

Littlehampton Business Forum Meeting

Notes of the Littlehampton Business Forum Meeting held in the New Millenium Chamber on Tuesday 25 August 2026.

1. Evacuation Procedures

2. Introductions

The group introduced themselves, eight businesses were in attendance.

3. Guest Speaker – Julia Edge, Littlehampton Museum Curator

Julia Edge spoke about the Museum's 100th anniversary in 2028 and how a new lottery funded project will help develop a solid foundation for the future. This will help transform the collection and is due to run until 2029.

Findings after a social history review showed that half the current collection had no direct links to Littlehampton and a community consultation in 2024 highlighted a need to better reflect the diversity of the town. The museum will be working closely with the community and are asking for help from businesses to help identify groups, communities and the personal experiences of people who live and work in Littlehampton. A group of volunteers have been recruited to record oral histories, and a consultant has been commissioned to further explore this where collections can be stored. An example Julia shared was five object groups with the forum which included 434 model boats, 30 cutlery items, 85 vinyl records and 159 tech items. The museum would like thoughts on dispersal of these and any thoughts on those who might benefit.

4. Business Guest Speaker – Andrei Maracine, Dumas Partners

Andrei, co-founder of Dumas Partners spoke about their new advice and accountancy firm which focuses on building businesses and creating culture. The business was sited in a historic building in East Street.

Dumas Partners approach finance from a different angle recognising that alongside this people often need creative paths and support to achieve goals. Start, Run, Grow was mentioned as a model with Dumas Partners seeing themselves as a finance partner for the long term, with the view being that their successes come from helping others succeed. They offer pro bono advice for two businesses a month.

Plans were outlined for the remaining space within the historic building to be transformed into an art gallery, featuring resident artist Leigh-Anna Barber Corbett. The venue will host exhibitions, events, networking opportunities and a range of courses. They will be working with schools and art colleges and asked the forum for any ideas to help bring the building to life.

Dumas Partners ambition is to create something Littlehampton is proud of, helping tourism and creating culture in the community.

5. Review of Progress and Action Plan 2026

Arun District Council (ADC) updated the forum on a new business e-form currently in development which will be used to monitor how businesses are performing over time. This will go out to selected businesses across varying sectors and areas in town. The form asks for monthly figures with each month feeding into a main overview to give an idea on how business in town are doing. ADC explained the form does not ask for identification and is kept broad for this reason. Feedback was asked on the level of detail in regards to sharing a percentage increase/decrease in turnover and the general consensus was that everyone was happy to share the information.

Julia Nixon from British Libraries suggested that footfall would be a better metric to use in their case rather than turnover. ADC would create a question to cover this. Daina from Daina's Art Studio said that for her type of business it would not be a straightforward comparison. It was confirmed there will be a space on the form where people can write additional content. A link will be shared.

The forum discussed the Love and Visit websites, with a member highlighting the challenge of selecting an appropriate business category for his unique business. Littlehampton Town Council (LTC) advised that the listing categories are currently under review and confirmed that support will be available to businesses once this process is complete.

Rich explained that there were plans to create a Meet the Makers initiative which aims to increase town centre footfall by encouraging businesses to host engaging, experience-led events that connect customers with local products, skills, and creativity. For example, a café could run a cooking demonstration while showcasing and selling related ingredients, coffee, or speciality products. The makers could be poets, musicians, authors. Julia Nixon mentioned that Chris Hare will be visiting Sussex libraries this winter.

Venues and local businesses will be encouraged to host and manage their own events, providing space and overseeing logistics while creating unique experiences that reflect their brand and audience. Makers will lead workshops, talks, and exhibitions, with a matchmaking event available to help connect creatives with venues. A call for Makers will launch in September. An onboarding toolkit will collect key event details, including event name, date and time, ticket fee, location, images, and web links. LTC asked whether there were any dates yet and suggested that the museum could be a location.

LBF would like to work with Littlehampton Museum to explore ways to bring heritage information to businesses to enhance the visitor experience.

Business welcome booklets are now available for new businesses from Bah Humbug and are also available on Love Littlehampton website

<https://www.lovelittlehampton.co.uk/app/uploads/sites/5/2026/08/BusinessWelcomePack.pdf>

Businesses were encouraged to share the Arcade Bookshop's upcoming October Book Festival on their own social media pages and highlighted the strong, supportive business community in Littlehampton.

The forum discussed the Halloween event which will be run by the shops in The Arcade. The chair reminded that businesses can apply for Event Support Funding from LTC. Sam from Magpie's and Butterflies asked whether this covered decorations and was signposted to contact the LTC Events Manager to discuss.

The Christmas planning meeting will be held on the September 23 at 6pm at The Menu in East Street. It was suggested by a forum member that the Friday market organiser be invited. It was understood that the market organiser is already working on a later opening of the market.

The forum then discussed the impact of the Friday Market on footfall for businesses across the town. A member suggested that relocating some stalls closer to East Street could help draw more visitors to that end of the High Street. A Forum Ambassador encouraged businesses with concerns to speak directly with the market organiser, Andy, who is generally willing to accommodate requests where possible.

An update was given on the LBF's Autumn Training Programme, which will provide a series of free workshops on topics including marketing, business development, TikTok Shop, and email marketing. Taking place throughout September and October at East Beach Café and open to businesses from across the local area to encourage wider networking opportunities. Julia Nixon confirmed she would signpost her business support clients to the training and promote Dumas Partners' offer of two free business support sessions per month. ADC also highlighted its free one-to-one business support service and the Business Growth Hub WhatsApp group, which provide additional support for local businesses.

The Forum discussed concerns around town centre safety following several significant incidents and reports of anti-social behaviour on Saturday evening. While the police were contacted, members noted that officers did not attend in person. ADC highlighted the use of the DISC reporting system alongside reporting incidents to the police, as businesses can record instances where reports were made but no police attendance followed. These reports are sent directly to the Business Crime Reduction Partnership (BCRP) Manager, who works closely with the police and local businesses. A Forum Ambassador noted that similar challenges are being experienced in other nearby streets and suggested this reflects wider national pressures on police resources.

Rich raised the possibility of introducing a town warden scheme in Littlehampton, similar to the model used in Bognor Regis. ADC provided further information on the associated costs and advised that the Council would not directly employ a third-party warden. Instead, any scheme would need to be managed and funded by the Littlehampton Business Forum. It was noted that the costs could be significant, including recruitment, training, uniforms, equipment, and salary expenses. The Ambassadors also reported that they had recently met with MP Alison Griffiths, who is exploring whether any potential funding streams or grants may be available to help support the introduction of such a scheme.

Concerns were raised about cleansing standards in the town centre. ADC and LTC advised that Biffa had fallen behind with jet washing schedules due to the recent bin rollout programme but had now resumed cleaning operations. The lower section of the High Street was cleaned during the week, and further work, including gum removal from pavements is on the list to be completed. ADC also reported ongoing issues with blocked drains. Although West Sussex County Council (WSCC) initially advised that inspections found no action was required, ADC later discovered that several drains were too heavily blocked to allow effective jet washing. Both ADC and LTC have raised the issue again with WSCC and are awaiting action through the new Highways Rangers initiative to resolve the problem.

A Forum Ambassador also highlighted the importance of businesses taking pride in the appearance of the town by keeping their shopfronts clean and well maintained, noting that this can play an important role in improving the overall look and feel of the town centre.

6. ADC/LTC Updates

LTC explained that a new business survey had been developed with support from the Business Forum, to gather feedback from local businesses on training and support needs, events and engagement opportunities, town centre initiatives, safety and crime prevention, and any challenges businesses may be facing. The findings will help shape future business support and activity in the town and will take 5 to 10 minutes to fill out.

A discussion about doing a Christmas window display competition resulted in it not being supported.

ADC reported positively on the continued growth of the local business community, highlighting the number of new businesses opening across Littlehampton. Recent additions include a dog grooming business, a tackle shop, a carpet and flooring retailer offering rugs and blinds, the expansion of a local beauty boutique, and a new dental surgery in Beach Road. ADC welcomed this investment in the town and noted

the positive impact these businesses will have on the local economy and high street offer.

ADC provided an update on business grant funding, advising that 77 grant applications had been received, with between 10 and 15 successful applications from the Littlehampton area. Funding remained available within the grant scheme, and businesses are encouraged to explore the opportunity through information published in the ADC newsletter.

Members were advised that utility companies are expected to resume street works shortly, with works anticipated outside Bonmarché. ADC explained that a system is in place requiring utility companies to fund replacement paving to ensure materials are restored on a like-for-like basis following excavation works. Updates were also provided on planned improvements to lighting in the alleyway near Peacocks, with a cost of approximately £10,000 and subject to landowner permissions. There was brief discussion around the potential provision of power points within the town centre.

Heather Allen, Economy Officer at ADC explained that she will be taking up a one-year secondment within the Council's IT team and will therefore be leaving her current role in October. The Forum thanked Heather for her support and contributions, and ADC confirmed that a suitable replacement is in place to continue attending and supporting the Business Forum.

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Rich encouraged businesses to get more involved in the organisation by becoming Forum Ambassadors. Businesses interested in contributing and helping to strengthen connections across the town were encouraged to come forward and spread the word about the opportunity.