



CABINET

3 June 2019

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held at the Council Chamber on Monday 3 June 2019 at 11:00am.

Committee Members present: Councillors Mrs C.A. Bayliss, J.H.F. Brewerton, C.A. Clark, Mrs D.C. Earl-Williams, K.M. Field, D.B. Oliver (Leader), S.M. Prochak (Deputy Leader) and J. Vine-Hall

Other Members present: Councillors J. Barnes, Mrs M.L. Barnes, T.J.C. Byrne, S.J. Coleman, P.C. Courtel (in part), A.E. Ganly, Mrs S. Hart, J.M. Johnson, E.M. Kirby-Green, C.R. Maynard, M. Mooney, P.N. Osborne, G.F. Stevens and H.L. Timpe.

Advisory Officers in attendance: Executive Director (TL), Executive Director (MJ), Property Investment and Regeneration Manager, Regeneration and Tourism Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

Also Present: 4 members of the public.

Publication Date: 5 June 2019

The decisions made under PART II will come into force on 13 June 2019 unless they have been subject to the call-in procedure.

CB19/1 MINUTES

(1)

The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2019 as a correct record of the proceedings.

CB19/2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor K.P. Dixon, Chairman of the Tourism Task and Finish Group and Robin Vennard, Assistant Director Resources.

CB19/3 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

(5)

Declarations of interest were made by Councillors in the Minutes as indicated below:

Vine-Hall	Agenda Item 6 – Personal Interest in so far as he owns and runs a holiday let.
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RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TOURISM TASK AND FINISH GROUP

(6)

Cabinet received and considered Minute OSC18/52 arising from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) held on 29 April 2019 that had considered the final recommendations of the Tourism Task and Finish Group (TT&FG). The OSC had appointed the TT&FG to undertake a scrutiny review of the Council's tourism activities.

The TT&FG had undertaken a thorough and comprehensive review by way of officer presentations and reports and presentations from relevant external organisations / stakeholders. The review had focused on various aspects of the visitor economy, as well as updating the Visitor Economy Chapter of the Council's Economic Regeneration Strategy, as attached at Appendix A to the report. The work of the TT&FG culminated in the identification of eight main recommendations, which included improvements in marketing, visitor information, research, accommodation, events, strategic / partnership working, budget and funding and sharing economy. It was also acknowledged that the Council's capacity and priorities were of necessity shaped by the resources at its disposal; and that the Council had to target its activity at those areas where it could have the greatest impact.

During the debate the following points were noted:

- Questions were raised regarding what services were provided by 1066 Country and the geographical area it covered. Cabinet was advised that 1066 covered the whole of the Rother District, Hastings Borough and Eastern Wealden District including Hertsmonceux and Pevensey. Members were encouraged to view 1066 Country's website <https://www.visit1066country.com/>. Further information was available from the Regeneration Team.
- Members queried what services Brochure Connect provided. It was confirmed that three Tourist Information Points (TIPs,) located within each of the main towns in the district were supported by the service, with a further network of 32 Local Information Points (LIPs). They circulated and distributed all tourism literature across the district. A suggestion was proposed that all literature be delivered to the Parish and Town Council Clerks to ensure maximum coverage, particularly across the rural areas.
- It was considered important that stringent Key Performance Indicators were linked to the Economic Regeneration Strategy, monitored by the Lead Member for Public Realm, Culture and Tourism and reported to the OSC.
- All organisations be made aware of the current policy and guidelines for the allocation of event funding.

Several amendments were proposed to the recommendations, as follows:

- 1) i. to remove the wording “three year” and include the words “to be reviewed annually” at the end of the sentence.
- 1) iii. be changed from annual to “6 monthly” basis. Cabinet was reminded that the OSC set their own Work Programme, therefore it would up to the Committee to review this, subject to the commitments of their Work Programme.
- 1) viii. to remove the word “available” and replace with “promoted”.
- By the inclusion of “toilets” to paragraph 6 of section “As a service provider and legislator” after the word museums of Appendix A – Draft Visitor Economy Chapter to the Council’s Economic Regeneration Strategy.

An amendment was proposed to the Cabinet Portfolios, namely Public Realm to be removed from Environment and Transport and added to Culture and Tourism. The Leader confirmed his agreement to this amendment.

Members requested that 1066 Country be invited to present at a future full Council meeting to advise Members of the services they provided.

Cabinet was pleased to endorse and recommend the draft Visitor Economy Chapter of the Economic Regeneration Strategy with the above suggested amendments which detailed how the Council would deliver and support tourism activities.

RECOMMENDED: That the draft Visitor Economy Chapter of the Economic Regeneration Strategy attached at Appendix A be approved and adopted as amended, to include reference to Skills East Sussex and Parish Councils.

AND

***RESOLVED:** That the following recommendations of the Tourism Task and Finish Group be approved:

1) Marketing Recommendations:

- i. The Council enters into a funding agreement with the 1066 Country Partnership at the present level of £50,000 per annum, subject to a commitment to increasing private sector contributions year on year to be reviewed annually.
- ii. The Council’s Lead Member for Public Realm, Culture and Tourism continues to work alongside officers to monitor the 1066 Country Partnership and contribute to monitoring and refreshing the Partnership’s marketing strategy ensuring due consideration is paid to the highlighted markets.
- iii. The Council’s Lead Member for Public Realm, Culture and Tourism to report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a 6-monthly basis on the performance of the 1066 Partnership, as and when appropriate.

Visitor Information Recommendations:

- iv. The visitor information services contract be reviewed and a report and recommendations be brought to Overview and Scrutiny Committee by June 2020, in time to re-tender the service prior to expiry of the current contract in March 2021.
- v. Officers explore the option to widen the procurement to encompass the whole of 1066 Country.

Research Recommendations:

- vi. The Council, with Partners, continues to support visitor research to inform future decision making.

Accommodation Recommendations:

- vii. Officers continue to work with developers and landowners to encourage the development of more serviced accommodation in the district, particularly in Bexhill, in accordance with Local Plan policies and Corporate Plan objectives.

Events Recommendations:

- viii. The Council consolidates the visitor events funding into a single programme that is promoted to organisations and event promoters from across the whole of the district.
- ix. The current policy and guidelines for the allocation of event funding be revised as follows:
 - a) two bidding rounds of funding to be offered in each financial year, in March and September;
 - b) weightings to be introduced within a scoring system for funding applications, with a greater weighting awarded to those events planned for shoulder-season;
 - c) Council funding to be awarded to event organisers who can show growth within their event to increase visitor numbers to the district and add to the local economy; and
 - d) consideration be given to partnership funding for events from East Sussex County Council and / or from Parish and Town Councils.

The new arrangements to come into effect from 1 April 2020.

- x. Council owned Car Parks should only be used as venues for events when it is considered absolutely necessary for the functioning of the event.

Strategic / Partnership Working Recommendations:

- xi. The Council continues to work with local, regional and national partners to develop, deliver and promote tourism projects and programmes relating to the visitor economy and cultural tourism.

- xii. The Council to work with Skills East Sussex and local education providers to promote opportunities for careers in the tourism sector.

Budget and Funding Recommendations:

- xiii. Officers continue to explore opportunities to attract external funding in support of the visitor economy in recognition of a finite budget and pressures on the Council's finances. Any savings made within the tourism budget to be allocated back into tourism and directed towards events.
- xiv. Consideration be given to increasing the tourism budget in future years by the rate of inflation.
- xv. The Chambers of Commerce in Battle, Bexhill and Rye, and any other interested parties, be invited to meet with the Lead Member for Public Realm, Culture and Tourism to explore their interest in developing Business Improvements Districts in their locality.

Sharing Economy Recommendations:

- xvi. The Council lobbies with partners for greater regulation of the sharing economy, with a preference for a self-regulating scheme.
 - xvii. The Council consider what resources would be required with the introduction of a statutory registration scheme for tourism accommodation, to be offset by registration charges and report back to the Licensing and General Purposes Committee.
 - xviii. The Council offers support to businesses to capitalise on new media platforms, including shared economy platforms and how to adapt and diversify their product with partners.
 - xix. A promotional campaign to be developed to ensure tourism accommodation property owners are aware of their responsibilities and obligations.
 - xx. The costs of business support and the promotional campaign to be met from the existing tourism budget.
 - xxi. The use of sharing economy platforms be acknowledged across the district through the 1066 Country campaign, but property owners be required to comply with legislation in order to register.
- 2) the Tourism Task and Finish Group, having fulfilled its Terms of Reference, be dissolved; and
 - 3) 1066 Country be invited to present at a future full Council meeting to advise Members of the services they provided.

*The **RESOLVED** parts of this minute are subject to the call-in procedure under Rule 16 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

(Councillor Vine-Hall declared a personal interest in this matter as he owned and ran a holiday let and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the room during the consideration thereof).

PART II – EXECUTIVE DECISIONS – subject to the call-in procedure under Rule 16 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules by no later than 4:00pm on 12 June 2019.

CB19/5
(7) **CALL-IN AND URGENCY PROCEDURES**

Members received and considered Minute OSC18/54 arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) meeting held on the 29 April 2019 which detailed the Council's Call-in and Urgency Procedures.

The Call-In procedure was the mechanism by which the Council's OSC could challenge decisions made by the Executive that were not yet implemented. Members noted that no Executive decisions had been called-in, and four decisions of Cabinet, within the approved budget and policy framework had been deemed and resolved as urgent decisions.

Cabinet agreed that the current arrangements for Call-in and Urgency Procedures remained satisfactory.

RESOLVED: That the Call-In Procedure and the current arrangements for calling-in an executive decision be agreed.

CB19/6
(8) **ROLES AND FUNCTIONS**

Members gave consideration to the report of the Executive Directors on Cabinet's role and functions. As part of the Members' Induction process a report outlining each Committee's roles and responsibilities was presented to the first meeting of each Committee in the new municipal year, including Cabinet.

The report gave details of the decision making structure at Rother which detailed how the Council operated a Leader and Cabinet Executive model of decision making since November 2001. Additionally, in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the Council had adopted the provisions of the "strong Leader" Executive Leader and Executive Cabinet model.

The report detailed workings of Cabinet in relation to its role and responsibilities, composition, meetings, decision making, the Forward Plan of Key Decisions, attendance and speaking at Cabinet meetings

by non-Executive Members, and openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations (new public rights). It was agreed that the report provided a useful guide for all Members.

Members reconsidered the start time of the meetings and it was agreed that all future Cabinet meetings from 1 July 2019 would commence at 6:30pm. It was also requested that the decision not to audio / video record meetings be reconsidered at a future meeting.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) all future meetings of Cabinet from 1 July 2019 would commence at 6:30pm; and
- 3) the decision not to audio / video recording meetings be reconsidered at a future meeting.

CB19/7
(9)

IRRECOVERABLE DEBTS

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director concerning irrecoverable debts. Debts in excess of £4,000 could only be written out of the Council's accounts with the consent of Cabinet. Where it was apparent that the debts would not be recovered, it was financially prudent for these to be excluded from the accounts; this did not mean that the Council could not take action in the future, if information was received indicating the debt could then be recovered. Furthermore, when residents / businesses having difficulty paying the Council approached the relevant service area every effort was made to assist them through the application of e.g. relevant rate reliefs or discretionary hardship payments as appropriate.

Cabinet was asked to write off 12 cases in total relating to Housing Benefit overpayments (five cases), Council Tax (five cases) and two Non-Domestic Rate cases totalling £86,360.03.

Members were reassured that the Council's debt recovery work was robust and undertaken in accordance with current Council policy.

Cabinet requested that the Council's Debt Management and Debt Recovery Policies be reviewed at a future meeting.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the debts totalling £86,360.03 be approved for writing out of the accounts; and
- 2) Debt Management and Debt Recovery Policies be reviewed at a future meeting.

CB19/8
(10)

TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Cabinet agreed that this report be deferred to the meeting scheduled to be held on 1 July 2019.

RESOLVED: That Treasury Management Update be deferred and reported at the meeting scheduled to be held on 1 July 2019.

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 11:40am.

Draft Visitor Economy Chapter to the Council's Economic Regeneration Strategy

Support the visitor economy

Why?

The total value of tourism activity in Rother is £329.2 million, which supports over 5,500 full time jobs, equating to 29% of all jobs within the district. Tourism is a key contributor to the district's economic and social wellbeing. It supports businesses, both directly and indirectly, and has an interdependent relationship with a range of sectors, including farming, transport, retail, food and drink, arts and museums and culture.

Tourism helps to create a positive image for the district which encourages inward investment and provides a great place for locals to live and work.

How is this achieved?

- By effective promotion of the area to visitors.
- By the availability of good quality information that meets customer requirements.
- By maintaining and improving the range and quality of the tourism offer, including attractions, accommodation and customer service.
- By enabling a range of quality events and festivals throughout the year to attract visitors.
- By supporting businesses to take advantage of growth areas and new technologies.
- By working in partnership to develop new products and services, particularly those that use, protect and promote the natural environment.

Who else is involved?

- Private sector businesses, including accommodation providers, attractions and other service sector businesses, events promoters and organisers.
- Local Authorities including Hastings Borough Council, Wealden District Council, East Sussex County Council and other neighbouring authorities.
- Parish Town Councils.
- Chambers of Commerce and other business representative organisations.
- Regional bodies, including Tourism South East, Skills East Sussex, Visit Britain, Visit England, South East Local Enterprise Partnership and relevant sectorial sub groups.
- Cross-sector partnerships, including 1066 Country Marketing and other local marketing and tourism partnerships.

The Council's Role

As an advocate:

We will promote the importance of the tourism industry when representing Rother in policy discussions at regional and national level.

We will encourage growth in the number of high value-added visitors to Rother, in order to increase spend per head and maximise the benefit of visitors to the local economy.

We will continue to lobby for resources to support the development of the tourism sector, particularly around support for emerging sectors and trends in the digital environment.

We will help to raise awareness amongst peer-to-peer accommodation providers of their legal duties and liabilities when offering accommodation, especially in relation to fire safety and health and safety.

We will lobby, with partners, for greater regulation of peer-to-peer platforms that promote tourism accommodation (such as Airbnb), to protect consumers and ensure that regulations are applied consistently for all visitor accommodation providers.

We will lobby for greater awareness and uptake of careers in the tourism sector.

We will help support the tourism sector in understanding the implications of macro-economic forces driving changes in the visitor economy (such as new technologies, Brexit).

As a service provider and legislator:

We will continue to commission and fund visitor research to inform future decision making and service delivery and share information through our networks.

We will review the delivery of the Visitor Information Services provision in preparation for when the current contract expires in 2021, having regard to trends in visitor behaviour and requirements and the advances of digital technology and new media channels. Consideration will also be given to expanding the provision through working with partners.

We will offer support to businesses to capitalise on new media platforms, including shared economy platforms and how to adapt and diversify their product.

We will ensure that the Local Plan encourages the provision of new quality accommodation across the district with a focus on good quality serviced accommodation, particularly in central Bexhill.

In the absence of national regulatory controls, we will consider implementing a local self-regulating scheme for peer-to-peer accommodation providers in Rother.

We will continue to deliver or support related amenities such as car parks, parks and gardens, leisure facilities, museums and toilets; and we will continue to support the visitor economy through our statutory roles in Licensing, Planning, etc.

As a partner and enabler:

We will continue to support the 1066 Country Marketing Partnership through funding and officer time, and contribute to reviews of its marketing strategy. We will also press for more private sector funding to help support the 1066 Country campaign.

We will support, fund and promote visitor events and festivals that aim to bring in additional visitors from outside the district. Encouragement will be given to shoulder season events to help level out the seasonality of tourism in the area.

We will continue to work with national and regional partners and networks to develop, deliver and promote projects and programmes relating to the visitor economy, cultural tourism and nature tourism.

We will continue to work with local partnership groups and stakeholders who have a role in the promotion of the destination to visitors, where this activity is complementary to the 1066 Country campaign.

We will work with developers and landowners to encourage the development of more serviced accommodation in the district, in accordance with Local Plan policies and Corporate Plan objectives. We will also encourage the development of new non-traditional tourism products and services, including diversification of existing tourism businesses looking to respond to market changes. This could include the development of 'niche' holiday accommodation and existing businesses looking to diversify to capitalise on market trends.

We will encourage and support initiatives and attractions to increase visitor numbers, particularly staying visitors, where they support the objective to increase spend per head in the district.

We will maximise the use of external funding opportunities where appropriate to support the development and delivery of tourism projects and initiatives across the area.

As a deliverer of projects:

We will continue to deliver the actions and projects set out in the Council's Corporate Plan. Specific projects linked to tourism include:

- Coastal Environments, including improvements to East Parade, Bexhill.
- Development of a new leisure centre and related facilities at Bexhill.
- Economic Regeneration at Camber.
- Development of a Walking and Cycling Strategy.
- Combe Valley Countryside Park.

We will continue to develop and deliver other projects in support of the visitor economy as opportunities arise.

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