

Agenda Item No:

Report No:

Report Title: Strategic Tourism Vision & Action Plan 2015 -2018

Report To: Cabinet

Date: 29th September 2014

Cabinet Member: Cllr Tom Jones

Ward(s) Affected: All

Report By: Nazeya Hussain, Director of Business Strategy and Development

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Purpose of Report:

To set out a new approach to delivering visitor information services across the District in line with changing visitor expectations. To seek approval of a three year Strategic Tourism Vision and Action Plan, which sets out LDC plans to ensure we remain a vibrant and attractive destination for future visitors.

Officers Recommendation(s):

- 1** To approve the Strategic Tourism Vision and Action Plan 2015 - 2018
 - 2** To authorise Officers to develop a more detailed and phased action programme and report back to Cabinet in March 2015.
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REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Drivers for Change

- 1.1** Lewes District Council has a strong and vibrant visitor economy, with spending in excess of £50 million in 2012. Our strong identity as a unique destination with internationally renowned attractions and stories including Glyndebourne; Charleston and the Bloomsbury Set; Tom Paine and the Rights of Man in Lewes town; all place us in a strong position to build for the future.
- 1.2** Visitor expectations are rising and their lifestyles are changing. Advances in technology, mobile devices and social media have transformed the way in which people look for inspiration on where to go, how they plan, when they

book and how they share their experiences and opinions with their friends and colleagues:

Technology

- 1.3 The fast changing pace of technology is having a major impact on tourism. The world has moved on in the last five years with around 90% of UK adults now using the internet and 83 million mobile subscribers in 2013. The key signifier is now how people are using technology, not who uses it. Whilst younger consumers are more likely to “live” online, older consumers use it for more practical activities.

Mobile Devices

- 1.4 Smartphone penetration in the UK reached 72% (86% of the under 35's and 42% of the over 55's) in 2013. Tablet ownership is currently at 51% (having grown from 16% in 2011). The top mobile searches include shopping, travel and weather.
- 1.5 This now creates a new and significant mobile advertising environment. This is increasingly the way people expect to find information now and in the future, to find free Wi-Fi hotspots out and about wherever they go. The growth in mobile devices makes non-mobile enabled websites redundant in the travel sector. Phone Apps are beginning to redefine how we do business and is anticipated to increase over the next five years. Two-thirds of smartphone users regularly use dedicated Apps.

Social Media

- 1.6 Social media has now gone mainstream. Facebook has 310 million daily unique visitors with 63% of the market share. Twitter by comparison has 22 million daily unique visitors but is rising very fast. Social media is fully incorporated within many people's lives especially families and pre-families. Around 44% of those over 55 years of age use some form of social media. Different segments use social media in different ways for travel and tourism:
- Pre-families: emotive inspiration and education
 - Young families: discounts, packages, ease of doing things
 - Older families: bonding, sharing, nostalgia
 - Empty nesters: how to get the most out of the trip, learning

Opportunities for Growth

- 1.7 There are opportunities to grow the sector and although our current tourism, arts and culture offer is strong, we currently have a traditional and relatively static approach to supporting, marketing and delivering our offer. The action plan outlined in Appendix I shows ways of we can work more efficiently and

effectively over the next three years, using available resources to modernise the service in line with visitor demand and expectations.

Working in Partnership: South Downs National Park Authority

- 1.8 The Council already has an excellent relationship with the SDNPA working on their behalf on planning regulations in Lewes; we were involved in the development of their Management Plan and our Parks department works closely with them on shared areas of responsibility. Officers have been involved in the new visual identity and branding for the National Park and our current Tourist Information Centre's serve as an unofficial SDNPA hub, with information leaflets, maps and walk guides.
- 1.9 Officers have already started working with SDNPA on the pilot of five new Visitor Information Points in key locations and National Park gateways across our district. These bespoke VIP's will be the first to be delivered in the National Park using their new visual identity and branding together with the logos from LDC and SDNPA.

INFORMATION

- 2.1 Tourism is a key component of the economy of our District:
- (a) There were an estimated 240,000 overnight trips to the District in 2012 which resulted in 941,000 visitor nights and visitor spending in excess of £50 million. This was an increase of 4% compared to 2011.
 - (b) Around 83% of these visitors live in the UK and the rest were from overseas.
 - (c) In addition there were more than 2.9 million day trips which generated visitor expenditure of more than £90 million.
 - (d) Collectively this supported nearly 2,400 jobs spread across a wide range of businesses which accounts for over 9% of all jobs in Lewes District.¹
- 2.2 In 2012 the Council produced *Building a Brighter Future*, its regeneration strategy for Lewes District Council 2012 – 2015 highlighting the Council's five priorities for achieving growth. 'Welcoming Visitors' priority with three broad targets² provides the foundation for this Vision and Action Plan.
- 2.3 In 2012, Matthews Associates were commissioned to undertake a Visitor Service Review, finalised in March 2013 which also supports this Vision.

¹ Economic Impact Study, Tourism South East, 2012

² Increasing our visitor stay and spend; higher levels of visitor satisfaction and return visits and greater awareness of our District amongst business and holiday visitors [Page 3 of 6](#)

- 2.4 In summary the attached Vision builds on our 'One District, One Council' approach reviewing the current TIC provision based in Lewes, Seaford and Peacehaven into a pro-active and more comprehensive district-wide approach.
- 2.5 It explores whether our fixed Visitor Information provision and service could be re-located in Southover House reception.
- 2.6 This will embed our Visitor Information firmly within our One District, One Council aim of offering better, speedier and more efficient service where our residents and visitors alike will be able to do all their business with the Council in one go.
- 2.7 This Vision highlights the way we can work more efficiently and effectively over the next 3 to 4 years, using available resources to modernise the service in line with visitor demand and expectation.
- 2.8 Web-based digital marketing should be the prominent visitor destination, event and attractions vehicle, complemented by a limited and targeted printing of maps, visitor guides and event information to enable visitors to self-serve as they chose, as well as helping those who cannot or chose not to.

The Vision

- 2.9 By 2018, our Vision is to have a distinctive, well branded marketed visitor, arts and culture offer where leisure and business visitors come to the area, confident of the choice available and quality of provision.
- 2.10 We will work more closely with our tourism, arts and cultural partners, seeking external funding and support from businesses to achieve this.
- 2.11 By 2018, the value of tourism to the local economy will have grown, on average, by 3% per year, generating an additional 600 jobs, contributing to the wider Regeneration Strategy to improve the reputation of the district as a place for investment, to live, study and to visit.
- 2.12 Lewes District Council's primary role will become that of an enabler, supporter, facilitator and advocate of the tourism sector and wider visitor economy.
- 2.13 Our district has some incredible tourism, arts, heritage and cultural assets. With good access, stunning rural settings, historic towns and villages with a coastline where the South Downs meets the sea. There are unique attributes with stories which have global recognition.
- 2.14 This Vision sees our visitor economy support function reducing its public funding requirement and transitioning towards a more business-led, public-sector supported function aiming to deliver wider economic growth throughout the year and bringing benefit to local residents.

Thematic Action Plan

2.15 The Action Plan (set out in detail in Appendix I) is built around six themes:

Visitor Information Provision

How key information about the District's visitor offer is collected and disseminated to visitors and residents alike.

Online Destination Marketing

How the District and its tourism assets are promoted and marketed to both visitors and residents alike

Events & Attractions

How events and attractions can be effectively supported through the Council's position as a strategic leader

Local Business Engagement

How the Council can effectively engage with and help support the wider tourism industry

Wider Partnerships

How the Council can effectively engage with and work with strategic and tactical partners and stakeholders

Research & Intelligence

How the Council can support the wider tourism industry through essential research and intelligence gathering

2.16 The Action Plan is designed to cover the next three years from 2015 to 2018 working towards the longer term Vision.

2.17 In the current economic climate and era of fast moving technological changes, the Action Plan should be treated as a living document and periodically updated and rolled forward in partnership with the stakeholders.

Financial Appraisal

3 The net budget for delivering Tourism activity in 2014/2015 is £255,600. This comprises the following four core components:

	£
Tourism strategy, marketing, etc	68,200
Lewes Tourist Information Centre	93,900
Seaford Tourist Information Centre	77,900
Contribution to Peacehaven Information Office	15,600
Total	255,600

- 4 Adopting the Strategic Tourism Vision and Action Plan 2015 – 2018 does not in itself have a financial implication for the Council. A full financial appraisal will take place when officers develop a more detailed and phased action programme, and this will be incorporated within the follow up report to Cabinet in March 2015.

Legal Implications

- 4 The Legal Services Department has made the following comments:

None arising directly from this report

Sustainability Implications

- 5 Questionnaire submitted on the 15 August, awaiting a response

Risk Management Implications

- 6 I have completed a risk assessment.

10.1 The following risks will arise if the recommendations are not implemented, and I propose to mitigate these risks in the following ways: (to be completed)

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Tourism service continues to be delivered in the traditional static way.	High	High	Improvement of website, development of a social media marketing campaign

10.2 The following risks will arise if the recommendations are implemented, and I propose to mitigate these risks in the following ways (to be completed)

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Publicity surrounding the potential of re provisioning the TIC service	High	Medium	Prepare a Comms strategy expressing the need for change.

Equality Screening

- 11 Screening submitted on the 15 August.