

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: ENVIRONMENT AND PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting:	8 th June 2010
Report of:	Strategic Director - Places
Subject/Title:	Draft 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 25 November 2009, work has progressed to prepare a visitor economy strategy for Cheshire East and to inform the emerging sub-regional strategy. The draft 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 taking the attached draft strategy to subsequent consultation with internal and external stakeholders.

2.0 Decision Requested

- 2.1 Members are asked to comment on the Visitor Economy Strategic Framework for Cheshire East prior to consultation with internal and external stakeholders.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 Following initial stakeholder consultation and consideration by the Visitor Economy forum, A draft strategy has been developed that will now be consulted on more widely. In order to develop the visitor economy strategy the broad milestones are:

June 2010	Draft Strategy to Environment & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee.
June –Sept	Consultation and alignment with both the sub-regional visitor economy strategic framework and Cheshire East interim economic development strategy
September 2010	Adoption of the Strategy

- 3.2 This timescale enables it to run in parallel with the consultation process for the Cheshire East Economic Development Strategy, though with an earlier completion date, as it relates to only one sector. It will also be able to inform and respond to the sub-regional framework that is currently targeted for publication later in June 2010.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All.

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All.

6.0 Policy Implications including

- 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

- 7.1 None.

8.0 Financial Implications 2009/10 and beyond

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

9.0 Legal Implications

- 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 Background and Options

11.1 The draft 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. In summary the strategic framework will focus on the following objectives:

- Improving the quality of products and services, helping to deliver increased productivity and better performance for businesses;
- Identifying and celebrating the distinctive offers of Cheshire East;
- Improving workforce skills and the attractiveness of our sector as an employer;
- Enhancing the experience for visitors through improving our public realm, while protecting and enhancing the built and natural environment;
- Supporting and encouraging key projects;
- Supporting and encouraging a programme of sustainable events and festivals;
- Making it easier for visitors to plan and book their trip, and to find the information they need to make the most of their stay;
- Considering visitor needs in decision making;
- Improving customer service and the visitor experience.

11.2 Work has been ongoing on a Sub-Regional Strategy for Cheshire & Warrington and the draft strategy takes this work into account. The draft strategy recognises that partnership working is at the core of delivery, a partnering agreement with Visit Chester and Cheshire, 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, 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 draft strategy is attached as Appendix 1.

12.0 Overview of Year One and Term One Issues

12.1 N/A

13.0 Access to Information

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

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