

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

04 June 2018

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 VISIT KENT SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT 2018

This report provides information on the Service Level Agreement that the Council currently has with Visit Kent and sets out proposals for 2018/19.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The most recent statistics relating to tourism in Tonbridge & Malling come from the Cambridge Economic Impact Research (published in December 2016). These statistics show that in 2015:

- Around 2.8 million people visited the borough, of these around 2.6 million were day visitors.
- 47,000 overseas visitors stayed overnight in the borough.
- Spending from these visits added approximately £160 million into the local economy.
- Tourism activity in the borough supports in the region of 3,150 jobs.

1.1.2 These figures, when compared to the previous statistics in 2013, show a 2.9% growth in the number of visitors, a 1.8% increase in expenditure and a 0.4% increase in jobs over the two year period.

1.1.3 Although tourism is comparatively a small contributor to the local economy in comparison to other parts of the county, the Borough Council currently has an annual Service Level Agreement with Visit Kent that aims to promote and increase awareness of Tonbridge & Malling as a tourism destination.

1.2 Overview of the Service Level Agreements for 2017/18

1.2.1 The Visit Kent Service Level Agreement was £3,500 in 2017/18, having been reduced over the course of a few years from just over £13,000 in 2015/16. In 2017/18, the agreement covered the following areas:

- Digital Marketing – including dedicated destination pages for Tonbridge and Malling on the Visit Kent website; as well as enhanced promotional features (feature boxes) and itinerary pages.
- Public Relations –including dedicated press releases and features in the InsideKENT magazine.
- Marketing Campaigns – encouraging local SME businesses to get involved with campaigns such as the ‘Big Weekend’, ‘2for1’ and ‘Gardens and Gourmet’.
- Research – access to data from the Business Barometer and opportunities to partner in research projects as they arise.
- Network and Communications – District Officer meetings, Visit Kent networking events and monthly B2B e-newsletters.

1.3 Delivery during 2017/18

1.3.1 Over the course of 2017/18, Visit Kent delivered a range of activities to promote Tonbridge and Malling as a tourist destination. These are:

Digital Marketing - in total there were 14,340 page views on the Tonbridge destination page of the Visit Kent website and 8,186 page views on the Malling destination page. In addition Tonbridge and Malling featured on the homepage on two separate occasions, as well as Oldbury Hill Camping and Caravanning Club (in May 2017) and Café 1809 (in December 2017).

In addition, Tonbridge and Malling attractions were listed in themed content on the website on 12 occasions during this period.

Public Relations - 2 attractions (Tonbridge Castle and Ightham Mote) were included in press itineraries. In June 2017, Belgian Journalists from Pasar Magazine visited Tonbridge Castle, and in July 2017, Dutch Journalists from Reizen Magazine visited Ightham Mote. In addition, Visit Kent disseminated 8 press releases featuring Tonbridge and Malling businesses.

Campaigns – A total of 6 local businesses signed up to (and benefitted from) the Big Weekend – Great Comp Garden, the Hop Farm, Ightham Mote, Nemes Diving & Water Sports Academy, Tonbridge Castle and Tonbridge River Tours. This campaign had a total media reach of over 1 million people. In addition, 5 local businesses engaged with other smaller campaigns such as the ‘2 for 1’ campaign and Gardens and Gourmet.

Travel Trade - there were a number of features within the 2017 Group Travel Guide, including the 200th Anniversary of the death of Jane Austen (and her links to Tonbridge); The War & Peace Revival at The Hop Farm; Karting at Buckmore Park and the portrait of the ‘Young Lady in White’ by John Singer Sargent at Ightham Mote.

Research – 22 businesses in Tonbridge and Malling now contribute to the Business Barometer and receive the resulting research analysis.

1.4 Proposed Next Steps

1.4.1 Although Visit Kent have clearly done a considerable amount of work to promote the borough as a tourism destination, given the continued pressures on budgets it is proposed that the Borough Council maintains the same level of expenditure for the 2018/19 Service Level Agreement (£3,500), with this cost being met through existing economic development budgets.

1.4.2 As a minimum, the Borough Council would look to include the following as a minimum within the agreement:

- Dedicated presence for both Tonbridge and Malling on www.visitkent.co.uk
- Greater publicity for the Borough, and especially Borough Council owned attractions, in order to help raise its profile and increase visitor numbers.
- Increased opportunities for local tourism businesses to link in to Visit Kent campaigns.
- Inclusion of the Borough and local attractions within Press Releases and Social Media
- Receipt of regular e-bulletins and useful business intelligence.

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 continue the Service Level Agreement with Visit Kent in 2018/19 at the same level as 2017/18 (a maximum of £3,500) **BE AGREED.**

1.9.2 That the inclusion of the activities set out in 1.4.2 **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