

TOURISM REVIEW WORKING PARTY

Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2023 at 5.30 pm in the Online Only.

Present: Councillor Leo Britcher (Chair); Councillors Austin, D Green and Kup

In Attendance: Councillors: Fellows, Bright, Davis, Keen, Manners and Munns

8. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Packman.

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

10. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Austin proposed, Councillor Britcher seconded and Members agreed the minutes of the working party meeting held on 26 October 2023 to be a correct record.

11. EVIDENCE GATHERING SESSION

The Chair invited Members to share any experiences and thoughts regarding the negative impact of tourism in the district and any views or ideas for mitigating such impacts. Members made the following comments:

- The volume of traffic due to tourists and lack of facilities for toilets and litter as well as urinating in residents' gardens were some of the problems faced in some parts of the district;
- It might help if the council provided for overnight camping facilities on the beaches;
- Enforcement remained an issue. There were no fixed penalty notices issues despite having PSPOs;
- Currently the Council's enforcement officers were only educational as they did not have the powers to issue fixed notice penalties;
- The Council should consider monetising visits at the Botany Bay;
- It was important for the working party to come up with realistic recommendations for consideration by Cabinet;
- An approach for issuing out cleansing contracts that were dependent on the weather should be considered;
- The Council should consider setting up tourist facilities (AIRES) each year and these would offer overnight parking on preferential rates for these visitors. This approach was currently being practised elsewhere in Europe;
- AIRES in France have modest facilities like grey water and back water for kitchen, bathing and toilet use;
- At Kingsgate and Botany Bays there were no parking facilities and very few toilets for visitors;
- There were a number of successful events that were hosted in the district. However, organisers for these events, such as the Folk Week and Dickens Week sometimes felt unsupported by the Council;
- There was a need for the Council to communicate effectively with events organisers;
- Parish and Town Councils would be welcome the opportunity to work with TDC in supporting events organisers;

- Could a topic on how TDC can work with Parish and Town Councils in supporting events organisers be added to the OSP Work Programme?
- During covid there was extra funding that was allocated to beach cleaning. Could this allocation be re-introduced?
- Could the toilets on beaches be opened for longer?
- Could the option to introduce the AIREs be considered where different car parks could be used to set up AIREs?
- There was space at Palm Bay for setting up such a facility;
- There were a number of individuals with AIREs experience in the local communities who could be asked to assist with setting up AIREs facilities;
- It might be a good idea for the Council to provide more concessions in Kingsgate;
- There were no incentives for visitors to use beach car parking. This should be looked at through the ongoing parking review;
- Jos Bay and Palm Bay could be monetised in Winter to set up a caravan parking site;
- Currently there were a number of camp sites that were being advertised in the district. Waste from these sites was being channelled into the sea;
- Although the Council could move people on from certain sites, they were not allowed to charge them if there were no facilities being offered at those sites.

Chris Blundell, Director of Corporate Services & Section 151 Officer and Penny Button, Head of Neighbourhoods responded to Member comments and questions as follows:

- The value of parking income was typically £200k off season car parking and £300k during the peak times;
- On average the Council received about £400k per year in car parking income;
- The cost of cleaning beaches was easily covered by car parking income as it cost the Council about £120k per year to clean Thanet beaches;
- AIREs did not cost free to establish and manage;
- Due to the nature of the location of the various car parks setting AIREs would require additional infrastructure to make AIREs facilities work in Thanet. This infrastructure would include facilities like water for kitchen and toilet use. This would come at a significant cost to the Council;
- Plans for public toilets were due to go to OSP and Cabinet;
If the Council was to introduce parking schemes their primary purpose would be about introducing effective traffic control not for revenue income. This is in order to comply with the Traffic Act 1984;
- It was hoped that the new Parking Strategy when finalised would address the issue of parking schemes;
- Unofficial parking in Walpole Bay would need addressing by officers;
- If the Council were to introduce overnight car parking stays, there would be a need to change traffic regulations;
- Seasonal parking schemes could be introduced;
- Park and ride could be added to the ongoing parking review alongside other measures;
- When suggesting solutions, it was worth noting the resource implications.

The Chair asked Members to offer suggestions and recommendations to be included in the working report. Members made the following suggestions:

- Broadstairs Town Council had agreed with PROBE to continue engagement with PROBE security to patrol beaches and the costs would be accommodated in the annual budget;
- The Council could engage Community Police Officers regarding tackling ASB;
- Improving signage on beaches;
- Patrolling car parks;

- The Council should have a joined up approach regarding monitoring ASB with support from agencies that can enforce ASB;
- The multi-agency ASB monitoring and enforcement approach should be finalised by end of March, ahead of the summer season;
- The Council could consider setting up event toilets along the beach. The Council could collaborate with hotel owners on this project;
- It would be a better approach if public toilets were within private business premises that operated on Council leases of TDC properties;
- TDC could make it a condition for renewing the lease or licence;
- There was a need for traffic control in problem spots where vehicles were driven over pavements, particularly in Botany and Palm Bays;
- The Council could consider introducing park and ride services in order to manage the impact of traffic flow.

Democratic Services were going to draft the structure of the working party report and circulate to Members to add content that would include recommendations before taking the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel in early 2024.

Meeting concluded: 6.30 pm