

JOINT CULTURE, LEISURE AND TOURISM & REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

13 May 2011

The meeting commenced at 3.00 pm at the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Pamela Hargreaves (Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio Holder)

Councillor Hilary Thompson (Culture, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Damien Wilson, Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning)
Antony Steinberg, Economic Development Manager
Jo Cole, Principal Economic Development Officer (Tourism)
Jo Stubbs, Democratic Services Officer

1. Appointment of Chair

Councillor Hilary Thompson was appointed as Chair for the meeting.

2. Tourism Business Support Post Area Tourism Partnership (ATP) *(Assistant Director (Regeneration and Planning))*

Type of Decision

Non-key

Purpose of Report

To inform of the future support the Council can make to the tourist economy in light of recent changes and seek comment and endorsement of this and of the regional and sub regional transition arrangements.

Issues for Consideration by Portfolio Holders

The visitor economy has an important role to play in assisting economic development goals in Hartlepool and the wider Tees Valley. In 2009 research estimated the value of this economy to Hartlepool as £49.7 million while regionally tourism was valued at bringing £3.8

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billion into the economy and directly employing 51,000 people. In recent years the visitor economy had been supported by the One North East Tourism Network, supported by four sub-regional Area Tourism Partnerships of which Hartlepool was represented by visitTeesvalley. The local authority role was to work with the regional and sub-regional partnerships to gain the greatest opportunities for business support and marketing for the visitor economy in Hartlepool whilst also delivering a series of projects bespoke to Hartlepool.

Following the election of the coalition government the following changes to the tourism structures had been announced:

- One NorthEast tourism function to cease by December 2011. The marketing function had stopped and the rest of the year would be spent on the regional website, database management system (desti.ne) and research in partnership with the Northern Tourism Alliance.
- The budget of Tees Valley Unlimited (of which visitTeesvalley was part) was cut from £7.4 million to £2.2 million which led to visitTeesvalley ceasing to exist by March 2011. TVU have provided a one year Transitional Tourism Post to engage with Tourism Officers within Tees Valley in engaging the Transitional Plan.
- The new Government Tourism policy to be launched from March 2011. While this recognises the importance of tourism to the economy future policy aims have changed with more emphasis on partnership and private sector leadership and engagement.

The loss of external funding opportunities would also impact on future projects and developments. Regional Growth Fund was an option for large scale projects smaller initiatives would struggle to access this and the Council would need to consider programme bids to support smaller businesses. Given these changes a number of proposals had been made to support Hartlepool's visitor economy. These were detailed in the report and included the delivery of key campaigns to promote Hartlepool, the enhancement of the destinationhartlepool.com website and the continuation of Golf Week, carried out in conjunction with Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council. The Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio Holder requested further information on this event. The Principal Economic Development Officer (Tourism) advised that it offered golfers from around the country the opportunity to play in a series of competitions at 2 of Hartlepool's golf clubs for a reduced rate. Set up approximately six years ago officers estimated that by 2012 the event would pay for itself in terms of promotion and delivery. Stockton Borough Council have also developed a similar event and there have been discussions between the Councils to avoid unnecessary

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competition. The Assistant Director felt there might be scope to extend the events and market them as a Tees Valley golf tour while the Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio Holder felt younger golfers could be a prime target.

The Chair commented that Hartlepool now had a much higher profile following the Tall Ships. However the loss of One North East and the associated visitTeesvalley tourism function meant the Council should continue to support small to medium businesses such as restaurants and B&Bs. The Principal Economic Development Officer (Tourism) acknowledged this, saying that the Eat guide to restaurants had been developed in response to the needs of businesses in this area. Officers were also engaging with hotel marketing managers and other businesses within an interest in the visitor economy through the Passport Group. The Chair also made reference to the additional support being given to the educational sector. The Principal Economic Development Officer (Tourism) indicated that this was support in the form of bespoke tourism training opportunities and advice on tourism as a career rather than financial incentives.

The Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio Holder requested further information on future plans for the regional database management system (desti.ne). The Principal Economic Development Officer (Tourism) advised that desti.ne, which covered the whole of the North East, had been five years in the making but the contract was due to end in March 2012. At that point it was hoped that the Northern Tourism Alliance would take over and all options were being looked at however it was also thought that desti.ne would probably no longer exist as a regional database after that. Officers were working closely with Middlesbrough Council on a potential future database management system. The Portfolio Holder urged officers to ensure that the information which had already been uploaded was retained rather than reinvest in work which had already been done.

The Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio Holder also referred to the current review and streamlining of the Council's website, asking whether Destination Hartlepool were involved in this. The Principal Economic Development Officer (Tourism) reported that they were not but they were engaging with Cultural Services and the Countryside Team in consolidating their activity within the destinationhartlepool portfolio. The Portfolio Holder queried whether the separate websites had shared functionality and the Principal Economic Development Officer (Tourism) confirmed that all the Council websites were developed by the same company. The Portfolio Holder asked to be shown a map of how the various websites slotted together.

The Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio Holder highlighted the success of the Eat Guide. She had previously requested information as to the process for new businesses being

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included. In terms of the branding the Portfolio Holder was keen to ensure that the Council were given credit for the guide as a positive piece of work. The Principal Economic Development Officer (Tourism) confirmed that the Council logo appeared on the rear of the publication however officers were keen to ensure the guide was not over-branded.

The Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio Holder queried the necessity of the 2 key networking groups – Passport and Hotels. The Economic Development Manager confirmed that these groups were very successful in encouraging businesses to help and support each other. The Portfolio Holder asked how new members were encouraged to take part. The Principal Economic Development Officer (Tourism) advised that hoteliers were able to join the Hotels Group while Passport was happy to include people with an interest in the local visitor economy. Current members included representatives from Navigation Point, Hartlepool United Football Club and the Historic Quay. The Portfolio Holder queried how people were made aware of the existence of this group and the Principal Economic Development Officer (Tourism) acknowledged that more could be done to encourage new blood.

The Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio Holder asked what impact the budget cuts would have on the work of the department. The Principal Economic Development Officer (Tourism) indicated that consideration was being given into ways to generate income through tourism, such as advertising and sponsorship. Golf Week was also a notable income generator as were the tourism publications. The website was viewed as the next opportunity to explore. The Portfolio Holder suggested that the Buy Local campaign could also be utilised and that Destination Hartlepool be further developed through social media such as Twitter and Facebook. The Principal Economic Development Officer (Tourism) felt it was more cost effective to continue to use the current developer but the Portfolio Holder urged officers to ensure this was allowable on a procurement basis. They did not feel there would be any issues in relation to this but would ensure that correct procedures were being followed.

The Assistant Director suggested that members might wish to see updates on the key priorities for the coming year. Members requested that these be brought to them in October 2011 and March 2012. The Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio Holder further asked that more information on golf week, the Destination Hartlepool site map and the process for new businesses being included in the Eat guide be forwarded to her.

Decision

- I. That the overall support to the tourism economy be noted in light of the current changes.

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- II. That the membership of the Passport Group be reviewed and the opportunity to take part be promoted to other interested parties
- III. That a site map detailing the relationships between the various HBC websites be forwarded to the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Economic Development.

The meeting concluded at 4:15 pm.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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