

From: Mark Dance, Cabinet Member for Economic Development
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To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee –
10 January 2019

Subject: Visit Kent

Key Decision: No

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: None

Electoral Division: Countywide

Summary: Kent County Council's current contract with Visit Kent runs from April 2014 to the end of March 2020. Visit Kent's presentation to the Cabinet Committee will review the performance of visitor economy in Kent in 2017. The presentation will also look back over 2018, based on information drawn from in Visit Kent's monthly Business Barometer.

Recommendation: The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

1. Introduction

1.1 Every two years Visit Kent uses the Cambridge Economic Model¹ to evaluate the number and length of trips to Kent and Medway (domestic and international), the economic impact in terms of monetary value and the number of jobs supported. The data is also broken down by District. In 2016 the headline results (based on the full year 2015) were 60.6 million visits, £3.6 billion value and 72,000 jobs. The results of the most recently available research (based on the full year 2017) will be released on 9 January so the final results have not yet been received. Visit Kent's presentation to the Cabinet Committee on 10 January is expected to include the confirmed 2017 figures.

2. The current contract with Visit Kent

2.1 The contract requires Visit Kent to develop and deliver innovative and creative solutions to grow Kent's visitor economy, and to support KCC's priorities for this sector. These are to:

¹ Kent's value and volume study uses figures derived from the Cambridge Economic Impact Model. The research was undertaken by research agency Destination Research. The model utilises information from national tourism surveys and regionally based data. It distributes regional activity as measured in those surveys to local areas using drivers such as accommodation stock and occupancy which influence the distribution of tourism at the local level.

- Promote the county to target visitor markets, and to increase the numbers of visitors to Kent and the value of visitor spend;
- Support the growth of Kent's visitor economy;
- Provide high quality support to Kent's tourism business sector;
- Improve the skills levels of employees within the Kent visitor economy; and
- Attract additional public and private sector investment.

2.2 Information about visitor numbers, visitor spend and jobs across the county are obtained by Visit Kent through the Cambridge Model and reported to the County Council.

2.3 The current contract with Visit Kent was awarded by the County Council in 2014 and runs until March 2020. The procurement process for the visitor economy contract for the period after March 2020 is expected to commence in autumn 2019.

3. Performance over the past year

3.1 Visit Kent has continued to undertake a number of high-impact, targeted marketing campaigns in 2018. These included:

- The Kent Contemporary campaign targeted at London visitors who increasingly associate the county not only for its rich heritage but also for its attractive landscape and coastline;
- The Visit Kent Cruise Partnership between the port of Dover and several leading attractions in Kent; and
- The annual Big Weekend event which attracted over 185,000 visitors to local attractions.

4. 2019 and beyond

4.1 Visit Kent has worked with niche businesses and organisations to create campaigns that drive high value visits to high profile industries and sectors in the county. These include the Golf in Kent partnership working towards the 2020 Open Golf tournament in Sandwich, leading the marketing campaign for the 2019 Turner Prize event at the Turner Contemporary in Margate and the Wine Garden of England that has brought together Kent's leading wineries to showcase Kent as a premier wine destination.

4.2 Visit Kent has also set up the Promoting Kent Group, comprising Locate in Kent, Produced in Kent, the Kent Film Office and Explore Kent. The Group is working together on joint campaigns to capitalise on several major events and anniversaries taking place in Kent over the next couple of years.

5. Financial implications

5.1 The total value of the County Council's support for Visit Kent for the period April 2018 to March 2020 is £310,000 per annum. This comprises the main contract (maintained at £280,000), plus £30,000 to provide for staffing to support the development of externally funded projects.

6. Legal implications

6.1 The current contract with Visit Kent runs until March 2020.

7. Equalities implications

7.1 The contract with Visit Kent contains provisions for ensuring that the County Council's equalities and diversity policies are adhered to. Visit Kent has its own equalities and diversity standards which are consistent with those of the County Council.

8. Conclusion

8.1 Visit Kent continues to have a significant impact on raising the county's profile as a key tourism destination and on developing Kent's visitor economy. The contract will help to maintain the momentum achieved over the past few years and ensure that the county achieves maximum benefit from major events taking place in 2019 and 2020.

10. Recommendation

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

Background Documents - None

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