

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	12 February 2009
Subject:	Tourism Strategy
Key Decision:	Yes
Responsible Officer:	Andrew Trehern
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Marilyn Ashton, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Development and Enterprise
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Draft Tourism Strategy Appendix A: consultation plan Appendix B: action plan

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report provides an introduction to the draft tourism strategy 2009-12

Recommendations:

That Cabinet approve the draft strategy to go out for consultation

Reason: (For recommendation)

To receive input and endorsement from the Council and partners.

Section 2 – Report

2.1 This report introduces a new tourism strategy for the borough, which aims to build on the successes of the first strategy.

Options

2.2 As the first strategy expires in 2008, there is no option other than to prepare a new strategy.

2.3 Background: first strategy (2005-2008) – achievements include:

57% increase in visitor spend between 2004-2006 from £92.6 million to £161 million¹

42% improvement in tourist information service to visitors²

28% increase in revenue per available room from 2006-2007³

25% increase in hotel occupancy between 2006-2007⁴ 2008/ 2009: New expressions of interest in further hotel development

from Travelodge Hotel and by new brand, Hampton by Hilton.

Total number of bed spaces in the borough: approximately 900 (including University of Westminster Harrow campus.)

2.4 Harrow's tourism has particularly benefited from the completion of Wembley Stadium, prior to the completion of any new major hotels in Brent. Through a wide range of actions the strategy seeks to maintain this boost to the economy.

Increase in overseas visitor spending by 20% from £81 million to £96 million.

Increase in the number of accommodation bed spaces by 10% in line with the GLA Hotel Demand study (June 2006). (2000 extra rooms per annum will be needed in London over the period to 2026)

Increase visitor spend by 10% from £161 million to £177 million

Increase the number of quality assessed accommodation from 42% to 60%

2.5 The vision for the new strategy is:

By 2012, tourism will play a fundamental role in supporting the local economy by creating more jobs for local people, improving local facilities and bringing our diverse communities together in a united feeling of civic pride in our borough. By offering a quality experience for the visitor in terms of accommodation, facilities, attractions and local welcome, Harrow will become the destination of choice for visitors to north- west London.

2.6 The strategy has been developed through a series of focus groups held with partners over the last five months under the auspices of; the Harrow Tourism Forum and the Tourism Action Group. This has included: Harrow

¹ London Development Agency Economic Impact Model results 2004/2007

² Mystery Shopper exercises conducted by Visit Britain 2005-2008

³ Statistics based on evidence supplied by a selection of Harrow hotels 2006/2007

⁴ Statistics based on evidence supplied by a selection of Harrow hotels 2006/2007

museum, Harrow Arts Centre Harrow Heritage Trust, local hotels, Bed and Breakfast providers and local business people with an interest in tourism as well as officers and Members.

2.7 The strategy makes links with related initiatives and strategies as well as providing up to date facts and figures on the value and impact of tourism to Harrow.

2.8 The strategy stresses the need to make the most of increased opportunities related to 2012 and how this may be done in the current economic climate. It also demonstrates how it contributes to the new corporate priorities.

2.9 During the lifetime of the new strategy it is expected that both Bentley Priory and West House will be developed to become important attractions in the borough.

3.0 The strategy's guiding principles :- partnership working, sustainability and improving the quality of the visitor experience.

3.1 The strategy also provides justification for a wide range of actions:

- Marketing and promotion- the need to work across the borough to develop cohesive materials to promote the borough which can be displayed on our web site for a range of purposes from inward investment to tourism.
- Encouraging more local tourism – encouraging local people to take pride in their area and support the facilities and amenities that are right here on their doorstep rather than travelling to other destinations.
- International visitors – with a particular emphasis on encouraging emerging markets, (and in particular India) via our current residents and their ambassadorial role in Harrow
- Business travel market – the high yield area of the tourism industry – worth £22 billion pounds a year or the equivalent to £120.00 a day, per visitor
- Group travel market – important for creating West London itineraries post-2012 to encourage repeat visitors to experience the other side of London
- Skills and training e.g. – increasing the number of local jobs for local people in line with increased population growth
- Customer services – providing best practice throughout the Council as outlined in “Gold standard customer service for 2012 and beyond”
- Volunteering – making use of our local resources in terms of cultures and ethnicities to provide a welcome to visitors and to also provide a stepping stone into work for unemployed residents
- London Ambassadors – Up-skilling front line staff in Harrow and increasing both local knowledge and civic pride in the borough
- Improving the quality of visitor accommodation – improving standards, business profitability and encouraging more repeat visitors to sustain the economy

3.2 **Equalities impact:** contributes to creating cohesive communities through increasing civic pride

3.3 Legal comments: none

3.4 Community safety: The Tourism Forum provides a mechanism to identify safety issues and discuss resolution through community safety and other channels.

3.5 Financial Implications

Implementation of the partner strategy will be managed by the tourism officer.

It is anticipated that external funding and public and private sector support will cover the costs of various activities outlined in the Action Plan. This method of financing has worked successfully in the last three years and has resulted in £8,000 from the London Development Agency (LDA) and £30,000 from the private sector to finance signage and other related tourism marketing activity.

As there is no budget provision for this, the proposal can only go forward if the anticipated income is received.

3.6 Performance Issues:

In reviewing the national indicator set, only NI5 “general satisfaction with area and NI6 “participation in regular volunteering” were deemed appropriate and tourism is only one of many factors that would impact on this target.

However the strategy includes a monitoring schedule for which we have used key indicators which have hard evidence.

- Increase in visitor spend by 20% from £161 million (2006 Economic Impact Model figures provided by the LDA) to £193 million by 2012.
- Increase in overseas visitors spending by 20% from £81 million to £96 million by 2012. (2006 Economic Impact Model figures provided by the LDA)

3.7 Risk Management Implications: The final strategy will include a risk assessment and minimisation plan.

3.7 Environmental Impact

Tourism has significant potential to be damaging to the environment, as it encourages people to travel both to and around their destination; puts pressure on water resources; increases the production of waste; increases local energy consumption; etc.

In delivering the strategy, the council and its partners should look to minimise these negative impacts by encouraging more sustainable modes of transport and reducing waste, water and energy use by good environmental design and management systems.

Where the strategy results in increased energy use within Harrow, it would mean that delivering the per capita reduction in carbon dioxide emissions (NI 186, which is part of the council’s LAA), would be more difficult.

The new strategy will also focus attention on ‘staycation’ –the new trend for hard up families in Britain to holiday at home. We will therefore look to encourage Londoners who want to get away from the city for a long weekend but who do not want to pay hidden charges of low cost flying or get stuck in a motorway traffic jam. We will also promote our other strengths which include

our heritage attractions such as Harrow School, excellent restaurants and the borough's 'unlimited legroom' in our expansive green belt. We will position this as a 'weekend in the country without leaving the city'. This measure help reduce environmental damage by influencing local Londoners to take fewer flights to overseas destinations.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Sheela Thakrar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 13 01 09		
Name: Abiodun Kolawole	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 07 01 2009		

Section 4 - Performance Officer Clearance

Name: Tom Whiting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	On behalf of the Divisional Director (Strategy and Improvement)
Date: 08 01 09		

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name: Andrew Baker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director (Environmental Services)
Date: 16 01 2009		

Section 5 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Linzi Clark – Tourism Officer, Tel: 020 8736 6535
email: linzi.clark@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers: None