

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

Report of Deputy Chief Executive (Place)

To
Cabinet
On
20th June 2017

Report prepared by: Scott Dolling, Director of Culture,
Tourism and Property

Tourism Strategy

Relevant Scrutiny Committee(s)
Executive Councillor: Councillor Ann Holland

1. Purpose of Report

To brief Cabinet of progress with Southend's Tourism Strategy in advance of adoption at full Council in July.

2. Recommendations

That Council adopts Destination Southend - the 2017-2017 Tourism Strategy

3. Background

Southend has previously incorporated the tourism agenda as an interlinked element as part of the overall economic development strategy.

The Administration outlined a requirement for a bespoke tourism strategy, along with a Parking Strategy, in August 2016. This was part of a positive response to managing the area's economic wellbeing in preparing for the submission of the Central Area Action Plan (SCAAP). The Administration has recognised the valuable role that Tourism plays to the local economy and required this strategy to be developed to support its intention to increase the profile and role that the sector plays in job creation, skills and growth.

Tourism is currently estimated to be worth £398M to the local economy supporting around 6,500 jobs and bringing in 6.8M visitors to the borough - Source Destination Research economic impact of tourism 2015.

The opportunity to focus on a bespoke tourism only strategy, provides a new link the increasing role of Coastal Community Teams, The Business Improvement District (BID) in partnership with the Council.

There are three Coastal Community Teams with a visitor focus in the borough (Leigh, Shoebury and the Southend Tourism Partnership).

A draft strategy has been developed (Appendix 1) with contributions from all three Coastal Community Teams and the BID to ensure a broad set of objectives are met. It recognises the key benefits that Southend offers visitors currently and reflects on improving those successes along with developing a wider offer. The traditional day visitor is a necessary part of the mix but developing a longer season and more staying visitors is a key focus for the future.

The Southend Tourism Partnership, a private sector led group made up of key players including the Council, is taking a lead role recognising that over the life of the strategy, an increasing role will be taken by private enterprise in the Tourism agenda.

The strategy focuses on five key themes for the future in shaping Southend's tourism offer and sets an overall goal of being England's leading coastal tourism destination by the end of the strategy's 10 year period. The performance indicators used to measure this goal will include increased volume and value statistics, doubling the number of overnight visitors and achieving a destination review rating of 95% from research professionals.

Each of the five themes helps towards the vision to be substantiated.

The key themes are:

- Marketing and Communications
- Infrastructure
- Product Development
- Make Southend Sparkle
- Culture/Events

The strategy will be updated each year with progress against the five themes and setting out year by year further upcoming projects.

An action plan as part of the strategy details various projects and who is the lead partner involved. These range from Council infrastructure projects such as junction improvements and public realm to private development initiatives that range from the rail operating company fleet replacement to Five Star hotel developments.

The tourism strategy links to other developing council strategies:

Digital/Smart City –planning itineraries, pre-booked parking, destination apps;
Skills – linking a new tourism degree and working with the Edge Hospitality school at Essex University to equip student with practical projects; and
Economic growth - supporting the development of new tourism based inward investment.

Tourism will also connect closely to a refreshed **Cultural Strategy** which will be developed over the coming 12 months with galleries and museums linking more closely in to the wider visitor offer expanding on the experiential provision – tours, walks, costumed characters etc.

Our proposed significant new attraction ‘The Thames Estuary Experience’ is strongly recognised as being a major transformation for the town’s appeal and exemplifies the ambition to create a destination that is open throughout the year and not weather dependent.

4. Other Options

Retaining tourism within a generic economic growth agenda fails to recognise the key role that the sector plays to the community.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

The project is ready to now progress to its next stage with members for scrutiny and adoption.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Contribution to Council’s Vision & Corporate Priorities

Contributes to a Safe, Clean Prosperous Healthy and Excellent Southend supporting the economy and cultural offer to residents businesses and visitors.

6.2 Financial Implications

There are no additional financial implication as a result of the strategy.

6.3 Legal Implications

No Legal implications at this stage.

6.4 People Implications

There are no people implications.

6.5 Property Implications

N/A

6.6 Consultation

The first draft of this strategy was launched at the Southend Tourism Partnership conference in March. Feedback from the stakeholders is being compiled.

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

Not relevant at this stage

6.8 Risk Assessment

N/A

6.9 Value for Money

N/A

6.10 Community Safety Implications

N/ A

6.11 Environmental Impact

N/ A

7. Background Papers

None

8. Appendices

**Appendix 1
Draft Strategy**