

# TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## LEISURE and ARTS ADVISORY BOARD

23 May 2011

### Report of the Chief Leisure Officer

#### Part 1- Public

#### Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

#### 1 TOURISM MARKETING

##### Summary

**The purpose of this report is to seek Member approval to transfer this Council's tourism marketing services from the existing Heart of Kent Consortia to Visit Kent.**

#### 1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Members will be aware that this Council has been a partner of the Heart of Kent tourism marketing consortia since its formation. Other Councils currently represented on the Consortia include Maidstone Borough Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Ashford Borough Council.
- 1.1.2 By pooling resources between the Councils in the Consortia, the opportunity has been taken to promote tourism in the area more widely, both nationally and internationally. In order to deliver the Heart of Kent work programme, each partner contributes £9,000 annually to the budget, helping to deliver the annual Heart of Kent holiday guide; regular e-newsletters, networking events for local tourism businesses, advertising campaigns and a website, [www.visitheartofkent.co](http://www.visitheartofkent.co).
- 1.1.3 Members will be aware from the Cambridge Model report, reported to the last meeting of this Board, that tourism in Kent is worth more than £2.5 billion, supporting in the region of 50,000 jobs, and 2,865 jobs specifically in this Borough. Tourism is forecast to grow by 5% per annum over the next five years, and is clearly an important part of the local economy.
- 1.1.4 Visit Kent, originally set up by Kent County Council, is a private/public partnership which works on behalf of Tourism South East. Visit Kent is responsible for tourism marketing, development, training and research programmes for Kent as a whole. In 2009, Visit Kent generated an estimated £10.7 million into the Kent economy. Further information on Visit Kent can be found on [www.visitkent.co.uk](http://www.visitkent.co.uk).

## **1.2 Review of Current Arrangements**

- 1.2.1 In light of the current pressures facing local authorities the Heart of Kent partners have looked at ways tourism marketing can be sustained for the future and delivered most cost effectively.
- 1.2.2 Discussions have taken place with representatives from Visit Kent to provide a tourism marketing service for the future which, at no additional cost to the Council, would include the following:
- Web presence and digital content distribution strategy.
  - Core coverage for key tourism assets in the annual Visit Kent Magazine and seasonal e-versions.
  - Local B2B communications; bi-monthly e-newsletter, annual networking event, business database, discounted campaign and training offers for businesses.
  - Research, skills and development advice for local businesses.
  - Business barometer - monthly survey of business performance across Kent.
  - Opportunity to engage in planning and project working groups including the 2012 London Olympics.
  - Campaigns to engage with local businesses.
  - Feed to and from District to national bodies e.g. Visit England, UK Inbound and Visit Britain.

## **1.3 Benefits of Visit Kent**

- 1.3.1 By promoting the county as an attractive destination for holidays and events, Visit Kent aims to help investors attract more visitors. This achievement was recently recognised when Visit Kent won the title of Destination Marketing Organisation of the year at the 2009 UK Inbound Awards.
- 1.3.2 This Council's investment would be a core contribution to Visit Kent's work, with the remainder being spent on developing niche programmes, research and pilot projects specific to this Borough.
- 1.3.3 A transfer from the Heart of Kent to Visit Kent would mean that there will be less duplication of tourism marketing in the County, a stronger tourism profile and access to a dedicated tourism team.
- 1.3.4 With tourism being seen as the main industry to benefit from the 2012 Olympic Games, a partnership with Visit Kent would mean that this authority will be able to

maximise the benefits from any marketing campaigns linked to this event, more so than can be achieved with the limited budget maintained by Heart of Kent,

#### **1.4 The Way Forward**

- 1.4.1 Each of the other Heart of Kent partners has confirmed its intention to transfer its tourism marketing services to Visit Kent or undertake them directly in-house. Taking into account the significant benefits tourism brings to this Borough's economy, it is therefore proposed that this Council transfers its tourism marketing service from Heart of Kent to Visit Kent.

#### **1.5 Legal Implications**

- 1.5.1 The Heart of Kent Consortia will cease operating at the end of 2011, and a formal agreement will be developed with Visit Kent.

#### **1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.6.1 The new arrangement with Visit Kent will be at no additional cost to this Council, and, as outlined earlier in this report, it is anticipated that the Council will achieve more for its current investment.

#### **1.7 Risk Assessment**

- 1.7.1 There is a significant risk to the local economy if the Council does not continue to support its local tourism business and product.

#### **1.8 Equality Impact Assessment**

- 1.8.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

#### **1.9 Policy Considerations**

- 1.9.1 Community. Business Continuity/Resilience, Customer Contact

#### **1.10 Recommendations**

- 1.10.1 It is **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET** that the Council transfers its tourism marketing services from Heart of Kent to Visit Kent from 1 January 2012.

The Chief Leisure Officer confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Robert Styles

Nil

Robert Styles  
Chief Leisure Officer

<b>Screening for equality impacts:</b>		
<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Explanation of impacts</b>
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	The proposed transfer of tourism marketing services will maintain the Council's current level of support to the tourism sector.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	No	As above.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		Not applicable

*In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.*