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Anita,

My understanding is that the visitor information provision is now located in multiple small business and organisations in and around the town where footfall is higher making them geographically far more accessible and the service more effective. This action certainly mitigates any loss of tourist information service from the old Look & Sea Centre. Also this alteration has the added benefit of signposting and bringing visitors to Littlehampton directly into supporting business establishments. I understand that Harbour Lights Café are also hosting tourist information services and are currently liaising with Arun District Council on this aspect as they remain open to host this and assist with the towns tourist information as required.

The “exhibition” was originally around the wider Littlehampton harbour as I said in my earlier email (to be re-provided shortly) it was aged and original dating back some 20 + years. It was very dated / aged and so could not be considered to be any way near up to the modern standard now demanded and required in order to attract tourists and visitors. The upper floor space was used for other exhibitions at times but again since closure those using it will have located to other venues that exist in the town. I have been unable to identify any evidence to confirm that there is any shortage of community use space within Littlehampton.

In speaking to colleagues regarding the old centre it is clear that anecdotal comments received from visitors indicated that the river and sea views were are high on the 'wish list' for visitors to a seaside town. This demand was met by access to the tower to admire the stunning views. The old operators used to charge for access. The current leaseholder proposes for public access to remain to the look out tower and he has no proposals to charge for access so this can only be regarded as an improvement on the past operation to this important aspect of the premises.

Paul Broggi MCIOB

Property, Estates & Facilities Manager

Property, Estates & Facilities Department

Technical Services

Arun District Council

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

Hi Paul,

There was another query I have just thought of regarding the previous use of the site. Can you advise what happened to the exhibition and the tourist information site? Do you know if any of it has been relocated elsewhere or moved within the tower area? The agent did say some of the Tourist info use has been retained. Do you know how this works? Is it just the provision of leaflets? The viewing tower visitor attraction is to remain and is excluded from the application, but it would be useful to know if entry will be charged and available from within the café?

Thanks

Anita

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

Any chance of a chat at some point re: harbour lights planning application? I have included my thoughts below which I would like to discuss.

Prior to the current leaseholder taking on the lease the entire premises it was leased to Look & Sea Ltd, a charity, so it was not under ADC control and management and this has been the case since the building was constructed circa 1999 / 2000.

I wanted to stress the business viability issue here which has just been compounded by the Covid 19 situation. The present leaseholder currently has four cafes under lease, all of which are closed due to the national pandemic issues. The leaseholder has made a substantial investment and commitment in these premises in the Town and in doing so has accepted and is paying a full commercial rent for the entire premises. If the leaseholder is unable to generate sufficient revenue from the upper floors then it is commercial fact that the ground floor business will be unable to sustain rent at the current lease level. A very successful café in this location, trading to its maximum potential, may be able to sustain an annual rent circa £25K to £30K at the absolute maximum.

As stated above the premises beforehand were not under ADC direct control or management and the premises were leased out. It is therefore difficult for me to accurately comment on their use but it is my understanding in terms of revenue lettings that the use of rooms was infrequent. The upper floors are divided into smaller rooms making them less attractive and interaction with the ground floor has always proved difficult. One thing that is completely clear is that the upper floor past use was not commercially sustainable, directly evidenced by the demise of the last premises operator (Look & Sea Ltd). Any repeat of this must be avoided as a further empty unviable commercial premises will be to the detriment of Littlehampton town. Importantly here it needs to be noted that the demise of the previous operator (Look & Sea Ltd) occurred even when running a popular and very busy café on the ground floor. This past business failure clearly evidences that the correct future use of the upper floors plays a very significant role here. Ensuring correct use and revenue generation from the upper floors is considered critical in order to secure the long term commercial viability of the whole leased demise, including Harbour Lights Café business. It is my belief that the current leaseholder is acutely aware of this and recognises the need for additional revenue income in order to ensure they have a viable lease operation. Successfully securing the current requested change of use will provide the leaseholder with this opportunity along with all year round employment for local people. The leaseholder has given a commitment that the current lookout tower will remain accessible to the public. Therefore this tourist attraction and interest draw will remain in Littlehampton. It should also be noted that access to the lookout tower to view the surroundings and harbour was one of the biggest draws for these premises previously and so this aspect of the premises will remain, even with the proposed change of use.

In the event that this current planning application fails then there should be no doubt that the whole centre will be at risk of closing once again.

I do not believe that there is any evidence to suggest that the town currently lacks usable community space. In fact one could argue that there is plenty of alternative meeting space including, The Body Shop, Dove Lodge, various good quality halls such as the Guide Hall in Duke Street and of course Littlehampton Town Council whom have a range of public meeting / group meeting space available.

Prior to the Mr Barnes taking on the lease the premises was leased to a charity, Look & Sea Ltd, so it was not under ADC control and this has been the case since the building was constructed circa 1999 / 2000. The charity however went out of business as the establishment was commercially unviable. Importantly it should be noted that this unviability included running a very busy and successful café on the ground floor. The upper floors were in essence a "visitor attraction" although the reality is that these were aged dating back to the original construction and so were not up to standard.

In operating for only a short period the leaseholder has taken time and effort to engage with many local groups and has set up large tables in the ground floor café / restaurant where local groups already now hold many weekly meetings at no charge and so community group use is already very successfully occurring.

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