
2	Audit what businesses we have in Hawkhurst	HPC / TWBC	15 th June	
3	Promote the local businesses	HPC / TWBC	19 th June	
4	Support public spaces – signage, messaging	HPC / TWBC	15 th June	Signage on streets / shops
5	Ambassador to support messaging	TWBC	8 th June	On site supporting advising shoppers
6	Promote reopen Farmers Market	HPC	4 th July	Re-start in Royal Oak car park
7	Learn from HCSG – payment options	HCSG	To be confirmed	Can this be rolled out across Hawkhurst, discuss at HBP
8	Funding / Business support plan	TWBC	To be confirmed	Discuss at HBP

9	Improve rural connectivity – link to national initiatives see link	HPC / TWBC	To be confirmed	https://rsnonline.org.uk/gigabit-rural-broadband-voucher-scheme
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Recover – 7 months onwards The new normal				
No	Action	Who	When	Update
Short term				
1	Joint marketing – quality shops in a village	HBP / TWBC / HPC	TBC	Embrace social media – depends on HBP
2	Enhance environment – in bloom, street dressing, empty shop windows dressing	HPC / HBP / TWBC	TBC	Brighten up shopping areas
3	Review “Street clutter - unwanted street furniture / signage / poles etc”	HPC / HBP / TWBC	TBC	Brighten up shopping areas
4	Reduce speeding vehicles – package of Reduce speed limits, mobile signage and mobile speed cameras	HPC / TWBC / KCC / KMSCP / Speedwatch	TBC	Lobbying for Reduce speed limits, mobile signage and mobile speed cameras – Cllr Cory Report
5	Implement agreed speed reduction on Hastings Rd	TWBC / KCC	NOW	Planning condition of application - 11/00217
6	Flexible approach to permissions -	TWBC planning condition	TBC	Tables and chairs, Marquees to act as cover for people in queues (Kino / supermarkets etc)
7	Promote mix of activities and increased Police presence to address ASB	ALL	TBC	
8	Flexible parking – due to longer queues leading to longer time shopping	TWBC planning condition	TBC	Tesco / Waitrose extend time for car parking??????
Long term				
9	Introduce CCTV cameras in Colonnade / High Street	TWBC / HPC	TBC	
10	Can we create more legal parking for pop-in shopping on the high street	TWBC / KCC	TBC	
11	New location for car park	TWBC / KCC	TBC	Where?
12	Junction of Cranbrook Road and Ockley Road – ban south bound lorries from turning left	KCC	TBC	As agreed in Hawkhurst Highway Improvement Plan
13a	Highgate Crossroads Can a modest redesign or improved road markings at the cross roads make it easier for traffic to turn right	TWBC / KCC	TBC	

	without blocking car trying to go straight on.			
13b	Highgate Crossroads Introduce Puffin signal technology to improve flow of traffic	TWBC / KCC	TBC	
13c	Highgate Crossroads Introduce CCTV to catch people to "jump" the lights	TWBC / KCC	TBC	
14	Pedestrian / Pelican crossing between Bowles Lodge and Tesco – review crossing near Garage as can be dangerous	KCC	TBC	Use s106 funding
15	Encourage community events – winter festival, bonfire, summer fair, Hawkhurst 10K	HPC / HBP	TBC	Link with community groups such Bonfire Society, HCT 2018
16	Ongoing joint marketing	HBP / TWBC / HPC	TBC	Embrace social media – depends on HBP
17	Promote business to business	HPC / HBP / TWBC	TBC	Example - HPC use of local printers Wider business support depends on HBF / working relationships
18	Local sponsorship	HBP		Businesses support each other Hawkhurst delivery van
19	Improve rural connectivity – link to national initiatives see link	HPC / TWBC KCC	TBC	https://rsnonline.org.uk/gigabit-rural-broadband-voucher-scheme
20	Develop business hub	HPC	TBC	Community Centre
21	Long term funding package	KCC / TWBC / HPC	TBC	S106, Grants

NOTE: TBC = To be confirmed

5. Long term sustainable recovery

1. Establish broad direction of travel – what will we look like in 5 years?

One of the key challenges for the Recovery Plan is to determine the best response to an evolving situation, input from the Hawkhurst Business Partnership is key – thematic ideas such as;

“Hawkhurst – working in partnership for a better future”

- **Environment - make Hawkhurst a pretty, safe place to shop and spend time**
- **Access – improve access for all business in Hawkhurst**
- **Support Business – partnership working such as marketing, funding opportunities**

One notable feature of the COVID-19 crisis is a radical shift to distance business models. In a matter of days, people massively stepped up their use of technologies that enable remote learning, working, services and consumption. Will that adoption recede post-crisis, or will we move to a new business process? Community IT projects? A business hub at the new community centre

2. Effective partnership working – the new normal

However, and whenever we do come out of COVID 19 the old silo working mentality will need to be revamped to make effective partnership working the “new normal”

3. A flexible approach

This will be best illustrated with a flexible approach to effective partnership working to solve problems rather than defend previous bureaucratic stances.

4. Funding

Without strategic funding and pooling of resources the recovery plan will fall away. For instance, KCC currently asks for library book store and Transport and Highway S106 contributions (funding for buses etc) and within S106 is the miscellaneous category, which can be for a range of projects.

In recent years these funding opportunities have had little impact on Hawkhurst and would be better directed towards recovery.

Link to national funding such as the Rural broadband initiative linking residents to Councils to business is an opportunity.

A joined up, strategic approach to accessing business grants would be advantageous.

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