

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**06 July 2017**

**Report of the Chief Executive**

**Part 1- Public**

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

**1 SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS (SLA) WITH VISIT KENT AND TOURISM SOUTH EAST**

**This report provides information on the Service Level Agreements that the Council currently has with two tourism bodies – Visit Kent and Tourism South East – and sets proposals for 2017/18.**

**1.1 Background**

1.1.1 In 2015, around 2.8 million people visited Tonbridge & Malling, spending approximately £119 million in the local economy. Tourism activity in the borough supports in the region of 3,000 jobs.

1.1.2 Although tourism is comparatively a small contributor to the local economy in comparison to other parts of the county, the Borough Council currently has annual Service Level Agreements with Visit Kent and Tourism South East that aim to promote and increase awareness of Tonbridge & Malling as a tourism destination.

1.1.3 The management of these agreements was passed over from Leisure Services to Economic Regeneration in March 2017.

**1.2 Overview of the Service Level Agreements for 2016/17**

1.2.1 The Visit Kent Service Level Agreement was £4,035 (plus £675 for additional research) in 2016/17, reduced from £13,135 in 2015/16. In 2016/17, the agreement covered the following areas:

- **Press and Marketing:** via the Visit Kent website ([www.visitkent.co.uk](http://www.visitkent.co.uk)), e-newsletter, press releases, familiarisation trips and InsideKent magazine.
- **Business Support:** via the collation of market intelligence (business barometer) and business advisory service.
- **Communications:** via networking events, weekly e-bulletin and district liaison meetings.

1.2.2 The Tourism South East Service Level Agreement was £2,000 in 2016/17, reduced from £3,645 in 2015/16. This 2016/17 agreement covered the following areas:

- **Press and Marketing:** via the Tourism South East website ([www.tourismsoutheast.com](http://www.tourismsoutheast.com)), social media (re-tweeting), familiarisation trips, annual media events, press releases and an Annual Group Travel Guide.
- **Communications:** via networking events and awards ceremonies, as well as lobbying on national issues on behalf of partners.
- **Discounts:** on campaigns, research services and training courses.

1.2.3 A comparison of the content of the two Service Level Agreements is set out in Appendix 1. This illustrates the extent to which the two agreements overlap. It is clear from this analysis that there is some overlap in the following areas:

- **Press and Marketing:** especially in terms of web presence, familiarisation trips, press release support and publications.
- **Communications:** including events and information sharing.

1.2.4 On the basis that there is duplication between the two agreements, it raises the question as to whether both agreements are still required and offer value for money, especially given the budgetary pressures that the Borough Council is currently experiencing.

### 1.3 Delivery during 2016/17:

1.3.1 An outline of the main activities that Visit Kent delivered during 2016/17 is set out in Appendix 2. This shows that Visit Kent have generally met the targets within the Service Level Agreement, apart from the following:

- Number of visits on to the Tonbridge & Malling webpages: this was down on the previous year, in part due to the fact that the website was completely redesigned.
- No familiarisation tour for trade operators took place
- The Business Advisory Service was not used by local businesses.

1.3.2 However, there was some additional activity in the form of additional social media activity and inclusion within new marketing campaigns.

1.3.3 The relationship with Tourism South East is more akin to a membership subscription, although there is a Service Level Agreement in place. The Service Level Agreement is reliant on the individual member organisation having a level of tourism resource that can take advantage of the support that they can provide, for example sending out tourism-related social media messaging that can be retweeted, actively taking part in campaigns or training in order to access

discounts or the provision of information that can then be supplied to Tourism South East in order to raise the profile of the borough as a tourism destination.

- 1.3.4 As such, whilst there has been some activity in promoting the borough on their website and marketing materials, the level of value for money extracted from the agreement has been limited.

#### **1.4 Proposed Next Steps:**

- 1.4.1 It is proposed that the council does not enter into a new annual agreement with Tourism South East, but the Service Level Agreement with Visit Kent is retained, albeit at a reduced level – up to a maximum of £3,500 for 2017/18. Such an approach would offer up additional savings on existing budgets.

- 1.4.2 The main reason for retaining Visit Kent rather than Tourism South East is simply that there is scope for Tonbridge & Malling to have a higher profile with Visit Kent than it can through Tourism South East simply due to geographical scale. This is illustrated at present through the existing websites of the two organisations. In addition, Visit Kent has the dedicated resources to proactively promote our tourism offer and include our businesses within their various campaigns.

- 1.4.3 A Service Level Agreement with Visit Kent for 2017/18 could look to retain the following as a minimum:

- Dedicated presence for Tonbridge and Malling on [www.visitkent.co.uk](http://www.visitkent.co.uk) – at present the site has dedicated pages for ‘Tonbridge’ and ‘Malling’. However, with the ‘Malling’ page getting lower visitor numbers, there could be scope to merge the two pages in order to attract greater traffic for the ‘Malling’ attractions.
- Inclusion of the Borough within Press Releases and Social Media
- Coverage of the Borough within InsideKent Magazine
- Business Advisory Service (carried forward from 2016/17)
- Receipt of regular e-bulletins and business intelligence.

- 1.4.4 The majority of the actions that the Borough Council would look to discontinue (such as some of the travel trade activities) could potentially be picked up through arrangements between existing private sector members in our Borough and Visit Kent.

#### **1.5 Legal Implications**

- 1.5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

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

- 1.6.1 These are addressed in Section 1.4.1 of this report.

#### **1.7 Risk Assessment**

1.7.1 Not applicable.

## **1.8 Equality Impact Assessment**

1.7.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

## **1.9 Recommendations**

1.9.1 That the proposal to not renew the Service Level Agreement with Tourism South East in 2017/18 **BE AGREED.**

1.9.2 That the proposal to reduce the Service Level Agreement with Visit Kent in 2017/18 to a maximum of £3,500 **BE AGREED.**

1.9.3 That the inclusion of the activities set out in 1.4.3 **BE AGREED.**

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and the Chief Executive confirm that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

None

contact: Jeremy Whittaker,  
Economic Regeneration  
Officer

Julie Beilby  
Chief Executive