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HARROW TOURISM STRATEGY OUTLINE

1. Introduction & background

Despite having a world-class attraction, a rich and diverse cultural heritage, a large green belt area and excellent national and international transport access, Harrow has yet to market itself as a tourism destination. Although there is no current market intelligence to determine the profile of existing visitors, initial research has indicated that the borough does already attract the following types of visitor: visits from friends and relatives, business travel for meetings and functions, group travel visits to Harrow School, and some short break visits from Europe (principally France, Spain and Germany).

While Harrow has the potential to develop all of these markets, the success of any tourism strategy is dependent on long-term investment to counteract the shortcomings in the borough's infrastructure. For example: lack of adequate signage; poor maintenance of certain key visitor attractions; inadequate range of shops; lack of amenities and attractions in the town centre, and inadequate tourist information. Without this financial commitment, Harrow will not be able to compete with the rapidly advancing tourism offer in other boroughs of London and any short-term tactical gains during the initial trial period of 2005, will not lead to any long term success in Harrow's future development as a visitor destination. Similarly, without adequate financial support for the marketing of Harrow to external audiences, lack of awareness and negative perceptions from the public at large will remain a major hurdle to attracting visitors in the future.

Tourism is by nature a fragmented industry and therefore encompasses: arts and leisure, sport, culture, environment, and retail sectors. The tourism strategy is therefore inextricably linked to the work of the regeneration, town centre management, arts & leisure, parks & recreation and sports development departments. A cohesive approach in the development of these key areas is therefore required to ensure that the tourism potential of the borough is exploited to the full.

Opportunities: Harrow Council is currently undergoing a period of major change in terms of both new policies and priorities. "Putting Harrow on the map" is now a key feature of the Council's corporate priorities. Furthermore the development of the cultural, green belt and town centre strategies and new initiatives such as the New Harrow Project and Harrow Corporate University (HCU) provide an excellent starting point for making improvements in Harrow's basic infrastructure for tourism.

2. Why tourism is important for Harrow

Visitors are very important to the West London economy. They create jobs and support a range of facilities such as hotels, restaurants, places to visit, events and retailing. Current statistics from the STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) economic impact model for the boroughs of Ealing, Hounslow and Hillingdon estimates the value of tourism in West London in 2001 as £1.26 billion. Tourism spending per year is worth £15 billion and accounts for 10% of London's GDP. Tourism has already helped to regenerate many areas of London including Notting Hill, East London and the Docklands and tourism expenditure in Greenwich today is worth £327 million to the local economy.

Tourism development creates a feeling of **civic pride** among the local population and enhances public perception of the work of the council. Contrary to current speculation regarding the reaction of residents to tourism, a recent nationwide Omnibus report has shown that:

- 96% of residents think that tourism is good for their area
- 93% of residents are proud that their area is worth visiting.
- 88% of the population believes that tourism helps to support local business.
- 69% of the population believes that there is an improved range of evening entertainment and leisure time facilities due to tourism.

Strengthening Harrow's communities: Tourism provides an ideal forum to put into practice community cohesion policies by promoting multi-culturalism as a positive strength of the borough. New cultural initiatives such as the Harrow Arts Festival/Under One Sky event brings all sectors of Harrow's diverse community together to create greater community involvement and to encourage a feeling of civic pride. Multi-cultural tourism is already a strong market in London with 80,000 people now attending the Ealing Mela every year. This is a positive strength to promote as part of Harrow's vibrant diverse identity.

Local business & retail facilities: from the findings of the town centre management strategy it has been brought to light that Harrow town centre is not fulfilling its potential as a retail or leisure centre particularly during critical evening and weekend periods. 40% of Harrow's residents do not regard the town centre as their main shopping centre and during the important lead up time to Christmas, 41% of shoppers are lost to other neighbouring shopping centres. Harrow's town centre development strategy provides an ideal opportunity to improve the town's potential to attract visitors. Visitors in turn support leisure and cultural facilities and the local economy via the "multiplier" effect i.e. visitors who spend time in the area indirectly contribute to other incremental business e.g. buying drinks, maps, train tickets, meals out, drinks in pubs. This in turn ensures an excellent return on investment. A more vibrant town centre would also alleviate public concerns regarding anti-social behaviour and public safety and would encourage more residents to use their local facilities rather than travelling elsewhere.

New Harrow Project: as a future project for this new council initiative, there is potential to strengthen Harrow's multi-cultural offer by working with ethnic shop owners to make more of a feature of their businesses by improving shop window displays and introducing interesting features such as recipe ideas and information on food produce. Shepherd's Bush currently run very successful food tours for visitors to the area. Food and festivals are both "non-threatening" threads which can be used to positive benefit to bind communities together.

Hotels: Harrow currently has thirteen hotels and ten bed and breakfast establishments which combine to offer a total of 596 bed spaces in a 19 mile radius. Four hotels offer over 80 rooms and can therefore accommodate group travel business. The majority of the hotels offer the benefit of free parking facilities and competitive room rates. No hotel in Harrow over the last 24 months has been operating at full capacity and to maintain current occupancy levels, discounting has become the norm. The award-winning Grim's Dyke hotel, has reported an occupancy level of only 44.9% for 2004, with a total of 73 bed nights left unsold per weekend. Small, independent hotels are also finding it increasingly difficult to compete against the range of chain hotels now operating in the borough.

Benefits: by developing a tourism strategy for Harrow, hotel managers will directly benefit from initiatives which aim to increase visitor traffic particularly during critical weekend periods. By working in partnership we would further enable hoteliers to network, share ideas and resources to target new markets such as group travel, single travellers and families. By working in partnership, hoteliers will also be able to benefit from becoming involved in large-scale events such as Under One Sky and the 60th anniversary celebrations of World War 2.

Employment opportunities: More than 7% of all people in employment are employed in tourism – more than in transport or construction and second only to the financial sector. In Greenwich, 25% of the local workforce is employed in tourism. Tourism also plays a key role in providing part-time and flexible work opportunities for women and other sectors of society who are not able to take up full-time employment. Harrow currently suffers from above average unemployment levels in certain areas such as Roxbourne. Tourism development could therefore provide increased local employment opportunities to residents and to Harrow's new influx of immigrants.

3. SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- World-class attraction: Harrow School.
- Visit London award winning small hotel of the year: Grim's Dyke hotel.
- Accommodation facilities: over 500 rooms available in a 19 mile radius.
- Nostalgia & eccentricity: a unique selling point for Harrow: Heath Robinson, Gilbert & Sullivan, Pinner Fair, Bentley Priory, bee keeping association.
- Old world village product: Harrow-on-the-Hill and Pinner strong enough to compete with Hampstead and Dulwich.
- Rich cultural heritage sites: Harrow school, Grim's Dyke hotel, Headstone Manor, West House, St Mary's Church, Little Stanmore church.
- Large multi-cultural population: food, festivals and events capable of attracting interest from wider audiences.
- Excellent range of British and ethnic restaurants.
- Large green belt area: part of the "London Loop" & the National Cycle Network, Bentley Priory nature reserve.
- Excellent road and rail links to connect with central London, Heathrow airport, and the M25.

Weaknesses

- Inadequate signage for attractions and visitor centre.
- Lack of cultural facility situated in the town centre: e.g. no theatre, conference facilities, family oriented amenities.
- Lack of events in the town centre.
- Lack of awareness from residents of events/attractions in Harrow.
- Front line tourism staff at hotel receptions, civic centre, libraries and bus drivers not sufficiently informed of tourism offer in Harrow.
- Scepticism from certain council staff regarding the strength of the tourism offer in Harrow.
- No coherency in terms of tourism information and inadequate basic tourism information supplied.
- Tourism suppliers not working together.
- Lack of awareness from the public at large of Harrow's attractions.
- Negative perception of Harrow from certain London audiences as being seedy, run down, "North London" area.
- Certain key attractions spoilt by inadequate maintenance of grounds.

Opportunities

- Close proximity to Wembley Stadium, Heathrow airport, M25 & gateway to the new Eurostar terminal in 2007.
- Strong legacy of famous people and film set locations: potential for tours and positive PR coverage.
- Creation of the West London Tourism Strategy.
- Development of Headstone Manor and West House adding to the strength of visitor attractions in the area
- Regeneration projects for the town centre development.
- Under 1 Sky festival to showcase the borough's cultural diversity to a wider audience.
- 60th anniversary World War 2 to showcase nostalgia offer in Harrow.
- Emergence of new town centre events such as the French market.
- 2012 Olympic bid.
- Joint promotional campaigns with West London Alliance, Visit London & London Development Agency to raise profile.
- Expansion of terminals at Heathrow airport.
- Possibility to form a Tourism Partnership.

Threats

- Competition for "village life" offer from Dulwich, Wimbledon & Hampstead.
- Competition for "multi-cultural" offer from Brent & Newham.
- Attractions very spread out throughout the borough.
- Attractions difficult to reach by public transport due to lack of driver knowledge.
- Lack of funding for tourism marketing activity
- Scepticism concerning tourism strategy in Harrow.
- Lack of investment and funding for tourism/tourist attractions therefore nothing to promote to and attract visitors.

4. The issue of sustainability

Sustainability: It is imperative that tourism in Harrow is managed in a sustainable way that does not exceed capacity or threaten the assets of the natural environment. By targeting a range of different markets such as business travel, group travel, and visits from friends and relatives, there is opportunity to diversify the tourism offer and therefore spread the benefits across the borough, over the day and evening and throughout the year. Harrow also benefits from a large green belt area which forms a part of the London Loop.

According to statistics supplied by the environmental charity Sustrans: 29% of people using traffic-free NCN routes said that their trip was replacing a car trip. This equates to a total of around 38 million car trips avoided by users of the NCN as a whole. Currently 50% of Harrow residents use their car to make even simple trips to the town centre. Initiatives such as Transport for London's Travel Options scheme should be supported and jointly promoted as part of the tourism strategy to minimise the environmental impact of cars and to draw attention to Harrow's green belt areas. The environmental charity Sustrans already work with a number of London boroughs to monitor route usage and they have confirmed that they would be happy to work with Harrow in the development of our green belt activity.

Assessments of the local impact of tourism should be made regularly. To date there are no surveys of business performance in Harrow to give an indication of what the current capacity is and how businesses are performing. The Strategic Planning department will be implementing business performance surveys later this year and it is recommended that these results should be carefully monitored as a benchmark of current capacity. Similarly, there are no performance statistics concerning hotels in the area and measures should therefore be put into place to carefully monitor occupancy rates at different times throughout the year.

Destination management is being reviewed on a pan-London scale as a mechanism for pursuing a sustainable approach to tourism development. As part of the West London Tourism Strategy and Action plan, West London will also be engaging in this process to ensure that the overall success of tourism in West London is beneficial and sustainable in the long-term. The proposed implementation of an Economic Impact Model for West London in 2006, will further help to monitor visitor traffic and visitor spend in Harrow to allow us to plan for a sustainable approach to tourism development in the future.

Beacon Peer Support Fund: The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (OPDM), is funding a programme (May – December 2005) that will enable the six Beacon authorities in Promoting Sustainable Tourism to work in greater depth with four other authorities on a one to one basis or in small groups to help deliver specific improvements in the quality and efficiency of tourism. In accordance with our commitment to sustainable tourism, Harrow Council will be submitting a proposal for inclusion in this new scheme. In the event that Harrow Council is not successful in this bid, consultation will continue with Greenwich Council who has been awarded Beacon Council status for promoting sustainable tourism by the office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Linzi Clark
Tourism Officer Harrow Council

5. Who are our target markets?

Harrow's residents: as "word of mouth" advertisers, Harrow's residents are a key audience to target in order to develop the "visits from friends and relatives" (VFR) market. In accordance with the Council corporate priorities, *valuing Harrow's customers* is a fundamental component of the tourism strategy. Tourism provides the opportunity to communicate positive improvements in the community to residents and to raise awareness of Harrow's existing strengths in order to create a feeling of CIVIC PRIDE. In the long-term, residents should be consulted on any plans for the development of new facilities and amenities.

Harrow's events and attractions should also be promoted to residents within the neighbouring boroughs in West London. Westminster University and other further education facilities should also be targeted to raise our profile to wider audiences and in the long-term promote tourism employment opportunities.

Current market:

VFR accounts for 42% of all trips taken in England in 2001 and 25% of all overnight trips expenditure.

Growth potential: The current trend in the growth of single person households and the tendency for children to settle away from their hometown indicates excellent growth potential for this market.

Actions: A sustained PR campaign in Harrow People and the local press to raise awareness of Harrow's events and attractions. Implementation of a "your Harrow" link from the council website to the tourism subsite. In the long-term: market research campaigns to monitor public opinion of existing facilities and reaction to new developments.

Weddings: Harrow is already a popular wedding venue and boasts two unusual venues for wedding ceremonies: Harrow School and Grim's Dyke hotel. Harrow School already attracts much VFR traffic from residents who have moved out of the borough and want to return to get married. Many of Harrow's other hotels also offer wedding and wedding reception facilities.

Civil weddings: Harrow is also one of the few London boroughs, which offers the opportunity for civil marriages at the Council Civic Centre. Planned improvements to the Civic Centre wedding venue provide further opportunities for future promotion in this area.

Actions: Revamp of the Council weddings brochure.

Investigate the possibility of increasing Harrow's range of civil wedding venues to target the new trend in civil weddings.

Creation of a dedicated wedding section on the tourism subsite.

ii) Business travel

Harrow hotels and attractions (notably Harrow School) already attract local & national business events and functions. Located close to the M25, Heathrow airport and within close proximity of central London, Harrow is ideally located to attract businesses on a local and national scale. Unusual and unique venues such as Grim's Dyke hotel and Harrow School provide particular appeal to this market.

Current market: Business travel expenditure in the UK is currently in excess of £16 billion, and the past 10 years has seen a growth of 53% in business trips. Business travel stimulates inward investment as business people see the attractions of a destination while travelling on business or to attend a conference or exhibition.

Growth potential: According to Visit Britain, expenditure from business visitors could represent as much as 45% of total business spend by 2010.

Harrow hotels and attractions (notably Harrow School) already attract local & national business events and functions. Located close to the M25, Heathrow airport and within close proximity of central London, Harrow is ideally located to attract businesses on a local and national scale. Unusual and unique venues such as Grim's Dyke hotel and Harrow School provide particular appeal to this market.

Sustainability: Business travel is the high quality and high-yield end of the tourism arena. Business tourism is year-round and thus is able to sustain permanent, full-time employment. Business tourism is sustainable and offers higher added value in terms of spending with fewer negative environmental repercussions as visitors are together as a group.

Actions: Dedicated business section on the tourism subsite.

Possible joint working via the Tourism Partnership, opportunities for venues and hotels to work in conjunction. (e.g. Harrow School working more closely with hotels in the borough).

iii) Group Travel

Harrow School already attracts between 8-10,000 visitors per year many of whom are international and travel in groups. Interest in Harrow from groups includes: Women's Guilds, National Trust, and several coach operators who deal with both British and American groups. There is potential to diversify the current potential of group travel from Harrow-on-the-Hill to other areas of the borough. This has already been test marketed to great success with American groups staying at Grim's Dyke hotel.

Current market: 85% of coach trips take place within the UK, and, only 15% travel to overseas destinations. Improvements in the comfort of coaches and smaller group sizes have helped to maintain coach travel as a strong market for the over 55-age range. "Retiring from work and not life" is the motto of today's generation of over 55's.

Growth potential: Today's "empty nesters" are travelling far more than in previous generations and have relatively high levels of disposable income to spend. The grey market has huge growth potential. In the UK, there were almost 20 million over-50s in 2000. By 2025 there are expected to be nearly 27 million.

Sustainability: Group sizes are declining and tend to be around 20-30 people rather than 50-100 people. Coaches are more environmentally friendly than cars since they achieve the economic benefit of transporting more people at the same time and have the benefit of being managed: (fixed drop off and pick up points and designated parking areas). (The majority of Harrow hotels have free parking areas, which are unobtrusive and would not adversely affect the local residents). Group travel itineraries further spread visitors more widely across the borough ensuring that other areas of Harrow benefit economically from visitor traffic.

Actions: Groups itineraries to be explored with private partners in the Tourism Partnership. Encourage hotels and attractions to work more closely together. In the long-term, explore the possibility of creating a group travel brochure and attending group travel trade events and exhibitions.

iv) Walking

Green belt area: Harrow has a very large green belt area which incorporates the national walking networks: the London Loop and the Capital ring. Harrow's green belt area should be exploited further to promote walking, cycling and other forms of exercise to local residents and to visitors. Harrow's long legacy of famous residents, architecture and quirky village areas offers further potential to promote interesting walking routes by combining heritage with walking. The Harrow Heritage Trust already produces an excellent range of leaflets targeted to families.

Current market: Across the UK, holidays where the main purpose of the trip was walking accounted for 300,000 trips, generating 2 million bednights and around £68 million of expenditure

Growth potential: The growing interest in health and well-being is also positive for the walking market. The Forestry Commission has already enjoyed great success with its "Forest Fitness" campaign, and the themes of health and escape will be become even more potent as visitors look for "get away from it all" destinations and activities as an antidote to stress.

Actions: Dedicated page on the tourism sub-site.
Walking and cycling routes given greater priority on the new Harrow visitor map.
Creation of a new Bentley Priory Nature Reserve map.
Work with voluntary groups to conduct walks in the borough.

v) Independent European short break visitors

Current market: The success of the low cost airline network across Europe has resulted in a growing trend in consumers to book budget flights independently via the Internet. This low cost option enables visitors to book a variety of short breaks throughout the year rather than saving for one longer stay holiday contributing to a more sustainable form of tourism. These travellers who predominantly book in groups or couples, are currently looking for budget accommodation within close proximity of central London. The challenge is to persuade these consumers to spend more time and money in Harrow helping to boost the local economy.

Growth potential: Short breaks are the fastest growing sector of the travel industry. 50-70% of travel sales in America are now generated via the Internet and this figure is expected to be replicated in Europe over the next three years.

Sustainability: short break visitors provide important year-round business and tend to travel on public transport rather than by car.

Actions: Greater market research needs to be conducted to identify exactly the profile of the European short break visitor. Once this profile is established targeted PR and marketing campaigns can be implemented in conjunction with Visit London and Visit Britain campaigns. As Harrow has limited awareness, it is important to concentrate initial marketing campaigns on residents and local London audience first before targeting overseas markets.

6. The impact of working in partnership

In accordance with the corporate priorities for Harrow, a partnership approach which includes internal departments of the Council, private tourism suppliers, voluntary and community groups is essential to the successful functioning of a tourism policy.

i) Internal partnerships

Marketing campaign: “Harrow as a place to live, work and visit”

The tourism strategy is inextricably linked to Harrow Council’s new marketing remit which is to promote a borough which is safe, attractive and enjoyable for everyone. Local residents and employers should be Harrow’s ambassadors and are therefore a key audience in these campaigns as they act as “word of mouth” influencers to outside audiences.

To ensure that the key departments of Sports Development, Arts and Leisure, Regeneration, Town Centre Management, and Parks & Recreation work closely together to share resources, eliminate duplicity of workload and create a singular vision for the development of Harrow as a visitor destination.

Cabinet meetings: Director of Communications, Marketing Manager, Tourism Officer and Regeneration Officer to meet and agree work in progress on a monthly basis.

ii) External partnerships

Cultural Strategy Forum: to continue to form close links between the council and other representatives of community groups to further Harrow’s cultural development.

Voluntary organisations: Harrow has a very strong and dedicated range of arts, sports and ethnic voluntary groups and associations who are very proactive in holding community events and raising funds for their cause. It is essential that strong links with these organisations are maintained to ensure that all facets of Harrow’s strong cultural diversity are considered in the borough’s tourism promotion.

Transport for London: effective relations with Transport for London should be established in order to explore opportunities to promote Harrow’s green belt area through national initiatives such as the Capital Ring, the London Cycle Network and the London Loop. Joint funding possibilities for improvements in signage should also be explored via the West London Tourism Executive in conjunction with Transport for London.

iii) Impact through Harrow's partnerships: Tourism Partnership

The success of a tourism policy is entirely dependent on the active participation of hoteliers and other tourism suppliers within the Borough. The creation of a tourism partnership would therefore help to share knowledge, expertise and resources to help Harrow to achieve its developmental targets in accordance with the tourism strategy. The Tourism Partnership would be open to all hoteliers and attractions who have a "tourism" product to offer. The Tourism Partnership would therefore seek to achieve the following objectives:

- To devise an action plan with realistic short and long-term goals.
- To provide a meeting place and networking opportunities for local Harrow businesses and attractions.
- To work together to exploit borough wide events to attract visitors.
- To provide a forum for joint training initiatives.
- To increase business opportunities for hotels by exploring new target markets such as single travellers and families.
- To explore effective ways of working together to encourage value added packages and group travel opportunities
- To ensure that an effective communication channel is created between private sector businesses, voluntary organisations and the Council.
- To hold meetings in different venues throughout the borough to actively raise awareness of Harrow's visitor attractions.

West London Tourism Executive: To work together with the Tourism Officers from the neighbouring West London boroughs of Hillingdon, Hounslow, Hammersmith and Fulham and Brent to look at ways in which Harrow can work with other boroughs to exploit potential tourism opportunities such as the newly developed Wembley Stadium and the proposed Terminal 5 at Heathrow Airport.

Dispersal strategy: The Mayor of London has recently published the tourism strategy for London, which aims to encourage the dispersal of visitors away from central London. The dispersal principle has particular relevance to the outer London boroughs. The West London Tourism Partnership should therefore be seen as an opportunity to lobby central London for increased funding for the West London boroughs.

Visit London/ Visit Britain: In accordance with the Mayor's dispersal strategy, utilise opportunities to promote Harrow to London, national and international audiences via Visit London TV, targeted PR campaigns, the Visit London and Visit Britain websites and other relevant print publications such as Visit London's "Get out and go further".

Linzi Clark
Tourism Officer Harrow Council

7. Putting Harrow on the map: (what do we want to achieve?)

The objectives of the tourism strategy relate to Harrow Council's corporate priorities, which emphasise the need to value Harrow's customers. The strategy therefore aims to create a feeling of civic pride among the local population by achieving greater prosperity for borough residents and businesses. We aim to achieve this objective by creating a positive and cohesive identity for the area through marketing initiatives and by improving Harrow's infrastructure to ensure that the visitor remains welcomed, involved and satisfied at all times.

- **To create a positive and cohesive identity for the borough**
- **To create a sense of CIVIC PRIDE in the local population.**
- **To welcome, involve and satisfy the visitor.**
- **To achieve greater prosperity for borough residents and businesses.**

Objective 1: To create a positive and cohesive identity for the borough

Marketing is a brand new function for Harrow Council and as such provides an ideal opportunity to create a strong identity for the borough.

Actions

- Promotional campaigns: Timely promotional campaigns to target varied market audiences.
- Adopt a market segmentation approach to tailor the product to suit the customer and allow for better use of resources.
- Gather reliable data to be able to analyse trends, forecast, and plan future marketing campaigns and measure the success of existing campaigns.
- To develop a cultural identity for Harrow to promote to wider audiences.
- Provide accurate quality print material and create a tourism subsite to orientate and influence the visitor to spend time in Harrow.
- To design and implement the "Harrow family" of promotional material to ensure consistency and build the Visit Harrow brand image and logo as a potentially recognised symbol.
- To implement a press/PR Media relations strategy in conjunction with the council's Marketing & Public Relations function.
- Implement monitoring procedures to evaluate the success of the campaign.

Objective 2: CIVIC PRIDE: Valuing Harrow's customers.

Actions

- Firmly establish Harrow to the local and national audience as a desirable area in which people wish to “live, work and visit”.
- Introduce a communications plan for Harrow residents utilising local press, “Your Harrow” link to the tourism subsite, and a regular slot in the Harrow People magazine. Explore opportunities to organise events for residents such as competitions, treasure hunts etc.
- Engage local communities in visitor surveys to gauge opinion and improve service and facilities for Harrow's customers.
- Keep residents informed of the current range of events in Harrow and raise awareness of existing visitor attractions and facilities through targeted promotional campaigns.
- **A true learning community:** ensure that residents and visitors continue to learn from and participate in local histories and cultures through learning and, access and in celebrating diversity.
- Positively promote the range of walking and cycling opportunities in the borough via the tourism map, website and through Transport for London's Travel Options scheme
- Improve facilities, events and attractions for the local residents via the town centre regeneration plan.
- Improve employment opportunities for local residents via the development of new tourism attractions, events and facilities.
- **Strengthen Harrow's communities** by actively engaging the whole community in events such as Harrow Arts Festival/Under One Sky and the 60th anniversary end of World War II commemorations.

Objective 3: To welcome, involve and satisfy the visitor

- **Tourist Information Centre provision.**

Harrow Council currently has a registered TIC based in the Civic Centre reception area. However due to its location outside the town centre, visitors are not aware of its presence and there is no sign posting or public information concerning its whereabouts. The existing TIC functions primarily as a reception area for the Council and as such, the reception staff have limited time and resources to cope with tourism queries. In order to ensure the credibility of Harrow as a visitor destination, it is vital that centrally located Visitor Information provision is provided for Harrow.

Actions

- To relocate the TIC to the town centre utilising the “one stop shop” provision planned for Harrow town centre.
- To present the public interface of tourism for the borough and promote key marketing messages & information in a positive and coordinated way.
- To employ trained staff to provide an excellent information service to visitors and encourage potential visitors to choose Harrow by responding efficiently to speculative queries.
- To implement visitor database collation to assess performance.
- To implement accommodation booking services to increase business opportunities for local hotels.
- Implement Transport for London provision as a revenue generating service for residents and visitors. (Hounslow TIC generates £200,000 in revenue). In the long-term, investigate other revenue generating opportunities such as bureau de change provision.
- To create a booking service for regular guided walks around the borough.
- To implement integrated and coherent signage systems at appropriate entry and vantage spots.

Objective 4: To achieve greater prosperity for borough residents and businesses.

i) Town centre development

As highlighted in the town centre management strategy, Harrow is failing to fulfil its retail potential and during critical weekend and evening periods, currently 40% of the town's residents choose to shop elsewhere. An improved range of retail outlets, a centrally located performance venue and a more varied range of events would enhance the appeal of the town centre for both residents and visitors.

Actions

- Expand the range of cultural events and festivals taking place in Harrow town centre: e.g. French markets and public art exhibitions.
- To support the developmental plans for a centrally located performance space to encourage residents and visitors to spend more time and money in Harrow in the evenings.
- To actively support plans for Harrow's art in public places strategy to increase ownership and civic pride among residents and arouse interest from external London audiences.
- Highlight the importance of Harrow-on-the-Hill village as a key visitor attraction by supporting the proposed development of a pedestrian walkway between the town centre and the hill.
- To improve the variety of shops within the town centre to enable Harrow to compete with the other key shopping neighbouring shopping areas of Watford and Brent Cross.
- Multi-cultural offer: make a positive feature of Harrow's range of ethnic restaurants and food retailers by improving the appearance of restaurants and shop window displays by implementing features such as recipe ideas to stimulate interest from visitors and enhance Harrow's multi-cultural offerings.
- To positively promote Harrow's range of licensed mini-cabs in print material to emphasize Harrow's strength as being the 2nd safest borough in London.

ii) Green belt opportunities

Harrow Council Sports Development department has now produced a Green Belt Strategy to compliment the existing strategies of the Parks & Recreation department. Harrow's green belt area is a key feature of the borough and should be developed and promoted to greater effect.

Actions

- The Green Belt needs to be better managed as a resource – currently there is a lack of cohesion between volunteers and the council which could be counteracted by the appointment of a Green Belt Officer.
- Ensure that existing attractions remain preserved and protected: improve the appearance and maintenance of the grounds of key tourism sites to include: Bentley Priory Nature Reserve, Stanmore Park, the grounds of Headstone Manor, the lake area of Grim's Dyke hotel, Pinner Park Farm and Cannon's Park.
- To explore the possibility of creating designated areas for walking and mountain biking in selected green belt areas.
- To highlight walking routes and cycling facilities on the new Visit Harrow map in consultation with HA21 and the Ramblers Association.
- To improve the existing infrastructure of walking and cycling routes to include such features as: signage, pic-nic areas and public toilets.
- Increase the range and interest value of current walking routes to create themed itineraries: heritage attractions/ film locations/ blue plaques of the borough.
- To implement a dedicated walking and cycling guide to the borough.
- To implement volunteer groups to conduct guided walks in the borough.
- Positively promote walking and cycling to local residents and to wider audiences via PR initiatives and related campaigns e.g. Transport for London's Travel Options campaigns for London.
- To include Harrow's golf facilities on promotional tourism information.

iii) Development of visitor attractions

Actions

- Support Harrow Heritage Trust's bid to create a museum/art gallery from the renovated West House to house the private collection of Heath Robinson's work.
- Investigate the market potential of the restored Headstone Manor and the Tithe Barn and put a development plan in place to ensure that the resources are utilised to their maximum potential.
- Investigate the possibility of developing a Gilbert & Sullivan Museum to be housed at Grim's Dyke Hotel to extend Harrow's range of visitor attractions.
- Support developmental plans for the implementation of an exhibition and performance space in the town centre.
- Improve signage within the borough to make it easier for residents and visitors to find places of interest.
- Explore new ways of generating greater revenue from existing attractions from corporate meetings and events, and weddings.
- To investigate opportunities to develop Bentley Priory into a visitor attraction at the end of the current lease in 2009/2010.

8. Training & Development

Tourism plays a key role in providing part-time and flexible work opportunities for various members of the community and is also a major provider of employment opportunities for new arrivals into the UK, which is of particular importance to the new influx of foreign residents to Harrow. As a true learning community, Harrow's long-term tourism policy must give due consideration to the area of training and development concerning front-line and back office hospitality staff to ensure that visitors receive a quality service and to also ensure that employees remain in the borough. In accordance with the findings of Harrow's Economic Regeneration Policy and plans for the new Harrow Corporate University (HCU) the following objectives should be carried out:

Actions

- In the short-term to implement regular "Harrow Training Roadshows" to target front-line tourism staff, bus, taxi and licenced minicab drivers to improve product knowledge of Harrow's attractions.
- To ensure that high quality and easily accessible learning opportunities are available to all prospective hospitality employees.
- To work closely with training providers and higher and further education colleges to ensure adequate uptake of training and work experience opportunities for students.
- To support the creation of a Harrow Lifelong Learning Network, providing accessible learning for all through a partnership between public, private and voluntary sectors in accordance with the objectives of the New Harrow Partnership.
- To ensure that the hospitality sector is fully integrated into the functions of the HCU which seeks to work externally to provide life long learning opportunities.
- To endorse quality and standards of training across all relevant bodies
- To ensure advice and assistance to new and existing businesses in terms of staff training opportunities and tourism marketing initiatives.

9. Performance Management

No visitor figures are currently available for Harrow. To measure the success of any current or future marketing campaigns it is therefore essential to invest in market intelligence information to be able to establish and develop target markets and record the effectiveness of current marketing campaigns. As Harrow's regeneration plans develop, market research will also be required to gauge customer satisfaction with regard to existing amenities and facilities and public reaction to new developments. In accordance with the Mayor's dispersal strategy, the London Development Agency is now, for the first time, planning to put into effect an economic impact model on the visitor profile for each of the London boroughs due to become available in 2006. However, it is also important for the borough to carry out its own qualitative and quantitative research to monitor customer satisfaction levels and gauge the effectiveness of current marketing and promotional campaigns.

- Put measures in place to record the number of site hits to the tourism subsite.
- Implement surveys to monitor public opinion of existing facilities & amenities.
- Organise focus groups to gauge public opinion of new proposed developments.
- Implement market research to establish target markets and build a profile of visitors to Harrow.
- Liaise with the London Development Agency to ensure that Harrow is included in the new Economic Impact Model for West London.
- Create a tourism database for phone call and e-mail enquiries to the tourism website and Civic Centre Information centre.
- Put measures in place to monitor occupancy rates in hotels to benchmark performance.
- Measure the amount of column inches in PR coverage in accordance with the Communications department evaluation policy.
- Measure the footfall to specific events such as Under One Sky and the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II to provide a benchmark for future events.
- To incorporate the findings of the Audit Commission's cultural inspection report into the development of Harrow's tourism strategy.

10. Objectives in 2005/2006

During the first year of the tourism policy, the emphasis of the strategy will be to increase awareness of Harrow and its tourism potential within the local population and within the larger London audience. It is unlikely that there will be a significant increase in visitor numbers within the first year as a certain time frame will have to be taken into account in order to establish Harrow's identity as a tourism destination and to raise awareness of it. The emphasis of work in the first year will therefore be to create a cultural identity for Harrow, improve the current provision of information, and for Harrow to work in partnership both internally and externally to make future progress.

Objective 1: To create a cultural identity for Harrow

Corporate branding

- In accordance with the Harrow Communications strategy: "Harrow as a place to work, live and visit" a new logo and the strapline "Visit Harrow" will be used on all internal and external tourism promotional material to produce a more co-ordinated approach for the Harrow family of publications.

PR Activity

- Timely and seasonal PR campaigns to target specific target audiences to include: residents, ethnic minorities, local London, travel trade, government press and national and international audiences.
- Two major community events to showcase Harrow's key selling points: old world England and diversity offers to residents and local London audiences. A structured communication plan will be implemented for both campaigns.

Harrow Arts Festival/Under One Sky: 17th July

Target markets: local and London families and the ethnic market.

A community wide festival to showcase Harrow's ethnic diversity and unity.

World War II: 60th anniversary end of war commemorations: 26th June

Target markets: residents & local London audience predominantly over 50's.

To commemorate the 60th anniversary of World War 2, Harrow Council will be active in hosting a community event. The event will showcase the "nostalgia" theme of Harrow highlighting the legacy of the borough: Heath Robinson (display of artefacts), Bentley Priory, (possibility of public opening), Winston Churchill, involving local residents, war veterans etc.

Events Diary: another of our objectives in 2005 will be to create an events diary to highlight not only existing events in Harrow but to also provide the opportunity to create local events to link to national events such as national book week. This in turn will help to raise Harrow's profile to a larger target audience outside of the borough.

Other events taking place in the borough such as the Heath Robinson exhibition and the Harrow Arts Festival will also be actively promoted to wider audiences via regional, national press and via Visit London and Visit Britain where appropriate.

Objective 2: To improve the provision and dissemination of information

- Rebrand and streamline the existing range of leaflets and promotional material to ensure that all print material belongs to the "Harrow family of publications".
- Assess the potential to augment existing print material to highlight the strengths of the borough.
- Assess and improve current leaflet distribution to cover a wider remit to include: hotels, attractions, libraries, sports centres, entertainment venues, pubs and restaurants within the local area and other TIC in the Western London area and central Tourist Information Centres such as Visit London and Visit Britain.
- Create a tourism subsite to inform and persuade the media, travel trade (leisure and business), local, national and international audiences. Include important up-to-date information on opening times, restaurant, leisure facilities and ideas for days out for local and national audiences.
- Develop an events diary for Harrow to inform local residents/council employees/potential visitors via the intranet and tourism subsite for cross-marketing purposes.
- To develop a new weddings brochure for the borough.
- To introduce a new Bentley Priory nature reserve map.
- Create a tourism travel map to distribute at the Civic Centre and other associated information points: e.g. libraries, other visitor information points throughout London
- Ensure that poster size map is also available at transport exits and town centre venues.

Objective 3: to develop Harrow's tourism infrastructure

- Explore private and public sector funding options for the development of West House.
- Plan improvements for the existing Civic Centre Information provision.
- To actively encourage opportunities for cultural events to take place in the town centre.
- Implement a development plan for the creation of a Tourist Information facility in the town centre.
- To actively support the town centre management's recommendation for the provision of a centrally located performance space.
- To improve signage in the borough.

Objective 4: To work in partnership

- Create a Tourism Partnership to include hoteliers, visitor attractions, Chamber of Commerce and business associations such as Harrow in business.
- To ensure that Harrow tourism suppliers are represented in the new West London Business Tourism Forum, organised by West London Business.
- To meet regularly with the Cultural Strategy Forum to network and contribute to the development of Harrow's cultural offer.
- To keep in regular contact with Visit London to ensure that Harrow is promoted in all relevant marketing campaigns.
- To represent the interests of Harrow in West London Tourism Executive meetings.
- To maintain close links with Harrow's strong voluntary and community groups and associations.
- To work closely with all relevant internal departments to include: town centre management, regeneration, sports development, arts development and parks and recreation departments to ensure a singular vision for Harrow's tourism development.
- To consult regularly with the Beacon authorities on Harrow's long-term sustainable tourism development.

11. Tourism Strategy Timeline

Project	Action	Target Date
Easter in Harrow	Promote things to do in the borough for residents and visitors via website and local press.	22 nd March
Heath Robinson Exhibition	To promote the Heath Robinson exhibition to wider audiences including Visit London, LDA, and regional press.	31 st March
Tourism Strategy	Final draft of Harrow Tourism Strategy completed.	End of April
Harrow Tourism Map	To design a Harrow Tourism Map.	End of April
Visit Harrow logo	Launch of the new Visit Harrow logo.	End of April
Visit London: Get out and go further campaign	To ensure that Harrow is included in this London promotion which includes: press, PR, radio promotion and face to face marketing for Londoners.	
Harrow events diary	To provide a comprehensive listing of all Harrow events.	End of May
West London Toolkit	To compile comprehensive information on Harrow for the new West London Toolkit (West London Tourism Executive).	End of May
Visit Harrow awareness	To ensure that Harrow is included in all relevant Visit London and Visit Britain website and print material.	End of May
Bentley Priory nature reserve map	To design a new Bentley Priory nature reserve map.	June
Visit Harrow website	To launch a new dedicated tourism portal for visitors & residents.	June
Harrow Tourism Partnership	To launch the first meeting of the Harrow Tourism Partnership.	June
60 th Anniversary War Memorial celebrations	To organise and publicise the 60 th anniversary war time commemoration as a showcase Harrow event.	26 June commemoration
Under One Sky	To promote Under One Sky as an event to highlight Harrow's diversity and unity.	17 July
Harrow tourism training roadshow	To organise a training roadshow for front-line hospitality staff	End of July (pending agreement of Tourism Partnership)

12. Conclusion

Harrow has great potential to attract visitors but the success of any long-term tourism strategy is dependent on a firm commitment to invest money into its development. The restructure of the council and the creation of new initiatives such as the cultural, green belt and town centre strategies provide an excellent structural framework in which to develop Harrow's tourism infrastructure. The support of local voluntary organisations such as the Harrow Heritage Trust and private tourism suppliers such as Grim's Dyke Hotel provide further evidence of the strength of our private partner's commitment to developing the borough's tourism potential.

2005 signals the climate of change in central government thinking, with the focus of attention finally shifting from central London to the outer boroughs. The West London Tourism strategy promises long-term support and commitment to the development of tourism in the area. The reopening of Wembley Stadium, the expansion of Heathrow airport, and the relocation of the Eurostar terminal to King's Cross in 2007 all provide exciting opportunities for Harrow to capitalise on London's continued growth as a world class destination.

Working in partnership to put Harrow on the map will not only strengthen our communities but help to significantly enhance public perception of the work of the Council. Improved amenities, greater prosperity for local businesses, and a high degree of civic pride are all key benefits which tourism can provide to ensure that Harrow becomes one of London's most vibrant and prosperous boroughs.

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