EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT COVER SHEET

Title of Report:	Review of the Tourism Plan	To be marked with an 'X' by Democratic Services after report has been presented
Meeting of:	Corporate Management Team 19th October 2021	X
	Leader and Deputy Leaders 25th October 2021	X
	Leader's / Leader of the Opposition's Advisory Group / Independent Alliance Advisory Group 3rd & 4th November 2021	X
	Cabinet 15th November 2021	
	Scrutiny Audit and Value for Money Council Services Committee / Scrutiny Community Regeneration, Environment and Health and Well Being Committee	

Is this an Executive Decision:	NO	Is this a Key Decision:	NO
Is this in the Forward Plan:	YES	Is the Report Confidential:	NO
		If so, please state relevant paragraph from Schedule 12A LGA 1972:	[ ]

Essential Signatories:

ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN THE NAME OF A HEAD OF SERVICE

Monitoring Officer: **Chris Ebberley**

Date 11/10/2021   Signature ………………………..

Chief Finance Officer: **Sal Khan**

 Date 08/10/2021   Signature ………………………..

EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Cabinet

Date: 15th November 2021

REPORT TITLE: **Review of the Tourism plan**

PORTFOLIO: **Leisure, Culture and Tourism**

HEAD OF SERVICE: **Mark Rizk**

CONTACT OFFICER: **Sara Botham   Ext. No. x1038**

WARD(S) AFFECTED: **ALL**

1.   **Purpose of the Report**

1.1.   To provide an update on progress with the Tourism plan during the first 12 months highlighting progress made against the three objectives identified in the action plan.

2.   **Executive Summary**

2.1.   A summary of progress is provided for each of the three objectives that were identified in the original tourism action plan: Objective 1 Tourism Audit; Objective 2 Partnership working; and Objective 3 MarComms. Opportunities for the continued development of the action plan will also be discussed with the aim of continuing momentum with promoting East Staffordshire as an emerging tourist destination.

3.   **Background**

3.1.   This report is a 12 month review of the Plan for Tourism which was approved by Council in November 2020.

3.2.   An initial action plan was developed during Summer/Autumn 2020 framed around three key objectives which work to highlight and promote the advantages and attractions that East Staffordshire has to offer as a tourist

destination. It should be noted that the purpose of the tourism plan was not to address financial support requirements for tourism businesses within East Staffordshire.

3.3.   The Plan for Tourism was adopted by Council prior to the Winter Covid restrictions and 2021 lockdown coming into effect. These issues impacted the tourism and hospitality sectors not just in East Staffordshire but also County and nationwide. Delivery of the action plan continued during these periods, but some aspects of the action plan became higher priorities as we moved towards lockdown lifting and the recovery and reopening phase of the pandemic. To this end an update was made to the Action Plan in March 2021 to incorporate additional MarComms objectives in relation to the Government's roadmap out of lockdown and support available for the tourism sector. A copy of the updated action plan is included in Appendix 1.

4.   Contribution to Corporate Priorities

4.1.   VFM28 Provide a first year update on the progress of the Tourism Plan.

5.   The Tourism Action Plan – progress update

Objective 1 Tourism Audit
5.1.   The purpose of the tourism audit was to build a picture of all that East Staffordshire had to offer as a tourism destination in relation to attractions, accommodation and events as well as relevant transport links.

5.2.   The initial desk based exercise to compile the tourism audit was completed in early 2021. However, as stated in the original action plan this will remain an ongoing piece of work with information added as and when required.

5.3.   This audit has provided the basis for one of the key features on the new webpages, the interactive map, creating a 'live' version of this document. Information gathered through the audit was reviewed and sifted to consider the local, County and/or regional importance before inclusion on the map. The map along with the audit will continue to be a working document and will evolve as more information is added.

Objective 2 Partnership Working
5.4.   During the past 12 months we have continued to build on our strong relationships with key partners including the National Forest.

5.5.   The Borough Council has continued attending as a partner with the Destination Staffordshire Management Partnership (DMP) management board.

5.6.   Our links and contact with neighbouring local authorities have continued through the DMP board and work with the National Forest. Like all District and Borough Councils we have focused on support for tourism in our own areas

as we come through the Covid-19 pandemic which is reflected in our delivery of the tourism action plan. Developing these links with neighbouring authorities will become an increasing priority in the next 12-24 months as opportunities for mutual benefit are identified.

5.7.   Closer partnership working has started to develop with Uttoxeter Town Council in recent months. This is still in its infancy but there may be opportunities for collaborative working and mutual support as the Town Council move forward with their own tourism plans.

Objective 3 Marcomms

5.8.   The final objective focused on marketing and communication. There were two strands to this: marketing to publicise and promote what the Borough has to offer as a tourist destination and communications with and between partners and local tourism businesses in order to ensure relevant information and updates are cascaded down.

5.9.   In early 2021 a marketing and communications plan was produced by the Borough Council's Marketing Officer and work started on the update and refresh of the tourism web content on the Borough Council's corporate website.

5.10.   The new webpages, http://www.eaststaffsbc.gov.uk/tourism, went live in July 2021 creating a local information hub for visitors. To avoid replication of information that is provided elsewhere and to focus promotion on what the Borough has to offer the webpages focus on local information with a taster of some of the highlights that the Borough has to offer. Links are also provided to partner organisations who will be able to offer additional advice and information to visitors including searchable databases and full attractions listings. Webpage content will be added and updated as required to ensure the pages remain relevant and useful. Further additions to the pages may include additional attraction highlights as well as an events listing section.

5.11.   To create an engaging content the design of an interactive map of the Borough was commissioned and this is now a main feature on the website providing a wide-ranging overview of attractions, accommodation and other tourism amenities in the Borough. This map is based on the tourism audit document and can be updated and refreshed as needed. It was important to start with the basics with this live content but there are more opportunities for adding to the map layers to include walking and cycling routes which are options to be considered going forwards.

5.12.   There has been greater use of social media both for the sharing of information from partners in relation to business support but also as part of the marketing and promotions work showcasing East Staffordshire as a tourist destination. The newly launched Enjoy East Staffs social media channels have 206 followers and an organic social media reach of 102,000. The use of social media as part of the Marcomms plan is not a one-off, clearly this will be a tool that will continue to be used as part of our tourism work.

5.13. It should be noted that the action plan was updated to include specific reference to supporting and promoting businesses as part of the lockdown easing and reopening of the tourism sector. Much of this work was incorporated into the Marcomms plan and social media was used to share messaging around key campaigns such as "Escape the Everyday" – Visit Britain domestic tourism marketing campaign and the "We're good to go" scheme for businesses. Our East Staffordshire promotions were linked to the #StayLocal campaign and can be viewed here https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCf2MXOCsvStzH3wtGYdd8JA.

5.14 Welcome Back Funds have supported a summer 2021 Business Tourism Campaign that has involved joint working with tourist sites and attractions across East Staffordshire. Short promotional films and radio content has been created for a range of venues to promote the Borough, the sites and the hard work undertaken by the tourism business to 'survive' the pandemic. Included within this was an outdoor media campaign combined with social media output. Featured businesses included the National Forest Adventure Farm, the Brewery Centre, the Brewhouse, Nelsons Distillery, Denstone farm shop, Tutbury castle, Clay Mills pumping station and Barton marina. The campaign has reached 83,000 residents has amassed 490 interactions and engagements.

5.15 Further use of the Welcome Back Fund has seen the creation of the Roundabout Theatre, the world's first pop-up, plug-and-play, portable in the round auditorium. Working with partners Paine's Plough Theatre and Streatfood Social the Council has created a 4 day pop up event on the old Bargates site on Burton High Street. The Roundabout Theatre seats 167 (125 socially distanced) and tours nationally each summer. The large yellow dome provided a spectacular, visual centre piece for this event to attract residents and visitors to Burton and invite them to explore the High Street, Washlands and businesses in the Town whilst they were there. Flyers and information about local businesses and shops were available for visitors along with #shoplocal materials. Over the 4 days (23-26 September 2021) the theatre hosted 13 live performances, 5 activities outside the theatre and 8 street food vendors. 780 tickets were sold for the theatre performances (including 4 sold out events) and over 1100 people attended the site over the course of the weekend. User feedback has been positive with visitors scoring their experience at 9.8 out of 10 and providing a swath of encouraging comments. Organic social media performance around the event was also impressive with a reach of 161,665, 703 media link clicks, 96% positive sentiment.

5.16 A business showcase event continues to be considered as part of the action plan as part of work to support local tourism businesses. It is not felt that it is the right time for such an event when the focus is on reopening and recovery from the upheaval of the pandemic. The promotional videos referenced above were positively welcomed by local tourism businesses and may prove to be a more appropriate tool in our tourism promotions rather than a set, physical showcase event. There may be opportunities to further develop these to create an engaging, virtual showcase of what East Staffordshire has to offer.

Over the next 6 months work will continue to assess the need for an event or forum for tourism businesses and what form that will take.

Summary

5.17   It was always intended that the plan and objectives were a starting point in the process. Whilst the objectives have been achieved over the year, they were never intended to be finite and will continue to underpin our work, creating a framework to support and promote tourism in the Borough.

6.   Financial Considerations

This section has been approved by the following member of the Financial Management Unit: Anya Murray

6.1.   There are no financial issues arising from this Report.

7.   Risk Assessment and Management

7.1.   The main risks to this Report and the Council achieving its objectives are as follows:

7.2.   **Positive** (Opportunities/Benefits):

7.2.1.   East Staffordshire has numerous attractions, destinations and accommodation as well as excellent transport links to attract tourists to visit and stay in the Borough.

7.2.2.   The continued development of good working relationships with key partners.

7.2.3.   Tourism has both a direct and indirect links with other ESBC initiatives and work streams for cross promotion.

7.2.4.   Strong foundations have been built for marketing and communications activities to promote the Borough as an emerging tourist destination whilst avoiding replicating information available elsewhere.

7.2.5.

7.3.   **Negative** (Threats):

7.3.1.   The local tourism economy is still recovering as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The real impact is still not clear and no local or County data is available as yet.

7.3.2.   Limited resources and subject specific skills although this is offset through partnership working.

7.4.   The risks do not need to be entered in the Risk Register. Any financial implications to mitigate against these risks are considered above.

8.   **Legal Considerations**

This section has been approved by the following member of the Legal Team: Caroline Elwood

8.1.   There are no significant legal issues arising from this Report.

9.   **Equalities and Health**

9.1.   **Equality impacts:** The subject of this Report is not a policy, strategy, function or service that is new or being revised. An equality and health impact assessment is not required

9.2.   **Health impacts:** The outcome of the health screening question does not require a full Health Impact Assessment to be completed. An equality and health impact assessment is not required.

10.   **Human Rights**

10.1.   There are no Human Rights issues arising from this Report.

11.   **Sustainability** (including climate change and change adaptation measures)

11.1.   Does the proposal result in an overall positive effect in terms of sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures) Yes

11.2.   Please detail any positive/negative aspects:

Positive (Opportunities/Benefits
11.2.1.   Continued marketing and promotion of the Borough in relation to "staycations" which supports the green agenda
11.2.2.   Opportunities have been identified to further develop information for visitors around cycling and walking routes.

12.   **Recommendation(s)**

12.1.   To note the contents of the report.

12.2.   Officers to continue work on identifying options for a business showcase event through engagement with local tourism businesses over the next 6 months.

13.   **Background Papers**

13.1. A Plan for Tourism

Appendices

13.2. Appendix 1: Tourism Action Plan (updated)

13.3. Appendix 2: Tourism Audit (working document)