

**Rother District Council**

Report to	-	Council
Date	-	8 July 2019
Report of the	-	Cabinet
Subject	-	References from Cabinet Meetings

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The Council is asked to consider recommendations arising from the Cabinet meetings held on 3 June, 1 and 8 July 2019, as set out below.

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**CABINET – 3 June 2019**

**CB19/04. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TOURISM TASK AND FINISH GROUP - DRAFT VISITOR ECONOMY CHAPTER OF THE ECONOMIC REGENERATION STRATEGY**

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

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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.

Cabinet also **RESOLVED** 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

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- 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.

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- 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

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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.

(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).

(Cabinet Agenda Item 6)

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## **CABINET – 1 July 2019**

### **CB19/12. TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

In February 2019, Cabinet formally approved the Council's 2019/20 Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy, attached at Appendices A and B to the report. To manage its treasury management activities, the Council followed the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management (revised 2017).

The Council was required to operate a balanced budget, which meant cash raised during the year met expenditure. Functions of treasury management included adequately planned short and long term cash flow, as well as funding capital plans. The contribution the treasury management function made to the authority was critical, as the balance of debt and investment operations ensured liquidity or the ability to meet spending commitments on day-to-day revenue or large capital projects. Therefore it was paramount to ensure adequate security of investments, as a loss of principal would result in loss to the General Fund.

The Treasury Strategy set the external debt (borrowing) limits for the Council, which took into account short and long term requirements. The Council's capital expenditure plans were the key driver for setting these limits, namely the operational boundary (the limit beyond which external debt was not normally expected to exceed); and the authorised limit for external debt (maximum level of borrowing).

The report detailed the revised / increased capital expenditure plans / limits, particularly in relation to the property investment strategy and potential investments. These changes ensured that the Council's treasury management and investments remained robust in managing the Council's cash funds and borrowing.

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Cabinet agreed that the revised authorised limit and operational boundary for external debt contained in the Treasury Management Strategy be forwarded to full Council for formal approval.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the revised authorised limit and operational boundary for external debt contained in the Treasury Management Strategy be approved.

(Cabinet Agenda Item 7)

**CB19/13. LAND AT NORTHIAM CAR PARK, MAIN STREET, NORTHIAM**

The Council owned and managed the car park at Main Street, Northiam as outlined in Appendix 1 to the report. Northiam Surgery owned by the practice partnership adjoined the car park and enjoyed rights of access over it.

The practice was reaching capacity and therefore seeking to expand its services by wishing to acquire part of the car park to extend the surgery building. The District Valuer valued the site at £30,000. A freehold sale was considered the most appropriate form of disposal because the extension would be integrated with the existing surgery building. The car park was subject to a restrictive covenant, requiring consent from Iden & Frewen Education Foundation; written approval had been received. The sale was subject to planning permission and a licence agreement would be required for the contractor's use during the construction period. Devolvement had been raised with Northiam Parish Council, who confirmed that they did not wish to pursue this opportunity.

Cabinet agreed that the freehold of part of Northiam Car Park be sold to Northiam Surgery for the sum of £30,000, subject to planning approval and, the Executive Director be authorised to enter into a licence agreement for a temporary compound to facilitate the works.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the:

- 1) freehold of part of Northiam Car Park identified in Appendix 1 be sold to Northiam Surgery for the sum of £30,000; and
- 2) Executive Director be authorised to grant a temporary licence for an additional area, for use as a contractors' compound for the duration of the construction period.

(Cabinet Agenda Item 10)

**CB19/14. RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AT BLACKFRIARS**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director that set out the background and options for the Council's landholding at Blackfriars, Battle. The site, which measured approximately 16 hectares (40 acres), had been identified in the Council's local planning

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documents and Corporate Plan as a site for residential development for some years. The Council owned just over 50% of the land with the remaining comprising three areas in separate private ownership.

The Council's Planning Core Strategy (2014) identified a need for 475-500 new homes to be delivered in Battle over the plan period until 2028, assuming that a proportion of these homes would be delivered on the Blackfriars site. Complex ground conditions and costly infrastructure issues had stalled development of the site.

In February 2018, the Council was provisionally awarded £3.24m Housing Infrastructure Funding (HIF) grant from Homes England (HE). The HIF grant was integral to progressing the site. In December 2018, the Council received formal confirmation of the grant, which was subject to specific conditions. Many of the conditions were unacceptable and were likely to further stall development. Following further dialogue, HE had provided an alternative offer which stated that any surplus made over an agreed developer's profit margin must be recovered by the Council. This money would be ring-fenced and used to facilitate additional housing development within the district. These conditions were now acceptable and highlighted in HE's offer at Appendix 2 to the report. It was therefore recommended that the Council accepted the grant funding award.

To progress planning permission for the new road infrastructure, a masterplanning exercise had been undertaken including site investigation, surveys, utilities and service enquires. This had allowed the Council to outline its regeneration ambitions and development priorities including the provision of affordable housing etc. Members were advised that a planning application had been submitted and awaited determination.

Part of the HIF grant stipulated that all landowners sign-up to a collaboration agreement, committing to joint working to utilise the new road infrastructure for unlocking their sites. Alternatively, the Council could seek to acquire these parcels of land to ensure delivery. Discussions with landowners were ongoing. The site owned by Rother had capacity of delivering 120 to 130 homes, or a larger scheme up to 220 homes should additional land be acquisitioned. This would make a significant contribution towards the Council's strategic housing requirement for the district.

The report outlined two options for delivery including details of the benefits and risks, as follows:

- **Option One:** Joint Venture (JV) with development partner, likely to be a Registered Provider (RP).
- **Option Two:** Direct delivery through the procurement by the Council of a main Contractor and professional team with delivery via Design and Build (D&B) Contract.

It was recommended that the Council pursue the first option as it was considered the safest, mitigated concerns regarding project funding and risk, as well as allowed partnership opportunities with an

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established RP. Legal advice would be sought to establish whether a public procurement exercise was required.

A lengthy discussion ensued on the advantages, disadvantages, risks and rewards of the Council pursuing both options. Mixed views were expressed and during the discussion the following salient points were noted:

- Should Option 1 be agreed, it would be extremely important that the Council retained 50/50 control with the RP to develop the site and that clear aims and objectives were established.
- Planning permission not being granted was considered a significant risk.
- Rejecting the HIF funding would stall development.
- Option 2 provided an innovative opportunity for the Council to take control build high quality houses/flats for the district.
- Residents would expect the Council to take an active role in progressing/developing the site.
- A suggestion was proposed that the Council sold individual plots for self-build development/opportunities.
- The Council currently did not have the capacity, expertise or resources to develop this size of project without the assistance of a development partner. In future, it was felt that consideration should be given to the Council bringing forward development of smaller projects. Options would be explored by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as part of their Work Programme for 2019/20.
- Important that affordable and social housing was delivered, including a mixture of shared rented / ownership properties.
- High quality design standards were considered imperative and that consideration be given to the emerging High Weald Design Guide.
- Officers were congratulated on securing the £3.24m HIF funding.

Cabinet agreed that the HIF grant be accepted and that a JV model with an RP be developed but that further information on the joint venture's Terms of Reference, aims, objectives and design standards be referred back to Cabinet before appointing a partner. The Executive Director agreed that a detailed report would be presented to a future Cabinet meeting.

**RECOMMENDED:** That development of a Joint Venture model with a Registered Provider to deliver residential units be approved, subject to agreement of the Terms of Reference, aims, objectives and design standards be referred back to Cabinet before appointing a partner.

Cabinet also

**RESOLVED:** That the funding offer from Homes England as attached at Appendix 2 to the report be accepted.

(Cabinet Agenda Item 11)

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**CABINET – 8 July 2019 – TO FOLLOW**

**CROWWHURST NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2018-2028**

**RYE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2016-2028**

**TICEHURST NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2018-2028**

**FORTHCOMING CONSULTATION ON THE MAIN MODIFICATIONS TO THE  
DEVELOPMENT AND SITE ALLOCATIONS (DASA) LOCAL PLAN**

Councillor D.B. Oliver  
Leader of the Council