



Report to: Cabinet, 17th January 2017

Report of: Councillor Geoff Williams, Cabinet Member for Economic Prosperity and Growth

Subject: WORCESTER CITY TOURISM STRATEGY 2017-2022 - KEY DECISION

1. Recommendation

1.1 To approve the Worcester City Tourism Strategy 2017-2022;

1.2 To establish a stakeholder forum that will provide strategic leadership and ensure stakeholder engagement; and

1.3 To approve £121,000 New Homes Bonus Corporate Priorities funding to enable delivery.

2. Background

2.1 In 2015 the Tourism Scrutiny Review Group made a number of recommendations including the establishment of a tourism steering group/network (linking partners, existing groups, attractions and the City Council); allocation of staff resource to drive work on the tourism agenda; development of a Worcester City Tourism webpage; and development of a Tourism Strategy for the City, involving partners and local stakeholders to ensure a coherent and collaborative approach to improving the tourism offer.

2.2 As a result a Tourism and Marketing Officer has been engaged by Worcester City Council on a fixed term basis, a tourism partner network has been established (from which a tourism steering group can be formed) and the Summer in Worcester and Christmas in Worcester websites have been developed and launched by the City council in order to increase on-line visibility and promotion.

2.3 The Worcester City Tourism Strategy is a high level plan setting out the council's goals in relation to the economic growth and prosperity brought about by sustainable tourism development in the City of Worcester. It sets out those goals and determines actions to cultivate a quality visitor experience, to raise the profile of Worcester as a visitor destination and to help encourage community engagement in the City's arts, culture and heritage activities.

2.4 Worcester City Council's City Plan identifies the Council's desire to become an official English Heritage City. The current criteria to become an official English Heritage City means Worcester will need to increase visitor spend by £20 million in order to be considered to be invited onto the group.

2.5 According to the RSA Heritage Index, Worcester is in the top 4% of heritage cities in England in terms of heritage assets, but is in the bottom 10% of heritage cities for

making the most of its heritage assets in terms of animating history, branding, marketing and promotion. Our strategy and ambitions for the city will enable us to showcase our heritage assets, and raise our profile as an international tourism destination.

- 2.6 Over a number of months we have carried out extensive consultation including a workshop with Members, a stakeholder workshop and surveys of businesses, residents and visitors in order to build a strategy based on evidence.

3. Preferred Option

- 3.1 The strategy sets out three key objectives:

- Enhance The Visitor Experience;
- Raise Worcester's Profile with Successful Marketing; and
- Provide Strategic Leadership and Ensure Stakeholder Engagement

and sets out a number of priority actions to deliver these. A plan to deliver the actions will be developed with partners by way of a Worcester tourism forum that will be established during Quarter 4 of 2016-17. This group will be critical to the successful achievement of the aims and objectives set out in the strategy in the engagement of the wider stakeholders.

- 3.2 It is proposed that £121,000 New Homes Bonus City Plan funding be used to fund the Tourism and Marketing Officer post until 2020 to manage the delivery of the Tourism Strategy.
- 3.3 As part of raising Worcester's profile, a new Worcester City tourism brand is being developed in consultation with stakeholders and this will be brought to Cabinet for agreement in 2017.
- 3.4 Over the life of the plan we will bring forward proposals for increasing the number of festivals, events and attractions; enhanced promotion of, and access to tourism information, and leverage opportunities (match funding; sponsorship packages etc.) as we seek to deliver initial projects around enhancing the visitor experience; raising Worcester's profile with successful marketing; strategic leadership and stakeholder engagement objectives.
- 3.5 To achieve the Tourism Strategy's objectives, and in line with the Tourism Scrutiny Review it is intended that a steering group comprising tourism industry stakeholders be established. The City Council has a key role to play in supporting the delivery of these objectives in the city, and to work in close partnership with VisitBritain, Visit Worcestershire, English Heritage Cities Group; and many other local and national partners.
- 3.6 A City Council strategy and delivery plan will be essential in demonstrating the Council's recognition of the contribution that tourism makes to the thriving City in bringing together and harnessing the resources of key stakeholders in the delivery of shared objectives. The two key drivers pertaining to sustainable tourism development in the city are the 2016-2021 Visit Worcestershire Destination Management Plan and the City Council's own City Plan objectives, however the City needs to be able to demonstrate what it is doing to contribute towards enhancing and co-ordinating the City's tourism offer and increasing visitor numbers and spend.

4. Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 The “do nothing” option is not viable as enhancing and co-ordinating the city’s tourism offer and increasing visitor numbers and spend has been identified as a priority in the City Council’s City Plan. Without a strategy, delivery plan and associated resources we will not be able to enhance the visitor offer, increase the numbers of visitors to Worcester, and raise the profile of Worcester as a place to visit regionally, nationally and internationally. It is unlikely that we would meet the criteria to become an official English Heritage City. In addition, we will lose the opportunity to create the additional employment opportunities that growth in this sector will undoubtedly create.
- 4.2 The option of letting other agencies take the lead is not a viable alternative. As a civic body with responsibility for the wellbeing of its residents and businesses Worcester City Council must work in partnership, setting out its ambitions and plans for the city in order to maximise the level of investment in the tourism sector, influence the investment decisions of other stakeholders at a local, regional and national level and ensure that the needs of residents, visitors and business are met.

5. Implications

5.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications

The Directorate has £23,750 remaining from the City Of Culture (now Heritage City) Cabinet-approved NHB allocation, and £13,390 from funding approved by Cabinet for a tourism-related activities, to fund future initiatives. Whilst certain aspects of the delivery plan will not require resources over and above existing budgets, other activities such as an annual programme of festivals and events; partnering with tourism bodies such as Visit Britain on national and international initiatives and associated marketing and promotion will require additional funding.

This report requests Cabinet approval for £121,000 New Homes Bonus Corporate Priorities funding to extend the tenure of the existing Tourism and Marketing Officer to co-ordinate the delivery of the Tourism Strategy and Delivery Plan. Over the life of the plan we will bring forward proposals (including additional funding) for increasing the number of festivals, events and attractions; enhanced promotion of, and access to tourism information, and leverage opportunities to delivery the priorities outlined in the strategy.

5.2 Legal and Governance Implications

The provision of services will be in line with standard procurement policy.

5.3 Risk Implications

The risk to Worcester if it fails to invest and address the issues around sustainable tourism development and does not effectively market and promote itself, is that it remains static, falling behind other heritage cities, and this will become a barrier to growth for the city, reduce its’ competitiveness and hold back its development. There is a reputational risk to the city council for failing to have a strategy to achieve objectives set out in the City Plan.

5.4 Corporate/Policy Implications

The Tourism Strategy (and resulting delivery plan) will contribute to achieving the Council's City Plan including:

- Existing businesses retained and growing
- New businesses moving to and delivering success in Worcester
- Increase in people coming for overnight stays
- Increased turnover at key heritage sites
- Increased visitor numbers to all the city's venues and events
- Enhanced reputation as an attractive tourist destination
- Increased reputation as a destination with a major heritage appeal, in part through achieving Heritage City status
- Sustainable growth delivered for the city's tourism, leisure, accommodation, hospitality and catering businesses
- More accommodation for delivering more spend in tourist attractions
- National and international recognition for Worcester's unique history

5.5 Equality Implications

The Tourism Strategy is inclusive of people of all ages, genders, ethnicities, sexuality, abilities and beliefs. It takes account of stakeholder feedback in relation to improving accessibility through our infrastructure, improving accessibility for visitors with disabilities, ensuring Worcester keeps up with technological advancements; and development of its festivals and events offer to include different ethnicities and cultures.

5.6 Human Resources Implications

Management of the project will only be possible via existing resources until March 2017. We are therefore seeking an additional sum of £121,000 New Homes Bonus Corporate Priorities funding to finance the existing Tourism and Marketing Officer's salary costs for three years (from April 2017 until March 2020) to co-ordinate delivery of the Tourism Strategy and delivery Plan 2017-2022.

5.7 Health and Safety Implications

None.

Ward(s): All
Contact Officer: Carolyn Davies Tel: 01905 722195
Email: carolyn.davies@worcester.gov.uk
Background Papers: None