

# ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

## REPORT TO AND DECISION OF BOGNOR REGIS REGENERATION SUBCOMMITTEE ON 21 OCTOBER 2020

### PART A : REPORT

**SUBJECT: STRATEGIC REVIEW OF ARUN DISTRICT COUNCILS TOURISM SERVICE**

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**DATE:** 6<sup>th</sup> October 2020

**EXTN:** 37846

**PORTFOLIO AREA:** Economy

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

This review considers all aspects of the council's current tourism support functions. The report summarises the recommendations and findings made in the strategic review of the tourism service by Blue Sail Consulting and makes recommendations for the future delivery of tourism services by the council.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Subcommittee is asked to resolve that officers to make Cabinet aware that the review recommendations contained within the Arun Strategic Review of Tourism are supported by the Subcommittee, together with any further observations it may put forward.

#### **1. BACKGROUND:**

1.1. Tourism is a key sector in Arun and very important to our local economy. The recently agreed Arun Economic Strategy identified, from the evidence base, the importance of the sector locally and that it should be treated as a priority sector. It is a major provider of jobs and income (visitor spend) and supports many businesses and a supply chain well beyond the most obvious attractions and venues.

1.2. But while the nature, funding and role of local government has changed dramatically and visitors expectations have risen, the types of services provided by the council to support tourism have remained largely unchanged for the last decade.

1.3. Combined with the challenges of Covid-19, this therefore is an ideal time to press 're-set' – to agree what needs to be done and why; where should the priorities and focus be and to decide how best to deliver that.

1.4. It is clear that the council needs to consider how best to take forward its tourism function and decide what is the best way to deliver this service, with the resources available to us, and in a format that meets modern visitors expectations.

1.5. Blue Sail Consulting were commissioned in July to carry out a review of our tourism function. The review has considered all aspects of our current tourism support offer and has made recommendations for the future delivery of the tourism service.

1.6. The review took account of what is already being done by others in the district towns of Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and Arundel as well as work at a county level through Experience West Sussex.

1.7. It considered whether the council or others were best placed to deliver the services visitors need or if there are other ways of delivering these services. It also considered the immediate and longer-term impacts of Covid-19 and ensuring the recommendations align to other council objectives such as those in the Arun Economic Strategy.

1.8. All aspects of the current service were reviewed including the main tourism facilities and services supported by the council including the VIPs, website, social media, visitor guides etc. It also reviewed all marketing plans and activities and considered how well the destination is performing and whether there are market opportunities and activities to exploit.

1.9. The consultants engaged with a range of key stakeholders, including key members, via telephone consultations which fed into the findings.

1.10. Areas explored included:

- Current performance, gaps and opportunities
- Alternative ideas for destination marketing and management
- Opportunities for collaboration and new models for delivery

1.11. The review was required to produce a strategic report with clear recommendations to include:

- Strategic context and rationale
- Review of current delivery
- Recommended roles in destination marketing and destination management to include an assessment of the destination strengths and opportunities
- Organisation and resourcing implications

1.12. The completed review document is contained in Appendix A.

1.13. The review has identified four strategic initiatives that will allow the council to shift from tourism delivery (marketing, information) to a strategic commissioning, investment and development role. By doing this the council can be clear about what it wants to achieve and work through others, who are better placed, to deliver it through visitor marketing. The council can then use its influence (inside and outside the council) to improve the visitor experience – to make it as good as it can be, and to secure the types of investment which will help the district build its visitor economy.

1.14. The four strategic recommendations for the tourism service are:

- Strategic Tourism Investment Role – this is natural territory for the council with a strategic and operational focus. Strategically we want to secure investment in the district (accommodation, events, attractions, watersports) and operationally we need to ‘show the way’ in lifting the quality of the visitor experience (public realm, signage, beach management, toilets) and advocate for visitors across the public and private sector.
- A Refreshed Tourism Strategy – prepare a new plan setting out clearly what we want to achieve as a destination and bring focus and clarity to the actions that are needed. We can’t do everything, given limited resources, so the plan will help to be very targeted in choosing where to focus. It is also an opportunity to engage stakeholders more closely in the development and delivery of the strategy.
- A shared narrative – develop thematic and town based narratives for all to use. To attract new visitors we need everyone involved in tourism saying the same messages in a similar way through all of their own marketing. But what is that narrative now and how do we address the differences between the towns? This isn’t about a logo or even a brand identity – it is a richer seam of stories and narratives, images and ideas that everyone can use which highlight the ‘very best’ of the district. Work has recently been completed on what the Bognor Regis Place Branding ‘narrative’ should be. This wasn’t just about attracting tourism visitors but broader themes of why people should visit, live and invest in the town. The town-based narratives should complement each other.
- Commission marketing support – invest in the Experience West Sussex project to deliver regional campaigns that attract new visitors and work hard to get our fair share of that business. And invest in the information and marketing services in each of Arundel, Littlehampton and Bognor Regis.

1.15. It is possible to support these recommendations within existing resources and the review suggests other funding and income streams that may also further support additional activities.

**2. PROPOSAL(S):**

The subcommittee is invited to indicate their support, to Cabinet, for the review recommendations contained within this report and any further observations they may wish to offer.

**3. OPTIONS:**

Not support the recommendations and, if not supported by Cabinet either, the tourism service functions, and focus remains the same.

**4. CONSULTATION:**

Has consultation been undertaken with:

**YES**

**NO**

Relevant Town/Parish Council

Relevant District Ward Councillors

Other groups/persons (please specify) 1 to 1 consultation with a range of key stakeholders.	<b>Yes</b>	
<b>5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Financial		No
Legal		No
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		No
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		No
Sustainability		No
Asset Management/Property/Land		No
Technology		No
Other (please explain)		
<b>6. IMPLICATIONS:</b> 6.1. There are no financial implications – proposed changes would be facilitated within the existing budget. 6.2. Some service activities will cease however if these recommendations are supported. This may result in job roles and responsibilities changing. The usual statutory consultation processes will be applied if this is the case.		

**7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:**  
 The subcommittee support the review recommendations and wish to advise Cabinet of this.

**8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**  
 Remember to list background papers and insert required links  
  
 Appendix A – Arun Strategic Tourism Review