

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

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| 1. | Meeting: | Cabinet Member for Culture, Lifestyle, Sport and Tourism |
| 2. | Date: | 14th December, 2010 |
| 3. | Title: | Review of Tourism Service Provision |
| 4. | Directorate: | Environment and Development Services |

5. Summary

To consider the future of the Tourism Service.

6. Recommendations

That the Cabinet Member:

- 6.1 agrees to implement Option 3.**
- 6.2 agrees to retain the Visitor Centre as an important function in providing information for local people and supporting local businesses.**

7. Proposals and Details

7.1 Background

As part of the savings identified for financial year 2009/10 two posts in the Tourism Service were disestablished leaving only the post of Tourism Manager. Subsequent to this the Tourism Manager resigned in April 2010 and this post has not been filled and has been offered up as a temporary in year saving for Culture and Leisure, pending inclusion in wider budget discussions.

This has left the Events and Promotions Service with a difficult problem in that the remaining staff have little or no experience or capacity to carry out the Tourism function (see Appendix A for brief description of responsibilities) and, therefore, the team are currently only able to respond to sub-regional and regional enquiries from Tourism bodies and are not actively carrying out any promotional work relating to tourist attractions and accommodations in the Borough, other than general promotion through the Visitor Centre.

It should be noted that the Visitor Centre's role has gradually changed over the last year or so to focus more on providing local information for local people and the promotion of local town centre businesses and the Tourist Information Centre remit has become less prominent with only 30% of enquiries being related to provision of information on UK destinations. 70% of information requested relates to local events, accommodation providers, transport, leisure activities and general information. The Centre has become a key focus in the town centre in the promotion of local shops and businesses and now features a "Local Business of the Week" aimed at signposting visitors to different areas of the town centre. This has been extremely well received by businesses within the town.

Since April 2010 the Council's Tourism Panel (made up of 6 Elected Members and 6 Industry representatives, which meets 8 times per year) and the Tourism Forum (made up of representatives from the tourism industry in Rotherham which usually meets 3 times per year) have not met as no reports/agenda items have been generated due to the Tourism Manager post being vacant.

7.2 Options for the future

Outlined in Appendix B are options for the way forward. None of these options include the withdrawal of the Visitor Centre function as it is felt that this is a vital service that is offered in the town centre for both local people and local businesses.

8. Finance

Relevant savings are identified under each individual option. Option 3 if approved will offer a saving of £63,100 from 2011/12.

The savings on the Tourism Manager post are currently identified as part of the in-year savings for Culture and Leisure for 2010/11.

The Welcome to Yorkshire and British Resorts and Destinations subscriptions are due to be renewed on 1st April, 2011.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Risks for each proposed option are identified in Appendix B.

There may also be concern expressed from industry representatives on the Tourism Panel and Tourism Forum relating to the demise of these groups. However, they still have the opportunity to collaborate together and share information via the Yorkshire Tourism network.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The role of the Visitor Centre contributes to the Regeneration theme of enhancing the role and function of the town centre and ensuring it acts as a hub for social, economic and cultural activity for the wider area.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Appendix A – Brief description of responsibilities for Tourism Service

Appendix B – Options for the Future

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APPENDIX A

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES OF TOURISM SERVICE

Production of Tourism publications – Rotherham Mini Guide, On your Doorstep, Heritage Open Days, Group Travel Packs, Access Guide, Tourist Information point posters

Draft Visitor Economy Plan – progressing actions

Production/co-ordination of agenda items/reports for Tourism Panel/Tourism Forum.

Yorkshire South Tourism – work on projects, launches, etc.

Welcome to Yorkshire/Destination Performance UK City Group 4 – provision of information and attending meetings when required

Advice and guidance to Visitor Economy businesses – new start ups, developers, assistance with quality assessments, fire risk assessments, licensing, etc.

Provision of information to Welcome to Yorkshire/Yorkshire South Tourism.

Advice and guidance to other Council service areas on visitor economy/tourism issues/policy documents, e.g. Planning, Environmental Health, etc.

Organisation of annual Walking Festival

Research and maintaining up-to-date awareness of tourism issues and market trends

Familiarisation visits

APPENDIX B

OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Key: WTY = Welcome to Yorkshire support implication
RMBC = Rotherham Council delivery implication

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| Option 1 |
| Continue to provide a Tourism Service at the same level as has been delivered in recent years. Continue subscriptions to Welcome to Yorkshire and British Resorts and Destinations. |
| Advantages |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Major attractions in Rotherham would still enjoy the support of Welcome to Yorkshire (WTY).• There would be strategic representation at regional/sub-regional level – Strategic Director, Environment and Development Services, sits on the Yorkshire South Tourism Action Group (WTY).• Rotherham would still have presence on regional/sub-regional websites and access to sub-regional conference desk (WTY).• Would still have access to market intelligence reports/benchmarking and Yorkshire branded merchandise at a discounted rate (WTY).• Ability to buy into regional and national campaigns if required (WTY).• Direct support for the local tourism industry through e.g. Rotherham Mini Guide, Heritage Open Days leaflet could continue (RMBC).• Campaigns such as On Your Doorstep and events like the Walking Festival could continue (RMBC).• Direct support to accommodation and visitor attraction establishments (RMBC).• Tourism Panel and Tourism Forum could continue (RMBC). |
| Disadvantages |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Currently there is no one within the Events and Promotions Service team with a Tourism specialism. Therefore, there would be a need to recruit to the post of Tourism Manager (RMBC).• The responsibilities of the Tourism Manager would also need to be reviewed as the workload outlined in Appendix A was managed by 3 members of staff until April 2009 (RMBC).• There would be no efficiency savings (RMBC). |
| Cost Implications |
| The Tourism Manager post (currently vacant) would need to be filled and an operational budget would be needed (2010/11 service budget is £70,600). Currently £28,000 saving has been identified in the 10/20/30% budget saving proposals. This could not be achieved with this option as a budget of £70,600 would be required to cover both staffing and operational costs. |
| Risks |
| Since the Tourism Manager post became vacant in April 2010 there has been little direct support to the tourism industry in Rotherham. If this support is reinstated it may raise expectations of the industry and it would then be difficult to make possible efficiency savings going forward into the future. |

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| Option 2 |
| Negotiate with an external body (e.g. Welcome to Yorkshire or another local authority) to deliver a tourism service on our behalf. Continue with subscription to Welcome to Yorkshire, but cancel subscription to British Resorts and Destinations. |
| Advantages |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There would still be some support for the tourism industry in Rotherham. • The Council could develop a service level agreement to specify exactly the type of service expected to be delivered with measurable outputs. • Major attractions in Rotherham would still enjoy the support of Welcome to Yorkshire (WTY). • There would be strategic representation at regional/sub-regional level – Strategic Director, Environment and Development Services sits on the Yorkshire South Tourism Action Group (WTY). • Rotherham would still have presence on regional/sub-regional websites and access to sub-regional conference desk (WTY). • Would still have access to market intelligence reports and Yorkshire branded merchandise at a discounted rate (WTY). • Ability to buy into regional campaigns if required (WTY). |
| Disadvantages |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is likely that the level of tourism activity/support to the industry would be less than previously experienced (RMBC). • There would be no Council-led Tourism Panel or Tourism Forum (RMBC). • No RMBC organised and funded Walking Festival (RMBC). • No Council produced promotional material (RMBC). |
| Cost Implications |
| Costs relating to external delivery are unknown at this stage. Members would need to decide an acceptable level of spend and then external bodies would be invited to submit their proposals of what they could do for the budget available. Based on the 2010/11 service budget of £70,600 approximately £7,500 would have to be allocated for the subscription to Welcome to Yorkshire leaving £63,100 available for external delivery and to provide an efficiency saving. Currently £28,000 saving has been identified in the 10/20/30% budget saving proposals. This may not be achievable as it depends on the level of spend that Members decide upon. |
| Risks |
| The level of support that the local tourism industry has enjoyed in recent years would likely decrease which may result in negative feedback. |
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| Option 3 |
| Withdraw tourism service provision (including subscription to British Resorts and Destinations) but still subscribe to Welcome to Yorkshire. |
| Advantages |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major attractions in Rotherham would still enjoy the support of Welcome to Yorkshire (WTY). • There would be strategic representation at regional/sub-regional level – Strategic Director, Environment and Development Services, sits on the Yorkshire South Tourism Action Group (WTY). |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotherham would still have presence on regional/sub-regional websites and access to sub-regional conference desk (WTY). • Would still have access to market intelligence reports and Yorkshire branded merchandise at a discounted rate (WTY). • Ability to buy into regional campaigns if required (WTY). |
| <p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There would be no direct support for the local tourism industry through e.g. production of Rotherham Mini Guide, Heritage Open Days and On Your Doorstep leaflets, other than promotion of industry's own leaflets through the Visitor Centre (RMBC). • No RMBC organised and funded Walking Festival (RMBC). • No Council-led Tourism Panel and no Tourism Forum (RMBC). • Welcome to Yorkshire would still expect the Council to feed into market intelligence reports. This would be difficult to achieve if there is no one with a Tourism remit to respond to these and a relevant officer of the Council would need to be assigned to this role (RMBC). |
| <p>Cost Implications</p> <p>Approximately £7,500 would have to be allocated for the subscription to Welcome to Yorkshire. Based on the 2010/11 service budget of £70,600 the remaining £63,100 could be offered as an efficiency saving which increases the current saving identified in the 10/20/30% budget saving proposals by £35,100 (from £28,000).</p> |
| <p>Risks</p> <p>The level of support that the local tourism industry has enjoyed in recent years would likely decrease. There will be a loss of Council-led promotional opportunities for Rotherham as a place to visit. There may be negative feedback from both the public and the local tourism industry.</p> |
| <p>Option 4</p> <p>Stop tourism service altogether and withdraw subscriptions to Welcome to Yorkshire and British Resorts and Destinations.</p> |
| <p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This would realise a significant efficiency saving. |
| <p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No strategic representation at regional/sub-regional level (WTY). • Major attractions in Rotherham may not receive support from Welcome to Yorkshire (WTY). • No support for local tourism industry/projects (WTY/RMBC). • No presence on regional/sub-regional websites (WTY). • No access to sub-regional conference desk (WTY). • No production of tourism related material including Visitor Guide, tourist information point posters, Heritage Open Days leaflet, On your Doorstep campaign (RMBC). • No RMBC organised and funded Walking Festival (RMBC). • No Yorkshire based branded merchandise discounts (WTY). • No Welcome to Yorkshire literature (WTY). • No TIC support or affiliation to Enjoy England/Visit Britain (WTY). • No Council-led Tourism Panel or Tourism Forum (RMBC). |

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| Cost Implications |
| Including both staffing and operational budgets the total saving would be £70,600. |
| Risks |
| Local tourism industry businesses may suffer without support from the Council and Welcome to Yorkshire. There will be a loss of Council-led promotional opportunities for Rotherham as a place to visit. There may be negative feedback from both the public and the local tourism industry. |