

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: CABINET

Date of Meeting: 17th January 2011
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 public consultation and a report to Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on 26th October 2010 the visitor economy strategy for Cheshire East has been updated and is presented as the Council's strategy for an important sector of the Cheshire East economy worth over £650m a year. 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 its adoption by Cheshire East Council.

2.0 Decision Requested

- 2.1 Cabinet are asked to approve and adopt the Visitor Economy Strategy for Cheshire East as the Council's framework to deliver services and agree policy relating to the Visitor economy.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 Following public consultation and consideration by both the Visitor Economy forum and the Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee, a strategy has been developed that takes into account relevant consultation responses and provides the basis for 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 2010/11 and beyond (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

8.1 All costs associated with the development of the visitor economy strategy will be contained 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 Visitor Economy Strategy

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 Cheshire East 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 to engage with sector representatives.

- 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. 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 final draft of the strategy is attached as Appendix 1.
- 11.5 Cheshire East Council received 26 submissions in response to the consultation process. 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. In addition the Strategy was discussed by the Visitor Economy Forum and was considered by the Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on both 8th June and 26th October 2010. 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 large hotels and venues,
- realignment of 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 Cheshire East market towns,
- PR support such as BBC Countryfile feature on East Cheshire,
- 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 provide 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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