

Report of the Strategic Director of Place the meeting of Executive to be held on 12 September 2017

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Subject:

The Destination Management Plan and Future Delivery of the Frontline Visitor Information

Summary statement:

This report is to inform the Executive of the Destination Management Plan (DMP) and Tourism Review reports and consider that the new approach to destination management is the right way forward and agree the delivery model for the Tourism frontline service

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:
Regeneration and Economy

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Executive of the Destination Management Plan (DMP) and Tourism Review reports and consider that the new approach to visitor economy development and destination management is the right way forward and agree the future delivery model for the Tourism frontline service.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Due to a challenging budgetary environment, changing industry approaches to destination management and growth opportunities within the visitor economy, CBMDC decided to commission two reports; a new Destination Management Plan that would set out how CBMDC will deliver visitor economy growth in the future and a review of frontline visitor information services. These can be found in Appendices 1 and 2.
- 2.2 Team Tourism were appointed as consultants and conducted a full consultation process with key partners, via workshops, face to face interviews, and telephone conversations. The key partners included industry partners from the Tourism sector including attractions, accommodation, and business.
- 2.3 Both reports were put out to consultation until from Jan 9th 2017 - 6th March 2017 on bradford.gov.uk and notification was sent to MP'S, Councillors, Parish Councillors, tourism businesses, partners and local stakeholders.

3. THE DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN (Appendix 1)

- 3.1 Team Tourism's DMP report analysed the current tourism offer in Bradford District and recommended a new strategic approach to destination management and an action plan based on: Product and Place; Promotion and Information and Facilitation and Partnership.

3.2 Aim and objectives

- 3.2.1 Current estimates put the value of the visitor economy in Bradford at £612m per annum with the potential to grow this to £725m in the medium term and possibly by more in the longer term if the correct conditions can be created. This will contribute to providing better skills, more good jobs and a growing economy.
- 3.2.2 The primary aim for intervention in the visitor economy at a destination level is to maximise the economic impact through the generation of spend, profit and jobs. In its simplest terms this aim is achieved by a combination of attracting more visitors, and increasing their length of stay and spend and having them return again in the future.
- 3.2.3 Ancillary positive impacts are also achievable for inward investment and place marketing through better alignment of messages and shared use of marketing collateral.

3.3 Strategic Approach

- 3.3.1 Developing the visitor economy in Bradford District must be predicated on a clear identification of target markets and our ability to carefully match their needs with tourism assets in the district. The DMP outlines a number of markets (e.g. UK coach operators and group organisers, overseas coach tours, families, 'active indulgents', 'young explorers' and event visitors) which have different characteristics and needs. Different approaches will be required to attract them.
- 3.3.2 While future activity will continue to distinguish four places and areas – Bradford, Haworth, Saltaire and Ilkley, we will also seek to package thematic experiences that cut across several or all of these places. In general, contemporary visitors are more interested in experience rather than place and future tourism product development needs to reflect this trend.
- 3.3.3 The DMP suggests that achieving a unified brand concept for the whole area and developing campaigns for each destination is unrealistic and given the new emphasis on experiences, potentially unhelpful. However, we will explore further whether an umbrella brand is useful, taking into account work currently being undertaken by P S London on behalf of the council which is looking at place marketing..

3.4 Facilitation and Partnership

- 3.4.1 While there will be an ongoing role for CBMDC in the development of the visitor economy, it will increasingly need to act as a facilitator and enabler of private and voluntary sector visitor economy development. In order to do this the sector needs to work better as a coherent whole. At present, partnerships across the district and within specific areas are quite weakly developed.
- 3.4.2 Moving forward the visitor economy sector needs leadership in terms of an organisation or group that will take ownership of the Destination Management Plan and drive it forward. Visit Bradford will take a lead on facilitating this shift supported by a steering group with significant private sector involvement and working closely with Welcome to Yorkshire.
- 3.4.3 Stronger partnerships and working arrangements are required within BDMC (e.g. across planning, regeneration, place marketing, WHS management, events, culture etc.), with other destinations (Leeds, and West Yorkshire, the Dales and Harrogate), and with Welcome to Yorkshire. Visit Bradford will also work closely with the nascent Bradford BID to ensure that they can play a full part in promoting the district.

3.4 Product, Place & Positioning

- 3.4.1 The Destination Management Plan usefully sets out the distinct essence of the visitor offer across the four key destinations within the district – Bradford City, South Pennines & Haworth, Saltaire and Ilkley and sets out some initial thoughts on market positioning. However, for the district to truly realise its significant potential

there is a need for further product development particularly in relation to developing themed experiences across different places.

- 3.4.2 This is particularly the case for Bradford itself where in addition to further product development, the development of the night time economy, further retail development, city centre animation and the quality of some arrival points such as Bradford Interchange need addressing.
- 3.4.3 Outside of the city centre the priority is primarily around improving visitor management (i.e. toilet provision, car and coach parking, signing and interpretation), and continued development of quality retail, and catering businesses.
- 3.4.4 Across the district there are a number of themes or areas for potential product development. The key one is further development and promotion of an events and festivals programme, which strengthens the key themes and offers of the district and its destinations and helps create demand at quieter times. Curry is a strong theme for Bradford but not easy to experience as a product -further development of the offer is a priority. Hockney, as a theme, has huge potential for Bradford if it can be further developed. Guided tours and added value activities for coach groups would be desirable, particularly in Bradford itself.

3.5 Promotion, Information and visitor welcome

- 3.5.1 There are a number of crosscutting principles that should underpin destination marketing – these include:
- Building awareness of the district and the wealth of its options.
 - Focusing on the market and the experience. Markets are becoming more focused on experiences and less on places. This is particularly the case for a destination like Bradford district where awareness is not strong and perceptions can be negative, but where appealing experiences can be presented
 - Dynamic marketing with experiences and itineraries changing through the year – reflecting seasons, what's new and fresh (e.g. events and festivals) etc.
 - Upselling and cross selling the destination with the promotion of specific experiences should focus on upselling something else in the district.
 - Keeping it simple and making it easy – experiences and itineraries need to be simple (e.g. based around a half day or 24 hour option) with only a limited number of options. Too much information is counter-productive.
 - Ensuring an exceptional visitor welcome and developing new ways of delivering in-destination information.
- 3.5.2 Budgetary pressures within CBMDC mean that maintaining four Visitor Information Centres in the form they currently operate isn't financially viable. There is also a general move away from this type of provision across the tourism sector which is

tending to operate more flexible ways of providing visitor information and welcoming visitors. Section 4 and Appendix 2 below deal in detail with proposals for existing visitor information centres.

- 3.5.3 In short, alternative delivery models are being developed for facilities at Haworth, Ilkley and Saltaire. Bradford VIC, which also accommodates back office marketing, promotion and enquiries will remain open until April 2019 while a new visitor welcome is designed and enhanced marketing and promotion capabilities developed. This delay will also enable the Bradford BID to have an input in shaping what comes next.
- 3.5.4 Some alternative ways of delivering a visitor welcome and visitor information are outlined below.
- 3.5.5 Visitor Information Points can be in the form of a kiosk in a key location as **Fig 3.6 and 3.7** or within museums, **Fig 3.8** visitor attractions, accommodation providers, retailers, restaurants and transport operators.
- 3.5.6 Council frontline staff can play an important role as an ambassador for Bradford. Sport & Culture frontline services are sometimes the first to welcome a visitor into the district and they can leave a positive or not positive impression on them. Word of mouth if positive is a very powerful way to improve perceptions.
- 3.5.7 The Skills House deliver a World Host Course. This course will give staff the skills to be an ambassador for their local area. Staff will learn how equipping themselves with knowledge about what's on offer in the district and their local community can take their service to another level, and how a positive and enthusiastic attitude can have a real effect on the visitor experience (and ultimately visitor spend).
- 3.5.8 Some cities such as Leeds, Manchester, London and Birmingham have introduced professional Welcome Ambassadors, who are funded by the private sector and Business Improvement Districts. These ambassadors are highly visible in distinctive uniforms, often wearing a bowler hat, as **Fig 3.9**. They are located in key areas and gateways within the City Centre and meet and greet visitors and business commuters, directing them and providing expert knowledge and guidance. Their main purpose is to enhance the welcome experience in the city through providing a professional meet and greet service for all city users and giving a lasting impression of friendliness and vibrancy.
- 3.5.9 Taxi Ambassador Schemes can be considered for Hackney Carriages. These can be the first port of call for a visitor and can give a warm and friendly welcome in the visitor experience.

Fig 3.6



Volunteer Ambassadors using a kiosk and meeting and greeting.

Fig 3.7



Hull City of Culture 2017 Welcome Kiosk at Hull Paragon Station including self-service ticket purchase and collection facility for city events.

Fig 3.8



Tourist Information located inside the Lowry Centre, Salford Quays, Greater Manchester.

Fig 3.9



Welcome Ambassadors

4. TOURISM REVIEW (Appendix 2)

4.1 Bradford Council currently operates four Visitor Information Centres, (VIC's) located in Bradford City Centre, Haworth, Ilkley and Saltaire.

4.2 The service has been operating on transitional budget and there is a further reduction to the budget in 2018/19. Therefore, the current VIC operating cost of £326,000 per annum will reduce to £94,000 in 2018/19.

4.3 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** –opportunities to provide information outlets within operators' properties (e.g. in attractions or retailers).

4.4 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

4.5 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.

4.6 Due to the budget cuts, the Council can no longer continue to fund four VICs. Visitor information is evolving and technology will continue to shape the future of visitor information provision. The internet is a key source of information in the planning and booking of destination visits. Social media is extremely influential and has an increasing role in the planning stage of a visit and the visitors experience when in destination. Visitors are looking for 'immersion' in culture, unique experiences, authenticity, and exploration, adventure and personal fulfilment from their holiday experience.

4.7 The Tourism service needs a Digital Media Officer and a Tourism Officer post to support and grow these functions.

5. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

5.1 February 2016 - a consultation on the proposed budget reduction commenced to try to identify delivery options of the VIC'S. However, at this point the proposal had been increased to £19k in 2016/17 and £172k in 2017/18 (*The Tourism Review commissioning date was amended to April 2016 in the Summary of the review*).

5.2 In February 2016 there was a further proposed budget cut of £50k in 2018/19.

5.3 Implementing the changes proposed above will realise these savings and enable investment in a reshaped digital marketing resource.

- Transitional funding for the VIC's ceased in April 2017/18
- There is a risk of some staff being displaced due to redesign and closure of some VIC'S
- There may a TUPE Transfer of staff at Haworth VIC
- There will be Trade Union Consultation
- There is a possibility of reputational damage to CBMDC

6. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

6.1 To be compliant in any undertaking of TUPE Transfer

7. LEGAL APPRAISAL

7.1 The Council has powers under Section 144 of the Local Government Act 1972 (either alone or jointly with any other person or body) to encourage persons, by advertisement or otherwise, to visit their area for recreation, for health purposes, or to hold conferences, trade fairs and exhibitions and to provide facilities for those purposes.

7.2 In the event that notice needs to be given on the leases at Salts Mill and the building where Haworth VIC is located then this and any penalty which may arise will need to be negotiated.

8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

8.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

None

8.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

None

8.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

None

8.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None

8.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

None

8.6 TRADE UNION

There will be Trade Union consultation in relation to possible redundancies and TUPE Transfers

8.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

None

8.8 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS

None

9. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

10. OPTIONS

10.1 Bradford

- 10.1.1 The recommendation from the Tourism Review is that Bradford VIC remains open, as the destination has the greatest growth potential. However, visitor information in destination is evolving and the service needs to move to a re-shaped delivery model.
- 10.1.2 Pop up visitor information, supported by a team of volunteers can have a presence at key events across the district and in busy locations and sites throughout the year
- 10.1.3 Professional Welcome Ambassadors can enhance the welcome experience in the city through providing a professional meet and greet service for all city users and giving a lasting impression of friendliness and vibrancy.
- 10.1.4 World Host trained frontline staff and Taxi Ambassadors can enhance the visitor experience that increases length of stay, increased spending and revisits.
- 10.1.5 That Bradford VIC continues to deliver its current service in the current location with reduced staffing until March 2019. This will allow an opportunity to re-think the future resourcing and delivery options of Bradford visitor information provision and provide the opportunity for engagement with external partners, including the proposed Bradford Improvement District
- 10.1.6 The remaining budget is invested in creating 2 new posts of a Tourism Development Officer and Tourism Digital Media Officer.

10.2 Haworth VIC

- 10.2.1 The Bronte Society has submitted a formal proposal to agree a level of Tourist Information provision for Bradford District based on the current 7 day opening. They agree to dedicate at least 50% of the existing service level to this, including window space.
- 10.2.2 They will carry the full range of Discover and Visit Bradford Guides.
- 10.2.3 They will continue to promote local and district events and we will continue to offer a ticket agency service, and promote the accommodation providers in Haworth

10.2.4 In terms of staffing, they wish to TUPE Transfer the current VIC staff. Bradford Council is currently collating details in relation to the pension scheme.

10.3 Ilkley VIC

10.3.1 Ilkley Parish Council have submitted a formal proposal to make a contribution of £19,000 per year for a period of two financial years (2018/19 and 2019/20).

10.3.2 This will fund 2 members of staff at Ilkley Visitor Information Centre.

10.3.3 The VIC would relocate into Ilkley library and would have a retail space to offset any other running costs.

10.4 Saltaire VIC

10.4.1 There has been an informal proposal from Shipley College to provide a Visitor Information Point in Victoria Hall Reception. .

10.4.2 Victoria Hall currently has a staffed reception area and this proposal is to provide an information point for visitors within this area.

10.4.3 There is space to relocate some of the leaflet displays that are currently in the VIC, and they would display the Discover Guides, events leaflets and information relating to Saltaire and the district.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the strategic approach to Destination Management outlined in the DMP report be implemented.
2. That Bradford Visitor Information Centre be kept in its current location until 2019 and partnership opportunities be identified to find future resourcing and delivery options for frontline visitor information, including professional Welcome Ambassadors in Bradford.
3. That a team of Pop up volunteers be developed to meet and greet at key events across the district.
4. That the Bronte Society takes over the lease of the Haworth Visitor Information Centre building and provides a frontline Tourist Information provision for Haworth and Bradford District. The Council consults with them on the TUPE Transfer of current staff.
5. That Ilkley Parish Council fund Ilkley Visitor Information Centre and the service moves from the Town Hall into Ilkley Library.

6. That Shipley College have a Visitor Information Point in Victoria Hall and direct all emails and phone calls to Bradford Visitor Information Centre.
7. The remaining budget be invested into Tourism development and marketing creating 2 new posts of a Tourism Digital Media Officer and Tourism Officer.

12. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – The Destination Management Plan

Appendix 2 – The Tourism Review