

SHEPTON MALLET TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting	People and Promotion Committee item 1.10
Date	03 November 2020
Author	Project officer
Subject	Tourism strategy

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 For councillors to note that the town clerk and project officer have become members of the Mendip Strategic Tourism Group, currently chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development at Mendip District Council. To note a number of initiatives are being discussed by this group which may concern Shepton Mallet.
- 1.2 For councillors to note the tourism strategy document (Appendix A) drafted by the project officer at the request of the Open Spaces committee.
- 1.3 For councillors to agree to the nomination of a lead councillor responsible for tourism.
- 1.4 For councillors to note that a budget of £6K for tourism is available this financial year, inherited from the Open Spaces committee and originally intended for the Tourist Information Centre.
- 1.5 For councillors to note that a bid for £10K funding has been submitted to Mendip Tourism Limited.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 At the last Open Spaces meeting in July 2020, it was agreed that the town council would play an active role in promoting the town to visitors (tourism). This commitment to promoting the town is in line with the Town Plan and is one of the primary responsibilities of this committee. For that, it was agreed that a strategic plan be developed with an action list for the medium term. The project officer has drafted a strategy document for councillors to consider (Appendix C).
- 2.2 Mendip District Council (MDC) have published the results of a report commissioned to an external consultant, recommending that MDC revisit the existing model for tourism provision at district level. The report (Appendix B) has identified key areas of priority focus for a Mendip-wide tourism strategy and recommends the creation of a Strategic Tourism Group for Mendip. The town clerk and project officer have been invited to be members of the board. This group brings together representatives from the public and private sector, including the business community, the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) for Somerset (Visit Somerset), a representative of the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership, and the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development at Mendip District Council. The group has been set up in such a way that it may in future operate independently of Mendip District Council.

2.3 This presents opportunities for the town council to be involved from the outset in the setting of district-wide priorities for tourism. The Strategic Tourism Group for Mendip will set out an action plan for the next 3 years. This action plan will be supported by funding made available by Mendip District Council, redirecting the funds previously awarded to Mendip Tourism Limited. A number of projects and initiatives are currently being considered or pursued by Mendip District Council:

- a multi-user path network connecting Mendip towns and parishes
 - an e-commerce platform for each of the five main Mendip towns
 - an electric bicycle rental scheme for each of the five main Mendip towns
- There is also an ongoing discussion with Visit Somerset about the possibility of a Mendip-wide membership scheme.

2.4 Given that Shepton Mallet town council does not have a tourism officer, or any officer with responsibility for this area of activity, there is currently limited capacity for the town council to fulfil a tourism function. The recommendation to councillors is therefore that the town clerk and project officer continue to engage with the Strategic Tourism Group for Mendip and use these meetings to inform the town council's own strategic approach to tourism; and that the town clerk be given delegated authority to act on behalf of the council in those meetings.

2.5 In addition, councillors should consider that additional resource be allocated to tourism in the next financial year. In particular, to manage communications via social media and online platforms.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 A budget of £6K for tourism is currently available this financial year. These funds were inherited from the Open Spaces committee and had originally been intended for the Tourist Information Centre but owing to its closure in Spring 2020, the funds have not been paid out.

3.2 A funding bid for £10K has been submitted to Mendip Tourism Limited for the town council to pursue tourism related activities. This funding would be made available during this financial year, paid out in arrears.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The town council will at all times be mindful of the environmental impact of the decisions it makes with regards to tourism.

5.0 TOWN PLAN REFERENCE

Promotion

Promote and encourage Tourism	<p>Work collaboratively to develop a tourism offering that encourages those who live locally to explore and encourages others to visit</p> <p>Work with partners in the retail and hospitality industries to ensure that the visitor experience is thoughtful and inclusive</p>
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6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 For councillors to note that the town clerk and project officer have become members of the Mendip Strategic Tourism Group, currently chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development at Mendip District Council. To note a number of initiatives are being discussed by this group which may concern Shepton Mallet. For councillors to consider and agree that the town council use these meetings to inform the town council's own strategic approach to tourism; and that the town clerk be given delegated authority to act on behalf of the council in those meetings.
- 6.2 For councillors to consider the strategy outlined in Appendix A and consider the next steps for 2021/2022.
- 6.3 For councillors to nominate a lead councillor to receive regular updates from the town clerk and project officer on the Mendip Strategic Tourism Group, and to act as a councillor representative in between committee meetings.