

Cabinet Meeting	
Meeting Date	Wednesday 8 July 2020
Report Title	Visitor Economy Framework Action Plan
Cabinet Member	Cllr Monique Bonney, Cabinet Member for Economy and Property
SMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director Regeneration
Head of Service	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing, Economy and Community Services
Lead Officer	Lyn Newton, Economy and Community Services Manager
Key Decision	No
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. To note the Visitor Economy Framework Action Plan and proposed consultation ahead of Cabinet endorsement in early autumn 2020

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report highlights the Visitor Economy Framework Action Plan which draws on primary and secondary research commissioned through independent consultants including surveys with visitors and non-visitors. Additional information has been collated from internal Officer and external tourism, leisure and hospitality sector workshops. A separate appendix details all actions including identifying ongoing work alongside short, medium and long-term actions. The Visitor Economy Framework 2018-2023 was adopted by the Council in 2017 and a budget of up to £250,000 was allocated from the shared business rate pool of which £100,000 has been drawn down to date.
- 1.2 The Council now wishes to consult on the current action plan ahead of committing resources. The timing is critical as the visitor economy emerges from the pandemic into what government is describing as a ten-year road to recovery.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Visitor Economy Framework Action Plan drafted prior to Covid-19 'lockdown' meant that the industry planned consultation launch in April 2020 was delayed. The purpose of the meeting was to 'sense check' the document, agree shared priority actions and identify industry leads where possible. With the exception of a key meeting in March with Faversham Town Council, at which an agreement in principle was reached to work collaboratively including the commitment to supporting of the Visit Swale web portal, further progress has been delayed as staff have been redeployed to respond to Covid-19. It is now proposed to engage

the industry over the summer period whilst businesses have a phased return ahead of the Council formally adopting the Visitor Economy Framework Action Plan in September 2020 when planning will need to take place for a new 'norm' visitor season in 2021.

- 2.2 The planning will include the allocation of resources including the balance of up to £150,000 budget to priority actions to 2023.

2 Proposals

Following working with the Economic Improvement and Recovery sub-group it is proposed that the Visitor Economy Framework Action Plan is shared internally and externally over the summer period to gain commitment to partnership working and inform resource allocation moving forward. It will also be necessary to monitor government announcements through Visit England and Visit Kent to ensure that Swale is well placed to take advantage of any emerging recovery initiatives and funding opportunities which are at this stage unknown. The government has announced a ten-year recovery plan which starts with 'baby steps' but there is limited detail at this stage to support key decisions at the local, county or regional level. For the Visitor Economy Framework Action Plan to be a success it is essential that there is shared ownership across different stakeholder groups as well as Council service units. A period of consultation over the summer will give an opportunity to both 'sense check' the current action plan as well as build in any emerging opportunities should they arise over this same period.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 It is advised that to ensure a collaborative response to both sector recovery post-pandemic and to build partnership that the proposal as outlined is the preferred option to build sector confidence and longer-term economic stability and growth. To do nothing would not be a sensible approach in a post pandemic environment where the visitor economy sector has been crushed.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The Visitor Economy Framework Action Plan has been developed through both an evidence base of research and surveys but also with internal and external workshops to begin a process of identifying and prioritising actions. It is now proposed to share internally and externally the key documentation to 'sense check' ahead of allocation of resources.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	<p>Priorities have been identified from the emerging Corporate Plan</p> <p>Priority 1 Building the right homes in the right places and supporting quality jobs for all</p> <p>1.6 Implement the Visitor Economy Framework to increase investment, address new visitor demands and grow the value of the sector to the Swale economy</p> <p>Priority 2 Investing in our environment and responding positively to global challenges</p> <p>2.3 Establish a special projects fund to provide much needed investment in the Brough's public realm and open spaces</p> <p>2.4 Recognise and support the local heritage to give people pride in the place they live and boost the local tourism industry</p> <p>Priority 3 Tackling deprivation and creating equal opportunities for everyone</p> <p>3.5 Promote wellbeing and enjoyment of life by signposting and encouraging a wide range of sporting, cultural and other leisure activities appropriate and accessible to each age group</p>
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>When the Framework was first agreed in 2017, £250,000 of funding was allocated from the shared business rate pool. To date, £100,000 of that funding has been drawn down.</p> <p>This is an ambitious set of actions that the Council will not be able to fund. Delivery will be dependent upon funding from other bodies.</p>
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	<p>Work within the visitor economy sector is non-statutory. Individual actions and projects would be costed and are subject to normal procurement rules.</p>
Crime and Disorder	<p>At this stage there are no known crime and disorder implications</p>
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	<p>The walking and cycling initiatives are likely to positively impact on air quality and reduce car emissions. Work to enhance open spaces should contribute to biodiversity net gains in addition to longer term improving air quality.</p>

Health and Wellbeing	Some project initiatives such as waling and cycling and other leisure activity will positively improve the individual's health and wellbeing as well as access to improved lifestyle choices through exercise, healthy eating and access to outdoor destinations (both free and paid for)
Risk Management and Health and Safety	At this stage there are no known risks, but individual projects and activities would be reviewed on a project by project basis
Equality and Diversity	At this stage, the Visitor Economy Framework Action Plan is too abstract with project ownership to be determined; where projects are to be taken forward by the Council an Equalities Impact Assessment will need to be undertaken
Privacy and Data Protection	There are no identified implications

7 Appendices

- 7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:
- Appendix I: (Swale Visitor Economy Framework Action Plan)
 - Appendix II: (Prioritised Actions)

8 Background Papers

None