

**22 May 2024**

**Agenda Item: 4**

## **REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT**

### **VISITOR ECONOMY FRAMEWORK – ONE YEAR ON**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To detail to the Place Select Committee the work the Council and its partners have undertaken in the first 12 months of the Visitor Economy Framework being approved, and to note the priorities for the forthcoming year.

#### **Information**

##### **Policy background**

2. The **Nottinghamshire Plan** details the Council's ambitions for raising the national and international profile of Nottinghamshire; creating the right conditions for investment and sustainable economic growth; driving the transition to greener more sustainable ways of working; protecting the environment as we grow; and securing investment into major projects. Summarily, the Nottinghamshire Plan explicitly supports the enhancing of the county's inward investment offer.
3. Similarly, the Council's **Economic Transition Plan (ETP)** identifies three main priorities for the Visitor Economy theme:
  - Attract more visitors to Nottinghamshire from across the UK and overseas.
  - Lengthen the amount of time visitors spend in Nottinghamshire.
  - Create the conditions for businesses to thrive.

##### **Visitor Economy Framework background**

4. Officers were invited to present the latest draft version of the document to members of the Place Select Committee on 30 January 2023. The presentation included details of the public consultation, targeted engagement with key stakeholders and how the action plan would be produced and delivered. The feedback received was very supportive of the process that had been taken to prepare the (then named) Visitor Economy Strategy (VES); agreed that the VES should be renamed the **Visitor Economy Framework (VEF)** to better reflect the need for a framework for stakeholders and partners to work within; and then suggested a number of points to consider for the action plan. A summary of some of the main points are below:

- Take advantage of Robin Hood as a catalyst for tourism.
  - Look at how influencers can be used on social media.
  - Consider more research into the accommodation sector and how it can be improved.
  - Use sport as a driver for the visitor economy, e.g. golf tournaments, match day flyers.
  - Improved signage, including the brown tourism signs.
  - Working with partners to join together and recommend each other.
5. Place Select Committee also requested an update after the first year of adoption and to review the work undertaken and progress made against the approved VEF and its associated action plan. This report is providing this update.
6. Following on from this feedback, and after a discussion at Full Council in January 2023, the VEF was approved in February 2023 by the Economic Development Asset Management Cabinet Member. It was produced to clearly identify and communicate the aims and ambitions of the County Council. The VEF sets out the basis for Council operations pertaining to the visitor economy and how to best support and bolster this sector. An action plan sits underneath the VEF to detail the work programme in order to meet the priorities identified in the VEF.
7. The VEF identified five main priority areas of work are identified that will be delivered as part of the action plan, including:
- **Invest in People** – The Council will aim to build skills, knowledge, jobs and capacity so people can thrive in the sector, develop an inclusive approach that people can relate to that puts Nottinghamshire people at the heart of the story, and empower people to share, enjoy, respect, understand and care for the county and its unique assets.
  - **Invest in Promotion** – The Council will aim to develop a distinctive and unique brand for Nottinghamshire. Through promotion and marketing, it will raise the profile of the county locally, regionally, nationally and globally.
  - **Invest in Product** - Stimulating investment in developing relevant, high-quality products while protecting and preserving assets for future generations. The Council will bring together providers to create a stronger, more coherent, joined-up offer.
  - **Invest in Place** – The Council will aim to establish a sustainable, co-ordinated approach to develop Nottinghamshire as a destination that people will want to visit, stay in and return to, and will create improved facilities, infrastructure and connectivity, bringing everything together to create a unique identity and ‘sense of place’ across the county.
  - **Invest in Performance** - The Council will build on its strengths and increase Visitor Economy-related visits and spend. Strategies and actions will be based on data and evidence, measuring the results regularly and sharing learning and best practice.

### **Progress – 12 months on**

8. There has been considerable progress against the VEF since its adoption in March 2023. Progress is being monitored against the VEF action plan and the key achievements to note include:
- **Destination Management Organisation (DMO)** – a contractual agreement between the County Council and Marketing Nottingham & Nottinghamshire for their visitor

economy division (Visit Nottinghamshire) to deliver a programme of work which centres around the Visitor Economy, namely leisure and business tourism.

- **Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP)** Application and letter of support – supporting and assisting Visit Nottinghamshire with the application and providing a letter of support from the County Council as well as being instrumental in garnering support from the Districts and Boroughs.
- **Collaborative relationships** – have been formed with the preparation and the implementation of the VEF internally and with external partners. There has also been collaborative relationships created by attending various tourism network groups and through joint projects such as, such as the District / Borough STEAM data commissioning partnership with District & Borough councils and Visit Nottinghamshire. Officers have set up new groups to facilitate partnership working for example the NCC Visitor Economy and Cultural Commissioning group and the Visitor Economy District and Boroughs group.
- **Forest Corner masterplan** – working with key partners to establish a new vision for the home of Robin Hood, which will be shortly ready for consultation.
- **Business support / training programme pilot** – was launched which supported 37 businesses and organisations over 3 sessions and will help to inform future events.
- **Sport as a Spectacle** - submission of a briefing (February 2024) which outlines opportunities around the development of one of Nottinghamshire’s core themes identified in the VEF - Sport as a Spectacle. A programme of work is currently being created which will set out activity for the County Council and relevant partners to implement.
- **Visitor Economy Data** - the County Council have purchased continues to be a vital tool to measure our progress and inform future priorities and planning. From the data purchased as part of the newly created STEAM data partnership with Visit Nottinghamshire and our District and borough colleagues, we have already begun to see a recognisable, recent uplift in the Nottinghamshire Visitor Economy, but job numbers have yet to return to pre pandemic levels.

<b>Nottinghamshire Visitor Economy</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Value</b>	£1.97bn	£1.7bn	£2.05bn
<b>Visitor numbers</b>	33 m	28.3m	32.97m
<b>FTE Jobs in sector</b>	23,179	18,224	20,522

**Source: STEAM data**

9. While we cannot solely attribute these figures to the County Council’s VEF, there is no doubt that the implementation of this plan and the associated resourcing that has been put in place has played a significant part in this success, particularly through partnership working. External circumstances permitting, the County Council is well on the way to achieving the target set out in the VEF which is to return to pre-pandemic levels by 2025.

### **Next Steps**

10. Looking forward, the Visitor Economy team (comprises 2 FTEs) will focus on the following areas:
  - **VEF** - Officers will continue to work with partners to deliver the priorities identified within the VEF, taking into account the opportunities presented by the emerging East Midlands

Mayoral Combined County Authority (EMCCA), and maximising the joint working opportunities.

- **VEF Action Plan** - Officers will continue to deliver the VEF Action Plan to ensure the right support from the County Council is in place to support visitor economy businesses to increase the number of hospitality jobs, as well as the number of visitors, their spend and the length of their stay.
- **LVEP** – Officers will continue to support the application of Marketing Nottinghamshire and Nottinghamshire (Visit Nottinghamshire) to become the LVEP for Nottinghamshire. Once this accredited status has been achieved, future funding and support from Visit England will be unlocked.
- **Destination Management Plan** – Officers will support Visit Nottinghamshire in the creation of a county wide Destination Management Plan, a requirement of the LVEP and an opportunity to bring city, county, districts and boroughs together under one united plan.
- **Contracted work** – Officers will continue to monitor the delivery of a programme of work contracted to Marketing Nottingham & Nottinghamshire (Visit Nottinghamshire) until March 2025.
- **Building Networks** - Officers will begin to build appropriate networks with local authority partners and wider stakeholders to realise Visitor Economy development and best practice.
- **Sport as a spectacle** - Officers will create a programme of work around the theme of Sport as a Spectacle which was identified in the VEF as an area of strength in Nottinghamshire’s visitor economy.
- **Robin Hood and Sherwood Forest** – a unique selling point for Nottinghamshire. Along with supporting the developments at Forest Corner, Officers will explore the opportunities around our central theme of Robin Hood and Sherwood Forest and produce a County Council guide for businesses and stakeholders.
- **Data** - Data will be gathered and analysed to inform planning and priorities, this includes the other themes identified in the VEF.
- **Job creation** – Officers will explore ways to create more jobs within the Visitor Economy starting with a Career Champion campaign to showcase people working in the sector, why they do it and to celebrate their work. This will coincide with recognising talent through the sponsorship of Visitor Economy related Business Awards around the county.
- **Business, Conferences and Events Tourism** – working with the Business and Events Team at Visit Nottinghamshire, Officers will attend the Meetings Show in London on 19th and 20th June 2024 to raise the profile of the county for this type of tourism.

## Other Options Considered

11. The Council could take a ‘do nothing’ approach and not continue with the priorities identified in the VEF. However, this would mean the relevant objectives contained within the ETP and the Nottinghamshire Plan could not be addressed.
12. The Council could adopt an approach which minimises the resources allocated to this area of work. However, this would mean that the work done to date may be lost or the full economic benefits for Nottinghamshire residents and businesses are not released.

## **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

13. The reasons for these recommendations revolve around the County Council's intention to help support the local visitor economy and maximise those opportunities under the Levelling Up Agenda, meet the aspirations within the Nottinghamshire Plan and Council's ETP.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

14. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Financial Implications**

15. The recommendations themselves have no immediate financial impact. Proposals resulting from the actions will be costed and considered and subject to the usual scrutiny and democratic process.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

It is recommended that Place Select Committee:

- 1) Considers the report and the notes the work the County Council and its partners have achieved in the first year of the Visitor Economy Framework's adoption.
- 2) Considers the future priorities (as identified in paragraph 8) for the Visitor Economy team.

**Councillor Keith Girling**  
**Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Asset Management**

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## **Constitutional Comments (CM 25/04/2024)**

16. The report falls within the terms of reference of the Place Select Committee.

## **Financial Comments (PAA29 26/04/2024)**

17. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- 'None' or start list here

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- 'All' or start list here