

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	6 April 2006
Subject:	Tourism Review – Report and Recommendations
Responsible Officer:	Director of People, Performance and Policy
Contact Officer:	Ed Hammond, Scrutiny Officer (x5205) Linzi Clark, Tourism Officer
Portfolio Holder:	Education and Lifelong Learning
Key Decision:	No
Status:	Part 1

Section 1: Summary

Decision Required

That the report be noted and the proposed recommendations be endorsed

Reason for report

The Environment and Economy Sub-Committee approved the enclosed review report at their meeting on 9 March. It is being referred to Cabinet for a decision on the implementation of the recommendations.

This covering report provides a response from the Communications Unit on the content of the report.

Benefits

Implementing the recommendations will further enhance Harrow's attractiveness as a tourist destination.

The Communications Unit have provided a detailed responses outlining the potential benefits of the recommendations at 2.2, below.

Cost of Proposals

None specific to this review – any costs would be met through existing funding, or funding to be agreed by Members at a future date.

Risks

None identified.

Implications if recommendations rejected

Harrow might not find itself able to capitalise on the benefits tourism would bring to the borough.

Section 2: Report

2.1 Brief History

The Tourism Review Group spent four months collecting evidence from officers, external witnesses, stakeholders and members of the public into tourism in Harrow, concentrating particularly on tourism infrastructure, community involvement and sustainability. It has now made a number of recommendations, which were approved by the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Sub-Committee on 9 March 2006 and are now submitted to Cabinet for a decision on their implementation.

The Communications Unit were consulted on the recommendations and invited to provide a response outlining suggestions for implementation and financial and other implications, where appropriate. This response is printed below.

2.2 Response from Communications Unit

1. Money should be allocated on a long-term basis, to the resourcing of the post of full-time permanent tourism officer.

At the end of January 2006, this action was implemented by cabinet.

2. Separate funding should be made available for tourism marketing and development purposes.

The Visit Harrow tourism initiative is a joint private/public sector campaign and wherever possible every attempt is made to secure private sector funding for campaigns. To date, £4000.00 has been secured from the private sector for sponsorship of marketing materials and events. Arrangements for the

provision of a small tourism marketing budget from the council's own budget are being made. It is also worth bearing in mind that Harrow's business community is limited to small-medium sized enterprises and there are therefore no large companies, which can offer a substantial budget for joint marketing campaigns.

3. Steps should be taken to market Harrow differently to the two principal groups of visitors – those visiting Harrow in particular and those using Harrow as a base for London – in consultation with Visit London.

These points have now been addressed in the 2006 Marketing/communications plan which outlines clear actions on how to target local Londoners/ visits from friends and relatives and regional and national audiences. However, in view of tourism's role as an economic generator, it is important to ensure that visitors spend as much time and money in Harrow as possible rather than losing this revenue to central London.

4. The council should recognise the importance of tourism as a regenerative tool by ensuring that closer links are built between the tourist economy and the council's regeneration function through the tourism officer.

Tourism is now more closely aligned to the functions of regeneration and is also now a part of the Economic Development & Regeneration Review. Tourism is also being integrated into regeneration projects such as the Bernays Gardens project, to provide a stronger framework for future funding bids.

5. The council should actively pursue working on tourism with neighbouring boroughs, and should examine the possibility of an officer's forum (comprising other tourism and regeneration officers) with a long-term view of establishing a north-west London marketing organisation of DMO.

Harrow is now part of the London Development Agency's (LDA) sub-regional tourism executive group for west London. The London boroughs of Harrow, Hounslow, Brent, Ealing, Hillingdon and Hammersmith & Fulham have also recently joined together in a marketing initiative to create a film map of West London covering filming locations across all six boroughs. The Marketing group is also currently looking into creating a tourist information kiosk at Terminal 5 of Heathrow airport and creating a West London Asian Film Festival in November.

6. A Tourist Information Centre with a dedicated trained staff should be established in the town centre.

There was an unsuccessful attempt to gain funding via the Local Area Agreement (LAA). The Tourism Action Group (TAG) will also be discussing this issue in depth with our Town Centre Manager and Strategic Planning team at our next meeting at the end of April. The need for a centrally positioned tourist information centre remains a strong desire.

7. Steps should be taken to make marketing more coherent, with attractions and sites in the borough being marketed under the “Visit Harrow” brand.

We are currently planning a Discover Harrow travel guide, which will bring all the attractions and sites of the borough together along with a fold out map.

During our regular tourism forum meetings and in our newsletters suppliers are encouraged to use the Visit Harrow branding in all their communications, this has already been incorporated by the Quality Harrow Hotel and by the Grim’s Dyke hotel.

8. A (possibly self-funding) detailed map of Harrow town centre – and in time other local centres – should be provided, giving information on shops, restaurants, bars and other sites of interest.

As mentioned previously, a new travel guide to Harrow will be produced this year which will include shopping, restaurants etc. However there are also opportunities to work in partnership with the town centre forum to produce other marketing materials aimed at Harrow town centre in the future.

9. Harrow should mirror Visit Britain and Visit London’s “assessed only” policy by only marketing quality accredited guest accommodation.

During the November tourism forum, a guest speaker was brought in to discuss quality accreditation with the guesthouse providers who were present. As a business support follow up measure, we will be offering mock-assessment days in May where guest house accommodation suppliers can see exactly what quality assessment entails. In terms of the new travel guide, we will be promoting quality-assessed accommodation only. We also intend to issue a 2007 deadline for accommodation suppliers to sign up to the scheme in order to be listed on the council’s approved list of accommodation suppliers.

10. Steps should be taken to encourage significantly more group travel, and to develop transport infrastructure to make Harrow more attractive to groups, including developing marketing packages in partnership with local hotels.

Following the very successful Coach Tourism Council familiarisation trip to the Grim’s Dyke hotel in 2005 which resulted in £20,000 worth of new business, it is intended to continue to target the group travel press with newsworthy events such as the 125th anniversary of the opera “Patience”. Before itineraries can be produced, infrastructural problems such as correct signage, parking facilities at Harrow Museum, and the future of Bentley Priory need to be addressed.

11. Work should be undertaken with Traffic and Transportation officers in the council to analyse current capacity issues, in particular the adequacy of coach parking and pick up and set down, and to assess future needs in respect of group travel.

These are issues which will be broached with Strategic Planning during the course of 2006. However before embarking on any future long-term plans, we are waiting to hear the outcome of the government’s public consultation

on fuel emissions in greater London, which could well have an impact on any future plans.

12. Signage should be improved to provide “wayfinding” information which is integrated with visitor attraction and council maps.

The issue of signage will be broached with Strategic Planning in the next Tourism Action Group (TAG) meeting on the 23 April. The council is currently awaiting guidance from the London Development Agency who are seeking to create consistent guidelines on tourism signage throughout London. Pilot projects on wayfinding and directional signage for car users are planned to be rolled out in summer 2006.

13. Where road signs are used, the council should plan to provide “progressive disclosure” and so limit the amount of street clutter.

Progressive disclosure is the method that we would seek to adopt and is the favoured method for tourism signage in other parts of the country and the method recommended by the LDA.

14. The role of the Tourism Officer should be expanded – with the appropriate support to allow for the development of relationships between the council and the local business community, and to provide a link between local businesses and regional agencies in respect of the council’s regenerative functions.

Through the Harrow Tourism Forum, the Council already has good relationships with accommodation suppliers in the borough. Via the regeneration function of the council, we hope to create stronger links with external bodies such as Harrow in Business to work specifically on projects, which could help local businesses to prosper.

15. More work should be carried out with local schools to encourage and develop civic pride, and to involve young people in the tourism economy.

An arts/heritage plan is currently being carried out in schools to promote 500 years of Harrow’s history in conjunction with the 500th anniversary of the Tithe Barn. 40 middle schools will be contacted for the involvement in the project, which will result in a timeline banner being created for display in the heritage tent of Under One Sky and later to be rolled out as a heritage exhibition in libraries and at Harrow Museum. The timeline banner project will seek to engage both community groups/school children and the arts to create a true learning community.

16. Marketing should initially be targeted at local people, with campaigns being used to prototype for campaigns outside the local area.

In 2006, it is intended to continue to view our residents as our primary audience. Following on from the success of our “More on your doorstep than you could ever imagine” marketing campaigns, we will continue to produce privately sponsored event planners, local media coverage and targeted features in Harrow People to educate and influence our “local ambassadors” to spread the word about Harrow to wider audiences. We would also like to hold in the future “I love Harrow” days where residents could benefit from

special promotions and events aimed at raising awareness of Harrow's attractions.

2.3 Options considered

Not applicable.

2.4 Consultation

The Portfolio Holder for Lifelong Learning (as the Portfolio Holder responsible for tourism) has been consulted on the contents of the review's report and its recommendations.

2.5 Financial Implications

None specific to this report - any costs would be met through existing funding, or funding to be agreed by Members at a future date

2.6 Legal Implications

ODPM Planning Policy Guidance Note 21 "Tourism" (PPG21) outlines the economic significance of tourism and its environmental impact. It acknowledges that tourism makes a major contribution to the national economy and to the prosperity of many cities, towns and rural areas. Because tourism often depends on a high quality environment, it can act as a positive force for environmental protection and enhancement and PPG21 explains how the needs of tourism should be dealt with in development plans and in development control.

2.7 Equalities Impact

None specific to this report – any developments and marketing activities will bear in mind the need to reflect the full and diverse nature of Harrow's communities.

2.8 Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Considerations

None relevant to this report.

Section 3: Supporting Information/Background Documents

Appendix 1 – Report considered by Environment and Economy Scrutiny Sub-Committee, 9 March 2006 and Scrutiny Review of Tourism (circulated in the Cabinet Supporting Documents Pack)

Appendix 2 – Reference from Environment and Economy Scrutiny Sub-Committee