

Rother District Council

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	14 September 2020
Title:	Tourism Events Funding
Report of:	Head of Service – Acquisitions Transformation and Regeneration
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of Report:	To present the position on Events Funding and the impact of COVID-19 and suggested options.

Officer

Recommendation(s): It be **RESOLVED**: That Cabinet be requested to:

- 1) authorise the constitution of a Bexhill Marketing Group under the proposed Terms of Reference (Appendix A);
- 2) allocate the £9,000 from the Council's Events Budget to Bexhill Marketing Group, to support the marketing and promotion of Bexhill from 2021/22 onwards;
- 3) approve that £9,000 events funding for Bexhill not allocated in the 2020/21 financial year be carried forward to 2021/22; and
- 4) the £9,000 usually allocated for Rye, to be awarded as a one-off grant to Rye Bay Marketing Ltd for their 2021 campaign.

Introduction

1. This report reviews the allocation of funding for visitor events and needs to be considered in light of the impact of COVID-19 has had on the events industry. In June 2019 Cabinet approved the recommendations from the Tourism Task and Finish Group that included a recommendation to consolidate the visitor events funding into a single programme for the whole of the district with effect from April 2020 (Minute CB19/04 refers).

Background

2. The allocated events budget was specifically to be used for pump priming new visitor events to help with start-up costs and to help existing visitor events with financial support towards new activity which will attract a new visitor audience.
3. The current policy and guidelines for the allocation of event funding are 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.
4. Further concessionary support is also being provided to events by the Council, which includes the use of Council owned land at no additional cost, usage of car parks, additional refuse collection and street clean-up services.
5. The events budget is managed by officers in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Communities, Culture and Tourism. The budget available is £18,000 per annum and covers Bexhill, Rye and rural Rother; but not Battle which has a separate arrangement which is detailed below.

Impact of COVID-19

6. The COVID-19 crisis has resulted in the cancellation of all events planned for this year which would otherwise have received Council support and accordingly all applications have been postponed. Funding that would have been allocated towards events this year has therefore not been spent and it is recommended that this funding be rolled forward to the next financial year. This will enable the Council to support more events as we seek to restart the visitor economy in 2021.
7. Events for 2021 remain uncertain and this industry has been severely damaged by COVID-19 with many firms going into receivership. Therefore, event planning for 2021 remains speculative.

Town Events Programmes – current position

Battle

8. As mentioned above, Battle has a separate arrangement in which £9,000 funding is allocated to the area. This continues to be spent on tourism marketing through an established marketing group comprising key stakeholders in Battle including Battle Chamber of Commerce, Battle Town Council, English Heritage, local businesses, event organisers and Battle Museum. Activity includes the production of an annual visitor guide, PR campaign, social media campaigns and events postcards.

Bexhill

9. The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Communities, Culture and Tourism has indicated a wish to establish a Marketing Group for Bexhill, to co-ordinate local marketing and promotion for Bexhill, in much the same way as exists in Battle. A Bexhill Marketing Group would bring together key stakeholders including Rother District Council, Bexhill Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, the De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill Museum and others. A suggested Terms of Reference is attached as Appendix (A).

10. It is proposed that £9,000 of the events budget (equivalent to the amount previously ringfenced for Bexhill events), be devolved to the Bexhill Marketing Group. In the future, a legally constituted Accountable Body will need to be identified to enter into a Service Level Agreement with the Council, in order to receive and pay funds and be accountable for the use of the Council's funding. In Battle, this role is currently undertaken by the Chamber of Commerce; but any legally constituted body on the Marketing Group could fulfil this role.
11. It is proposed the Rother District Council can undertake the role of Accountable Body for the first year of this arrangement, until an appropriate external partner can be identified. However, the Council does not have the resources to provide secretariat support for this group, which it will have to provide itself.

Rye and Rural Rother

12. A request has been received by Rye Bay Marketing Ltd to assist with the shortfall in the 2021 funding for their annual Rye Visitor Guide. In 2020, 130,000 copies of the 50-page guide were printed, but due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the summer season, only 50% of the guides have been distributed. These guides are privately funded through advertising revenue, and with many contributing businesses experiencing significant losses, the future of this guide remains in doubt.
13. In most years, £9,000 would have been spent on part-funding events in the town through the RDC events budget. This year, as no events have been supported through this fund, it is recommended that the Committee request that Cabinet make this money available for one year only, to Rye Bay Marketing Ltd to ensure that they have sufficient funding to produce the 2021 visitor guide.
14. On-going, the remaining £9,000 from the annual budget will continue to be ringfenced for the support of events in Rye and rural Rother under the existing guidelines for events support and administered by RDC officers in consultation with the Lead Member.

Options

15. In light of the Council's own financial position, the underspend of the £18,000 event budget could be used to reduce the Council's forecast overspend as reported to Cabinet Quarter 1 financial monitoring report.

Conclusion

16. The proposals in the report would devolve support to marketing and events in Bexhill to a stakeholder group with the benefit of funding from the Council and help Rye Marketing produce its promotional material for 2020/21.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	Consultation	No
Environmental	No	Access to Information	No
Sustainability	No	Exempt from publication	No
Risk Management	No		

Executive Director: Dr Anthony Leonard

Proper Officer:	Malcolm Johnston – Head of Paid Service
Report Contact Officer:	Ben Hook - Head of Service – Acquisitions Transformation and Regeneration
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Appendices:	A – Suggested Terms of Reference
Relevant previous Minutes:	CB19/04
Background Papers:	Tourism Task & Finish Group.
Reference Documents:	CB19/04

Bexhill Marketing Group

Terms of Reference

Aims

To oversee and monitor local tourism marketing activity for Bexhill and surrounding area, to share information and best practice and to disseminate information to colleagues and decision-makers.

To become a constituted body that can hold and manage the annual £9,000 tourism events grant currently administered through Rother District Council (RDC).

Scope

- To develop a marketing strategy and campaign for Bexhill and the surrounding Bexhill area including Little Common and Sidley, incorporating printed material, advertising, PR, website, e-marketing, and other media as appropriate.
- To identify appropriate delivery mechanisms.
- To agree the allocation of the available budget, including but not limited to the £9,000 tourism grant from RDC, plus anticipated advertising revenue and other sources.
- To identify and pursue opportunities for additional revenue generation.
- To monitor the delivery of the marketing strategy and review activity as necessary.
- To ensure that the marketing campaign complements other local tourism marketing strategies and avoids duplication as far as possible.
- To respond to requests for Bexhill event support.

Desired Outcomes

1. To increase visitor footfall to Bexhill especially focusing on the shoulder months to extend the season.
2. A co-ordinated marketing strategy for Bexhill and the surrounding area.
3. Additional revenue streams brought in to support further marketing activity.
4. 'Buy-in' of key stakeholders.
5. To support the development and promotion of a variety of high-quality visitor events within Bexhill and surrounding local area.

Permanent Membership:

RDC: Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Communities, Culture and Tourism & 1 officer	2
1066 Country - Bexhill representative	1
De La Warr Pavilion	1
Brochure Connect	1
Bexhill Museum	1
Bexhill Chamber of Commerce	1

Yearly membership:

Active event promoter (held an event in the last 12 months)	1
Accommodation provider (1 year term)	1
Local business representative (1 year term)	1
Co-opted members (1 year term)	2

Members will be responsible for representing the views of their organisations and for advising their respective organisations of the decisions of the Bexhill Marketing Group.

Any member put forward to represent an organisation for a 1 year term will be voted on by the permanent members.

Advisors - other parties may be invited to meetings by prior agreement of the Chairman in order to inform discussions but will not have a vote.

Up to two co-opted members may also be invited to join, by approval of the group.

Nominated representatives and nominated deputies, to be reviewed annually. There will be no duplication of roles so that one individual can only represent one organisation at the group.

Frequency of meetings

Quarterly meetings will be the minimum requirement with additional meetings as necessary.

Quorum

A minimum of six representatives from the full membership will be required for a quorum. Decisions will be reached by consensus wherever possible, but in the absence of a consensus approval of decisions will be made by a simple majority of those present.

Election of Chair

The marketing group will elect its Chairman on an annual basis from the permanent membership.

Minutes

The Marketing Group will provide the secretariat and minutes will be issued for public release following each meeting. Any confidential items will be marked as such and should not be distributed beyond the membership of the Marketing Group.