

**Cheltenham Borough Council**  
**Cabinet – Tuesday 8 March 2016**  
**Developing a new strategic approach to tourism**

<b>Accountable member</b>	<b>Councillor Rowena Hay, Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles</b>
<b>Accountable officer</b>	<b>Tim Atkins, Managing Director, Place &amp; Economic Development</b>
<b>Ward(s) affected</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Key/Significant Decision</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<p>In summer 2015, tourism consultants, Creative Tourist Consults, were commissioned to assist the council in developing a new strategic approach to tourism for the town. The key deliverable for the project was an outcomes proposition for Cheltenham's tourism offer behind which all key stakeholders could align, that would boost the tourism economy and provide clarity on how the council delivers the proposition and how the council will measure success and the impact on public value in its widest sense.</p> <p>The final consultant's report 'A Strategic Tourism Outcomes Proposition for Cheltenham' is attached at Appendix 2. This report has been developed from extensive research, analysis and consultation and provides an evidence-based proposal for a new strategic approach to tourism and a route map for implementation.</p> <p>A number of priorities have been identified by the consultants and also by members of Cheltenham Tourism Partnership, who will be key stakeholders in the delivery of this new approach.</p> <p>The report recognises tourism as a key economic driver and therefore the recommendations and action plan contained in the report will also need to be considered in the context of wider activity on economic development to ensure an aligned approach to tourism and economic development.</p>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. To accept the consultant's report</b></li> <li><b>2. To delegate authority to the Managing Director, Place &amp; Economic Development to further consider the delivery plan and the proposed delivery mechanism in consultation with the Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles</b></li> <li><b>3. To delegate authority to the Managing Director, Place &amp; Economic Development to consider, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles, how the £50,000 funding set aside to support strategic tourism should be allocated</b></li> </ol>

<b>Financial implications</b>	<p>On 9 February 2016, as part of the Budget Monitoring Report to end of December 2015, Cabinet approved £50,000 be moved to the Economic Development and Tourism Reserve to support the Tourism Strategy work. Under B11.4 of the Council's Financial Rules, the Section 151 Officer has delegated authority to approve in year transfers to and from earmarked reserves to support the activities of the council.</p> <p><b>Contact officer: Nina Philippidis, Accountant,</b>  <b>nina.philippidis@cheltenham.gcsx.gov.uk, 01242 264121</b></p>
<b>Legal implications</b>	<p>Consideration needs to be given as to whether any public consultation should take place with regard to the strategic proposal for Tourism in Cheltenham. Should there be any employee implications then the Council's HR procedures should be followed. Any Virement of Funds must be undertaken through the correct legal process.</p> <p><b>Contact officer: Donna Marks, Solicitor,</b>  <b>Donna.marks@tewkesbury.gov.uk, 01684 272068</b></p>
<b>HR implications (including learning and organisational development)</b>	<p>There are no direct implications arising from this report.</p> <p><b>Contact officer: Julie McCarthy, HR Manager (GO shared services West),</b>  <b>Julie.mccarthy@cheltenham.gcsx.gov.uk, 01242 264355</b></p>
<b>Key risks</b>	See risk assessment
<b>Corporate and community plan Implications</b>	<p>Tourism is a cross-cutting theme which runs through many of the council's activities such as economic development, culture, health and wellbeing, public realm and community engagement. Adopting a new strategic approach to tourism will support the council's outcome of sustaining and growing Cheltenham's economic and cultural vitality, but it also has the capacity to contribute to the protection, maintenance and enhancement of the town's environmental quality and heritage. Creating opportunities for visitors brings benefits to local people and can contribute to the health of communities.</p>
<b>Environmental and climate change implications</b>	<p>There are no direct implications arising from this report; however, it will be important to consider the impact on the environment and climate change of tourism activities as initiatives are implemented.</p>
<b>Property/Asset Implications</b>	No direct implications arising from this report.

## 1. Background

- 1.1 When the Council handed over responsibility for the tourism service and the tourist information office to The Cheltenham Trust it retained accountability for developing the strategic approach to tourism, acknowledging its unique role as the democratically elected body for the town and its role as convenor and "place-shaper".
- 1.2 Against a backdrop of an increasingly complex tourism landscape locally, regionally and nationally and financial constraints, it was recognised that a new and sustainable approach to tourism was needed.
- 1.3 A commissioning group was established to lead a project to develop this new approach,

comprising:

- Cllr Rowena Hay, Cabinet Member for Healthy Lifestyles
- Pat Pratley, Deputy Chief Executive
- Julie Finch, Chief Executive of The Cheltenham Trust
- Kevan Blackadder, Cheltenham Business Partnership Manager
- Richard Gibson, Strategy & Engagement Manager
- Gill Morris, Client Officer

- 1.4 and in summer 2015, tourism consultants, Creative Tourist Consults, were commissioned to assist in developing a new strategic approach to tourism for the town.

## **2. Project outcomes**

- 2.1 At that time, Cheltenham Tourism Partnership had already been established, but was a fledgling partnership that had met only once. It was recognised that, in order for any future approach to be sustainable, this group of key stakeholders would need to be able to support the outcomes of the project. Therefore the key deliverable for the project was an outcomes proposition for Cheltenham's tourism offer behind which all key stakeholders could align, that would boost the tourism economy and provide clarity on how the council delivers the proposition and how the council will measure success and the impact on public value in its widest sense.
- 2.2 Creative Tourist Consults undertook extensive research, analysis and consultation to develop the final report, 'A Strategic Tourism Outcomes Proposition for Cheltenham', attached at Appendix 2. This report provides an evidence-based proposal for a new strategic approach to tourism and a route map for implementation.

## **3. Consultation and feedback**

- 3.1 Consultation formed a key element of the project. During the evidence gathering phase, 1-2-1 interviews were undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders (listed in addendum F to the consultant's report) and workshops held with Cheltenham Tourism Partnership and a Cabinet Member Working Group, which was established to ensure member engagement during the project. Membership lists for both groups are attached at Appendix 3.
- 3.2 Both the tourism partnership and cabinet member working group were further involved at subsequent stages to review the work and feed in ideas to ensure agreement with the direction of travel and alignment behind the proposed outcomes and recommendations.
- 3.3 The consultants presented the final report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 22 February. An extract of the draft minutes covering the discussion (to be approved by the committee Chair) is attached at Appendix 4. The committee approved the proposed recommendations to Cabinet.

## **4. Priorities for moving forward**

- 4.1 The outcomes proposition includes an action plan with a large number of measures, but within this the consultants are recommending a number of priority actions. These include:
- Sourcing additional capacity to drive the programme forward
  - Commissioning a detailed gap analysis of cultural and major events to identify market opportunities and support year round programme development
  - Commissioning an evaluation and research framework to create benchmark/ baseline data
  - Working collaboratively on the tourist information centre function
  - Commissioning digital infrastructure development
  - Commissioning updating of the audio-visual assets for the town

- Scheduling a review to consider further digital audits
- Commissioning new content to articulate the (cultural) tourism narrative
- Commissioning a short series of visitor itineraries to form the foundations for travel trade communications and consumer-facing packages
- Reviewing whether a digital communications role is needed after twelve months

**4.2** It is important to note that the investment to deliver the action plan is not intended to be secured solely from Council resources.

**4.3** The stakeholders who make up Cheltenham Tourism Partnership are key to the delivery of the action plan and therefore, as part of their review of the final report, they were asked to identify their priorities for moving forward. They identified four internally focused priorities around the delivery model:

- Defining what partners do now
- Defining internal and shared resources
- Mapping the strengths of the partnership – how does the partnership organise itself? Who do the partners represent? What do partners bring to the table in terms of skills and resources and what can partners get out of the partnership?
- Defining the relationship with Cotswolds DMO

And two related to delivery:

- Place branding to define Cheltenham's identity
- Developing a shared calendar of activities

**4.4** These priorities, together with those identified in the action plan, will form the focus of activity over the coming months.

## **5. Reasons for recommendations**

**5.1** The consultant's report provides an evidence-based proposal for a new strategic approach to tourism and a route map for implementation.

**5.2** The report recognises tourism as a key economic driver and therefore the recommendations and action plan contained in the report also need to be considered in the context of wider activity on economic development, notably the report by Athey Consulting entitled '*Cheltenham Economic Strategy: Developing Cheltenham as a business location – January 2015 – Final report: options, ideas and recommendations*' and the work that is being undertaken jointly by Cheltenham, Gloucester, Tewkesbury districts and Gloucestershire County Council to consider opportunities for capitalising on economic development for Gloucestershire. There is considerable complementarity across this spectrum of work and it will be important to ensure that all the resulting recommendations are considered collectively to develop an aligned approach to tourism and wider economic development.

**5.3** Creating links between tourism and the Business Improvement District will also be essential to ensure activity is complementary and to further develop partnership working.

**5.4** The report also highlights the need for some additional resource with a degree of specialist knowledge, which the council does not currently possess, to drive the programme forward in the short/medium term.

## **6. Alternative options considered**

**6.1** As part of the project brief, the consultants were asked to consider the potential options for Cheltenham's strategic approach to tourism and the respective benefits, drawbacks and resourcing commitments. This options appraisal can be found in the 'Delivery vehicle options'

section of their report.

## **7. Performance management – monitoring and review**

- 7.1** The Managing Director, Place & Economic Development will use the recommendations and action plan in the report as a basis for developing a more detailed work plan with timescales and performance indicators. This work plan will also take account of the recommendations from the Athey report and the outcomes of the work being undertaken with the other JCS authorities.
- 7.2** This work plan will be brought back to Overview & Scrutiny Committee and to Cabinet for monitoring and review in October 2016.

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<b>Appendices</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Risk Assessment</li><li>2. Report by Creative Tourist Consults – ‘A strategic tourism outcomes proposition for Cheltenham’</li><li>3. Membership lists for Cheltenham Tourism Partnership and Cabinet Member Working Group</li><li>4. Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee 22 February: extract of draft minutes</li></ol>

The risk				Original risk score (impact x likelihood)			Managing risk				
Risk ref.	Risk description	Risk Owner	Date raised	Impact 1-5	Likelihood 1-6	Score	Control	Action	Deadline	Responsible officer	Transferred to risk register
	If this new approach to tourism is not taken forward then Cheltenham will not be able to maintain its position as a tourism destination	Tim Atkins	8/3/16	3	4	12	Reduce	Consider how best to implement the report recommendations and action plan	June 2016	To be determined as part of action plan	Divisional
	If tourism is not considered in the context of wider economic development then potential benefits may be lost	Tim Atkins	8/3/16	2	3	6	Reduce	Consider how to take the recommendations on tourism and economic development forward collectively to ensure an aligned approach	June 2016	To be determined	Divisional
	If investment in tourism is lacking this may have a detrimental impact on the local economy	Tim Atkins	8/3/16	3	4	12	Reduce	Consider how best to deploy available resources to support both tourism and economic development and continue to develop relationships with external partners	June 2016	Tim Atkins	Divisional
<b>Explanatory notes</b> <b>Impact</b> – an assessment of the impact if the risk occurs on a scale of 1-5 (1 being least impact and 5 being major or critical) <b>Likelihood</b> – how likely is it that the risk will occur on a scale of 1-6 (1 being almost impossible, 2 is very low, 3 is low, 4 significant, 5 high and 6 a very high probability) <b>Control</b> - Either: Reduce / Accept / Transfer to 3rd party / Close											

**Membership List: Cheltenham Tourism Partnership**

Councillor Steve Jordan	Cheltenham Borough Council
Councillor Rowena Hay	Cheltenham Borough Council
Pat Pratley*	Cheltenham Borough Council
Julie Finch	The Cheltenham Trust
Louise Emerson	Cheltenham Festivals
Maxine Melling	University of Gloucestershire
Geoffrey Rowe	Everyman Theatre
Ian Renton	Cheltenham Racecourse
Peter Christensen	Cheltenham Hospitality Association
Michael Ratcliffe	Cheltenham Chamber of Commerce
Jeremy Williamson	Cheltenham Development Task Force
Martin Quantock	The Growth Hub
Kevan Blackadder	Cheltenham Business Partnership

(\* will be replaced by Tim Atkins)

**Membership List: Cabinet Member Working Group**

Cllr Andrew Chard	Cllr Flo Clucas	Cllr Diggory Seacome
Cllr John Payne	Cllr Chris Ryder	Cllr Adam Lillywhite
Cllr Anne Regan	Cllr Paul Baker	Cllr Colin Hay
Cllr Max Wilkinson	Cllr Garth Barnes	Cllr Duncan Smith
Cllr Wendy Flynn	Cllr Matt Babbage	Cllr Rowena Hay

## Overview & Scrutiny Committee 22 February 2016: extract of draft minutes for tourism item (to be approved by Chair)

The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles introduced Andrew Palmer from the tourist consultants, Creative Tourist Consults. The committee were given a PowerPoint presentation.

The following responses were given to members questions by the Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles and Andrew Palmer, of Creative Tourist Consults;

- The report made clear that the 'full' offer was of equal importance to the cultural offer (currently 16 weeks of Festivals), but Cheltenham was culturally rich and as such, this was a major focus.
- The consultants advocated an honest appraisal of the existing Festivals and felt that this could be easily undertaken given the number of comparable events across the country. One suggestion was that Cheltenham, as other towns and cities had started to do, should look to use public open spaces as part of the offer, with innovation being key to success.
- The key focus of the money that had been set aside, but by no means the sole purpose, would be manpower, rather than simply improving websites. The consultant's report would be taken to Cabinet on the 8 March and the recommendation was that Tim Atkins, Managing Director, Place and Economic Development, be delegated authority to consider the delivery plan and proposed delivery mechanism.
- Marketing and promotion would be the next area of focus for the Partnership, but whilst it was important to have a creative campaign, it was equally important to target the right markets in order to get the best return from any investment.
- It was recognised by all (Cheltenham, Cotswolds and Gloucester) that working together would improve the message and therefore the overall offer. The Cotswolds was internationally known but it was for Cheltenham to decide what it wanted/needed from the DMO. Gloucester were in the process of creating a cultural strategy and had invited Cllr Hay to contribute. Marketing Gloucester would be invited to participate on the Tourism Partnership.
- The 2011 report did not include details of how Cheltenham could or indeed, should, improve its offer, it simply set out that the products were good but could be better.
- Creative Tourist Consults were commissioned and Cheltenham Tourism Partnership established because the council recognised it did not have anybody with the right skills set to take tourism strategies forward. Whilst the council needed to drive the programme forward for now, it was not envisaged that the council would always be leading on this.
- Areas where a Business Improvement District had been developed had seen improvements to tourism and culture simply by attracting people to the geographical area itself. It was important that resources dovetailed rather than crudely overlapped and therefore it was vital to have early conversations, which was being put into practice by the inclusion of Kevin Blackadder.
- If the action plan is successfully delivered then examples of the difference that could be seen in 5 years' time would be a coherent and consistent message with greater penetration, assets being used to their full potential, with time specific reasons to visit (events) increased and enhanced. Whilst existing markets would continue, new audiences would be coming in.
- Free events were available at most festivals, though there was always scope to do more, but with no central place to access information, these events were not always as well publicised as they could be. However, it was most likely that the more expensive events would result in more revenue and would therefore, always be promoted to a greater degree. The consultants suggested that festivals with free entry could in fact raise the market for everyone.
- The report acknowledged that the Wilson was perhaps not the best location for the TIC. Seasonal or even pop-up TICs, and not just in the town centre, but at transport gateways and slightly out of town locations, could be a means of using assets in the most effective way in the future.
- No one person would be responsible for, or able to take forward all of the actions on the action plan. Work had already been undertaken to improve advertising and marketing by the Wilson and this demonstrated that some of the actions could only be realised with the help of Partners.



A member reminded members that the 2011 strategy was drafted at a time when the council was losing staff year on year and now was the time to look forward rather than dwelling on the past and focussing on what went wrong. Partners had an appetite to work together and this coupled with the BID process, put Cheltenham in a strong position to take advantage of all opportunities and he envisaged that in 5 years time, Cheltenham would be nationally recognised.

One member felt that most people would access tourist information online rather than seeking out and visiting a TIC and therefore did not place significant value on this arrangement going forward, suggesting that a TIC would be even less important in 5-10 years. He went on to say that in order for Cheltenham to boost its economy it needed to attract more people to live and work in the town and that this started with tourism, but he felt that as a town, there was a reluctance to attract such increases, which it needed to overcome.

The committee were happy to endorse the recommendations that were going to be considered by Cabinet at their meeting on the 8 March, to accept the consultant's report, delegate authority to the MD Place and Economic Development to further consider and progress the proposed delivery mechanism and to allocate funding required to source the additional capacity needed to take the programme forward.

The Chairman thanked Andrew Palmer from Creative Tourist Consults and the Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles for their attendance.

No decision was required.