

Littlehampton Business Forum Meeting

Notes of the Littlehampton Business Forum Meeting held in the New Millenium Chamber on Tuesday 26 May 2026.

1. Evacuation Procedures

2. Introductions

The group introduced themselves, 10 businesses were in attendance.

3. Guest Speaker – Julia Nixon from BIPC, British Libraries

Julia delivered an engaging and informative presentation on the wide range of support available through the Business and Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC). The service supports both new and established businesses, helping them at every stage of their journey.

BIPC Sussex operates across 36 libraries in the area, with specialist teams based at the Worthing and Crawley branches. These expert teams offer valuable guidance on a variety of key business areas, including:

- Accountancy and financial planning
- Grant search and funding support
- Website development and marketing advice
- Access to market research databases

Julia highlighted how the BIPC provides ongoing support at every stage of the business journey, from developing an initial idea through to building and growing a successful enterprise. She shared inspiring examples of businesses that have benefited from this support, including her own venture, Aqua-Artes Swim School, as well as DesignMadeNow, a handcrafted jewellery business, and Wool Shred, an innovative gardening product made from wool.

In addition to one-to-one support, the BIPC also offers:

- Free online seminars and workshops
- Access to free business books, guides, and digital resources
- Networking and learning opportunities

Free tickets for BIPC Sussex events are available via Eventbrite, making it easy for local businesses to access these valuable resources.

4. Business Guest Speaker – Jason Grove, Faith Telecom

Jason delivered an inspiring talk about his journey to starting a telecoms business in Littlehampton, driven by both professional insight and personal motivation. Having

spent six years working for BT, he recognised a gap in the market for a more tailored, attentive customer experience for local businesses.

Deeply passionate about Littlehampton, Jason is committed to supporting the local business community by helping organisations save time and money through practical, effective solutions. At the heart of his journey is a strong desire to build a secure and sustainable future for his family, particularly his three daughters, two of whom have additional needs.

Jason addressed the upcoming copper wire (PSTN) switch-off, stressing the importance for businesses to prepare for the transition to digital systems. Jason outlined the range of services his company offers, including:

- Payment systems
- Energy supply
- Connectivity solutions
- Telecoms services

He emphasised his commitment to supporting businesses by providing free, independent advice, helping them make informed decisions about their communication and operational needs.

5. Review of Progress and Action Plan 2026

The Littlehampton Business Forum (LBF), with support from Arun District Council (ADC), is developing a simple, anonymous questionnaire for local businesses. The forum aims to engage a sample of 20 businesses across a range of sectors, including hospitality, retail, creative industries, and health and wellbeing. The purpose is to determine whether trade is increasing, decreasing, or remaining stable. No individual business data will be shared publicly; instead, the findings will be used to identify overall trends, such as how events may be impacting local businesses.

A member queried whether alternative methods of measuring footfall had been considered, such as Springboard. Both ADC and Littlehampton Town Council (LTC) confirmed that these options had been explored previously but were discounted due to cost.

6. New Website Sign up

LTC discussed supporting businesses to list their details on the Visit and/or Love Littlehampton websites. A member noted that the online form does not always function correctly. LTC will raise this issue with the website developers for investigation.

The distinction between the two websites was also outlined. LTC explained that Visit Littlehampton is primarily focused on promoting tourism and events, while Love Littlehampton highlights the local community and businesses.

A new digital badge is currently being developed for businesses by LTC to display on their own websites and social media pages. This will help strengthen online links and improve search engine optimisation (SEO). Businesses also expressed interest in contributing blog content to the Love Littlehampton website. LTC confirmed that this will be encouraged once more businesses are registered on the new platform.

7. eNewsletter

The LBF welcomes suggestions for newsletter themes, as well as contributions from members who would like to write their own articles. It was also noted that the social media pages have been renamed to the Sussex Independent Collective.

8. Loyalty Scheme Update and Museum Collaboration

The Business Forum discussed the idea of introducing a loyalty card scheme; however, this has been placed on hold due to the number of variables involved, which make it difficult to implement effectively. Instead, support is being offered to businesses interested in developing their own schemes.

The LBF is also collaborating with the museum to provide historical information that shop owners can share with their customers, helping to enhance the visitor experience.

9. Newsletter Promotion and Town Marketing

The ILBF requested support in promoting newsletter sign-ups, with ideas such as running competitions discussed as a potential incentive.

LTC highlighted the use of noticeboards across the town, including the potential for posters to help direct visitors between the seafront and the town centre. The Events Forum will also use major events, such as the Bonfire Parade, to promote town centre businesses.

To make better use of limited display space, upcoming events will be featured on a single, generic poster for use in shop windows.

10. Events

The Christmas Light Switch-On event is scheduled for 21 November, and the LBF is planning a series of complementary activities. These could include late-night shopping on Thursday, an extension of the opening hours of the Friday market, and a programme of Saturday events hosted in local shops. Activities could range from arts and crafts to books and literature, as well as wellbeing-focused sessions. LBF would like more businesses to sign up and get involved.

A query was raised regarding the possibility of hosting a Christmas Market in the town. LTC explained that this option has been explored previously but was considered to be costly. While it will not be pursued this year, it is being considered as a potential project for next year. LTC will also be making contact with other organisations experienced in delivering similar events to explore options further.

Road closures for Surrey Street and Beach Road to facilitate events during the Christmas period were discussed; however, this would not be approved by West Sussex County Council, as previous applications have also been unsuccessful. LTC confirmed that it was seeking permission to close East Street, as had been planned the previous year.

A suggestion was raised to introduce a Christmas window competition in the town to help increase footfall, potentially supported by a themed trail. LTC noted that this initiative had been run in the past but was discontinued due to low business participation. The prize previously offered was a donation to a charity selected by the winning business. It was agreed that LBF could revisit this idea, particularly as there are now more independent shops in the town, and explore interest by encouraging businesses to take part. It was also suggested that participating businesses could organise their own related events, for example, a bratwurst cook-off to further enhance engagement.

A further idea was proposed to invite tractors to run a trail through Littlehampton, similar to events held in Arundel and Rustington. However, ADC has raised concerns about the weight of tractors on the High Street, which would need to be addressed. An alternative option could be for the tractors to follow a route around the town centre, and this is something LBF will investigate further.

Meet the Maker events will be promoted via social media, and businesses are encouraged to get involved to help showcase and champion these activities.

11. Digital Marketing Training

LBF have arranged a series of digital marketing training events.

These are:

- Tuesday 1st September 6pm to 8pm @venue to be confirmed
- Wednesday 16th September 6pm to 8pm @ East Beach Cafe
- Wednesday 30th September 6pm to 8pm @ East Beach Cafe
- Wednesday 14th October 1pm to 2.30pm - Ben's afternoon session featuring how to launch on TikTok shop and email marketing @venue to be confirmed
- Tuesday 28th October 6pm to 8pm @ East Beach Cafe

12. Town Centre Safety

LBF highlighted the importance of town centre businesses using the DISC app to report any incidents. Reporting concerns helps build accurate statistics, which in turn influence police response levels. If crimes or antisocial behaviour go unreported, it may appear that there are no issues in the area, leading to resources being directed elsewhere where reporting is higher. It was also asked whether Littlehampton Marina falls within the Town Centre boundary for DISC; ADC will investigate this. For

businesses located outside the boundary, incidents can be reported using the ADC app.

13. Cleansing

The cleanliness of the Town Centre and the areas requiring further attention was discussed. Concerns were raised about the tree outside Peacocks, which requires cutting back as sap is dripping onto the shop signage. Issues of chewing gum and graffiti in the same area were also highlighted. ADC advised that they were aware of the issues. A suggestion was made to report issues individually through the ADC app, rather than one person reporting multiple issues, as separate reports are more likely to result in a faster response.

It was also noted that rubbish levels have increased following recent events in the town and due to market traders. ADC confirmed that responsibility for waste management in these instances lies with the event organisers and market operators, who should ensure they clean up after themselves.

The placement of bins outside South Terrace was also discussed, with consideration given to whether there is a more suitable storage area, as their current position on the pavement detracts from the visual appeal for visitors.

14. ADC/LTC Updates

For Armed Forces Day on 27 June, a number of town centre businesses will be offering discounts to those in uniform. LTC has asked to be informed of any offers so they can be promoted via their website and social media channels. There will also be comperes present on the day who can help highlight these offers during the event.

Additionally, a series of themed summer events will take place in the High Street every Wednesday throughout August. LTC would welcome input from businesses on how they may wish to get involved and encourages this information to be shared with other local businesses.

The themes are as follows:

- Victorians
- Anime Street
- Dragons
- Animals/Sea

ADC reported that improvements have been made to the lighting in the alleyway next to Peacocks, with a new LED light installed to provide a better spread of illumination. They are also liaising with Enevero to design and install additional lighting along the entire length of the alleyway to further enhance visibility and safety.

ADC highlighted that funding is available to support art projects and additional wayfinding within the town. Businesses and stakeholders are encouraged to put forward any ideas that could benefit from this funding by end of May

ADC also noted the availability of a grant scheme that supports businesses at various stages of development. Some grants are limited to specific streets and can be used for improvements such as repairs, shutters, and signage. Businesses are encouraged to explore the scheme to understand what support is available to them.

One-to-one business support is also offered as part of this programme. Further details can be found on the ADC website: www.arun.gov.uk/leap/

Since the beginning of April, 40 applications have been submitted across the Arun area.

AOB

Concerns were raised regarding the forthcoming increase in business rates set by the government, as well as the potential removal of Small Business Rate Relief. ADC confirmed that letters have been sent to businesses outlining these changes, and further information is available on the ADC website.

Night-time security in relation to public houses in the town was discussed, including whether an increased police presence may be beneficial. LBF suggested that further discussions could take place with the Business Crime Reduction Partnership.

The reputation of the town was discussed, with a general consensus that businesses should continue to work collaboratively to promote Littlehampton across various social media platforms as an attractive destination. It was emphasised that the town is a safe and enjoyable place to visit, and that efforts should be made to communicate and promote this message more widely