

TOURISM REVIEW WORKING PARTY

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2023 at 5.30 pm in the Virtual Meeting.

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Fellows.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

3. EVIDENCE GATHERING SESSION

The Chair introduced Louise Askew (Head of Regeneration and Growth) to give a presentation to the committee and made the following points:

- The team operated through the Destination Management Framework, this was to help develop higher-value tourism to make sure Thanet stayed sustainable through tourism;
- Tourism was currently worth £212m to the local economy and supported approximately 5,831 jobs in the district;
- The Volume and Value Survey of Tourism was conducted every two years and used the Cambridge Economic Impact Model;
- 2019 figures showed that Thanet had 4.6 million visitors;
- The Kent Residents - Thanet Survey results showed that there wasn't much difference between the Summer Wave and Winter Wave responses to the question "Do you consider your local area to be a tourist destination?" and showed that coastal beaches were the biggest perceived main attractions in Thanet;
- 82% of residents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "I support Summer tourism in my local area"

Following the presentation, discussion raised the following questions and points:

- Members asked how different authorities handled issues regarding tourism and whether or not Thanet District Council would benefit from an official Tourism Strategy. Officers responded by saying that there wasn't a need for a Tourism Strategy as tourism was included in the Economic Development Strategy. The authority also worked with the sector via the destination management plan and elements could be managed via the Local Plan Process.
- It was raised that 191 responses were received from local people in the area and Members asked if these could be shown on a map to see how vocal different areas were. Officers said that they could ask for more detailed data gathering in the future, however there was only enough funding for the Cambridge model of surveying. Officers explained that there was a changing demographic of visitors to the district; this was partly due to an increase in the number of people visiting friends and families.
- Members asked if TDC could gather information from different areas around Kent and other coastal areas to ask how they handle parking issues. Officers responded by saying that it would be possible, but TDC would need to be clear what specific questions we would ask;

- Members discussed the idea of making parking in the area cheaper during the weekends, in an attempt to encourage more people to support local businesses on those days. Officers said that it could be looked at when TDC reviewed their Parking Strategy;
- Members and officers expressed concerns over AirBNB and its impact on local holiday lets in Thanet, as it made a significant impact on the local Housing Market. Officers said AirBnB was a national issue that needed national solutions, but they hoped that the Council would ultimately be provided with the means to keep up standards and enforcement. Officers stated that TDC would support a national register of short term holiday lets.
- Members asked officers if generating a profit for the Council would be considered being included in its long term strategy in regards to parking. Officers replied that the parking service could not make a “profit” and charges could only be made to control traffic flow.
- Members expressed concern that high road charges and venue charges would raise the costs of different events, discouraging organisers from using Thanet; Officers explained to the Members that there was an event process that TDC followed, through a multi-agency approach where impacts on the area were taken into consideration.
- Members touched upon the subject of waste left behind from visitors to the area, especially in terms of the waste left behind on Thanet’s beaches. Members pointed out the improvement of waste management, thanks in part due to larger receptacles on different locations on the beaches. Officers told members that procedures were followed to make sure recycling was a priority and these bins had been successful in improving that, especially around the Summer months.

Meeting concluded: 6.28 pm