

TOURISM REVIEW WORKING PARTY

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2023 at 5.30 pm in the Online Only.

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

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

6. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Members agreed the minutes as a correct record of the meeting held on 12 September 2023.

7. EVIDENCE GATHERING SESSION

In the absence of Councillor Britcher, Councillor Austin chaired the meeting and invited Penny Button, Head of Neighbourhoods to lead the discussion first by sharing her views regarding the negative impact of tourism in Thanet and what lessons the Council could learn from other district councils that have faced similar experiences.

During her presentation, Penny Button made the following comments:

- TDC had worked with event organisers to make them a worthwhile and positive experience for visitors and local residents;
- There were some youth gatherings in Broadstairs and Margate;
- These gatherings at certain spots were usually more prevalent at the beginning of the summer season. This peaked after the school exams;
- More recently that had been at the beginning of the school holidays;
- The Council worked with Kent Police on these issues. However, resources were limited;
- Having knowledge of the local issues and environment was important in tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB);
- Getting adequate numbers of police officers to patrol hotspots for youth ASB especially at peak times was always a challenge;
- The Council was also facing the challenge of individuals who were camping on beaches;
- Getting adequate officer numbers for enforcement was a challenge;
- TDC officers went on a learning visit to Bournemouth in 2021 to see if they could emulate some of the approaches used by Bournemouth City Council;

- Bournemouth had one beach and Thanet had three;
- Bournemouth had a location on the beach where all agencies met daily to discuss enforcement issues. They had CCTV inside the meeting venue so they were always monitoring activities on their beach;
- Bournemouth also used the Beach Check app for monitoring and they actively input information in the app;
- TDC's beach enforcement should use this app;
- Zoning was also useful for attending and responding to incidents on beaches;

- Bournemouth's Community Safety Team was accredited and the Police just gives them some of their enforcement powers;
- TDC was looking into that accreditation in order for the Community Safety Team to have more powers to enforce;
- However, accreditation was an expensive exercise.

Members made comments and asked questions as follows:

- With regards to accreditation of officers in the Community Safety Team, could TDC provide accreditation training subject to those officers staying with the Council for a stipulated number of years?
- Could the Council stop advertising Botany Bay?
- Were there any places near the popular places where parking could be provided and prevent access from those points?
- Could signage for locating bins be made bigger and more visible for visitors to these popular sites?
- Placing bins by bus stops would also mitigate against littering;
- What was the potential for parking for coaches?
- Considering that most of the enforcement activities were informal in terms of resolution of anti-social behaviour, what data did the Council have that could be used to understand the impact of PSPOs?
- Was there a way of working with local community groups who organise events so that charges were not as high as they currently were?
- Was there anything that officers would like the working party to recommend to the Overview & Scrutiny Panel out this investigation?
- Could the working party meet with Kent Police?

Penny Button responded to Member questions and comments as follows:

- TDC could consider providing accreditation of officers working in the Community Safety Team in order for them to exercise additional powers that could be delegated to them by Kent Police;
- The Community Safety Team has day to day duties in addition to attending to Anti-Social Behaviour incidents;
- However, the officers were not patrolling officers;
- With regards to parking issues; TDC was limited in what it could do as this was a KCC Highways function;
- The Parking Strategy that TDC was working on would hopefully improve off-street parking and parking areas for visitors;
- Parking at Botany Bay was more difficult to address because there was no potential;
- Significant work had been carried out regarding coming up with a residents parking scheme. However, this did not get the Joint Transportation Board approval;
- A number of residents rented out their parking spaces and garages;
- The Council could consider single lines to enforce parking rules. However, the Council did not have towing powers;
- The Council could come up with a trial but this would require access to a 24-hour storage;
- This summer and the one before there were a lot less complaints received regarding parking at Botany Bay and Jos Bay;
- There were camper van restrictions and the Council was getting both positive and negative feedback regarding parking;

- Maybe the Council was missing a trick by not providing camper van parking facilities with basic provisions;
- Currently there was a £10 per night camper van parking charge in place;
- The Council could consider having a campsite dedicated to pitching of tents not just for camper vans only;
- However, this would not stop ASB completely;
- The Community Safety Team had weekly meetings with Kent Police;
- It was important to think in advance and plan early in order to bid for resources early; say in January of each year;
- Botany Bay has not been advertised for years. It was still popular because it was an iconic place due film and television shots that took place there;
- It was not possible for the Council to prevent access to the two Bays as the public had access rights to those places;
- Issuing of bin bags and having big signs for where to locate bins might help with mitigating littering;
- Dane Road in Broadstairs and a parking space in Cliftonville were the only sites where there was a potential for coach parking;
- The Dreamland was no longer available as it was sold;
- KCC could be requested to take in planning for parking in those potential sites mentioned above;
- The coach park issue would be raised as part of the Parking Strategy;
- The working party should also consider the impact of ASB in relation to jet ski activities;
- There was a spike in summer for ASB related to drinking alcohol;
- There was new legislation that was coming that would make anti-social behaviour activities on beaches a criminal offence;
- With regards to events, some of the events started small but were now attracting 40,000 people. This meant that these events were no longer community events but rather commercial events;
- Event fees were £375 per day for most events at the highest end and £75 per day at the lowest end;
- Suspension of parking charges during events would be a decision that would require KCC consent;
- Campervan parking facilities would benefit the local area significantly;
- It was important to consider putting more funding into tackling ASB to enable TDC to work better with other agencies. However, the key issue would still be getting adequate numbers of staff to monitor and tackle those ABS activities;
- The working party would benefit in their research from having a discussion with Lisa Collingwood, Beach and Coast Manager;
- Officers were going to approach Kent Police to see if they would be available to discuss this subject with the working party.

Meeting concluded: 6.25 pm