

Policy and Development Review Committee

Meeting Date	Wednesday 17 January 2018
Report Title	Visitor Economy Framework
Cabinet Member	Cllr Mike Cosgrove, Cabinet Member for Regeneration
SMT Lead	Emma Wiggins
Head of Service	Charlotte Hudson
Lead Officer	Lyn Newton
Key Decision	Yes
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<p>1. That Policy and Development Review Committee consider the Visitor Economy Framework for 2018 – 2023 to be submitted to Cabinet on 7 February 2018</p>

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 That PDRC is asked to consider the Visitor Economy Framework for 2018 – 2023 which sets out six priorities to maximise the contribution of the visitor economy to Sittingbourne, Faversham and the Isle of Sheppey. A budget of £250,000 has been identified for delivery of the framework from the shared business rates pool with Kent County Council and that a request is made to release monies to support local delivery.
- 1.2 This high level framework seeks to increase the contribution of the visitor economy to Swale and support to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy through business growth and business rate retention.

2 Background

- 2.1 The difference between Tourism and a Visitor Economy Framework is that whilst tourism is a function of people's active interests and can be shaped and supported, a Visitor Economy Framework is the strategic leadership by the Council of the tourism industry and economy within a policy framework that enables stakeholders to fully play their part.
- 2.2 The premise driving this is that the Visitor Economy Framework creates economic as well as social benefit, and creates growth, employment and skills. The Framework is a cross Council activity that includes factors that will create a

multiplier effect on the visitor experience such as infrastructure, car parks, green space and the Council's large investment in leisure in Sittingbourne.

- 2.3 The visitor economy in Swale supports economic growth and creates employment in the tourism, leisure and hospitality sectors. The economic impact assessment (2015) shows that tourism continues to be one of the drivers of the local economy and supports sector sustainability. Tourism remains important to Swale economic growth (comparable to the health and social care sector) and is the fourth highest performing sector (after wholesale and retail; transport and storage and manufacturing).
- 2.4 Tourism is a long-standing corporate priority and the Council has invested in its open spaces seafronts and keeping the borough clean for both residents and visitors. Sector businesses are also being supported through bespoke tourism business support as well as access to the wider business support service. Alongside the £11,000 used to support the industry through Visit Kent projects and activities including the Visit Swale web portal, there are a range of corporate projects that support the Visitor Economy including enhancements at Minster Leas which has seen significant investment over recent years of £159,000 for resurfacing works, £124,000 for beach hut development and annual seasonal costs of £64,000. The investment in the regeneration of Sittingbourne will also see a wider cultural and leisure offer. The successful Stage 1 HLF bid to enhance Faversham Recreation Ground has secured £117,000 and could lead to an investment of £1.7m.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 We will have a Visitor Economy Framework with six key priorities
 - Identity, marketing and promotion
 - Infrastructure and connectivity
 - Public realm improvements
 - Sector support
 - Developing the cultural offer
 - Market segmentation and information management
- 3.2 The implementation of the Visitor Economy Framework will support a buoyant tourism, leisure and hospitality sector in Swale creating a more positive perception of place. The framework will provide a five year timeframe for place shaping and set out clear principles to help Swale achieve its potential in a global tourism economy as a visitor destination. The Borough will become a more prosperous place with distinctive identities and image that will help attract new inward investment, visitors and sustainable jobs. We will be measured on the numbers of jobs created, new accommodation providers and bed spaces with an increase in room occupancy, greater visitor satisfaction, strong industry and public sector partnerships characterised by sharper communication.

- 3.3 A budget of £250,000 from the shared business rates pool is identified for the five- year Visitor Economy Framework (2018-2023). It is proposed that in addition to the ECS Manager and the ECS Project Officer there will be a re-alignment of other officer resources of up to 2 FTE posts equating to £85,000 per annum to deliver against this Framework. This will be agreed by the Head of Service as part of the annual service planning together with continuing discussions with higher academic institutions continue with a view to securing tourism interns. Our approach will be to also seek match funding along with partnership funding for initiatives e.g. S106, Coastal Communities Fund, EU PROFIT) to provide additional leverage and resources for delivery.

- 3.4 Preliminary actions will include establishing a new baseline position through an Economic Impact Assessment (more commonly known as the Cambridge Model); industry leads are currently being identified from the three geographical areas whose role will be to develop area action plans. A Council led Officer Working Group will agree investment against the six priorities identified in the framework.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 Do nothing - this is not recommended given the current and future potential of sector growth and a contribution to the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan. Sector support is a corporate priority and the Council's desire to increase activity and industry performance.

- 4.2 Status Quo – there is currently no strategy in place and this is not recommended. There is opportunity to increase sector growth and make a contribution to the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan. Sector support is a corporate priority and there is a desire to increase activity and industry performance.

- 4.3 Other organisation – this is not recommended but the Council could consider passing the function to an external body. This is likely to require a start-up approach possibly including funding and capacity building and is not recommended.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 A cross authority officer workshop followed by an extensive period of industry consultation undertaken from May through to September 2017 through survey, focus groups and partnership meetings, 1 to 1 meetings, telephone calls and emails.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications

Corporate Plan	<p>A Borough To Be Proud Of – this priority theme focusses on the Council's aspirations for Swale as a physical place. In particular the following are relevant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A redeveloped town centre for Sittingbourne which acts as a catalyst for the wholesale regeneration of the town, fostering economic and cultural renewal • Delivery of smaller scale regeneration projects elsewhere in the Borough it improves the appearance and facilities of our towns and villages • A Borough which is noticeable, clean and well maintained, in which the natural and built environments are respected, conserved and enhanced for future generations • A Borough with a strong brand which is recognised nationally and internally for its advantageous business environment and for its wealth of visitor attractions <p>The relevant high-level objectives under this priority theme include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the Borough's economic and tourism offer • Keep Swale clean and tidy • Protect and improve the natural and built environments <p>A Community To Be Proud Of – this priority theme focuses on the Council's aspirations for the people of Swale. In particular the following are relevant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities across Swale which people work together to solve the issues that confront their local areas • A diverse, flourishing and well supported voluntary sector working to improve lives across the Borough <p>The relevant high-level objectives under this priority theme include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster economic growth and prosperity for all • Encourage active communities and support the voluntary sector <p>Use our influence to ensure local skills are matched to local jobs.</p>
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>Delivery of a five year action plan will include the need for industry leads to be identified, working groups and work programmes and priorities to be agreed collaboratively with the Council. The current tourism service has one 0.5 FTE (ECS Project Officer) and one 0.25 FTE (ECS Manager) and will be supported with up to an additional 2 FTE at an annual cost of £85,000 to manage the Council's investment of £250,000 and delivery of the Framework. The Head of Service will co-ordinate and steer an internal Officer Working Group where Council intervention and influence is needed</p>

	<p>to facilitate and support local action and stimulate growth.</p> <p>The Council is also looking to collaborate with higher education Kent through its tourism degree courses to acquire additional resources through its funded intern programme and for the life of the Visitor Economy Strategy. It is envisaged that funding of £250,000 from the shared business rates pool with Kent County Council is used for delivery of the framework. In addition, match funding and partnership funding will be sought. The sector contributes significantly to economic growth and jobs and in part contributes to the Council's Medium Term financial strategy which is based on business rate growth.</p>
Legal and Statutory	Provision for the section is not a statutory function of the local authority but does contribute to regeneration through place shaping. The economic impact assessment forms part of the Local Plan which is a statutory document.
Crime and Disorder	None identified at this stage but quality sought-after destinations support civic and community pride in place.
Environmental Sustainability	None identified at this stage but the VES links with other key strategic documents such as Green Grid Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan
Health and Wellbeing	Partnership delivery will be explored through existing partnership arrangements with new opportunities sought to promote healthier lifestyles both for resident communities and visitors. The Swale Green Grid Partnership will facilitate this
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage
Equality and Diversity	The Visitor Economy Framework will provide facilities and services directly and indirectly to residents and visitors but is high-level and does not focus on key attractions but destinations and themes (coast, country, marshland, heritage and events) in terms of place. Different services and facilities provided through the sector could have the potential of different impacts on groups with different characteristics; public sector projects would need to be assessed independently.
Privacy and Data Protection	Database preparation to support industry liaison and consultation with regard to the VES has been undertaken by the Consultant. The Council maintains principal point of contact with industry through the Visit Swale and social media messaging. The sector is being advised on future legislative challenges through commercial lawyers.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Visitor Economy Framework 2018-2023

8 Background Papers

Not applicable