

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: ENVIRONMENT AND PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 26th October 2010
Report of: Strategic Director - Places
Subject/Title: Visitor Economy Strategy for Cheshire East
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Jamie Macrae

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 Following a report to Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on 8 June 2010, the visitor economy strategy for Cheshire East has completed a consultation period. The Visitor Economy Strategy and framework sets the context within which the Council will deliver services and work with partners to maximise the benefits of the area's visitor economy. The visitor economy is an important economic sector and the strategy sits alongside the draft Economic Development Strategy. This report updates on progress with a view to completing the drafting of the Strategy and its adoption by Cheshire East Council.

2.0 Decision Requested

- 2.1 Members are asked to endorse the Visitor Economy Strategy for Cheshire East for adoption by the Council as a framework to deliver services and agree policy relating to the Visitor economy.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 Following consultation and consideration by the Visitor Economy forum, a draft strategy has been developed that takes into account relevant consultation responses. In order to adopt the visitor economy strategy the broad milestones are:

Aug –Oct 2010	Alignment with both the sub-regional visitor economy strategic framework and Cheshire East strategies. Redraft following consultation period.
Oct 2010	Consultation responses and Draft Strategy to Environment & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee.
January 2011	Adoption of the Strategy

- 3.2 This timescale has enabled it to run in parallel with the development of the draft Cheshire East Economic Development Strategy and Local transport plan as well as '2020: Meeting the Challenge', the sub-regional framework for the visitor economy in Cheshire and Warrington. Although timescales are not fully aligned this has still allowed greater coordination of related policy development.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All.

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All.

6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change - Health

- 6.1 The visitor economy strategy may inform the development of several other strategies including those for Climate Change and Health. A healthy, competitive and high performing economy will contribute to the health and well being of the population of Cheshire East. This can help shape the scale and location of employment opportunities and encourage accessibility. The nature of the economy in future will determine the extent to which Cheshire East as a whole is able to reduce its carbon emissions particularly in relation to more sustainable travel patterns.

7.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

- 7.1 None.

8.0 Financial Implications 2009/10 and beyond (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

- 8.1 All costs associated with the development of the visitor economy strategy will be constrained within existing budgets.

9.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

- 9.1 The development of a visitor economy strategy is not a statutory function. However, the strategy relates to one economic sector that will be informed by a Local Economic Assessment (LEA). The Council is under a statutory duty to carry out an LEA.

10.0 Risk Management

- 10.1 The risk of not developing a visitor economy strategy is that other related strategies are prepared in a policy vacuum without the relevant economic objectives, priorities and direction and that the Council does not have a

framework to realise the opportunity to influence the economic benefits of the visitor economy through its actions.

11.0 Consultation

- 11.1 The visitor economy strategy is intended to support an overall vision to maximise its contribution to the economy, employment and quality of life of Cheshire East.
- 11.2 A Sub-Regional Strategy for Cheshire & Warrington has been drafted and the strategy takes this work into account. The strategy recognises that partnership working is at the core of delivery, including close working with business clusters, attention to cross-boundary opportunities and cooperation and the establishment of a Visitor Economy Forum as a sub-group of the LSP Learning & Skills and Economic Development Thematic group.
- 11.3 The strategy identifies priorities for Cheshire East Council and its partners in seeking to maximise the contribution of the visitor economy. This includes building on geographic and thematic brands, supporting key projects to enhance the tourism product, promoting events, improving visitor information services and ensuring that Visitor Economy needs and opportunities are taken into account as part of regeneration projects and decisions relating to planning, transport, public realm, events, culture and countryside/greenspace.
- 11.4 The strategy document sets out a cross-cutting framework within which the Council intends to operate up to 2015, whether in its own activity, in partnership or in the context of regional/sub-regional priorities. The framework is prepared within a wider context, taking into account existing regional and sub-regional visitor economy strategies. Delivery in the context of this framework will also be in partnership with business clusters, related organisations and Visit Chester and Cheshire, the sub-regional tourism board. The updated strategy is attached as Appendix 1.
- 11.5 Cheshire East Council received 26 submissions in response to the consultation process as. The draft strategy was presented at a number of meetings of tourism business clusters as well as two LAP meetings and a sustainable towns meeting. Most respondents completed a short questionnaire and Appendix 2 summarises the comments. As this is a high level strategic document, not all comments, particularly those relating to a single venue or topic, could be incorporated unless they helped illustrate a wider point. Many helpful comments were received and taken on board. This particularly related to the changing strategic landscape, the period covered by the strategy and the scope of its ambition. The development of the strategy has also influenced and been influenced by the sub-regional strategy with which it is aligned.

12.0 Progress to date

Delivery against the strategy priorities and action framework has not waited upon completion of the strategy consultation. The visitor economy team is already delivering key programmes and projects in line with the strategy. These include the Cheshire Peak District brand development, business cluster development with a

large hotel group and Cheshire Peaks & Plains tourism association, event support such as the Nantwich Food and Drink Festival and co-promotion with Manchester of the Elizabeth Gaskell bicentenary, web development such as the 'ivisit' guides for market towns across Cheshire East, PR support such as BBC Countryfile feature on East Cheshire and input to regeneration projects such as sustainable towns network and Macclesfield economic masterplan. In addition Recession recovery projects have been developed to enable town and area-based promotional groupings to develop small scale tourism campaigns and a 'welcoming visitors' training and development programme has been launched. Finally new funding has been attracted through VCC to support rural businesses to improve accommodation standards and through support for attractions and events.

13.0 Overview of Year One and Term One Issues

13.1 N/A

14.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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