

Report of the Strategic Director of Place to the meeting of Regeneration and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 27th April 2017

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Subject:

Tourism Consultation Update

Summary statement:

This report will provide an update on the Tourism Review and the Destination Management Plan consultation.

Steve Hartley
Strategic Director of Place

Portfolio:
Environment, Sport & Culture

Phil Barker
Assistant Director Sport and Culture
Phone: (01274) 432616
E-mail: phil.barker@bradford.gov.uk

Overview & Scrutiny Area:
Regeneration and Economy



1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report will provide an update and inform on the Tourism Review and Destination Management Plan (DMP) that has undergone a public consultation. It will provide the recommendation of the Tourism Review and the findings of the DMP and feedback from the consultation.

2 BACKGROUND OF TOURISM REVIEW (APPENDIX 1)

- 2.1 The Tourism Service currently has transitional funding for Visitor Information Centres (VICs) until 2017. This will have a significant impact on the service putting the frontline information service at risk and possible closure of some of the VICs.
- 2.2 The service leads on key strategic relationships with tourism agencies such as Visit Britain, Visit England, Welcome to Yorkshire and other private and public sector organisations ensuring that policies and strategies align with culture and tourism strategies.
- 2.3 External consultants Team Tourism were commissioned to undertake a review of the Tourism Service. This provided a report to provide a basis for its future development and operations. The consultants presented the findings of the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20th January 2016.
- 2.4 In reviewing activity and reducing budgets, consideration has been given to a number of factors including:
- **Changes in consumer demand** – the advent of the internet and prevalence of smart phones provides visitors with many alternative sources of visitor information.
 - **Commercial opportunities** – There are some opportunities within the VICs to improve the retail offer and provide other commercial services (e.g. advertising, left luggage, and a Post Office counter in Haworth). However, these are limited and only likely to make a marginal contribution (up to 20-25% maximum) to running costs.
 - **‘Taking Information to the Visitor’** – via pop-up or mobile VICs. A pop up stand, a table and some wi-fi connected tablets can provide a proactive visitor information service at events across the district (such as The 40s Weekend, Curry Festival) and in busy locations and sites through the year.
 - **Apps and a mobile enabled website** containing suggested itineraries and experiences can provide information in-destination.
 - **Partner outlets** – there may be opportunities to provide information outlets within operators’ properties (e.g. in attractions or retailers).



2.5 The overall assessment of the relative pros and cons of the four VICs is as follows:

| | Pros | Cons |
|----------|---|---|
| Bradford | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deals with the majority of back office enquiries Low property costs Destination with greatest growth potential / future VIC need | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not identifiable as 'Welcome Centre' as corporate council branded. |
| Haworth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highest number of 'tourist' visits and probably added value Good location | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leased property Most expensive to run |
| Ilkley | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highest number of visits Provides box office/booking services for King's Hall and Ilkley events Low property overheads Cheapest VIC to run | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily a local audience Ticket sales are a high proportion of sales |
| Saltaire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High proportion of 'tourist' visitors Sits in World Heritage Site Most distinctive and attractive VIC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor location within Saltaire Least visited VIC Most expensive per visit Leased property |

2.6 Other findings were that from a tourism perspective, as opposed to a community perspective, Haworth is a key VIC. It deals with the most visitor enquiries and probably adds the most value to the destination. Looking to the future Bradford, as a destination, has both significant needs and opportunities. A Bradford VIC could play an important role but its role would need to change from a traditional VIC to more of a welcome and interpretation centre. This would focus more on creating 'Welcome Centres' that provide a strong sense of place and focus on selling the destination more through utilising a range of different media and imagery. This approach is particularly pertinent to the Bradford VIC but could apply to other centres as well.

2.7 In December 2016 the consultants published a recommendation for the Tourism Review as follows:-

- That Bradford VIC remains open. Bradford, as a destination has significant growth potential and the VIC could be an important aspect of the longer term development of the visitor economy.
- It also recommended re-positioning the centre as more of an interpretation centre (helping to tell Bradford's story) and welcome centre (to help to sell both the city and the wider area).

Other options included:-

- Keep Haworth and Bradford VICs at current opening and staffing levels & lose Ilkley and Saltaire VICs
- Maintain Haworth at its current operational level (staff and opening hours) and close all other VICs



- Close all VICs. Re-invest the savings in alternative forms of information provision and enhanced marketing

3 THE DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN (APPENDIX 2)

- 3.1 The DMP identifies an ambitious shared vision and common goals for the future growth of the visitor economy of Bradford District. It identifies the priorities, and the interventions that will add real value to the visitor economy across the whole area and in individual destinations within it
- 3.2 It is about collaborative action, and provides a framework for all partners in the area with an interest in the Visitor Economy to work together effectively to improve and develop the destination over the next five years
- 3.3 This plan has been developed with ideas and observations from a wide range of businesses, attractions and public, private and volunteer representatives involved in the visitor economy of the area.
- 3.4 Tourism and the visitor economy, within Bradford District, is seen as an important economic driver
Key findings include:
 - Developing a unique and attractive offer in Bradford city but which is complimentary to neighbouring towns and cities.
 - Develop the evening economy, a rich programme of events and leisure opportunities; and new cultural and visitor attractions.
 - Development of a Festival City
 - To address the 'whole' experience – for example, investing in parking and transport; bars and restaurants and shopping will create a better holistic experience
 - To re-position Bradford (using culture) as an appealing City in the minds of residents and visitors
- 3.5 The DMP will need to be 'owned' and implemented in partnership with other organisations. A successful model will be likely to have:
 - A steering group for DMP implementation.
 - A new approach to working with other BMDC departments and to continue to work with regional partners in other West Yorkshire authorities, on specific campaigns.
 - Maximise the potential opportunities for gaining more impact within existing Welcome to Yorkshire programmes – particularly in digital programmes, and benefiting from their high level of social media engagement and travel press activity.

4. THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION OF THE TOURISM REVIEW AND DMP

- 4.1 The Tourism Review & DMP went out to public consultation on January 9th – 6th March 2017. Sixty two people responded to the consultation via the Council



Website, four responded by letter and a petition was sent from Haworth traders and residents with 1,087 signatures.

4.2 Some responses supported one of the VICs and some supported two or more VICs to remain open.

- 5 comments supported Bradford VIC (Low response as recommendation was to keep Bradford open)
- 18 comments supported Haworth VIC
- 20 comments supported Saltaire VIC
- 25 comments supported Ilkley VIC
- 10 of the comments also commented on the closure of the public toilets across the district

4.3 Industry partners in Bradford have welcomed the recommendation. The majority of comments from Haworth, Ilkley and Saltaire related to the importance of the VIC to the local community and visitors to the destination.

Many of the concerns from Ilkley were in relation to the ticket sales that the VIC provides.

Other Comments included:

- Recruit volunteers for Saltaire, Haworth and Ilkley
- Consider seasonal hours
- Single man to reduce staffing costs
- Relocate Ilkley into the library
- Bradford VIC also becomes the telephone and email centre for visitors

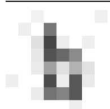
5. THE FUTURE DELIVERY OPTIONS

5.1 Proposals have been submitted by The Bronte Society in relation to Haworth VIC. The proposal is to become responsible for delivering Haworth's Visitor Information Services based within its current location.

5.2 This will provide strategic benefits for both organisations: it will provide the Society with a prominent Main Street presence in the town, including much needed office space, while maintaining a Visitor Information Centre service in Haworth, promoting tourism across the entire Bradford district.

5.3 Consultation is currently on-going with Ilkley Parish Council in retaining a VIC in Ilkley Library. The Parish Council are considering the funding of 2 members of staff.

5.4 These findings, proposals and recommendations of the Tourism Review and DMP will be taken to Executive for approval.



6. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Trade Union Consultation

7. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

There are no financial implications arising from this report and any financial impacts of a remodelled Tourism Service will be dealt with through the council budget setting processes.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

Risk of some staff being displaced due to possible closure of some VICs

9. LEGAL APPRAISAL

None

10. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

11. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

None

12 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no sustainability issues

13. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

14. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to note the content of this report and give their views.

15. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Tourism Review
Appendix 2 – Destination Management Plan

