

The Business Opinion Survey findings (most commonly answered questions)

- Nearly 400 business have premises in Crowborough representing retail, commerce, light industry and service industries.
- 33 business people (of the 91) expressed a positive interest in the present framework for business support being enhanced. Another 7 intimated some interest (there were at least 30 suggestions covering a wide range of topics some of which may be addressed locally e.g Register of Local Businesses; Promote business support services; Local training)
- 17 considered they may be prepared to develop aspects of business by working with other local business people; a further 26 said they may be interested depending upon the circumstances (18 suggestions included Local purchasing and Networking)
- Virtually all 91 businesses responded to the question about main advantages and/or threats to their businesses being located in Crowborough ranging from being 'close to home; less expensive than Tunbridge Wells, Brighton, London; Good centre with residential areas; Free parking' on the positive side - and 'inadequate parking; local competition; poor public transport; high costs viz. Rates; proximity to Tunbridge Wells' being some of the threats.
- 39 factors inhibiting New Businesses in Crowborough included 'not enough affordable Office accommodation; lack of Industrial area / units; High Rents and Business Rates'
- Of the issues of local concern to businesses, 72 supported the retention of Free Parking, 43 supported the need to promote the local business economy, 39 wanted better public transport, and 24 supported the need for better signage to both shops and industrial estates. Other issues raised included the need for better policing, less vandalism, more business premises and improved security.
- 43 suggestions were made in response to identifying the most significant actions (not already mentioned here) that could be taken locally to help businesses thrive. They included upgrading the appearance of and accessibility to the town, having a Crowborough Website and promoting Crowborough to better effect as well as introducing general measures to increase viability of local businesses.

What can be done?

Some of the issues raised are outside the direct control of local businesses and need to be directed towards Agencies and Local Authorities. Others can be influenced, in The Business Group's view, at a more local level. Either way, it is extremely important to make the best possible use of the information obtained and business people's views and ideas how make progress are welcomed at any time in any way. There are important issues facing local businesses; the most effective way forward needs to be established and the following actions are being planned to get the ball rolling.

The next steps

Copies of the findings will be sent to Sussex Enterprise, Federation of Small Businesses, Economic Development Depts of Wealden District and County Councils, EDEAL, Crowborough Business Assoc., Beacon Community College, Crowborough Town Council and Wealden Business Panel as well as the local police to establish what level of support they can offer local businesses.

Half day exhibitions of the schedules and the supporting information will be held at Crowborough town Hall in the New Year (i) on Wednesday, 22nd January 2003 from 10am until 2pm and (ii) an evening exhibition at the Town Hall on Thursday, 23rd January 2003 from 5 until 7pm

Local meetings of business people will be organised depending upon need. Additionally, Tony Slack is prepared to visit business people who completed the original questionnaire, or speak to them individually on the phone. Primarily, this is for those who cannot attend the exhibitions but feel they would like to contribute in some way to promoting and developing the local economy in Crowborough. However, contributions and attendance are welcome from all business people.

