



To be submitted to the Council at its meeting on the 17th September 2020

TOURISM AND VISITOR ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL

29th July, 2020 at 10.00 a.m.

Present:

Councillor Brookes (in the Chair)

Councillors Cairns (sub for Callison), Hyldon-King, Mickleburgh, Parkinson and Rogers

Officers in attendance:

- Anne Campbell (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Laura Cowie (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Wendy Fisher (Capital and Assets Programme Manager)
- Guy Lonsdale (Deputy Section 151 Officer)
- Helen Thompson (Investment Manager, Economy and Growth)

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Callum Procter, Portfolio Holder for Tourism, Heritage and Culture

SPTVE.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies for absence from Councillors Abel and Callison for this meeting. An apology for absence was also received from Councillor Freeston following the closure of the meeting.

SPTVE.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received in respect of any item on the agenda for this meeting.

SPTVE.3 MINUTES

The minutes of the Tourism and Visitor Economy meeting held on 13th February 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

SPTVE.4 QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public for this meeting.

SPTVE.5 FORWARD PLAN

The panel received the current Forward Plan and members were asked to identify any items for examination by this Panel via the pre-decision call-in procedure.

Ms Campbell advised that other than the routine monitoring reports to be referred to all scrutiny panels, there were no further items on the Forward Plan specifically for this panel.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be noted.

SPTVE.6 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY

The panel received a report from the Director for Communities tracking the recommendations of the Tourism and Visitor Economy Scrutiny Panel.

Ms Campbell confirmed that all items from the tracking had either been picked up in this year's Work Programme or an update had been provided. At SPTVE. 40, A Strategic Approach to Tourism in NEL, Ms Campbell explained that due to COVID-19 and the rapidly changing economic climate the work had been delayed, but reassured Members that this would still be a joint piece of work with the Economy Scrutiny Panel. Members questioned what the delay was with the strategy before COVID struck, as it had been a couple of years since this first came to the attention of the panel. A written response from the Director of Economy and Growth would be sought and shared with the panel explaining the delays. Members also raised concerns regarding the library service, and how limited it was currently with some libraries only opening between 5-7 hours per week; when in comparison other leisure facilities had reopened with full opening hours restored. A written response from Lincs Inspire would be sought and shared with the panel addressing these concerns; but the Chair noted that an update on Leisure and Tourism was due at their next meeting in October.

The panel requested that the new Resort Manager who was now in post be invited to the next meeting along with the Strategic Lead for Culture so they could both provide an update on how things were progressing in their roles. In response to Members questions the Portfolio Holder for Tourism, Heritage and Culture confirmed that the Resort Manager was specifically for the resort of Cleethorpes and that the Strategic Lead for Culture had lots of exciting things lined up for the borough, but due to COVID most of these had been put back at least eighteen months. A lot of activity was also planned for Grimsby Town Centre and the Portfolio Holder believed that 2021 would see these exciting plans come to fruition.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That a written response from the Director of Economy and Growth explaining what the delays were with the Tourism Strategy before COVID, be sought and shared with members of the panel.
3. That a written response be obtained from Lincs Inspire explaining current and future plans for libraries, to be shared with members of this panel.
4. That the recently appointed Resort Manager be invited to attend the next scheduled meeting of the panel.

SPTVE.7 HISTORIC VESSELS' CONSERVATION

The panel received a briefing note from the Investment Manager providing the latest position following the Historical Vessels' Conservation and outlining next steps.

Members thanked Mrs Thompson for the comprehensive and detailed briefing note and raised their concerns regarding the Ross Tiger and its future. The panel queried what avenues of funding had been explored for the Ross Tiger, and once funds were secure would it be possible to have the Ross Tiger completely enclosed to preserve it and also allow access to the vessel all year round. Mrs Thompson reassured Members that various avenues were being explored with regarding to funding, including looking into sponsorships and partnerships with local businesses and entrepreneurs. With regards to enclosing the Ross Tiger, Mrs Thompson explained that these types of methods were often very costly but would not be excluded initially, there were other methods also available such as a dry dock for the Ross Tiger or keeping it on the water. Mrs Thompson reassured the panel that a lot of work was being done being the scenes to look at all options, and once cost analysis had taken place a future report would come back to this panel.

RESOLVED – That the briefing note and update be noted.

SPTVE.8 PUBLIC CONVENIENCES UPDATE

The panel received a briefing note from the Capital and Assets Programme Manager providing the latest position on Public Conveniences within the borough and on actions taken by Cabinet at their meeting on the 28th May 2020.

Members started by expressing their disappointment at the closure of Grant Street toilets and felt that this could cause problems for visitors who arrived to the resort by coach and were dropped in this area, and that it was restricting the number of facilities available on the North Prom. The panel felt that at present the North Prom looked very neglected and that the promenade had been divided by this closure. In response Mrs Fisher reassured the panel that conversations were ongoing behind the scenes

with the owner of the North Prom and was confident that the toilets would be reopened. The panel wanted to see the businesses along the North Prom supported during these difficult times to ensure their survival for the seasonal months. The Portfolio Holder concurred with the panels concerns and reassured them that money was being spent to help the North Prom; including Shutter Art, the Palm, new furniture and moving lights. All of which would contribute to raising the profile of the resort. The Portfolio Holder believed that the North Prom would look very different this time next year.

In response to Members ongoing concerns about the number of facilities reducing, Mrs Fisher explained that they were not looking to reduce the number of facilities. The closure of Grant Street was due to much more than footfall, it was also due to the terrible misuse of the facilities. The number of toilets across the borough would be maintained but agreed to take back the point about coach travel.

As a last point Members asked why the council was not advertising and charging for advertising within our toilets across the borough; and noted that the charging policy should be reviewed to ensure if we are offering free facilities in Cleethorpes the same was considered in Grimsby Town Centre. Mrs Fisher informed the panel that our Assistant Director Communications had been exploring the option of advertising in council owned toilets and would seek an update for the panel; and the Portfolio Holder acknowledged the request to look at the charging policy and agreed to pick this up with officers.

RESOLVED –

1. That the update be noted.
2. That the panel be informed about future plans for advertising in council owned toilets across the borough.
3. That the Portfolio Holder for Tourism, Heritage and Culture discuss with officers the possibility of making Grimsby Town Centre facilities free to use also.

SPTVE.9 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN REPORT

The panel received a report from the Director of Resources and Governance providing key information regarding the Council's provisional financial outturn for 2019/20.

Mr Lonsdale highlighted key issues within the report and informed the panel that the Quarter 1 report which was due to Cabinet next month would be due at the panels October meeting and would include a breakdown of the financial impact COVID has had on the borough.

The panel welcomed this update and looked forward to the report due at their next meeting; they were concerned that the retail and hospitality industry and been hit extremely hard due to COVID so seeing the figures would help put this into perspective.

A member raised their concern around the Tourist Information Centre for the resort being inside a library, when as mentioned earlier the libraries were not fully open at present; they felt that this could hinder tourism. Mrs Thompson was able to inform the panel that plans were already in place to have the Tourist Information Centre moved temporarily out of the library.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

SPTVE.10 TOURISM AND VISITOR ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL: WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

The panel considered the work programme for the ensuing municipal year 2020/21.

Ms Campbell advised the panel that items previously identified had all been included and allocated with the work programme. The panel were invited to make any additional suggestions. The Chair suggested that the panel investigate an article in the Which? magazine where Cleethorpes was one of the lowest rank seaside resorts in a survey by holidaymakers. The panel would like to understand more about how the survey was conducted, and the assessment criteria used, to fully understand the results. The panel was deeply shocked by the results of the survey and agreed to add this into their work programme.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be agreed, subject to the additional item of the Council's response to the Which? Survey, being added.

SPTVE.11 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER

There were no questions submitted for this meeting.

SPTVE.12 CALLING IN OF DECISIONS

There were no formal requests from members of this panel to call-in decisions taken at recent meetings of Cabinet.

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 10.59 a.m.