

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

17 June 2019

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 2019

This report provides information on the Service Level Agreement that the Council currently has with Visit Kent and sets out proposals for 2019/20.

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 2018). These statistics show that in 2017:

- Around 3.03 million people visited the borough (up from 2.80 million in 2015), of these around 2.8 million were day visitors (up from 2.6 million in 2015).
- Spending from these visits added approximately £174 million into the local economy (up from £160 million in 2015).
- Tourism activity in the borough supports in the region of 3,430 jobs (up from 3,150 jobs in 2015).

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 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 Agreement for 2018/19

1.2.1 The Visit Kent Service Level Agreement was £3,590 in 2018/19, having been reduced over the course of a few years from just over £13,000 in 2015/16. In 2018/19, the agreement covered the following areas:

- Digital Marketing – including dedicated destination pages for Tonbridge and Malling as well as promotional features on the Visit Kent website; promotion of attractions and accommodation through social media and Visit Kent blog posts.
- Press Releases – including dedicated press releases circulated to media contacts, inclusion within the '48 hours in....' itineraries and support for press trips.

- Marketing Campaigns – opportunities for inclusion within the ‘Big Weekend’, ‘2for1’ and ‘Kent Tourism Awards’ campaigns
- Research – use of the business barometer, access to the Cambridge Model Economic Impact Study and other research on the Visit Kent business website.
- Business Support and Development – including Familiarisation Trips, Tourism Business Advisory Service and District Dashboard, which provides information about the area for hotel developers and press.
- Communications – invitations to update meetings and networking events, as well as supply of monthly e-newsletter.

1.2.2 In addition to the activities set out above, Visit Kent also highlight other activities that could be undertaken for an additional cost – such as involvement in the ‘Kent Contemporary’ campaign, ‘World Host customer service training sessions for local tourism businesses, or additional research activities. TMBC did not pursue any of these additional activities during 2018/19.

1.3 Delivery during 2018/19

1.3.1 Over the course of 2018/19, Visit Kent delivered a range of activities to promote Tonbridge and Malling as a tourist destination. These are:

Digital Marketing - in total there were just under 10,000 page views on the Tonbridge destination page of the Visit Kent website and around 5,000 page views on the Malling destination page. In addition Tonbridge and Malling attractions featured as themed content on the homepage on 20 separate occasions.

Marketing Campaigns – A total of 6 local businesses signed up to (and benefited from) the Big Weekend – Great Comp Garden, the Hop Farm Family Park, Ightham Mote, Tonbridge Castle, Nemes Diving & Water Sports Academy and Aylesford Pottery. This campaign had a total media reach of 700,000 people.

Research – 25 businesses in Tonbridge and Malling now contribute to the Business Barometer and receive the resulting research analysis. Work on the Cambridge Model Economic Impact Study has also been undertaken, providing the information set out under paragraph 1.1.1.

Travel Trade – Staff from TMBC went to the Eurotunnel Terminal in Coquelles to promote Tonbridge Castle to French Group Travel organisers in October 2018. There was a lot of interest in Tonbridge Castle as a stop off destination on the route into London. Outside of this event, Tonbridge Castle was also recommended to two European travel trade operators.

Business Support – a Familiarisation Tour of the Borough was undertaken in spring 2018 helping to raise the profile of the borough amongst Visit Kent staff, and a ‘District Dashboard’ has been produced containing key information about the Borough.

Communications – series of networking events delivered and monthly e-newsletters provided.

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 a similar level of expenditure for the 2019/20 Service Level Agreement. This will equate to an increase of £90 due to inflationary costs (total £3,680). This cost will be 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
- Continued 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

1.8.1 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 2019/20 at the level set out in 1.4.1 (a maximum of £3,680) **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

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