

Tourism Scrutiny Review Report

Cabinet	25 April 2024
Report Author	Charles Hungwe, Deputy Committee Services Manager
Status	For Recommendation
Classification:	Unrestricted
Key Decision	No
Ward:	Thanet Wide

Executive Summary:

This covering report is to introduce the report by the Tourism Review Working Party following a review by the sub group that started in August 2023, into how the Council could mitigate the negative impact of tourism on local communities. This scrutiny review led to some findings and proposals being identified through a report which is attached as Annex 1 to this covering report with a summary of findings and recommendations detailed in the body of this covering report. The report was adopted by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 16 April 2024.

Recommendation(s):

1. Cabinet is asked to consider the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review at Annex 1 and respond in full to each recommendation.

Corporate Implications

Financial and Value for Money

There are financial implications arising directly regarding some of the recommendations in the main report. The refurbishment of public toilets owned by the Council, supply of additional waste bins at beaches and other public places for use by residents and visitors, additional signage on beaches establishing command centres at local beaches and upskilling TDC Enforcement Officers would require some form of funding and budget allocation. However such additional budget allocations could yield positive results for the benefit of the local area, by keeping Thanet public spaces clean. In the long term this approach could lead to a reduction in costs for the Council's cleansing activities.

These proposals could be considered within the 2025/26 budget setting process against the context of other competing priorities and financial affordability.

Legal

The role of scrutiny is set out in section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000. The council must also have regard to the statutory guidance on Overview and Scrutiny from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government when exercising its functions.

In accordance with the provisions of the constitution Cabinet should carefully consider the recommendations made by Overview and Scrutiny. Cabinet can accept or reject the recommendations and should provide reasons for the same.

Risk Management

There are no risks arising directly from this report.

Corporate

This report is a result of the work undertaken by a working party that was tasked by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel to conduct an investigation into the impact of tourism on the district. Any findings would need to be shared with Cabinet for a final decision.

Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

This report relates to the following aim of the equality duty: -
(Delete as appropriate)

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- To foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

No implications arise directly but the Council needs to retain a strong focus and understanding on issues of diversity amongst the local community and ensure service delivery matches these.

It was important to be aware of the Council's responsibility under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and show evidence that due consideration has been given to the equalities impact that may be brought upon communities by the decisions made by Council.

Corporate Priorities

This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -

- To keep our district safe and clean
- To protect our environment
- To create a thriving place
- To work efficiently for you

1.0 Introduction and Background

1.1 At the meeting on 20 July 2023, the Panel set up a five member Tourism Review Working Party to conduct a scrutiny review on identifying the negative impact of tourism and find ways to mitigate that impact. The review topic was picked out of a list of topics that were identified by the Panel (on officer advice) and that list forms part of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel work programme.

1.2 The working party was given specific terms of reference as follows:

- a. To investigate the negative impact of tourism on the district and identify measures to mitigate such impact.

2.0 Review Activities and Summary of Findings

2.1 The working party met on a number of occasions to gather evidence for their report from senior council officers that included the Director of Corporate Services and Head of Neighbourhoods. These meetings were held between August 2023 and November 2023.

2.2 Members agreed that the review would focus on the negative impact of tourism and how the Council might best address these – in particular, in relation to managing the impact on the various areas of Council activity. The working party then held a number of report drafting sessions between November 2023 and February 2024. This led to the drafting of the report hereby attached as Annex 1 to the covering report. Below is a summary of findings and recommendations made by the working party that were subsequently adopted by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

- i. Beach Management

The district experienced a spike in Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) related to alcohol in the previous summer period. Council enforcement officers were not accredited and upskilling these officers through further training and accreditation would improve enforcement effectiveness. Current budget limits were preventing the Council from conducting enforcement activities across all of the local beaches to tackle ASB. There were complaints received from residents about jet ski users coming close to beaches and at times harassing swimmers.

- ii. Public Toilets

There was a need to refurbish council owned public toilets and that this issue should be a priority for the Council.

iii. Waste Management

There was a need to reduce waste left behind by visitors especially on the local beaches and other tourist favourite destinations in the district. Visitors staying in holiday lets and campervans were filling street bins with domestic waste. This was a longstanding problem that involved ensuring that landlords and letting agents were providing proper waste management facilities to short-term residents, including information on bin collection days and what to put in which bin.

iv. Traffic Management

The value of parking income was typically £200k off season and £300k during the peak times. On average, the Council received about £400k per year in car parking income. The Traffic Act 1984 specifies that the parking service cannot make a “profit” and that charges can only be made to control traffic flow. KCC Highways were the responsible authority for on-street parking. Thanet District Council therefore had little room to implement changes. It was hoped that all ideas for improving the situation would be considered in the Parking Strategy review currently underway.

v. Financial Management

The Council was spending about £120k per year cleaning beaches. This included year-round cleaning but was heavily weighted to peak holiday periods. The use of temporary contract workers for cleansing activities gave the Council greater flexibility to respond to spikes in litter during peak summer periods. The Council should explore ways of events contributing to the funding of costs of the visitor economy like additional cleansing service activities on beaches and other tourist favourite sites in the district.

3.0 Summary of Recommendations

3.1 Beach Management

Improve beach management in peak season through measures (some already being trialled here), including:

- Clearer signage on all beaches, with zoning for faster response to incidents;
- CCTV Command Centres on all beaches to monitor safety & tackle ASB;
- Multi-agency patrols on beaches and hotspot areas to pre-empt trouble;
- Upskilling of TDC Enforcement Officers to accredited levels, to enable them to issue Fixed Penalty Notices;
- Promoting the Beach Check app to visitors to share information & help spread visitor numbers.

3.2 Public Toilets

Improve the provision of public toilets, particularly those most used by visitors, by:

- Accelerating the planned public toilet refurbishment programme and ensuring regular maintenance of all public toilets;
- Considering ways to extend opening hours of beachside toilets during peak season -eg through closer collaboration with Town & Parish Councils;
- Investigating possibilities of collaborating with hospitality businesses to offer toilet facilities to visitors when public toilets are closed;

- Setting up & managing additional temporary toilet facilities along beaches and at popular venues during peak season and for special events.

3.3 **Waste Management**

Work to maintain cleanliness, manage waste effectively, improve recycling rates and minimise costs of managing additional waste at peak periods by:

- Ensuring all beaches and visitor attractions are well supplied with ordinary waste bins and clearly labelled recycling bins, and that these are emptied frequently, particularly in peak season;
- Ensuring locations of bins are clearly flagged and visible from a distance (eg by use of larger, highly coloured 'The bin is here →' banners on beaches, in parks etc);
- Providing 2-minute litter pick stations on all main beaches;
- Providing toy recycling at all Thanet's beaches over the summer season;
- Ensuring penalties for littering and Thanet's PSPO rules are clearly displayed at all beaches, parks and visitor attractions, and ensuring our Enforcement Officers can levy fines where necessary;
- Seeking to ensure all short-term lets have appropriate recycling & waste management information & facilities in place.

3.4 **Traffic Management**

Proactively manage traffic and parking issues during peak season by measures such as:

- Identifying problem spots and considering what traffic control measures may be appropriate to address the issues - e.g. creating low traffic areas, additional temporary car parks, better signage to car parks, reduced costs for car parks cf on-street parking etc;
- Ensuring car parks are regularly patrolled to reduce ASB;
- As part of the Parking Strategy review, consider measures to simplify parking for residents and visitors (eg parking passes), to make best use of underused parking facilities and generate additional income (eg coach parking; overnight stay facilities for campervans, along the lines of 'aires' in mainland Europe) and to encourage visitors to use shops & hospitality facilities in local towns & villages.

3.5 **Financial Management**

Actively investigate opportunities to maximise income to the Council from the visitor economy to help balance its costs to the Council - for example:

- Levying additional Council tax on second homes;
- When permitted, levying a modest tourism tax on overnight stays;
- Ensuring holiday lets contribute to funding the costs they impose (via Council tax or business rates);
- Taking a robust approach with Southern Water over beach pollution, including obtaining financial contributions to help improve our visitor facilities;
- Accrediting officers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for ASB to nip problems in the bud;
- Exploring opportunities to provide paid-for facilities (eg overnight campervan parking, beach huts with facilities for overnight stays);

- Reviewing our charging policy for community-led events to ensure small-scale events are affordable for organisers;
- Implementing the recommendations of the OSP WP report on work with Town & Parish Councils on working together to support events and generate visitor numbers;
- Continuing to seek external funding to support our visitor economy.

3.6 Additional Recommendation by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel

3.7 During consideration of the Tourism Review Working Party report at the meeting on 16 April 2024, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel in addition to the five recommendations highlighted above in paras 3.1 to 3.5; further recommended the following to Cabinet that:

- TDC should consider when renewing or agreeing leases on properties they own where such properties have toilet facilities attached; that those toilets be made available for public use where possible.

3.8 The above recommendation should be read in conjunction with the recommendation regarding Public Toilets in para 3.3 (bullet point 3), where the justification for the proposal is provided.

4.0 Senior Management Comments to Scrutiny Recommendations

Tourism WP Recommendations	Justification for Recommendation	CMT Comments
<p>Beach Management Improve beach management in peak season through measures (detailed in para 3.1 above)</p>	<p>These measures have been trialled in Thanet and/ or used elsewhere effectively to improve monitoring & response times, tackle ASB, issue penalties and ensure visitors have up-to-date, accurate information, ensuring a pleasant time for visitors and minimising costs and inconvenience to residents and the Council.</p>	<p>The Council's beach signage has been designed and implemented in collaboration with the RNLI so that the design is consistent with the rest of the UK coastline.</p> <p>The Beach and Coast team are working with colleagues from the CCTV team to look at what improvements can be made for the monitoring of and response to ASB.</p> <p>The Beach and Coast team work in partnership with multi-agency teams. Patrols depend on timetables of</p>

		<p>workforce and availability of staff but shall be looked at further.</p> <p>Coastal Enforcement Officers were trained in June last year and were able to issue Fixed Penalty Notices from July. The next training for new staff is in June this year and then all staff will be able to issue Fixed Penalty Notices.</p> <p>The beach check app was funded by the tourism department in the past but was deemed not feasible to continue.</p>
<p>Public Toilets Improve the provision of public toilets, particularly those most used by visitors</p>	<p>Toilet facilities are already a concern for local residents, and demand for these rises significantly when we have visitors. For special events (e.g. Broadstairs Folk Week) or areas with little in the way of current facilities (e.g. Botany Bay, Western Undercliff Beach) we need additional toilets available on a temporary basis for reasons of hygiene and to ensure visitors are comfortable and wish to visit again.</p>	<p>The Council refurbished the Margate Harbour Arm toilets in 2023. The Council is currently undertaking the repair and refurbishment of 7 of its public toilets ready for the summer season. In addition officers have begun the design work required to submit a planning application for 3 new build toilets. This leaves a further 16 public toilets that shall be considered for repair and refurbishment, subject to funding becoming available. A report on phase 2 shall be presented to cabinet in October 2024.</p> <p>The street cleansing team has installed temporary toilet facilities at Walpole Bay and in other beach areas. For example in collaboration with Ramsgate Town Council at Western Undercliff. Toilet provision is part of the events</p>

		application process and private/special events are requested to provide adequate toilet provision.
<p>Waste Management Work to maintain cleanliness, manage waste effectively, improve recycling rates and minimise costs of managing additional waste at peak periods</p>	<p>We need to make it easy for visitors to keep Thanet beautiful by taking their litter home or leaving it in a nearby bin, and to help them to recycle as much of their waste as possible. Visitors staying in holiday-lets need to know how to manage their waste responsibly and have the right facilities to do so. And the minority of visitors who spoil the area for others must understand the penalties they face for doing so.</p>	
<p>Traffic Management Proactively manage traffic and parking issues during peak season</p>	<p>To improve travel convenience for both local residents and visitors to the district. To increase positive visitor experience.</p>	<p>The physical management of traffic does not fall within the remit of TDC, this would be collaborative work with KCC. However the parking review will be looking at signage for car parks etc. Areas of parking concern are already proactively managed during peak season. With regard to patrolling car parks to address asb, we do not have staff to do this, it would require investment into new officers with asb enforcement and de-escalation skills.</p>
<p>Financial Management Actively investigate opportunities to maximise income to the Council from the visitor economy to help balance its costs to the Council</p>	<p>We want a booming visitor economy but we are acutely aware of the additional costs visitors bring, so we need to make every effort to secure income for the Council to set against those costs.</p>	

5.0 Options

5.1 Cabinet is being asked to either agree all or some of the following Overview and Scrutiny Panel recommendations:

1. Improve beach management in peak season through measures highlighted in para 3.1 of the report;
2. Improve the provision of public toilets, particularly those most used by visitors;
3. Work to maintain cleanliness, manage waste effectively, improve recycling rates and minimise costs of managing additional waste at peak periods;
4. Proactively manage traffic and parking issues during peak season by measures highlighted in para 3.4;
5. Actively investigate opportunities to maximise income to the Council from the visitor economy to help balance its costs to the Council;
6. TDC should consider when renewing or agreeing leases on properties they own where such properties have toilet facilities attached; that those toilets be made available for public use where possible.

Or

5.2 That Cabinet rejects the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel report.

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Reporting to: Nicholas Hughes (Committee Services Manager)

Annex List

Annex 1: Tourism Review Working Party report

Background Papers

None

Corporate Consultation

Finance: Chris Blundell, Director of Corporate Services & S151 Officer

Legal: Ingrid Brown Head of Legal and Democracy & Monitoring Officer