

Agenda Item No: 9 **Report No:** 66/17
Report Title: Strategic Tourism Vision & Action Plan 2015 -2018
Report To: Scrutiny Committee **Date:** 23 March 2017
Cabinet Member: Cllr Tony Nicholson – Cabinet Member for Customers and Partners
Ward(s) Affected: All
Report By: Phil Evans, Director of Tourism and Enterprise
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Purpose of Report:

To better understand LDC's Strategic Tourism Vision & Action Plan 2015 -2018 (agreed by Cabinet 29 September 2014) and the role of Tourist Information Service within this

To consider role of LDC in relation to tourism and, in particular, the part this plays in delivering economic sustainability

To make relevant recommendations in light of the above

Officers Recommendation(s):

- 1 That the Scrutiny Committee consider the report and agree any recommendations it would wish to make to either the Cabinet Member for Customers and Partners or to Cabinet regarding the Council's policy direction in relation to tourism.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 1 The Scrutiny Committee agreed at its meeting on 12 January 2017 to request a scrutiny report regarding the Council's role in relation to Tourism. When agreeing the scope of this work, the committee asked that particular consideration be given to
 - 1.1 LDC's relationship with SDNPA;
 - 1.2 The promotion of sustainable transport in tourism;

- 1.3 The promotion of popular visitor attractions on the borders of district (eg. Bentley, Bluebell Railway etc);
 - 1.4 Future plans working with EBC and benefits of collaboration.
- 2 This report provides Members with information about the Council's tourism function and the progress that has been made against the Strategic Tourism Vision & Action Plan 2015 -2018

Information

- 3 The Strategic Tourism Vision 2015 – 2019 was developed in 2014 following a Visitor Service Review undertaken as part of LDC's Regeneration Strategy 2012 – 2015, which identified 'Welcoming Visitors' as one of LDC's five regeneration priorities.
- 4 It was planned as a phased 3 year action plan to create a foundation for a new approach to the delivery of our visitor information service across the district. This approach was linked to LDC's model of increasing opportunities for the customer to self-serve and to provide a more pro-active model of visitor information in line with changing visitor expectations.

It should be noted that since the Vision was written the tourism market has changed. The recent decline in the value of the UK currency has highlighted the opportunities for tourism growth, given the likely increased demand for inbound tourism to the UK combined with incentives for staycation breaks amongst UK residents in 2017-18.

- 5 The Strategic Tourism Vision was adopted by full Council on 29 September 2014 and the implementation of the Action Plan agreed in March 2015.
- 6 The Action Plan is set out into six main areas:

- Visitor Information Provision
- Online Destination Marketing
- Events & Attractions
- Local Business Engagement
- Wider Partnerships
- Research & Intelligence

Progress

- 7 Action Plan Progress 2015/2016 (see Appendix 1)
- 8 Progress has been made in all of the identified six areas despite the challenges of a limited annual budget for Tourism (£17k to include website development and written copy, photography, printing, marketing and promotion, but excludes budget for TIC's or proportion of salary for Project Manager)
- 9 Notably, the move to online marketing only via Stay Lewes, Coast & Country our destination marketing website (www.staylewes.org), which was re-branded

and re-launched in 2015, has proved successful and good value. It is increasing its visitor numbers and attracting more advertisers to the website year on year. Twitter is reaching 5000 followers and page views on the website reached 75,000 in the summer season.

10 Relationship with South Downs National Park Authority

LDC has established good relationships with the Sustainable Tourism Officer and team at SDNPA. In the past two years we have worked in partnership on a number of successful small scale projects including four Visitor Information Points across the district, information maps at three railway stations and the provision of information and support for the Go South Downs pilot project, due for completion in 2017. We supported the production and research of a popular leaflet, Car Free Holidays around Lewes which was funded by SDNPA and further longer term projects are currently in discussion.

11 Promotion of Sustainable Transport

There is no specific strategic objective for promoting sustainable transport within the Vision, however the visitor website, TIC's and Artwave festival encourage the public to use public transport for visiting, and particularly in Lewes where traffic and parking are an issue. Maps, bus and train timetables are available in the TIC's and on the VIPs.

LDC's support for the Car Free holiday map and the Go South Downs pilot project and information maps in railway stations support the SDNPA Sustainable Transport Strategy.

12 Promotion of visitor attractions outside of the district

Both of the TIC's hold considerable literature and promotions for attractions and events outside of the district's boundaries to provide a comprehensive service to visitors and residents alike. This includes information on visitor attractions in Brighton, Wealden, Eastbourne and the local environs.

13 The Joint Transformation Programme with Eastbourne Borough Council will bring exciting new future operations and opportunities

- An increased capacity in the officer team, sharing expertise, experience and knowledge, which will protect and support the service;
- An increased strategic profile across the two areas;
- Joint working on new projects which could create new jobs;
- Increased promotion of Lewes and Eastbourne as complementary locations to visit, whilst maintaining their individual and distinct characters and features.
- And the recent decline in the value of the UK currency has highlighted the current market opportunities for tourism growth.

A full Cabinet Report on the **Future of Tourism in Lewes** has been scheduled for Cabinet in **September 2017**, which will identify in more detail the future operations and opportunities of sharing services with Eastbourne's Tourism and Enterprise Department.

Financial Appraisal

- 14** There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. As noted above, a full Cabinet Report on the Future of Tourism in Lewes is scheduled for September 2017 which will include details of any budgetary implications if service changes are proposed.

Legal Implications

- 15** Under article 6 of the council's constitution, it is a proper function of Scrutiny Committee to consider and make recommendations on the council's tourism vision and action plan (being a matter that has a direct bearing on the economic, social or environmental well-being of the district's residents) to the relevant policy-making body, in this case Cabinet or the designated Cabinet Member.

Lawyer consulted 13.03.17. Legal ref: 006163-LDC-OD.

Risk Management Implications

- 16** *(Please refer to the Checklist for Decision Makers under Risk Management Implications on how to complete this section of the report. This guidance provides five option statements that you can choose from.)*

Equality Screening

- 17** *(NOTE: Where appropriate, please remember to attach an Appendix to the Report which sets out details relating to the associated Equality Analysis).*

Background Papers

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Appendices

- 19** Strategic Tourism Vision and Action Plan update 2015/2016
Visitor Information Points – images and locations
Artwave Festival 2016 Impact Study