

## PROSPERITY

86% of people felt that links between business and education was the most important element in improving the prosperity of the District.<sup>27</sup> A number of residents are concerned about declining services in villages and the need to improve facilities in Wealden towns. Tourism plays an important role in improving the local economy as visitors spend an estimated £248 million in the area every year. The consultation also identified a need for support and advice to agriculture and other business sectors in the area.

### Priorities

- Support existing and emerging businesses in order to encourage a thriving range of sectors which will provide more employment opportunities as a prerequisite for enhancing quality of life in Wealden
- Encourage small, clean, high-skill businesses with minimal transport needs, e.g. the knowledge-based sector
- Encourage a balanced approach between residential use and new or existing business sites, for example, by encouraging a more sympathetic approach to the conversion of redundant farm buildings for alternative business uses
- Support efforts to ensure that adequate employment opportunities are in place or under development where more houses are to be built
- Ensure that appropriate support and infrastructure is available for the small and micro businesses which tend to predominate in the area
- Encourage partners to ensure the five core towns are attractive as local retail and service centres
- Encourage business links with existing colleges and universities through the provision of outreach and business centres attached to

those institutions, for example to develop more apprenticeship opportunities locally

- Improve links between business and the local community for example, by encouraging local businesses to employ local people, encouraging and supporting flexible working patterns and measures to include people with disabilities
- Develop use of broadband, particularly for electronic communication and websites, and encourage more active networking amongst local businesses
- Establish a mechanism to lead, in partnership, the Eastbourne / Hailsham Triangle in a single co-ordinated approach, to ensure that it is not simply a growth area for residential development but contributes to the economic growth of the region

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<sup>27</sup>Wealden LSP (2002) Wealden Community Planning Consultation Report of Findings