

VISITOR MANAGEMENT FORUM

MONDAY, 5 DECEMBER 2016

PRESENT: Councillors Colin Rayner (Chairman), Jesse Grey and Nicola Pryer

Also in attendance:

Officers: Tanya Leftwich and Julia White

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was announced by the Chairman that the meeting would be recorded and posted to the web.

The Chairman welcomed everyone and thanked the Castle Hotel for kindly hosting the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gerry Clark, Councillor Shamsul Shelim, Amanda Bryett (Windsor Tourist Guides), David Eglise (Windsor & Eton Society), Wyatt Gates (South West Trains), Sean Gleeson (Oakley Court), Claire Pearce (Moor Hall Conference Centre), Paul Sedgewick (The Crown Estate) and Hilary Thompson (Windsor Welcome Tourist Guides).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

MINUTES

RESOLVED Unanimously; That the Part I minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

WELCOME TO CASTLE HOTEL

The General Manager at the Castle Hotel, John Willcock, welcomed everyone to the venue and informed the Forum that the Castle Hotel used to be Mecure Hotel until it rebranded last September. It was noted that the Castle Hotel had 108 bedrooms and in March 2016 had opened a Marco Pierre White restaurant. John Willcock informed the Forum that the new restaurant had made a huge difference to the hotels business as the previous restaurant had been quite empty in comparison. Members were informed that hotel restaurants tended to struggle because hotel residents liked to try different restaurants in town however, the Marco Pierre White restaurant was pulling people in and also helped keep hotel residents in the hotel.

The Chairman informed the Forum that his wife and daughter had eaten in the Marco Pierre White restaurant and had thoroughly enjoyed it.

John Willcock went on to explain that the Castle Hotel had experienced a strong spring time and summer, particularly as a result of the Royal Cavalry staying at the hotel whilst the Queens birthday celebrations took place.

The Chairman thanked John Willcock for addressing the Forum and for the Castle Hotels hospitality.

VISITOR MANAGER UPDATE

The Visitor Manager gave Members the highlights since the last meeting.

The Visitor Manager informed everyone present that the Tourism Development Day had taken place at the Ascot Racecourse on the 6 October. It was noted that around 100 businesses had attended and that the Visitor Manager had received excellent feedback including from partners who had already had business from the event. Members were informed that the Visitor Manager planned to set a date for the 2017 Tourism Day in the New Year and it was noted that the Visitor Manager would be happy to return to Ascot Racecourse if it was available.

With regard to refurbishment of the Visitor Information Centre the Visitor Manager explained that it was coming together and installation was planned for week commencing 9 January 2017. It was noted that the Visitor Information Centre would be closed for five days whilst installation took place. The Visitor Manager informed the Forum that a package of advertising on both the feature wall and the digital screens was available and had been circulated to the visitor attraction partners. It was noted that Legoland had already signed up to the package.

The Visitor Manager informed everyone present that a new welcome sign was being produced for the Coach Park and two train stations. It was noted that the furniture at the Coach Park would be refreshed in time for the start of the new season. Members were informed that the Council was investigating a digital sign within the monolith on Station Approach to help show what the town had to offer.

The Forum were informed that the Visitor Manager was working on a new Visitor Management Strategy. It was noted that consultation had started last week and that the Visitor Manager had to date met with 18 hotels and 5 major visitor attractions. The Forum was informed that the Visitor Manager would be seeing other attractions on Wednesday at the Windsor Castle later on this week. The Visitor Manager explained that a lot of work had gone into evaluating the previous strategy and the results of our economic impact assessments and visitor surveys over the last five years.

The Visitor Manager informed the Forum that copies of the new visitor guide were now available. It was noted that the accommodation guide and venues directory were nearing completion and should be printed before Christmas.

The Forum was informed of the Visitor Survey 2016 key findings which were as followed:

- The highest proportion of visitors indicated that the main purpose of their visit to Windsor was for 'leisure / holiday' purposes (86%). 7% were in Windsor primarily for the purpose of visiting friends or relatives, 3% were on a special shopping trip, 2% were visiting for business purposes, 1% were language students and the remaining 1% were there specifically for eating out.
- The majority (80%) of the visitors surveyed this summer were visiting Windsor independently, with the remaining 20% indicating that their visit was with an organised group or tour.
- Of the visitor groups staying overnight in Windsor, 78% were using serviced accommodation (compared to 71% last year), including 69% who were staying at a hotel and 6% who were staying in a B&B or guest house. 12% of all staying visitors were accommodated in the homes of friends or relatives in 2016.
- That half of all visitors had travelled to Windsor by private vehicle. 26% of all visitors had used public transport and around 19% had arrived in Windsor as part of a coach tour.
- That only 2% of the visitors who travelled to Windsor by private motor vehicle used the Park & Ride facility with most using the town centre car parks, parked on the street or at their accommodation base in Windsor or had parked elsewhere.

- That cafes, restaurants, pubs (visited by 85% of visitors) and shops (visited by 73% of visitors) were the most frequently mentioned attractions visited in 2016.
- That as in previous years high levels of visitor satisfaction were reported for many aspects relating to the visitor experience in Windsor. General atmosphere, quality of service at the Visitor Information Centre, usefulness of information at the Visitor Information Centre, upkeep of parks and open spaces and the feeling of welcome were aspects rated particularly in 2016.
- Ease of parking and cost of parking were rated lower than 3 out of 5.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were noted:

- That no feedback had been received regarding taxi's and the availability of taxis in Windsor.
- That the refurbishment of the Visitor Information Centre would be based on the mid-range option.
- That the Visitor Manager would inform local businesses and local attractions if there was an additional cost to the standard membership cost with regard to advertising.
- That none of the content of the Visitor Information Centre had been decided to date and that random graphics had been used in images of what the Visitor Information Centre could look like.
- That the Council had had a live aim to grow the economy as part of the Visitor Attractions Strategy and that this financial aim had been achieved over the eight years.
- That visitors to Windsor could use the Park & Ride facility at Legoland and also the Centrica car park (weekends only) to do their Christmas shopping.
- That a question regarding the take up of the Queens 90th birthday celebrations was not asked in the survey.
- That the Economic Impact Assessment next year would show if there had been a significant increase in 2016.

The Chairman encouraged everyone present to attend the Tourism Day in 2017 and thanked Ascot Racecourse for hosting the 2016 event.

The Chairman thanked the Visitor Manager for her update and for all her hard work throughout the year.

DISCUSSION ITEM: TOURISM POST BREXIT - WHAT ARE THE LOCAL EFFECTS?

The Chairman asked the Forum if they had a view on Brexit and asked what the Council could do to help local businesses and attractions.

The Visitor Manager informed everyone present that the September inbound tourism figures from Visit Britain showed year to date visits tracking 3% ahead of the same time in 2015 and a 4% increase in the twelve month period to September than the previous twelve months. It was noted that both were new records for inbound tourism. The Visitor Manager added that September was 1% up on holiday visits, 2% up on visiting friends and relatives and was 7% up on business visits.

The Visitor Manager explained that all in all the figures mentioned above were very good due to the fall in the GBP rate which meant that overseas visitors were getting value for money and UK citizens were staying in the UK.

It was noted that UK trade organisations were still campaigning for various things such as retaining access to the single market, etc. The Visitor Manager stated that 10% of the boroughs workforce were EU migrants and her concern was about losing these migrants talents.

Sunil Kalia (Jetset Coaches) stated that whilst there had been no Brexit impact on the coach industry he was concerned about emissions and parking at Heathrow.

Councillor Judith Diment informed the Forum that she travelled a lot to European countries and had noticed a common theme that they had seen a huge drop in tourism, particularly restaurants, due to security issues. It was noted that Councillor Judith Diment had visited Italy in July and found she could not book into her usual hotel even though she had tried booking four months ahead because people felt the country to be safer than France and other countries affected by terror attacks. Councillor Judith Diment went onto explain that she had visited Rome in April and found the country to be suffering from immigrants sleeping rough on the streets which was having a negative effect on restaurants and hotels in the area. It was noted that Councillor Judith Diment felt optimistic that people would continue to visit the UK. It was noted that Councillor Judith Diment felt European countries would be as affected as the UK if visas for the UK were introduced. The Visitor Manager added that the 2015 figures for inbound tourism had been a record year and that the 2016 figures were already showed a 6% growth on the 2015 figures.

The Chairman explained that his business used polish workers could end up earning less (approximately 20% less than a year ago) due to the exchange rate. The Chairman asked the question of whether the UK needed to target people who usually went to Paris to come to London instead.

FORUM NAME

The Chairman asked Forum Members whether they felt the Visitor Management Forum name should be changed as he felt it needed a better title.

It was noted that Legoland had come up with a suggestion which was the 'Tourism Development Forum'.

RESOLVED Unanimously; That the name of the Forum be changed, subject to agreement at Full Council, to the Tourism Development Forum.

ITEM SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

The following item suggestions for future meetings were noted:

- Coach Park – whether it be left where it was or be moved. It was suggested that someone from Property Services be invited to attend the applicable meeting or a CBT representative.
- Potential price increases re: coach park vehicles to make them comply to regulations which would in turn be passed onto customers (approximately 10-15% increase).
- That a Major Events Plan for major visitor events be tabled at the start of the year and a list of the major events be included with the minutes.
- A discussion on economic affects (via exit surveys) as a result of events in Windsor.

Members were asked to email any additional item suggestions for future meetings directly to the Visitor Manager, Julia White at julia.white@rbwm.gov.uk and the Clerk, Tanya Leftwich at tanya.leftwich@rbwm.gov.uk

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Chairman informed Members that the date of the next meeting was as follows:

- Monday 13 March 2017 (6.30pm start) – venue to be confirmed.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion took place on following items 10 & 11 on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 8.00 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....