

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	18 June 2009
Subject:	Tourism Strategy
Key Decision:	Yes
Responsible Officer:	Andrew Trehern, Corporate Director of Place Shaping
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Marilyn Ashton, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Development and Enterprise
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Appendix A: Tourism Strategy Appendix B: Consultation plan Appendix C Action plan

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report seeks adoption of the Tourism Strategy 2009-12 following the consultation exercise conducted on the draft strategy from 16 February to 31 March 2009.

Recommendations:

That Cabinet adopt the Tourism Strategy (2009-2012) attached at Appendix A.

Reason: (For recommendation)

The tourism strategy plays a significant role in the council's economic development remit and also plays a key role in maximising the benefit of the Olympic Games for the benefit of the local economy.

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 expired in 2008, there is no option other than to prepare a new strategy.

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

- Tourism contributes £161 million to the local economy
- Since the first tourism strategy there has been a £4 million increase in overseas visitor spend in Harrow between 2005 and 2006.
- Tourism contributes 4.2% of local employment – this equates to 3,427 jobs in the borough
- Tourism provides flexible work opportunities and is therefore ideally suited to slivers-of-time and other initiatives to tackle worklessness.
- Harrow's tourism has particularly benefited from the completion of Wembley Stadium, prior to the completion of any new major hotels in Brent.
- Anecdotal evidence has demonstrated that within two hours of concert tickets going on sale in 2008 – every hotel room in the Comfort Hotel Harrow had sold out. The hotel has now received consent for expansion of facilities to accommodate extra rooms and conference facilities.
- There has also been a 25% increase in hotel occupancy between 2006-2007¹2008
- 28% increase in revenue per available room from 2006-2007²
- 2008/9: New expressions of interest from the Intercontinental Hotel Group (IHG) and the Hilton hotel chain.
- 2008: New hotel approved for Northolt Road, South Harrow
- Harrow's excellent public transport interface makes it a popular base not only for events at Wembley but also for rugby matches at Twickenham, London Fashion Week, Wimbledon and events at the O2. Visitors travelling by Eurostar can arrive in Harrow in twelve minutes from Euston and the Jubilee line creates direct access to the Olympic sites in Stratford in less than an hour.
- Total number of bed spaces in the borough: approximately 900 (including University of Westminster Harrow campus.)

¹ Statistics based on evidence supplied by a selection of Harrow hotels 2006/2007

² Statistics based on evidence supplied by a selection of Harrow hotels 2006/2007

2.4 The strategy has been developed through a comprehensive series of consultation exercises that started in April 2008 with initial discussions under the auspices of the Harrow Tourism Forum and the Tourism Action Group (TAG).

Following approval of the first draft of the tourism strategy by cabinet in January 2009, a further period of consultation followed (from the 16 February – 31 March 2009), with a wide variety of internal council departments including: Conservation, Heritage Projects, Championing Harrow, Waste Management, Community Development, Cultural Services and Economic Development. The strategy was also an agenda item at the Greener Harrow meeting on Tuesday 24 March and further feedback has also been received from the London Development Agency (LDA) and Visit London (VL). In addition, the strategy has also been disseminated to the Harrow Youth Council, the Harrow Association of Voluntary Services (HAVS) neighbouring West London boroughs and local authority tourism departments in both Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

Key findings during consultation:

The key findings during the consultation period were as follows:

Partnership working: to develop further the links with voluntary, public and private sector partnerships in order to create added value to the “visitor offer.” This could include offering complete packages of accommodation, leisure activities and entertainment particularly during the recession. More joined-up working in the areas of public transport, walking/ cycling and volunteering is needed in order to share resources and create greater awareness to wider audiences.

Sustainability: as tourism does have a social and environmental impact, sustainability needs to be an important element of the strategy. This includes waste management, visitor management, promotion of public transport, development and promotion of walking and cycling infrastructure and adoption of green tourism business practices by attractions and accommodation providers.

Skills and employment: Harrow will be going through sizeable population growth in the next decade and it is therefore important to ensure that there are enough local jobs for local people. The flexible nature of employment within the tourism industry needs to be highlighted and the sector should be incorporated into new employment initiatives such as “Slivers-of-Time” which particularly benefits those who cannot work on a full-time basis. Volunteering also provides a useful stepping-stone into work particularly for those who are long-term unemployed. Volunteering opportunities within the tourism sector should therefore be incorporated into existing schemes run by Harrow Association of Voluntary Services (HAVS).

Impact of 2012: Harrow’s ethnic diversity is a positive strength for the borough and one that should be capitalised on in the lead-up to and during the Olympic games. Harrow’s diversity sends out a welcoming message to the world’s athletes and has already helped to secure the Bangladeshi team. It is estimated that 72% of visitors to the Games will be staying with friends and relatives. Harrow’s strong links with India, one of the world’s strongest emerging markets, could therefore be exploited further to not only boost the visitor economy but also stimulate inward investment opportunities.

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 northwest London.

Through a wide range of actions the strategy seeks to maintain this boost to the economy.

Partnership working: build on the current partnership activity developed with the voluntary, public and private sector particularly in the areas of volunteering and community engagement with ethnic minority groups in the lead up to 2012. Continue to work with attractions and accommodation providers to promote key messages around good value accommodation and excellent public transport connections.

Develop more local tourism – encourage local people to take pride in their area and support the facilities and amenities that are right here on their doorstep rather than travelling elsewhere. This will also help with encouraging “visits from friends and relatives” in the lead up to and during 2012. During the recession, marketing will focus attention on the new trend for hard up families to holiday at home. Emphasis will be put on our diverse restaurants, heritage attractions and “unlimited legroom” in terms of the expansive areas of local greenbelt. This will be positioned as a ‘weekend in the country without leaving the city.’ These measures also help reduce environmental damage by influencing local Londoners to take fewer flights to overseas destinations.

Sustainability: positively promote the “Green Tourism Business Scheme” and arrange annual awards for the best “green tourism business provider” to encourage uptake. Adopt best practice in terms of waste management and visitor management planning. Work with other council departments and external voluntary groups to improve walking and cycling route infrastructure and promotion. Highlight Harrow’s excellent public transport infrastructure to wider audiences.

Skills and employment: integrate tourism opportunities into existing employment schemes including “slivers of time.” Work in partnership with the Harrow Association of Voluntary Services (HAVS) to create volunteer opportunities within the tourism sector and encourage uptake among the long-term unemployed as a stepping-stone into work. Offer training such as the London Ambassadors scheme to frontline workers to up skill staff and create a better visitor welcome in 2012.

Impact of 2012: positively promote Harrow’s direct public transport access to Stratford via the Jubilee Line. Promote positive messages around Harrow as a great base to stay for the leisure and business travel markets and continue to align Wembley Stadium with Harrow for the conference meetings and events sector. Maximise post-2012 legacy opportunities by creating itineraries around Harrow and the wider West London area to encourage post-2012 repeat visits to West London.

Exploit Harrow’s links with India and encourage our expatriate population to take an ambassadorial role in encouraging more inward investment opportunities in the borough. Create stronger links with Think London and the LDA’s new “Tourism, Inward Investment and Emerging Markets” division. Conduct site visits where appropriate and proactively approach developers with possible sites for investment where appropriate.

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

2.7 Legal comments: none

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

2.9 Financial Implications

The Tourism Officer will manage the implementation of the partner strategy.

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.

2.10 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.

The current performance for these targets are as follows:

Satisfaction with your local area:

Very satisfied: 13%

Fairly satisfied: 58%

Participation in regular volunteering (at least one a month) 24%

Outer London average 21%

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

- Increase overall visitor spend by 10% from £161 million (2006 Economic Impact Model figures provided by the LDA) to £177 million by 2012.
- Increase overseas visitor spend by 10% from £81 million to £89 million by 2012. (2006 Economic Impact Model figures provided by the LDA)

2.11 Risk Management Implications: The strategy includes a risk assessment and minimisation plan.

2.12 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 will 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. The Green Tourism Business scheme will be promoted to tourism businesses and there will also be a Green Tourism Award created as a further incentive to businesses. Best practice in waste management practices will be adopted in tourism events and at key attractions. Visitor management plans will be implemented at key sites in the borough.

By employing the findings above, the new strategy seeks wherever possible, to manage energy use in a sustainable manner in accordance with the Council's LAA NI 186.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance and Performance Officer Clearance

Name: Sheela Thakrar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 19 May 2009		
Name: Abiodun Kolawole	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of Monitoring Officer
Date: 20 May 2009		

Section 4 - Performance Officer Clearance

Name: Tom Whiting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director (Strategy and Improvement)
Date: 20 May 2009		

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name: Andrew Baker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director (Environmental Services)
Date: 19 May 2009		

Section 5 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Linzi Clark, Tourism Officer, Ext 6535

Background Papers: None