

Bexhill News

FEBRUARY 2023 | ISSUE 08

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'WE ARE ON THE RIGHT TRACK'

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

MP Huw Merriman says he wants to put Bexhill firmly on the map and become a go-to seaside destination, create more opportunities and encourage investment

Full interview on centre pages

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EDITOR'S WELCOME



MANY critics of politicians, particularly those who serve at Westminster, say they have become too remote from their constituents but, like the rest of us, every MP is an individual. However, do we really know what makes them tick?

Therefore, when *Bexhill News* was offered an exclusive interview with Bexhill and Battle's Conservative MP Huw Merriman, we jumped at the chance.

Over the course of 90 minutes, Mr Merriman opened up on a wide variety of topics and didn't duck any questions that were put to him.

That included talking about his relatively new role as Minister of State for Rail and HS2 and about how proud and privileged he feels to represent our town.

We also discovered that he loves walking, cycling, fine wine and a good old fashioned pint.

He was candid and forthright throughout. It also transpired that he is an avid Arsenal fan although that won't go down particularly well in some quarters!

You can read the full interview on pages 16 and 17 of this issue.

There has also been considerable debate over the near £20 million levelling up fund granted to Bexhill but, it has to be said, any new investment in our town has to be welcomed.

Staying with politics, we also report on Eddie Izzard's failed bid to secure the Labour nomination as candidate for the Sheffield Central constituency and await his next political move with considerable interest.

This latest issue is packed with stories about Bexhill and we want to hear yours.

Please get in touch with your stories as we will always endeavour follow them up. You never know, you might well feature in the next edition. Enjoy and don't hesitate to let us know your views.

Kim Mayo, Editor

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WORK COMMENCES TO ENSURE OUR ROADS IN BEXHILL DO NOT GO TO POT

Roads in Bexhill have received plenty of criticism recently with many motorists claiming their cars have been damaged after hitting deep potholes.

But plans are now afoot to remedy the problem as swiftly as possible.

East Sussex Highways are working "day and night" to deal with the backlog, but admit that the harsh winter months have made the issue considerably more difficult to deal with and remain on top of.

It is clearly a case of playing catch-up, but the inclement winter weather is certainly hindering progress.

An East Sussex Highways spokesman said: "Like every other highways authority in the country, we see an increase in the number of potholes forming on our road during the winter months.

"The prolonged periods of wet and cold weather that we have experienced recently means potholes that are forming are becoming larger and deeper more quickly than usual.

"To deal with this, we have increased our resources by more than 50 per cent and our teams are working extended hours and at weekends to keep on top of the situation.

"Since December 1, we have repaired in excess of 2,150 potholes across East Sussex."

This, however, has not appeased motorists, many of whom have reported damage to their cars and tyre blow-outs as a result of hitting a pothole after nightfall, especially as they are barely visible until the moment a driver has actually struck one.

One, who asked not to be named, said "You



might as well be competing in the Paris-Dakar rally across the Sahara Desert. It is certainly that bad in Cantelupe Road. There are deep potholes along the entire stretch of road and it is not only dangerous, but extremely damaging to our cars."

But the highways team are urging patience as they attempt to deal with the profusion of new potholes across the Rother district and the rest of East Sussex.

The highways spokesman added: "Our highways stewards are working tirelessly to monitor the condition of roads across East Sussex,

"But they have more than 2,000 miles of carriageway to inspect and we would urge residents to report any defects they see to us directly to enable us to react as quickly as possible.

"We prioritise the repair of potholes across the county, based, whether reported by members of the public or from routine safety inspections on a

number of factors, including the depth, size and location of the pothole and, where these meet our published safety intervention levels for repair, they are repaired within a specified time frame.

"To repair all potholes regardless of whether they are an immediate safety issue or not would require considerably more resources.

"Potholes and other road defects can be reported directly to East Sussex Highways at eastsussexhighways.com where information about when and how we repair potholes can also be found."

That is all well and good but not much consolation to Bexhill motorists who were left to count the cost of repairing tyres over the course of the traditionally expensive festive period and during the cost of living crisis.

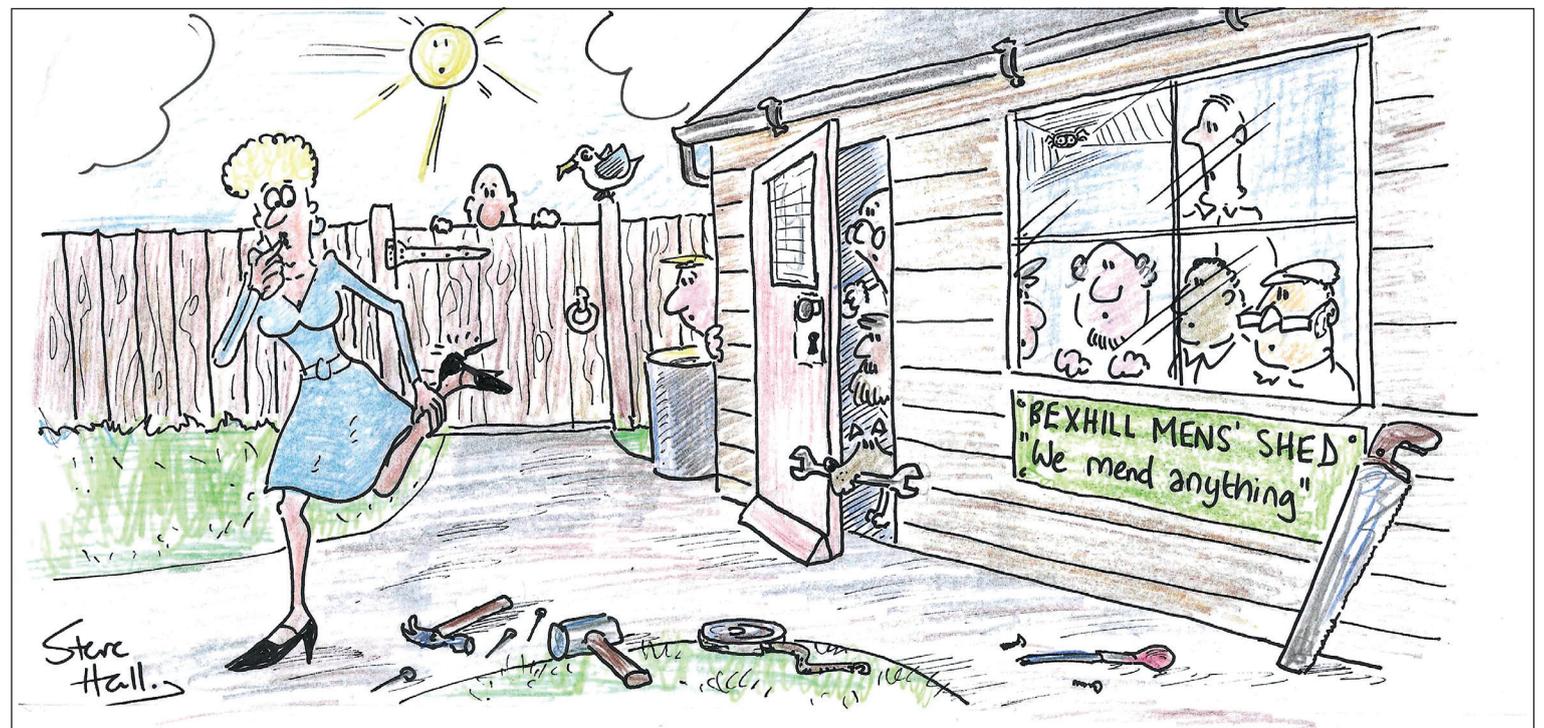
On a personal note, this Bexhill News reporter also found himself on the receiving end of an unexpected bill having suffered a blowout in Cantelupe Road.

Getting the tyre replaced cost £100 which at the time I could ill-afford.

Many have posted on Facebook and via other social media outlets to express their outrage, with particular reference to the appalling state of Cantelupe Road and Ninfield Road.

They have expressed their outrage about the ongoing issues and say direct action must be taken as an absolute priority.

If you have suffered damage to your vehicle as a result of potholes in Bexhill, please let us know by contacting Bexhill News directly online. We want to hear your views.



Steve Hall is a local cartoonist drawing inspiration from Bexhill and the sea. His cards, books and other items can be found in local independents and the Bexhill museum shop. He can be contacted at steve54.hall@gmail.com.

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COUNCIL SECURES LEVELLING UP FUNDING FOR A CULTURAL REVOLUTION IN BEXHILL



PHOTOS: JTP553 PHOTOGRAPHY

ROTHER District Council has been awarded more than £19 million to be invested in community, creativity and skills in Bexhill.

The move has been broadly welcomed by the Bexhill community, although exactly how the money will be distributed is yet to be revealed.

A large proportion will no doubt be spent on the De La Warr Pavilion, the cultural hub of the town with other money being used to support Sidley's regeneration.

Detailed plans of how the cash boost to the local economy are expected to be forthcoming in due course.

The investment of £19,192,000 from the Government's Levelling Up Fund will enable the delivery of cultural-led regeneration to improve the lives of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in Rother.

The money will help fund the transformation of the De La Warr Pavilion on Bexhill seafront and the development of new community facilities in Sidley, creating new jobs, upskilling local residents and bolstering career progression in the area's creative and cultural sectors, particularly for young people.

Councillor Doug Oliver, leader of Rother District Council, said: "We are thrilled to have been awarded government funding to level up community, creativity and skills in Rother.

"This investment gives us the opportunity to harness the De La Warr Pavilion, providing learning and skills opportunities as well as creating new jobs.

"It will also enable us to work with Heart of Sidley (Big Local) to develop a much-needed community and recreation facility in the heart of Sidley, which will support the local community.

"The funding will be transformative for our communities."

The De La Warr Pavilion is a pioneering centre for arts and culture that plays a pivotal role in



Mel Stride, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions visits the De La Warr Pavilion

driving the local economy through tourism, regeneration and skills development in Rother, East Sussex and the wider South East region.

The proposed development includes improved accessibility for audiences, new auditorium technical and other learning facilities, the redevelopment of the outdoor community spaces, and new environmental systems to help meet net carbon neutral ambitions.

The total cost of the scheme is £23.4 million and funding will be sought from other sources to cover the remainder of the project costs.

Stewart Drew, director and chief executive of the De La Warr Pavilion, said: "Earl De La Warr's vision for our amazing building was a People's Palace that would drive the growth, prosperity and culture of the area.

"We want to be more relevant to more people

and are hugely excited about the potential of this project to reach the more disadvantaged communities in our area and continue to be a catalyst for growth and prosperity.

"More spaces and better facilities mean we will be able to dramatically increase creative engagement, deliver high quality skills training including T Levels, provide flexible learning spaces, and attract new visitors."

In a project led by Heart of Sidley (Big Local), the Levelling Up investment will also fund crucial community facilities in Sidley, one of the most deprived wards in the country.

The proposed community hub at Sidley Recreation Ground will connect Sidley with the De La Warr Pavilion and the town centre, providing increased opportunities for residents to develop their skills and access education and employment.

Jay Carroll, Chair of Heart of Sidley, said: "As Heart of Sidley approaches the last two years as a Big Local area, this is some very exciting news. Enabling us, without question, to align our vision in fulfilling a lasting legacy in fully transforming the old toilet block at Sidley Recreation Ground, into a state-of-the-art community hub and sports changing facilities.

"We want local people to have as much opportunity as possible to be actively involved, and to feel proud to be part of a community with such a commitment to its future."

Huw Merriman, Conservative MP for Bexhill and Battle and sponsor of Rother District Council's Levelling Up Fund application, said: "I am absolutely delighted that Rother has been successful in this hugely significant Levelling Up bid which I have been proud to support.

"This £19 million funding demonstrates the government's commitment to levelling up extends to communities in the South East which are often, mistakenly, considered to be affluent. We have six of England's most deprived wards in Rother and this funding will improve access to vital learning and training opportunities as well as giving tourism and the local economy a tremendous boost.

"The De La Warr Pavilion already does great work in working with our local communities and this bid will enable to do so much more. It is really important to me that this project will deliver opportunities for the residents of Sidley."

The investment has been cautiously welcomed by Howard Martin, president of Bexhill Chamber of Commerce and Tourism.

He said: "Bexhill Chamber of Commerce thinks this is a fantastic investment in Bexhill and would like to thank everyone involved in making this happen, especially the incredible team at the De La Warr Pavilion who have worked so hard using their expertise and skills alongside those of Rother regeneration officers.

"Bexhill Chamber of Commerce have campaigned for many years very vociferously to bring Government capital funding to Bexhill for halo projects such as these.

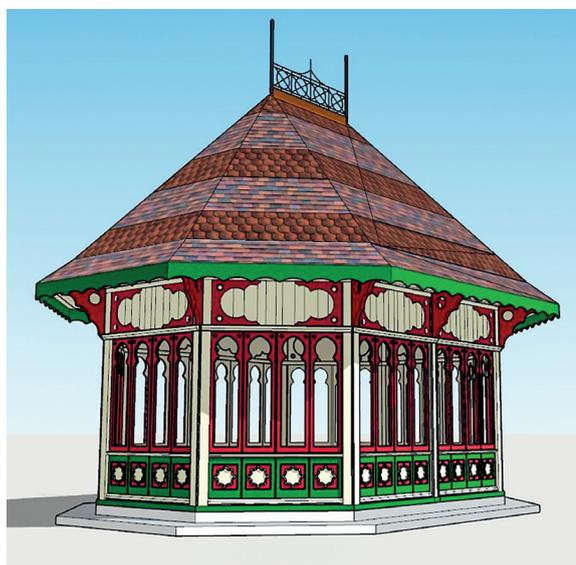
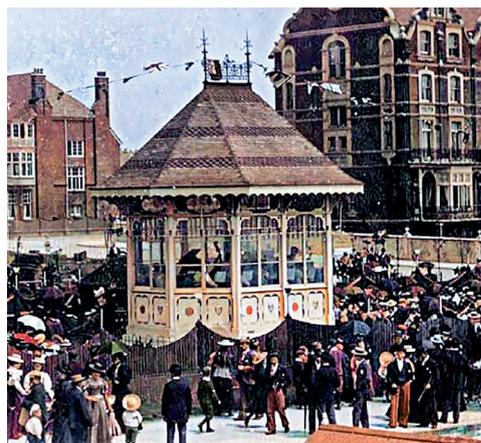
"For far too long we have lagged behind our neighbours in Hastings, Eastbourne and Newhaven and we hope that as a deprived coastal community this investment in skills, jobs and cultural infrastructure will turn the tide and attract other key projects like the long promised high speed rail link, major hotel development and destination leisure centre that will create hundreds of new jobs.

"Bexhill Chamber hope that this is the start of a change in political culture in Bexhill where regeneration investment is welcomed rather than deterred."

In the wake of the announcement on January 19, Mel Stride, the work and pensions secretary, paid a flying visit to the De La Warr to voice his support for the popular venue and said the the cash injection is a sign the Government is fully supportive of seaside towns.

More information about the project will be available on the council's website in the coming weeks.

BAND AID IS HELPING TO SAVE HISTORIC SEAFRONT STRUCTURE



THE restoration of Bexhill's historic bandstand is continuing apace despite the horrendous January weather, which would have slowed progress on many similar projects.

But that is certainly not the case when it comes to the dedicated team at Bexhill Heritage, who are determined to see the project through in time for a grand opening in April.

Despite the rain bucketing down in mid-January, project leader Steve Johnson and his team refused to let that deter them as they continue to work to restore the bandstand to its former glory.

The bandstand has a long and illustrious history.

Earl de la Warr built the first bandstand, which proved to be an immediate hit, with renowned English composer Gustav Holst once playing at the venue. Rumours suggest his world-famous Planet Suite could have been inspired by evenings spent star gazing in Bexhill.

Over the subsequent decades, it was converted into a seafront shelter and fell into a state of disrepair. By 2021, the building had sadly become a wreck but fortunately it retained its basic shape and original wooden ceiling.

However, much of the original structure still needed replacing.

As a result of plans to preserve the structure, Ian Exley, a local heritage architect, came up with a new design which referenced the original bandstand with the ongoing work taking place due to a productive partnership between Bexhill Heritage and Rother District Council.

Once the restoration work is complete, the Bexhill community will once again benefit from using the the restored bandstand.

Everyone will have free access to the bandstand in order to relax, meet friends and chat, play board games or even just look at the seafront and marvel at its ever evolving landscape.

The seafront structure, henceforth to be known as the Coronation Bandstand, has had an extremely chequered history but now there is every reason to be optimistic about its future thanks to the partnership between the council and the heritage charity.

Mr Johnson, the chairman of Bexhill Heritage, said: "After lots of painstaking work in all sorts of weather, Bexhill Heritage's team of volunteers are close to completing this ambitious restoration project.

"We are extremely grateful to Rother District Council for their substantial financial contribution and for their invaluable support.

"Bexhill Heritage's members, sponsors and supporters have also made hugely generous contributions towards the final cost.

"Together we have tried to show respect for the bandstand's original designers and builders and to realise their 1895 vision for a building which people can enjoy.

"We have proved just how many skilled trades are based within a stone's throw of Bexhill. Our Victorian forbears would have used local suppliers and craft people when building the original bandstand and we have done our best to follow their example.

Bexhill residents can now look forward to a new era for the bandstand which will be in situ for future generations to enjoy and cherish."

Bexhill Heritage's vision for the future is for a facility that everyone of all ages can enjoy.

Local musicians, clubs, organisations charities and faith groups will be able to book time at the restored bandstand, but there will also obviously be time for residents and visitors to simply sit and enjoy the view.

You can find out more by visiting the website at www.bexhillheritage.com

HISTORIC CHURCH CAN LOOK FORWARD TO A NEW ERA THANKS TO OVERWHELMING SUPPORT

A MUCH-LOVED historic community church is on the brink of receiving a new lease of life.

Fears that St Barnabas Church may have to close its doors for good have now been allayed much to the relief of the church wardens and congregation.

The church, in Sea Road, is a magnificent structure, which is one of the main focal points of Bexhill and now, at long last, its future has been secured thanks to much-needed support from the National Churches Trust.

Churchwarden Angela Wyle said "Sadly, St Barnabas is in need of much repair and updating and has been placed on the A list of heritage at risk.

"To support our plans to transition St Barnabas Church into a community hub, the Trust has granted £9,000 towards paying for an architect to give a design for the future.

"I would like to express my grateful thanks to the Trust for their support of us."

St Barnabas has a rich history due to the building itself and its presence in the local community.

The Grade 2 listed building, which is the second biggest in Bexhill, was designed by distinguished Victorian architect Sir Arthur Blomfield. And is held in considerable affection by both the town and local community.

A feasibility study was taken by Paul Whitnall of Ten Spires CiC who said: "St Barnabas is a treasure to celebrate.



"It is a lovely generous space, with some fascinating and unusual features which are well worth investigating!"

"But there is no doubt that major interventions are needed, to meet the costs of major repairs and to adapt the building to ensure a long-term viable future.

"Finding the best way forward takes bravery, thought and specialist help but the National Churches Trust grant has enabled St Barnabas to

grapple with the challenges they face."

The imposing church also has a rich heritage of social outreach that was started by its first vicar, the Reverend Mortlock.

He supported the poor of the town, providing them with a nurse to help with their medical needs.

Recognising the need for children's education, he opened the first primary school; the building which now houses Bexhill library.

St Barnabas' outreach work continues today by accommodating the Homelessness Unity Group, known as HUG, and other support work such as bereavement and support groups and other social activities.

However, the primary purpose of St Barnabas is worship and the pastoral care of the community.

The Parochial Church Council trustees have also expressed their delight at having the backing of Dr Edward Dowler, Archdeacon of Hastings, who has offered practical advice and spiritual support.

He said: "I am delighted to be able to support the transition project at St Barnabas Church.

"Since it was built in 1891, the church has stood as a beacon of the Christian faith in its town centre location.

"We hope that the project will continue to enable it to do so for many more years, whilst also opening up this spacious and sumptuous historic building and the surrounding land for a range of wider community uses".

Deputy Churchwarden Russell Meredith added: "This exciting news will help us prepare for the future.

"St Barnabas is a splendid building with a vast amount of space that needs to be adapted so that more in the community can make use of it.

"We are looking for new ideas and volunteers to help expand our outreach and would be pleased to hear from anyone interested."

St Barnabas aims to be a fully-committed community church and meeting point for everyone in the town.

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NEW MEN'S SHED PROJECT PROVES TO BE A MAJOR HIT AS LAUNCH DRAWS CAPACITY CROWD

A MAJOR new initiative was launched in front of a capacity crowd amid much fanfare in Bexhill in January.

Entitled Bexhill Men's Shed, the project is envisaged as a meeting place for those with practical skills who might also be suffering from loneliness.

They now have the perfect chance to meet with like-minded people to swap ideas while also taking the opportunity to meet new friends and acquaintances with a common purpose in mind.

You can share skills, enjoy a cup of coffee and a slice of cake twice a week with good company guaranteed.

In order to become a member of the Bexhill branch there is a suggested annual donation of £35 with an additional cost of £3 per session, which represents remarkably good value.

The sessions will be held every Tuesday and Wednesday between 9.30am and 4.30pm.

The Bexhill Men's Shed now has premises at 47 London Road, and boasts a fully equipped workshop so that existing skills can be honed and practised in a convivial atmosphere.

Among the dignitaries and volunteers in attendance at the launch event were Bexhill Mayor Paul Plim plus organisers, Mark Legg and chairman Derek Merkl, both of whom have been absolutely delighted with the response thus far.



Mr Merkl said: What a great turnout. We are absolutely delighted to see so many people in attendance to support us and plenty have already signed up. That just underlines the level of support we are already receiving."

An equally ecstatic Mr Legg added: "The launch has been fantastic and certainly exceeds our initial expectations. The number of people who have chosen to come along to find out more is

simply terrific.

"There have been loads of enquiries already and hopefully we can build on this and make it a thriving community space for all to enjoy."

Bexhill mayor Mr Plim is another enthusiastic supporter of the project. He told Bexhill News: "This is what we want to see; people getting actively involved in their community and, as we can see from the turnout, the interest expressed



so far gives us every reason for optimism.

Our town is a wonderful place to live with a great community spirit and projects like this help to bring everyone together.

"Hundreds have turned up to find out more and I am delighted to be here along with several local councillors to offer our whole-hearted support. I wish Bexhill Men's Shed every success."

Aside from companionship and the opportunity to socialise, there will be a focus on woodworking, metalworking, electronics and furniture restoration.

For more, email info@bexhillmensshed.org.uk or just turn up on one of the allotted days.



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NEW MINI-ROUNDBABOUT INSTALLED TO EASE TRAFFIC CONGESTION IN TOWN



A NEW mini-roundabout is being installed at a busy junction in Bexhill. It is the latest initiative by East Sussex Highways to make roads and junctions as accessible as possible and to prevent traffic build-up.

The mini-roundabout is at the junction of London Road and Beeching Road.

The work incorporates removing and re-siting the pedestrian island in Beeching Road plus kerb work and footway surfacing and street lighting improvements.

In addition, there will be new signage as well as carriageway surfacing and lining.

NEW RESTAURANT OPENING

JAMAICAN-THEMED restaurant One Love Kitchen is the latest addition to the wide range of food outlets in Bexhill.

It is situated at the rear of the Amherst Road Sports and Social Club with its grand opening in early February.

Billed as providing “authentic Jamaican cooking” customers will be able to eat in, order a takeaway or get their food delivered.

After a launch party from 5pm on February 4 featuring top DJs, it will be open every week from Tuesday to Sunday, 12.30pm to 10pm.

SUEDE TO PLAY SHOW AT THE DE LA WARR PAVILION IN MARCH TO PROMOTE LATEST ALBUM



LEGENDARY Britpop band Suede are playing a one-off show at the De La Warr Pavilion in March as part of their nationwide tour. The tour is promoting their most recent album *Autofiction* which debuted at number 2 in the UK album charts with the band also expected to play highlights from their extensive back catalogue.

The tour has been billed as a performance of hits, classics and tracks from *Autofiction* with lead singer Brett Anderson saying the band are “very excited” to be embarking on this latest tour.

It has now been confirmed that a further gig has been added at the De La Warr on March 25 with tickets available from 9am from Friday January 27 via www.gigsandtours.com

Following two special *Autofiction* launch shows at the Electric Ballroom in London late last year, which sold out in less than 20 seconds, Suede returned to America for the first time since 2011 for a co-headline tour with Manic Street Preachers which went down a storm with fans on the other side of the pond.

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ACTOR AND COMEDIAN'S FIRST BID TO BECOME A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT HITS THE BUFFERS



The Bexhill actor, comedian, author and model train enthusiast had hoped to be selected as the Labour candidate for the Sheffield Central constituency in Yorkshire, but he was beaten to the nomination by a local councillor.

Human rights lawyer Abtisam Mohamed was selected by members of the local constituency after winning 433 votes, while Eddie finished as the runner-up, having accumulated 175 votes.

Mohamed called her selection the "honour of my life". She will replace Paul Blomfield who will be standing down at the next General Election. At the last election, he held a majority of 27,273 in the Labour stronghold.

Eddie, 60, congratulated the winner on Twitter, writing: "She will make a fine MP and I look forward to campaigning with her in the months and years to come."

The political activist's campaign was mired in controversy due to several negative comments aired by some rivals.

Speaking to *The Guardian* newspaper, Eddie said there had been a "torrent of abuse" since the candidacy was announced. That included a gender critical feminist taking a photo of Eddie using the women's toilet at a campaign event, tweeting a caption which said: "Coming out of the ladies loo."

To add to the furore, Lee Anderson, the MP for Ashfield in Nottinghamshire, was criticised in October last year when he said: "I would not follow him into the toilets if he became an MP."

In addition, Rosie Duffield, the Labour MP for

Canterbury in Kent, added fuel to the fire by saying she would rather be arrested than refer to Eddie as a woman.

In response, Eddie tweeted: "She has got to join the 21st century. She has got to catch up with the rest of us. The vast majority of the world is now moving forwards."

Eddie, 60, adopted the "she" and "her" pronouns two years ago yet made it clear at the time that the terms "he and him" did not cause any undue offence.

Eddie was the only candidate on the shortlist who was not a resident of Sheffield.

The big question now is where does Eddie go from here with regard to political aspirations?

With Eddie having significant links to Bexhill, one Labour supporter told Bexhill News: "I think Eddie would be a major success and a great asset to the town and to the party."

"Everyone I speak to loves Eddie, so why not stand to become Bexhill's MP? But I guess we will have to wait and see what develops."

As yet, the Labour candidate has not been selected to contest the constituency although sitting Conservative MP Huw Merriman does enjoy a significant majority in a town which is traditionally seen as Tory supporting.

Whether Eddie decides to enter the race remains to be seen but at present it seems no firm decision has been made.

At the 2019 General Election Mr Merriman accumulated 37,590 votes while Labour councillor for Bexhill Central, Christine Baylis, gained 11,531 votes.

INITIATIVE LAUNCHED TO FREE UP HOSPITAL BEDS IN EAST SUSSEX

So-called "bed-blockers" have put enormous strain on an already under-siege National Health Service during the winter months.

As a result, Huw Merriman, Conservative MP for Bexhill and Battle, has welcomed the news that Sussex will benefit from the trial of a new initiative to free up hospital beds.

It launched on January 9 and sees Sussex Health and Care Integrated Care System trialling a new data tool to help services manage performance, give operational oversight and manage demand.

Sussex is one of six areas exploring new ideas to free up hospital beds and make sure patients get the right care at the right time — which is key to reducing future urgent and emergency care delays and help get ambulances back on the roads far more quickly.

Mr Merriman said: "I know from my regular meetings with our local hospitals trust and the NHS commissioning team that finding the right care for those ready to leave hospital can be a challenge. "Our NHS and adult social care teams already work closely to ensure that local people ready for discharge have the right support in place when they leave hospital, be that to a community setting or home.

"East Sussex is therefore ideally placed to take part in this trial which will deliver better health outcomes for patients and free up hospital beds for those requiring urgent care."

Joe Chadwick-Bell, chief executive of the East Sussex Healthcare Trust, added: "One of our priorities as a system is to ensure local people can be discharged from hospital in a safe and timely way.

"We have already made a lot of progress and have strong partnership working in place across health and care.

"We are excited about being selected as a Discharge Frontrunner in recognition of this work and know that it will help to build on the positive partnerships that we already have underway in Sussex.

"We will use this opportunity to further improve what is already in place and find new ways to support safe and effective discharge that work for local people and communities, supporting people to get the care they need, at the right time, and in the best place for them."

Meanwhile, Minister for Care, Helen Whately said: "Getting people out of hospital on time is more important than ever. It's good for patients and it helps hospitals make space for those who need urgent care.

"We're launching six Discharge Frontrunners to lead the way with innovations to help get people out of hospital and back home.

"Winter is always hard for the NHS and social care, and this year, especially with flu in high circulation. That's why we provided the £500 million Discharge Fund earlier in the winter."



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READERS' LETTERS

Email your letters to the Editor to: letters@bexhill-news.co.uk

WHY DOESN'T ANYONE LISTEN?

Dear Editor, I am writing this in the hope that people will start to listen. People moan and complain about the price of everything going up, not just a bit, but ridiculously high, but they don't do anything about it.

The government can stop these prices of everything going up, but they don't because they know the people will just pay and except it.

Where is the fight in people, come on get off your backsides, stand up for the prices to be lowered to what they were.

The government banned everyone of us, from travelling to see our families at Christmas, but the government had their Christmas parties. Did anyone of you complain about it? No of course not. The government know they can do what they want, as they know that no one is going to say anything about it.

You people who voted for us to come out of the EU. Well done I hope you are pleased with yourselves. You have helped the government to do exactly what they wanted. You people also have the blood of all those millions of people who were killed with the covid.

Some one has to be held responsible for the millions and millions of people who have died from the covid. The government are mass murderers and so are you Brexitiers.

I am disgusted and ashamed, that the country I love, is being destroyed by the greedy and selfish government.

You are just sitting there, doing nothing, while people are terrified of what is happening and how they are going to manage.

It's ok for you people, not having to worry about a thing. I don't know how any of you can sleep at night.

There are going to be a lot of suicides, as people have no where to turn and see no future. Sorry there are already hundreds of suicides, but do you blink an eyelid, no none of you do. People sign petitions but nothing is done.

Those people who have died from suicides and the covid are the government's fault. They have the blood of every single person that has died on their hands.

Please do something about it, and put a stop to these prices, before

there's nothing left of this country. Please, please do something.
Josephine Crowe

WHEN IS IT FLYTIPPING?

Hi Bexhill News. If I saw some rubbish on the ground and picked it up and then couldn't find a bin so threw it down again could I be guilty of fly tipping and then find accordingly?

I ask based on my daily walk in Bexhill following (the next day) the local council refuse collection.

Large amounts of rubbish strewn across paths and gardens all over the area.

When the employee takes control of the full bin and drags it to the vehicle is the employee responsible for that rubbish?

Having made my point I am not asking for fines to be place on employees, more that the employees should take more care in their jobs.

Finally, how many people fill their bins with plastic bottles and tin cans STILL INFLATED (wrong word) and not crushed to make more space?

Yours congratulating you on a good paper!

John Donnelly, Little Cooden

CYCLE MADNESS

Dear Editor, The article on the proposed cycle route in the current Bexhill News has prompted me to write to you.

Ever since I was in my teens back in the 50's, I have known it was wrong to ride a bicycle on the pavement.

In fact, for many years, it has been stated in the Highway Code: "You MUST NOT cycle on a pavement" and it cites Laws HA 1835 sect 72 & R(S)A, sect 129.

Yet cyclists DO ride on the pavement much of the time!

I was walking in Devonshire Road, some time ago, when a Cyclist came out of St Leonards Rd, on the pavement, and if I hadn't grabbed his handlebars, he would have run into me! When I told him he shouldn't be on the pavement, he shouted in my face, "F**k Off". Extreme example, I know, but true.

More recently, my wife and I were walking along Little Common Road, close to where we live, and saw a cyclist approaching us on the pavement. As he got closer, he realised we weren't going to give way and had to brake sharply. He then proceeded to mouth off at us!

Recently there have been changes to the law favouring cyclists but the powers that be haven't addressed the very real problem of cyclists often flouting the law especially with regard to riding on pavements.

I would welcome your opinion on this!

Roger Siggery

STRANGE GARDEN VISITOR



I have seen this green parakeet in a tree at the back of my garden.

I believe others have seen them as well. Not a good sign of our native birds are they?

P.Lester.

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Friday 24th February 6.30pm
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COUNCIL HITS BACK OVER TRANSFER OF PUBLIC TOILETS

ROTHER District Council has hit back over criticism in some quarters that it is abdicating responsibility for the running of public conveniences in Bexhill.

It comes as negotiations are ongoing over the transfer of responsibility for the care and maintenance of the toilets from the council to Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council.

In a lengthy statement, the District Council, clearly irked by criticism in some quarters on social media, wrote: "We are currently in discussion with the town council about them taking on the provision and management of public conveniences in the town.

"Like many local issues, this has prompted some comments on social media about this plan and whilst we welcome all opinions, there has been some inaccuracies we thought it would be helpful to clear up."

As with most proposals, there are always differing views, but the district council believes the path it is pursuing can only be of benefit to the town, its residents and visitors.



"As part of national guidelines, we've been devolving services to our parishes and towns for many years. However, as Bexhill didn't have a Town Council until recently, we've been the sole provider of services to the town, with the costs shared amongst all Rother residents.

"There have been some comments that passing services to the Town Council would result in 'double taxation.' This isn't the case as once the services are transferred; we will stop paying, and also stop collecting council tax to run them. The Town Council will take over collecting council tax to run that service."

At its last meeting, the Town Council agreed to continue with lease negotiations for the devolvement of the public

conveniences and that the final decision will be taken in March.

But in order for any transfer of service to happen, certain legal actions must be carried out.

The statement from Rother District Council concluded: "We have a duty to our council taxpayers to manage our finances and protect services in the best way we can.

"We have a record of sound financial management — even in the face of years of Government budget reductions and increasing cost pressures — and we want to protect discretionary services such as public conveniences.

"But the ongoing financial pressures means that we are looking to the Town Council to take these on in Bexhill and protect them from closure."

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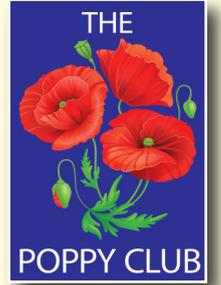
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FLAMES, FIRE, DANCE AND MUSIC STUNS VISITORS TO EVENING FESTIVAL

PHOTOS: JTP53 PHOTOGRAPHY

Thousands of visitors flocked to town to witness the breathtaking performances as part of the annual After Dark Light Art Festival. The evening kicked-off with Bexhill Museum packing in the visitors thanks to free entry early afternoon — hundreds of families took advantage and spent time to look around the array of displays before the main events of the festival outside.

Sujata Banerjee Dance Co started with the entertainment with a Kathak dance inspired by the costumes in Bexhill Museum. That was followed by the UK Africa Acrobats who stunning the crowd with entertaining stunts and fire breathing acts.

Dolly Delicious then took to the stage to give visitors a unique insight as to what could be done with power tools.

The popular light parade then left the clock town which involved hundreds of people, all lit-up in various forms to put on the stunning display of lanterns made by local communities in workshops with professional artists and performers.

At the De La Warr Pavilion lawns, visitors were stunned with performances from actors with exciting stories to share alongside their fire displays and shooting flamethrowers.

Local dance students then entertained the gathering crowds with a special performance on the Pavilion balcony — choreographed with an incredible lights and music.

The entertainment continued throughout the evening to conclude an evening which was enjoyed by all who attended.



BexhillEvents

ARE YOU HOLDING A CHARITY OR NON-PROFIT EVENT?

For a **FREE LISTING**, email your details to: events@Bexhill-News.co.uk

BEXHILL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & TOURISM BI-MONTHLY NETWORKING MEETING

Last Wednesday every other month, 7.00am-9.00.

Trattoria Italiana, 68-70 Devonshire Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, TN40 1AX

Tickets £13 (plus Eventbrite Fee). Register and pay at:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/o/bexhill-chamber-of-commerce-and-tourism-55864975473>. Become a member for £90pa per business.

BEXHILL FARMERS' MARKET

Devonshire Square, Bexhill. Every Saturday, 9am-1pm

Pop by to visit and select local quality traceable produce and crafts, including freshly baked bread and sweet treats, fresh and cured meats and cheeses, fruit and vegetables, plants, honey, chutneys, plus lots more. Stalls offer quality locally produced or sourced foods and goods.

PEBSHAM INDOOR MARKET – MOTHER'S DAY SPECIAL

Pebsham Community Hub, Seabourne Road, TN40 2SW

Sunday 26 February, 10am-1pm

Gifts, crafts, refreshments, cakes & savouries, local causes, local businesses

EAST SUSSEX VISION SUPPORT BEXHILL SOCIAL GROUP

St Augustine's Church Hall, Bexhill

First Friday of the month

We provide a social atmosphere for blind and partially sighted people including the opportunity to meet and make new friends. We can provide transport to St Augustine's and the afternoon includes refreshments, entertainment and a raffle and we also arrange lunch outings. If you are interested in joining, please contact Christine on 01323 482407 or East Sussex Vision Support Head Office on 01323 832252.

GOLDEN ACTIVITIES – GENTLE CHAIR EXERCISES

The Bagnall Room, 25 Sackville Road, Bexhill, TN39 3JD

Every Monday Morning, 10.30am-11.30am

We are a friendly group and welcome everyone. £6 each (carers are free) includes refreshments. At The Bagnall Room (next to Bexhill Caring Community). For more information contact Anna 07961 349956.

FREE BEXHILL MEDITATION & WELLNESS CLASSES

11 Windmill Drive, Bexhill

Every Thursday, 5.45pm-6.45pm

In modern times many of us are so busy trying to get through life we forget to have time for ourselves. We find it difficult to motivate ourselves, to dedicate time to our own personal development, or have no idea where to start. Maybe we feel disconnected from our local community. This impacts both physical and mental well-being. The goal is not only to provide a regular meeting space for the community to dedicate time to their own wellbeing, but also to offer tips and tricks they can take into their everyday lives to manage stress and improve well-being.

KIDS STORYTELLING & CRAFT WORKSHOP

Eco Hub, The Mall, Western Road, Bexhill, TN40 1DX

Saturday 4 February, 11am-3pm

Come along and meet our storyteller and enjoy some fun and simple crafts ideas. This event is free to attend.

COMMUNITY WARM SPACE

Beulah Centre, Clifford Road Entrance

Every Thursday 2pm-4.30pm (last admission 4pm)

Our Warm Space is now open. Everybody is welcome especially if you are struggling with the winter blues. It is a great opportunity to come along and have a friendly chat and a hot drink. Hopefully the new times will have greater appeal for those who don't like the dark evenings.

INDOOR CAR BOOT SALE

9th Bexhill Scout Hall, Wainwright Road, Bexhill, TN39 3UR

Every Sunday, 9am-12 noon

All the usual items you would expect to find at an Indoor Car Boot Sale — but maybe find that surprising item — you never know what you may find!

SIDLEY FRIENDSHIP CLUB

Freedom Church, Sidley Street entrance (behind Lidl)

Every third Monday of the month, 2pm-4pm

A social club for ladies and gents over 50 years old. Speakers, Games, Bingo, Coach Trips etc. No Annual fees, Just £2 each meeting which includes refreshments. New Members welcomed.

BEXHILL SEASIDE LADIES' GROUP

St Michael's Church Small Hall, Glassenbury Drive,

Every 4th Wednesday of the month, 7.30pm

A social club for ladies 50+ years old with speakers, quizzes, etc

TEA AND TODDLERS

St Augustine's Church, Cooden Drive, Bexhill-on-Sea TN39 3AZ

Every Thursday, 9am-10.30am

Free friendly Toddler group. Come and join us for play, chat and refreshments. Donations are gratefully received. For more information contact Daisy at st.augustines288@outlook.com or 07544326059

BEXHILL TUESDAY FOR THE BLIND AND PARTIALLY SIGHTED

St Mark's Church, Little Common. Every Tuesday afternoon.

Are you feeling isolated and want to make new friends? Then come and join in with lunches, cream teas, quizzes and entertainment. We can even pick you up and take you home. Call Jane on 01424 729323.

BEXHILL SEAGIRLS WI

St Augustine's Church, Cooden Drive, Bexhill-on-Sea TN39 3AZ

Every Third Wednesday of the month, 8pm

Our aim is to make friends and have fun, activities include outside speakers, games, crafts, baking and dancing. We have a book group, a 'knit & natter' group and a dining club. We hold events to raise funds for local charities. Are you interested in joining? Your first visit is free. Contact our secretary jill.duckett1@hotmail.co.uk or call Jo on 07514625749 Or just turn up, we look forward to seeing you!

BEXHILL, HASTINGS & ST. LEONARDS PROBUS CLUB.

Bexhill Conservative Club - Last Thursday every month - 10am-12 noon.

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OPINION

FOXES RUNNING AMOK IN OUR TOWN IS NOT THEIR FAULT AT ALL... THE BLAME LIES FIRMLY WITH US

BY EDITOR, KIM MAYO

WALKING to the pub recently on a lovely clear evening, I was temporarily distracted by a rustle in the hedgerow. Closer inspection revealed a pair of stunning yellow eyes belonging to an extremely cute fox cub. Now, I will declare at this point that I love foxes. They are beautiful, intelligent creatures, but it seems not many share my view in Bexhill and beyond.

Fast forward 20 minutes and I was happily ensconced in the pub with my mate, he supping a pint of lager and I armed with a glass of sauvignon blanc.

The next table was inhabited by a group of middle-aged men, who had clearly “had a few” as they say in the trade.

The leader of the pack then said to his mates: “Isn’t it about time something was done about these damned foxes running amok in Bexhill? They are everywhere. As far as I am concerned, they should be exterminated because they are vermin and they are causing chaos.”

His pals nodded and murmured in agreement while I bit my lip and decided that discretion is the better part of valour.

Admittedly the fox population has exploded in



Bexhill, but who is to blame?

Well, the bottom line is, it is us. Food waste has reached epic proportion with large amounts being thrown into bins or bin bags on a daily basis.

Therefore why should Fantastic Mr Fox bother scouring the countryside for food to sustain himself when a three-course meal is available by simply ripping open a few bin bags?

Basically it is maximum reward for minimal effort, hence the reason they populate our towns, including Bexhill.

Foxes are now part and parcel of our daily life and there is no point whining about it. Do they adversely

affect our daily lives? The short answer is no.

Hunting has quite rightly been outlawed for a number of years now but foxes have been forced to adapt as a result with intensive farming in particular reducing their natural habitat. Towns were the obvious alternative and being canny creatures, they have taken full advantage. We need to embrace their presence rather than vilify them.

The same goes for the explosion of gulls on our seafront. By nature, they are predators with an overwhelming appetite for fish, crustaceans, insects, worms and so forth.

But, like foxes, they know an easy opportunity

when they spot one. A child’s ice cream? Yeah, that will do. They can also spot a kebab being consumed on the street from a mile off.

They are certainly not scared of us for the simple reason we are their meal ticket on a daily basis, especially with our propensity for eating food “on the hoof”.

If you choose to live by the seaside then gulls are part of the deal, however annoying and aggressive they may be.

No-one likes to see rubbish strewn across our pavements after bin bags left out have been ripped open by perennially ravenous gulls.

But if we took a little more care with dispensing with our food detritus then we could perhaps learn to live more amicably with our furry and feathered friends.

They are not going to go away any time soon and they are part of the charm of our town rather than a significant negative issue.

As a town we have far bigger problems to concern ourselves with rather than worrying about our fox and gull populations.

As the old saying goes... “Let’s live and let live”.

And you know what? I think gulls, like foxes, are rather beautiful.



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BEXHILL MP OUTLINES HIS VISION TO MAKE THE TOWN A REAL SUCCESS STORY

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW BY EDITOR, KIM MAYO

HUW Merriman is a busy man, even more so since becoming a government minister with an overflowing “in tray”

However, at the end of a hectic week, the Conservative MP for Bexhill and Battle still found time to sit down for an exclusive interview with *Bexhill News* as darkness descended outside his constituency office in Sea Road.

Over the course of 90 minutes Mr Merriman voiced his views on the state of the nation and vision to ensure a bright future for Bexhill, both as a “go to” destination for tourists while also ensuring the interests of local residents and businesses are looked after.

“I am proud and privileged to have been elected as the Member of Parliament for Bexhill and Battle and it is a role I take very seriously indeed,” he said.

“The voters put their faith in me. I am very grateful for that and it is certainly not something I take for granted. Quite the opposite is true.”

The 49-year-old was Born in Brackley, Northamptonshire and following his schooling he went on to study law at Durham University and qualified as a barrister.

He had shown a keen interest in politics from a young age and, despite being brought up, in his own words, “in a Socialist environment” with both of his parents supporters of the Labour Party, his beliefs were clearly far more aligned with the Conservatives.

Having moved to East Sussex in 2006, he was elected to Wealden District Council the following year and re-elected in 2011.

He failed to be elected as an MP in his first tilt at Parliament in 2010 when, as the Conservative party candidate for the constituency of North East Derbyshire, he finished in second place behind the Labour incumbent.

That disappointment was swiftly cast aside, however, as he was selected as the Conservative candidate for Bexhill and Battle and duly won the seat at the 2015 General Election with a whopping majority of more than 20,000.

He has comfortably held the seat ever since.

Mr Merriman supported now Chancellor Jeremy Hunt in the 2019 Conservative leadership election and backed Rishi Sunak against Liz Truss last year before the latter resigned after less than two months after the financial meltdown prompted by her ill-fated budget.

That led to Mr Sunak being anointed as Prime Minister, a move which the Bexhill MP thoroughly endorses.

Now Minister of State for Rail and HS2, Mr Merriman is thoroughly relishing the challenge and says working with Mr Sunak is a wonderful opportunity to change things for the better after tumultuous times for the Conservatives under the stewardship of Boris Johnson and then Ms Truss.

“Rishi is a good man,” he said. “I have known him since I first entered Parliament in 2015, the same year as him.

“He has a clear vision and focuses on what really matters. As Conservatives, we know people have been suffering during the



Huw Merriman Conservative MP for Bexhill & Battle

cost of living crisis but with Rishi at the helm and Jeremy as Chancellor I am sure a brighter future lies ahead.”

Some would say that being made Minister of State for Rail and HS2 is a poisoned chalice, but Mr Merriman doesn't see it that way at all.

The rail network has been severely disrupted by industrial action as members of the unions strike in an attempt to secure a pay hike and improved working conditions.

At the time of writing, no solution had yet been found, but Bexhill's MP remains optimistic.

“Unions do of course have a right to strike if that is what their members vote for,” he added. “But we want to change the tone and establish a relationship with the leaders of unions such as the RMT and ASLEF.

“I want to see significant progress so that a relationship can be established and a solution found.

“As I have already mentioned, they do have a right to strike if a ballot of members votes for it but it is the passengers who are being hit hard in all of this, so it is therefore vital that a solution is

found as swiftly as possible.

“Everyone wants to see an efficient and punctual rail service which can be relied upon.

“Take Bexhill for example. People sometimes want to visit London as a treat to go sightseeing, or watch a West End show, or go out for an evening meal. But they need to know that at the end of their evening out they can get back to Bexhill if they are relying on trains as their transport of choice.

“If a deal is made with the rail unions I also believe it would set an example to other sectors that solutions can be found if everyone involved in negotiations takes the right approach.”

There are also several issues to be discussed much closer to home with Mr Merriman saying he will continue to work tirelessly on behalf of his constituents, regardless of whether they voted for him or not.

“I have always wanted to help the most vulnerable in society,” he said. “I want to see opportunities created for people who live in Bexhill, that is one of my main priorities.

“We must give people the skills they need so they can thrive. I am a great believer in individual freedom but of course that must come with responsibilities.”

Plenty of concern has been expressed over Bexhill becoming a “ghost town” which pales in comparison to near neighbours Hastings and Eastbourne, a view which Mr Merriman strongly refutes, especially in light of the recent near £20 million “levelling up” fund granted to the town.

“Nobody likes to see empty premises in a town centre,” he added. “We need to do everything possible to encourage investment in new business to create an infrastructure to make Bexhill a go-to destination.

“In the De La Warr Pavilion we have Bexhill's jewel in the crown and we must capitalise on that.”

Mr Merriman has in the past also been a vocal critic of Southern Water following sewage being swept out to sea, leading to the beach being closed last summer, but he has been pleased with recent developments.

He added: “Of course it was a concern and very disruptive for seafront businesses and it also raised serious environmental issues which can affect our maritime wildlife such as seals for instance.

“But I have struck up a good working relationship with the new chief executive of Southern Water who is doing all he can to allay our concerns. Nevertheless, I will be closely monitoring the situation.”

There is a shortage of affordable housing in the town, which Mr Merriman is also keen to address.

“Yes, we need more homes,” he said. “But new homes need to be built in the right places, certainly not where they might be susceptible to flooding.

“In addition, planning applications once granted need to be fulfilled rather than the companies involved simply submitting more before the original successful ones have been completed.

“New homes need to be built faster. There has to be incentives but equally there should be penalties for those who don't act on planning applications once granted.”

As our time draws to a close it was time to ask our MP about his



political heroes and also his leisure interests.

“You think I am going to say Margaret Thatcher, don’t you,” he replied with a wry smile. “Well, in fact you would be wrong.

“It would be John Major. He came from very humble beginnings but he didn’t let that hold him back. It drove him on to achieve what many would have seen as an impossible dream. He worked incredibly hard to ultimately become Prime Minister.

“We need politicians who speak the truth. Although I totally disagreed with his politics, when I was growing up Tony Benn was so passionate about what he believed in and that struck a chord with me.

“Ken Clarke was another who served the Conservative party and the country faithfully for decades. He was totally committed to making things better for Britain and worked tirelessly to achieve that. He is also great company.

“Finally, I would like to mention Philip Hammond. He was a real mentor to me and I thoroughly enjoyed working for him. But the common denominator is that they all wanted to be in public service and they all wanted to make things better for everyone.”

When it comes to leisure pursuits and relaxation, time permitting, Mr Merriman, is an avid Arsenal fan and enjoying the fact that his beloved Gunners are flying high at the top of the Premier League table after a few seasons in the doldrums.

Gardening also features prominently as does a penchant for real ale.

“I have been a member of CAMRA for many years,” he confirmed. “Given the opportunity, I love popping down the pub.

“The heritage of our pubs must be preserved. That is absolutely vital.”

Countryside walks and cycling are two other passions while a major ambition is to visit all the wine producing nations in the world.

But certainly for the foreseeable future his focus is totally on politics and helping to ensure Bexhill thrives.

He concluded: “I want people to know that I work hard on their behalf. They want to see action and I am determined to deliver on what matters most to them.

“First and foremost I am an MP and I am the MP who represents Bexhill and its residents. I am very proud of that and, as I said earlier, it is a privilege to do so.”



Huw Merriman enjoys latest issue of Bexhill News

ARCHIE OVERCAME ADVERSITY TO BECOME A REAL SPEED KING

BY STEVE HALL

NO car racing driver is harder to assess than Archie Scott-Brown. Whilst rivalling and beating the likes of Stirling Moss, Tony Brooks and Bruce McLaren, he was confined largely to racing in the UK and New Zealand.

Archie was born in 1927 in Paisley, Scotland to a father who was works driver for Alvis and a mother who had raced at Brooklands. Archie had the torso of a well-developed man but had short legs with deformed feet and his right arm terminated just below the elbow in a vestigial palm and thumb. He stood at just over five feet in height.

Throughout his life he faced opposition and prejudice on medical grounds, denying him entry into many prestigious events. However, when he could race, he excelled. He competed so successfully that he came to the attention of car designer Brian Lister.

Brian entered Archie in the 1953 races leading to the prestigious Empire Trophy. Archie won the first two rounds despite the car being underpowered against serious opposition. However, in the final qualifying race Archie's deformities came to the attention of the stewards who promptly suspended his licence.

The replacement driver came eighth and missed the cut for the final. Despite what must have been a massive disappointment Archie behaved typically impeccably and his attitude engendered support in high places to the extent that his licence was restored. In 1955 and with the new car he took 13 wins, two seconds and two thirds against top drivers in cars such as Aston Martin DB3S and D-type Jaguars. The sweetest victory was winning the Empire Trophy that year.

Archie and Brian were great friends and there was no problem in him driving other cars. In 1956 he began his association with Elva. He became the works driver and achieved some successes that year, winning at Brands Hatch in a MkIII, similar to the vehicle in Bexhill Museum's transport gallery. He liked the cars which he felt handled in a similar way to the Listers and typically no money exchanged hands when he drove for Elva. He liked the car and loved to drive at every opportunity.

In 1957 it proved to be the year of the works Lister-Jaguar and Archie Scott-Brown. His season took off with 14 starts, 11 wins, a second and two retirements.

He was still driving for Elva and others and ended the season with two firsts and a fourth at Brands Hatch. Though he could struggle with stamina in longer races there was no doubting his ability and the international racing world beckoned.

At the same time Archie was welcomed Down Under where he dived with and beat the likes of Bruce McLaren and Jack Brabham in Australia and New Zealand.

Archie's star was rising and the authorities were beginning to relent regarding his eligibility. He was accepted for the Monaco Grand Prix, but the Cooper he was due to drive was not ready for the race. Typically for Archie, he took up the opportunity to race in Spa in Belgium on May 18 1957. Archie was leading as he entered the Clubhouse bend, but encountered a patch of wet track, hit a road sign and the car went out of control, rolling and spilling petrol which ignited. The car had been fitted with a magnesium body for lightness, and this caught fire.

Archie died in the medical centre the following day with his father at his side. Within his final words he said that he'd made a mess of things and that Brian Lister should not feel too badly about the crash. He was 32.

The bitter irony was that Archie's death came at a time when he had won his personal fight to be accepted on his own terms into Formula One and his name being up there with other greats of the period.



ELVA CARS

ELVA was the brainchild of Bexhill born Frank Nichols.

Post war he established a successful local garage and tinkered with sports cars.

In 1955 he produced his first Mk1 Elva. Around 20-25 were built and sold from his London Road garage. The company was doing well selling, particularly in the USA but, following a disaster with the fraudulent American distributor, went into liquidation in 1961 and the company was bought out.

It is an interesting fact that the current road car produced by the highly successful McLaren Formula 1 racing team is in fact a McLaren Elva. So, at least, the name lives on.

A 1958 Elva Mark III can be seen in the Motoring and Transport Gallery of Bexhill Museum.



The car on display at the Bexhill Museum

MEAL DELIVERIES OFFERING PERSONAL SERVICE TO RESIDENTS

Cookmere Meals is a meals on wheels delivery service dedicated to providing home cooked, home delivered meals to people in need.

The service allows their customers to remain independent in their homes while receiving the essential nutrition needed for a balanced diet.

Cookmere offers nutritional, balanced meals through local service providers, ensuring the convenience, safety and dignity of those in need. The service allows its users to socialise with their friendly, familiar delivery drivers, receive additional support pertaining to welfare, and information on a variety of topics including advice on your individual dietary needs, and reduce risk of malnutrition and social isolation.

The service service allows those in need in our community to maintain a healthy, stay active and independent, and form relationships with those in their communities.

It is a local, leading meals on wheels company located in the lovely Lower Dicker, Hailsham, East Sussex. Since the company's conception they have been working hard to build strong working relationships with their customers, their service connects those in need with freshly cooked, high quality, home cooked meals, without having to leave the comfort of your home.

Their dedicated team work all year round to ensure a smooth running, reliable and trustworthy local delivery service that cares about every customer. Lots of great heart-warming stories come out of Cookmere, just recently one of their delivery drivers found one of their customers having had a fall, the driver scooped her up and put her back in her chair, he then proceeded to stay with her for a further 90 minutes while they waited for an ambulance, completely proving the real care that Cookmere provides for those most in need.



The company collectively boasts an impressive 30+ years of kitchen experience amongst their talented kitchen team.

Cookmere uses local food suppliers as much as humanly possible, their local suppliers provide them with a trove of fresh ingredients on a daily basis, not only does that ensure they only use the best fresh, seasonal ingredients, it also ensures the business is talking steps towards the ever-growing important goal of becoming an environmentally friendly company.

The vast majority of Cookmere's customers take advantage of their unique chilled meals delivery service, freshly prepared by expert chefs, best utilised by those who still want an element

of independence while also receiving a small level of care. Cookmere's meals are highly nutritious to make sure their customers have a healthy and balanced diet. Every customer can have their options tailored to make sure they have plenty of options each day, there are even options to have meals cut up into small pieces, pureed etc.

Choosing a chilled meal, ready to eat when you need, eliminates the extra time and effort of preparing your own meals from scratch. Rather than shopping, prepping, and cooking, Cookmere delivers your meals right to your home, ready to eat whenever you are ready, giving you even more freedom.

All of their chilled meals are presented beautifully of a china plate with a plate ring, all wrapped up so you know it will stay fresh and you can see the meal before you have unwrapped it.

Another service Cookmere has available is the hot meal delivery service, it is best for those who need that extra little bit of help. You, or your relatives could have daily hot meals delivered by a friendly and experienced delivery driver that even does a quick, free welfare check for you just to give you that extra piece of mind.

The hot meal delivery service is a convenient, time-saving way to enjoy fresh, home cooked food without having to leave your home. Instead of having to shop and cook, the service delivers fresh and nutritious meals right to your door, quickly, safely and all year round.

Cookmere has a team of dedicated customer service agents, based in Eastbourne, that are available 7 days a week, 9am – 4pm, meaning they are never more than just a phone call away, offering top tier service for each and every one of their customers.

For a service that genuinely cares about their customers wants and needs, look no further than Cookmere Meals.

www.cookmere.co.uk

COOKMERE
meals

“
A lovely meal, a friendly face and a kind office team.
Thank you Cookmere!
Doris

“
A good, hot lunch delivered daily by a friendly, familiar face. Cookmere is a lifeline!
Tim

“
I'm fussy, but my likes and dislikes are always met and the meals are absolutely delicious!
Maureen

Enjoy freshly prepared, home cooked, chilled meals, delivered to your home daily!

- Mains start from only £9.95!
- Desserts from only £3!
- Sandwiches from only £3.25!

Call us now on 01323 884 274 and ask us all about the fantastic service we offer. Our office team is available 9 – 4, 7 days a week.

Cookmere LTD: Cookmere LTD, Pronto, Lower Dicker, Hailsham, East Sussex, BN27 4BT **Tel:** 01323 884274 **Email:** orders@cookmere.co.uk **Website:** www.cookmere.co.uk



BEXHILL CHAMBER — GETTING AHEAD OF THE NET ZERO CURVE IN 2023



Everyone is aware that the Government has set a target for the decarbonisation of all sectors of the economy by 2050. They call this "Net Zero".

Bexhill Chamber are working with our members to get ahead of the Net Zero curve and put Bexhill at the heart of the new local green industrial revolution way before that deadline.

Probably the biggest impact most people will experience from the Net Zero policy is the transition in car technology towards alternative powertrains like electric and hybrid to comply with the ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel only cars in 2030.

The scramble by car companies to comply with this legislation has led to a market place flooded with new technologies like; EV, PHEV, Mild Hybrid, regenerative braking, one pedal drive etc that are often confusing and an impediment to informed decision making when considering a new car. That's



why we have teamed up with our members at Birchwood Kia to help bridge the knowledge gap for our members.

On February 23rd, we will be holding a charity fundraiser at the Birchwood Kia showroom in Eastbourne to help members get a grip on the new car technologies in a business friendly environment. This evening event is a follow up to our recent massively successful networking breakfast hosted by Powerhug that helped members better

understand how they could not only take back control of their current energy use and costs but also move towards self-sufficiency by adopting cost-effective sustainable energy solutions like Solar and Ground energy pumps.

Bexhill Chamber helps and supports our members in delivering to not only their statutory green energy obligations but also their individual sustainability targets.

With Bexhill being a central point of the National Cycle Network route between Eastbourne and Hastings we should also embrace a shift towards a leisure cycling culture as a driver of Net Zero regeneration.

We are a relatively small town that could easily be transformed by encouraging walking and cycling within our environs. Bexhill would benefit massively if we became recognised as an active

travel town where pedestrians and cycling were given equal priority to cars. You only have to look at the thronging heart of Lewes on any weekend to see how sharing space as part of a co-ordinated traffic plan delivers a real difference to the local economy.

We are not looking to ban cars from the town centre but we are looking at shifting the town's economic reliance away from them to help deliver on Net Zero targets and create a demographic shift that welcomes a younger more eco engaged population. It will take a concerted effort by politicians across all tiers of Government to really get a grip on the local potential of Net Zero and to formulate a joined up and costed strategy to deliver it for Bexhill. Bexhill Chamber cannot deliver the green revolution by ourselves, but we can help our members get ahead of the curve.

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TUESDAY
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WEDNESDAY
Total Body Conditioning 10-11am

THURSDAY
Pilates 5-6pm

FRIDAY
Mind, Body Fusion (Tai Chi, Yoga & Relaxation) 4-5pm

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- 40 minute class **£4.00**
- 60 minute class **£5.00**
- Weekly class pass **£18.00**

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PARTNERSHIP ALL ABOUT FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD



Food Social's, Max Brent

MAX Brent is a self-confessed foodie and now he wants others to follow his lead. He has teamed up with renowned Bexhill chef Malcolm Emmanueil, who runs the Sobremesa restaurant in Sackville Road, to launch a cookery school.

Mal specialises in bringing the taste of Latin America to our British palates and, like Max, is keen to spread the word by teaching others how to create simple, cost effective and, most importantly, a tasty array of dishes.

In recent years British households have increasingly turned to ready meals when they get home from work rather than spending time in the kitchen whipping up something for themselves and their families, This is an unhealthy trend that Max fervently believes has to be reversed.

"Cooking should be seen as fun, not a chore, he explained. "We both want to spread that message. Spend time in the kitchen rather than just slumping down in front of the television the moment you get through the door in the evening."

Hence the launch of Food Social, with its ethos of meet, greet, eat.

The cookery school practical sessions will take place every Monday, Wednesday Thursday and Sunday and are suitable for all levels of ability and experience, whether you are a complete novice who wouldn't recognise a wok even if you were hit over the head with one or consider yourself the next Jamie Oliver.

Remember, even the best chefs are continually adding to their skills and creating new recipes.

In terms of food classes, the focus initially will be on Mexican street food, tapas, Thai and Brazilian street food, but there are other aspects of the restaurant trade which will also be thoroughly explored with expert tips from Max and Malcolm.

"Our cookery school evenings will be held in a relaxed and convivial atmosphere," added Max.

"The era of head chefs screaming at and verbally abusing their staff must be consigned to history.

"We want to support new chefs and restaurant staff coming in to the sector without them fearing it will be an intimidating atmosphere.

"In effect we want to create a hospitality hub and address the root cause of issues which may crop up.

"We are out to establish a support network and also act as a platform for restaurants in Bexhill.



Malcolm Emmanueil cooking up an education.

"For anyone involved in the restaurant trade, support and mentoring is absolutely vital.

"We are determined to be a focal point when it comes to helping and advising local chefs, regardless of who they work for.

"The hospitality industry is tough, but working towards a common goal and meeting up regularly means you are not alone when dealing with challenging situations, whether it be finance, setting up a restaurant, creating menus or just needing any other expert help. Basically it will be very wide ranging because we have so much knowledge we want to pass on."

During the course of our conversation, Mal whipped up a cornucopia of delights for sampling and it tasted as good as it looked as we tucked in to a veritable feast.

But then it was back to business as Max outlined the dynamic duo's objectives with the cookery school up and running from February.

When asked about their short and long-term objectives, Max said. "The core of Food Social is going to be our hugely informative cookery classes which are all built on the ethos of Sobremesa

"It is all about having conversations around food and enjoying

that feeling you have after you have eaten and you connect with a person.

"That being said, we will also be working with local communities, doing free sessions and demonstrations to raise understanding in the local area, while also working with the Ukrainian hub plus school and colleges to help put something back into the community .

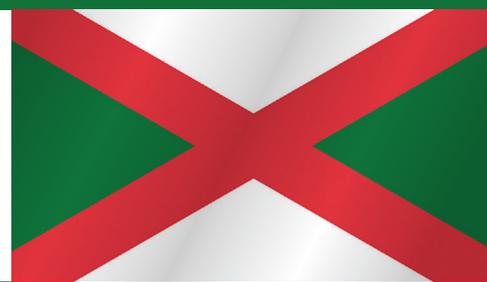
"The plan is to create a network of like-minded individuals within hospitality to attract the best talent, cement Bexhill as a destination to go out and eat and create a forum for hospitality professionals to ask questions to help overcome challenges and create opportunities.

"Some of the other key services we will be offering will be things such as micro accountancy, menu/concept design, social media and so forth.

"In addition we can offer marketing support for restaurants as well as valuable advice on food hygiene."

Regular classes will be up and running from February onwards. **You can find out more by visiting www.foodsocials.co.uk or alternatively emailing info@foodsocials.co.uk.**

BEXHILL-ON-SEA TOWN COUNCIL UPDATE



PRECEPT AND BUDGET UPDATE 2023-24

The town council has been busy calculating its budget for 2023-24. The aim has always been to ensure the minimum impact on residents whilst moving forward with the council's strategy to improve local services.

The big change for the coming year is the devolution of the public toilets in Bexhill. There has been some social media posts stating that by passing the management of the toilets to the Town Council would result in 'double taxation.' This isn't the case; once the services are transferred, the District will cease paying for the cost of the service. If the agreement is made to transfer the service, Rother District Council will cease collecting council tax for the public conveniences in Bexhill from residents across Rother, and Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council will precept its residents for the running costs. There is no double taxation.

The final agreement for the toilet maintenance will be considered for approval in March 2023, and if the Town Council agrees to the terms of maintenance of the toilets Rother District Council will also transfer approximately £200,000 in funding to assist the future refurbishment of the sites.

The Town Council is keen to improve the state of the toilets, and a long-term plan will be agreed to improve their appearance, cleanliness and make them more efficient.

The precept to be raised by the Town Council for 2023-24 will be £651,715, compared to £390,920 last year.

To illustrate the changes, we chart the precept against a typical Band D property in Bexhill. A Band D property will now pay £38.31 in council tax, this is an increase of £15.08 per year, equivalent to 29 pence per week.

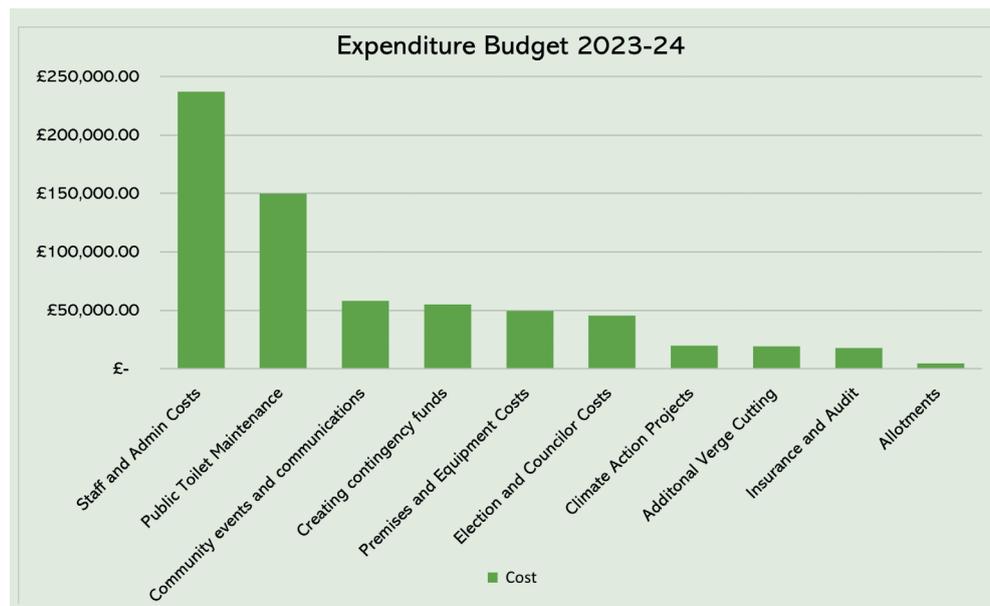
How does Bexhill compare?

Last year's Band D charges for our neighbouring councils:

Battle	£142.93
Camber	£95.64
Rye	£132.24
Ticehurst	£89.86
Bexhill	£23.23

**£38.31 per year or
74 pence per week**

is how much a Band D home will contribute to the services provided by the Town Council in 2023/24



WHAT IS "SPECIAL EXPENSES"?

This is the term used for the council tax money raised by Rother District Council for services dedicated to Bexhill. Each Band D home in Bexhill paid **£37.88** to this fund in 2022/23, which equates to a total of £608,945. This meant a total Band D council tax payment was £61.11 for the year.

The Special Expenses fund is used to pay for the upkeep of Bexhill's parks and open spaces, the maintenance of bus shelters, Christmas lighting and the Bexhill Museum. The District Council will no longer charge "Special Expenses" and discussions are underway for the Town Council to take over these services in future years. No decisions have been made yet, negotiations will begin once a decision on the public conveniences has been reached.

You can see a breakdown of our expenditure budget picture above.

BEXHILL UNITED LADIES FC UNDER 11S

We were pleased to sponsor the Under 11s kit. Bexhill Ladies Football Club is a football team for girls and ladies of all abilities. It was established in 1989 as a standalone women's club. They provide football opportunities for girls aged 5+. The ladies first team play in the London South East Regional Women's Football League (step 6).

U11S GIRLS



If you organise a community group in Bexhill you could be eligible for a grant from the Town Council to support a project. The closing date for the next round is 28th February 2023. See our website for more information www.bexhilltowncouncil.gov.uk

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

We will be holding our Annual Town Meeting at St Augustine's Hall, Cooden Drive TN39 3AZ on Saturday 18th March 2022 starting at 4.30pm. You can hear a round up from Mayor Cllr Paul Plim, we will present the Civic Awards for 2023 and you will have an opportunity to put your questions to councillors during our public forum.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

- Wednesday 8th February Planning Committee and Full Council
- Wednesday 15th February Asset Transfer Committee and Community Committee
- Wednesday 22nd February Planning Committee and Finance and General Purposes Committee

Please check our website for start times and locations of meetings.



GRANTS AND DONATIONS NEWS

The Town Council has made the final decisions on its second round of funding for community groups.

£1491.82 will go towards the Bexhill Royal Air Force Cadets to fund their archery equipment on their popular sports nights.

£1300 means that Wave Arts can complete the London Road underpass project, and paint Gubby's Balls in Devonshire Square – pictured above.

£2000 will go to St Michael's Community Centre to upgrade to LED lighting and replace the windows.

WHAT A START TO THE NEW YEAR FOR BEXHILL!

BY CLLR DOUG OLIVER

This week I had the absolute pleasure of meeting Government officials to discuss the projects that will be made possible thanks to a £19 million grant from the Levelling Up Fund.

Bexhill is the only Sussex town included in the second round of this Government funding and will benefit from cultural-led regeneration as a result.

The funding will help transform the iconic De La Warr Pavilion and improve accessibility for audiences and support the Heart of Sidley's development of a new community hub at Sidley Recreation Ground.

As well as regenerating the Bexhill area, this funding will create new jobs and help bolster skills and career opportunities among local residents.

The news of this funding comes hot on the heels of an £85,000 Government grant to help us improve Sidley House open space and play area.

Cabinet colleagues unanimously voted earlier this month to accept the money from the Levelling Up Parks Fund recognising the benefit this would have on the community.

Sidley House was chosen to benefit from the money because of the number of people that will use and enjoy this space including those using the early help centre, the neighbouring nursery, families from the local primary school and the wider community.

The competition for funding like this is always fierce, so to get two pots of funding in such a short space of time is testament to the dedication and hard work of our officers who have passionately



argued Bexhill's case to secure this money.

Ask any councillor and they will tell you a long list of things they would love to provide for their communities. With limited funding itself, the council relies on external funding to try and make as many of these projects a reality as possible.

While budget planning continues all year round, the new year sees our budget planning work step up a gear.

Residents and businesses across the district are being hit hard by the cost-of-living crisis and the district council is no different.

With an expected budget shortfall of more than £2 million, plans for the new financial year include an increase in fees and charges for the majority of council services as well as council tax increase 2.83 per cent.

The increase in Rother's share of Council Tax would equate to

contribution of just under £4 per week based on a Band D property. This money helps to provide some 60 plus services including waste collection, which accounts for almost 50 per cent of the weekly amount. We believe that Rother provides real value given the restricted funding.

To keep any increases to an absolute minimum, we have been working hard to find savings from the way we work, but we still face some very difficult decisions.

It is so important that we consider the people we serve when we set the budget and I would urge as many residents, businesses and partners to give us their view on plans by taking part in our consultation before Tuesday, January 31 at www.rother.gov.uk/consultations/rother-district-council-2023-24-budget-consultation/



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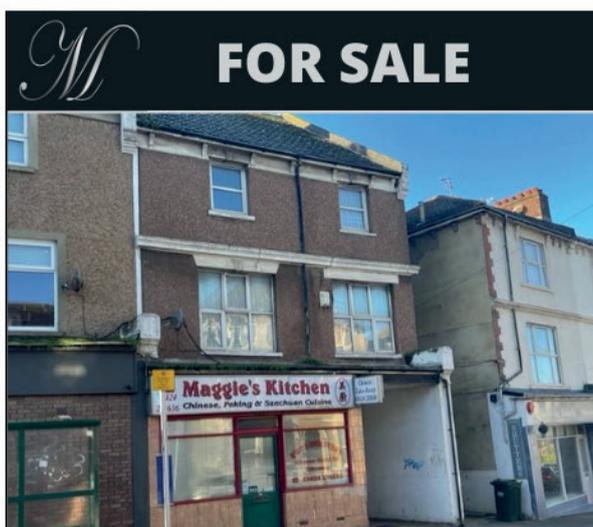
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**London Road,
Bexhill on Sea** **£1,375 PCM**

- Roller shutter door
- Industrial unit
- Separate double garage
- Two offices
- Gated off-road parking
- Kitchen & toilet facilities



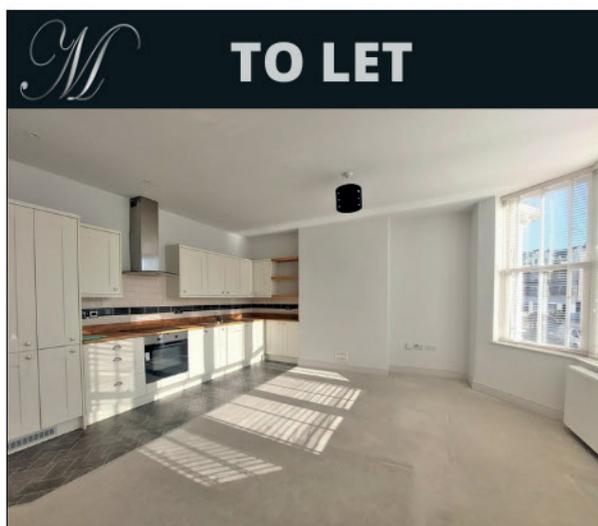
**London Road,
Bexhill on Sea** **£250,000
GUIDE PRICE**

- Mixed-use building
- Redevelopment opportunity
- Ground floor premises with four-bedroom maisonette above
- Garage & off road parking to rear
- Cash buyers only



**Western Road,
Bexhill on Sea** **£11,000 PA**

- Town Centre premises
- 'Sui Generis' classification
- Suitable for takeaway restaurant
- Large main trading area, kitchen, and storage room
- Small courtyard to rear



**Parkhurst Road,
Bexhill on Sea** **£1,200 PCM**

- Three-bedroom maisonette
- Town centre location
- Recently refurbished to a high standard
- Off road parking for up to two cars
- Gas central heating
- Close to seafront and station



**Western Road,
Bexhill on Sea** **£11,500 PA**

- Ground floor retail unit
- Town centre location
- High footfall area
- Private double garage to rear
- Newly decorated throughout
- Upgraded electrics



**Wickham Ave,
Bexhill on Sea** **£6,000 PA**

- Commercial premises
- Town centre location
- 'Sui Generis' classification
- Currently a beauty salon
- Separate kitchen, storage room, and WC
- Available mid March

ATTENTION LANDLORDS... MORE PROPERTIES WANTED!

FRIENDLY INDEPENDENT RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL LETTING AGENT



JFS is an established management and letting company covering Bexhill, Hastings, St Leonards, Eastbourne and Kent which will be celebrating its 5th anniversary this year. Joy, the sole director, is driven with a passion for property and is known for offering a personal and friendly service.

With a fierce reputation for friendliness and professionalism, we pride ourselves on providing an unrivalled standard of service to match all our commercial properties. With our rebellious attitude towards property management and an impressive growth rate, our high calibre property portfolio is updated frequently to bring you our newest instructions on all Residential and Commercial properties we have available – be sure to check back regularly so you don't miss a listing.



Why choose JFS Properties?

Professionalism - Joy at JFS is a member of Property Redress Scheme which gives you the assurance that you will receive the highest level of customer service of any estate agent. All our properties have their own sets of floor plans and all regulations are in place such as

EPC, Gas Safety and Electrical Certificates and we also offer a price match guarantee from our contractors.

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4 Bedroom House | Master bedroom with dressing room and ensuite | Good size kitchen and dining area | Large garden | Off road parking

£1,800 PCM

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2 Bedroom First Floor Flat | 2 double bedrooms | Balcony | Single garage | Newly decorated throughout | Available immediately

£1,200 PCM

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Commercial Unit Available | New Lease Terms | 3 Months Rent in Advance | 3 Months Deposit | Available Immediately

£8,000 PER ANNUM

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Located along London Road | Site area of property - 1320 Sq Ft | Shared parking available | Unit is vacant and available now

£896PCM / £10,750PA

UNIT 4, BURNSIDE MEWS, BEXHILL



Located along London Road | Site Area of Property - 2160.0 Sq Ft | Shared Parking Available | Unit is available immediately

£1,396PCM / £16,750PA

UNIT 6, 6A & 6B BURNSIDE MEWS



6 Burnside Mews - Site Area of Property - 321 Sq Ft, Shared Parking Available. £295pcm / £3,540pa

6a Burnside Mews - Site Area of Property - 600 Sq Ft, Shared Parking Available - currently vacant. £595pcm / £7,140pa

6b Burnside Mews - Site Area of Property - 264 Sq Ft, Shared Parking Available. Rent - £395pcm / £4,740pa



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| Excellent Communal Facilities | Adjacent to
Town Centre.

FOR SALE: £195,000



Spacious Second Floor (Top) Flat | Two Bedrooms
| Favoured Old Town Area

FOR SALE: £250,000



Exceptionally spacious 1st & 2nd Floor Maisonette
| Three/Four Bedrooms | Excellent Location

FOR SALE: £269,950



Third (top) Floor Flat | Lift | Two Double Bedrooms
| Garage

FOR SALE: £295,000



Two Bed Mid Terrace House | L-Shaped Lounge/
Dining Room | Garage and Gardens

FOR SALE: £325,000



Semi-Detached Bungalow | Two Bedrooms
| In need of Modernisation

FOR SALE: £315,000



Detached Two Bed Bungalow | Garage & Additional
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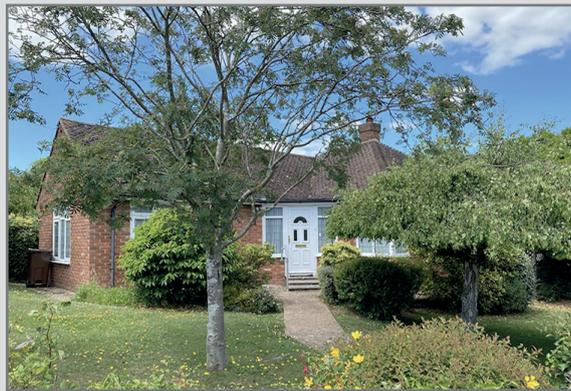
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DEANS CLOSE, BEXHILL-ON-SEA - £379,950

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OCKLYNGE CLOSE, BEXHILL-ON-SEA - £510,000

This well presented two bedroom detached bungalow is well positioned in a small close that's close to Little Common Village. The property is double glazed throughout, has central heating, a modern kitchen, a bathroom, a very useful large conservatory and two spacious bedrooms. Outside there is a single garage and a decent sized garden to the rear of the property. Little Common Village has a real community spirit and enjoys a range of shops. Eateries including a convenient store, doctors surgery in fact all you would need.



TOWER ROAD, ST LEONARDS-ON-SEA - £139,950

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BEXHILL ROAD, ST LEONARDS-ON-SEA - £220,000

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AN AMBITIOUS CLUB WHICH IS CERTAINLY BOXING CLEVER



Louie Crouch throws out a left hand

BY SPORTS REPORTER, MIKE LEGG

PHOTO: BEXHILL FILM COMPANY

TERRY Freeman believes Bexhill Amateur Boxing Club is now packing a punch. Freeman and his like-minded bunch of coaches are the driving force behind the club which is approaching its 13th year.

It has been a long haul but the 41-year-old coach hopes Bexhill ABC is now an established name on the Sussex circuit – and beyond.

Former amateur Freeman told Bexhill News: “We’re a small club in a small town, like a small fish in a big pond, but we are putting ourselves out there and getting recognised now.

“We’re not saying we are anything special but we are doing our best.”

The club began life in Pebsham with the help of Mick Turner, who sadly passed away in late December, after branching off from Bexhill Athletic Club’s ATHA gym. It now sits behind Sutton Place on the seafront in what used to be Bexhill Squash Club.

Freeman explained: “Mick, bless him, was a great help setting up in Pebsham and we have been under England Boxing rules for the past ten years.

“It took a couple of years to get the gym set up and people in before we came under their guidance. We are a registered charity and all the coaches are volunteers.”

While top-level professional boxing generates huge money, Freeman and his right-hand man Rian Witcomb are operating at the other end of the scale trying to benefit the Bexhill community.

Freeman said: “As a charity, you heavily rely on donations. We do not make much profit. As we’re not a business, we try to keep our subs down for grassroots boxing.

“We charge £3 for kids for an hour’s session twice a week and £4 for seniors for up to two-hour sessions twice a week.

“We try to keep our prices low because if you charge too much then you are coming away from the poorer parts of society.

“We want to target everyone and we understand everyone is feeling the pinch.”

Freeman’s passion is clear for the sport, which is often labelled the toughest of them all.

Although you are on your own when you step through the ropes, Freeman stresses it is a team effort outside the ring to keep the club running smoothly.

And with 40 to 50 members and ten to 12 carded

boxers representing the Black and Golds, there is plenty going on. The club boasts six England Boxing Level 2 coaches and Freeman said: “I did the leg work to set it up but myself and Rian and our committee members are the backbone.”

Witcomb, Ian Fletcher and Graham Towse all train the competing boxers, while Stuart Dewhurst, Nathan Gavmin, Tony Jackson and Ben Pettet take a variety of classes.

There are plans to extend the size of the club with money needed to pave the way for funding. Freeman said: “We’re looking for about £5,000 to get us in a good position and then we can start applying for grants to the National Lottery.”

On the competitive side, Freeman hopes some of their boxers can have a big 2023.

Demetri Kakoulli and Aaron Davies both reached the Southern Counties finals in the National Development Championships earlier last year, while senior Steve Garlick and Bobby Salmon fought on Guernsey for a representative team.

Freeman said: “We have a young prospect, Aaron’s brother Terry, who has just turned 20 years old. He’s had ten fights and seven or eight wins and boxes like a little pro.

“He is very well schooled and is coached by Graham Towse, who used to be at West Hill ABC. Hopefully with Terry this is going to be his season to shine.

“Aaron and Terry will go back into the Nationals at the end of the season and possibly a number of Box Cups along the way, such as Haringey, one in Cornwall and even possibly Ireland.

“There are plenty of shows coming up too and we want to get back active in mid-February with a few lads out competing.”

Whether Bexhill produces champions or not, Freeman will be happy if he just inspires others to take up a sport he credits with transforming his life.

He said: “I never got into it to be the best coach, I got into it to help people, keep them off the streets and help them keep fit.

“I come from a broken home, was brought up by my mum and got into trouble as a kid.

“So, meeting Mick Turner really helped me and gave me direction and that is what drove me to help other people.

“Boxing is not everyone’s sport. You have got your football, your rugby, basketball, but for the kids who don’t want to do that, it is just another opportunity.”

PLENTY TO CELEBRATE AS RUNNING CLUB RECOGNISES ACHIEVEMENTS



David Rogers and Sharon Dickson.



Jackie Knight and Darrem Harwood of MK Studio.



Zak Overfield, Simon Leonard, David Rogers and Geoff Tondeur.



Ksenia McCrae, Eva Harwood and Demelza McCrae.

BY SPORTS REPORTER, MIKE LEGG

DAVID Rogers scooped the coveted Alex Hall Trophy for his remarkable commitment to running at Bexhill Runners and Triathletes’ Christmas bash.

Triathlon awards went to Mark Mitchell and Tom North, while special acknowledgement was given to runners who entered the IronBourne teams at the Eastbourne 2022 event.

Trail runners, including Grant Docksey, Simon Leonard, Mark Thomas, Syreeta Watts and Zak Overfield, were highly commended.

Road running achievement plaudits went to Cathy Bate, Charlotte Elliot, Ellie Docksey and Amanda Tondeur.

Performance of the year was presented to Sharon Dickson. Most improved runners went to Geoff Tondeur and Nigel Jewell with special mentions to Harry Scott, Lottie Cranthern, William and Oliver Carey.

A successful annual raffle concluded the yearly celebrations, offering exciting prizes including a voucher for an introductory personal training session at MK Studio with Darren Harwood. All donated prizes contributed to raising money for the local Bexhill foodbank, where some BRT runners volunteer.

Five dedicated club members committed to the Marcothon challenge to run 5K every day during December, including Christmas Day and in all weather. High praise goes to Carole Cranthern, Sharon Dickson, Grant Docksey, Malcolm Jones and Geoff Tondeur.

The Sussex Cross Country Championships took place on Bexhill Downs as the new year got off to a wet and muddy start in blustery conditions.

BRT juniors Eva Harwood, Ksenia and Demelza

McCrae took part and have produced brilliant performances in East Sussex Cross Country League events.

Meanwhile, you may be thinking about your fitness journey or next running race challenge as part of your New Year Resolutions.

If you have ever thought about running with a friendly group of like-minded people, please go to the BRT webpage for more information on junior and adult membership. It can be found at www.bexhillrunnerstriathletes.co.uk

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SPORT



BOXING PAGE 30



Goalmouth action in the derby clash between Bexhill United and Little Common on Boxing Day

BEXHILL UNITED ARE SHINING A LIGHT ON HOME COMFORTS

PHOTO: JOE KNIGHT, SEASIDE PHOTOGRAPHY

The Pirates suffered a disappointing 4-1 loss at Peacehaven on January 24 before they hosted high-fliers Newhaven on the final Saturday of January.

Weather permitting, they then had a run of three home matches at the Polegrove against Crowborough (February 1), Saltdean (February 4) and Midhurst and Easebourne (February 8).

A trip to Uckfield (February 11) is then followed by Steyning's visit a week later before the month ends on the road at Crawley Down (February 25).

Boss Light admitted a home run after a tricky run of fixtures presented a chance to make hay as they chase another top-four finish this season in the Southern Combination League premier division.

Speaking before the Newhaven visit, he told the Bexhill News: "Our home record has been excellent over the last three years.

"I think we've lost twice, and that was recently, but before that we went on the run of three years unbeaten at home.

"We've only lost there twice recently, and that was against the top two sides Crawley Down and Broadbridge Heath. We always back ourselves at the Polegrove and we have made it somewhat of a fortress over the past few seasons."

Light puts United's home domination down to a number of factors.

He claimed: "I think it's feeling comfortable at somewhere other teams don't.

"I don't think it's ever a particularly great playing surface at the Polegrove by any means. And I don't think it inspires teams to want to come to us.

"So that, coupled with us being quite a tenacious side who gives everybody a hard game, helps.

"Also, I think the home crowd over the years has grown and it's quite vociferous. It's a great home crowd to have behind us."

A 2-1 win over visitors Little Common on Boxing Day and 4-1 success against Alfold in January have kept United ticking along

but Light is not getting carried away despite last season's great strides.

He said: "The rise over the last four seasons from the lower reaches and almost going out of senior football, to finishing top four last year in the county premier has been unbelievable.

"And the top four were miles clear of the rest of last season – it wasn't a case we snuck into fourth.

"But what that means is expectations get heightened.

"And even though I think we're having a decent season, which is only our second at this level for 30-odd years, there are expectations from last year with people expecting us to be running away with the league. It doesn't work like that. We are still just little Bexhill.

"There is a long way to go yet and I think we're doing all right. I am really happy with where the squad is at numbers-wise. We've had a few new faces come in and it's really fleshed the squad out nicely."

One of those recent additions is Stephen Okoh, the former Hastings United, Lewes, Whitehawk and Stranraer winger.

Okoh put United ahead with a superb header in a 1-1 draw at Eastbourne Town on January 21 before the hosts replied with a scrambled last-gasp leveller by Delwin Duah.

Light worked with the 28-year-old previously at Hastings and knows what he can bring to the Pirates.

He said: "I really liked him at Hastings and when they let him go and I was really surprised.

"He was a player that could get past players and they are not ten-a-penny.

"I followed his progress when he went to Stranraer and then he came down to Kent, where he lives and has flipped around a few clubs. I swooped in for him and so far, so good.

"He's making the trip down and consistently shown a good attitude to getting his fitness back up and he's great signing for us.

"I signed him to be a winger and didn't expect rising bullet headers from corners!"

COMMON AIMING TO PLAY CATCH-UP IN CONSIDERABLE STYLE



Russell Eldridge (left) in action

Photo: Joe Knight, Seaside Photography

RUSSELL Eldridge is eager to get some points on the board as Little Common play catch-up in the Southern Combination League premier division.

Common have not played a home league since November 22 after being hit by the triple whammy of rain, snow and frost.

Eldridge's side had played just 18 league games by January 24; the least of any side in the division.

An understandably ring-rusty Common lost 3-0 at leaders Newhaven on January 24 as Callum Connor (two) and Charlie Bennett netted for the hosts.

But Eldridge is hopeful that the worst of the weather is over and he can see his side claw their way back up the table as they face Saturday-Tuesday-Saturday games until mid-March at least.

Common were due to travel to Uckfield on January 31 before three home games at the Rec against AFC Varndeanians (February 4), Eastbourne (February 7) and Crowborough (February 11).

Loxwood (February 14), Hassocks (February 18) and Broadbridge Heath (February 21) then follow on the road before the month closes with Lingfield home (February 25) and away (February 28) in the space of four days.

It's a crammed fixture schedule and boss Eldridge, who turned 40 in January, admitted: "It can work in one or two ways.

"Hopefully you can build up a little bit of momentum where you're playing Saturday-Tuesday-Saturday-Tuesday. If you're winning and you're playing well, then everyone is looking forward to the next game and everyone's confidence is high.

"On the other hand, it can be quite tough when you go from game to game if you're not doing so well.

"We would prefer the first one where we are able to pick up points and we're looking forward to the next game ahead.

"Because we have had such a long lay-off, it is about trying to get into those good habits again first of all and building momentum in terms of performances and results.

"Hopefully, they can come hand in hand and lend themselves to getting on a little run.

"We are behind in games but there are lots of points to be had.

We're just be focused on trying to add some points to the board as quickly as possible."