Appendix H I

Full Council November 2026

High Street Rental Auctions

Introduction

Please find below some information from David Dennis, who, as part of his contract with the Town Council, provides advice on planning matters.

Considerations

What can Bexhill Town Council say about this? Do we want any of the premises as extra office space? Do we support the powers to obtain these premises for other uses? Would the powers to effectively 'seize' these properties lead to more shops and if so, then would they be financially unsustainable and lead to excess competition thus ruining other small businesses. Competition can be a good thing, but too much can be ruinous. It is hard to think of reasons why we might get involved as a special case for BTC alone.

Survey findings

Rother District Council (RDC) commissioned Edeal Enterprises to audit commercial premises in Bexhill town centre in spring 2026. The survey recorded 439 premises, of which 55 were vacant (12.5%) and 384 occupied. Vacancies were concentrated particularly around London Road, Sackville Road, Sea Road and Devonshire Road.

Council action and consultation

In February 2026, RDC Cabinet authorised preparatory work, including a survey estimated to cost £5,000. Cabinet considered the survey findings on 14 September 2026. On 23 October, RDC announced a public consultation on possible use of High Street Rental Auction (HSRA) powers in Bexhill town centre. The consultation closes on Friday 27 November 2026.

What the proposed powers mean

HSRA powers may enable a council, where statutory conditions are met, to arrange the letting of persistently vacant commercial premises. The 55 vacant units identified in the survey are not automatically eligible for an auction: each property would need to meet the legal requirements. No final decision to adopt the powers has yet been made; RDC is expected to review consultation responses before reporting back to Cabinet.

Next Steps

- Importance of the Edeal audit and can RDC provide any more detailed information form this including premises locations and any breakdown of vacancy duration?
- Ask RDC how the scheme would complement the Bexhill Neighbourhood Board's town-centre regeneration work and what happens after consultation.

Appendix H I

Primary links

RDC consultation: https://www.rother.gov.uk/consultations/high-street-rental-auctions/

RDC announcement (23 October 2026): https://www.rother.gov.uk/news/public-asked-for-views-on-long-term-empty-shops-plan/

Cabinet report and survey appendix (14 September 2026):
https://rother.moderngov.co.uk/ieIssueDetails.aspx?IId=11066&Opt=3