

a) Power to impose a tourist tax in Oxford (proposed by Councillor Wilkinson, seconded by Councillor Goff)

Liberal Democrat member motion

Council notes that a number of local authorities are currently lobbying for the power to impose tourist bed taxes or “hotel levies”. These include Camden, Westminster, Bath, Birmingham, Brighton, Edinburgh and Cornwall.

Council also notes the recent support by the Mayor of London for the introduction of such a levy following the publication for the London Finance Commission by the GLA of Working Paper 83 entitled Options for a tourism levy for London. This report gives details of tourist taxes levied across the world in cities that have a high proportion of tourists.

Council recognizes that the British Hospitality Association is strongly opposed to any imposition of a bed tax, and that the VAT rates in the UK on hotel accommodation are much higher than in other EU countries.

Oxford is the seventh most visited city in the UK by international visitors and is the tourism gateway to the rest of Oxfordshire. The opening of the new Westgate retail offer is expected to generate increased visits to Oxford. Council welcomes tourism in Oxford as this brings many benefits to the City, however this does bring with it an extra demand for infrastructure and environmental improvements, and cost to the Council of increased workload in some departments, for example Streetscene and Parks.

Council notes that there are uncertainties ahead post-Brexit with respect to Oxford’s economy, and that it may be wise to join other authorities in lobbying for the power to introduce and retain a tourism levy.

Council therefore asks the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council to work with other local authorities representing cities with high rates of tourism to lobby jointly for the devolution of the above power. It further requests that Council writes to Oxford’s two MPs to inform them of this Council’s motion and ask for their support.

Useful references:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/tourism-levy-for-london-wp83.pdf>

<http://uk.businessinsider.com/sadiq-khan-calling-for-visitors-to-be-hit-by-new-tourism-tax-2017-1>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/could-bath-be-the-first-uk-city-to-bring-in-a-tourist-tax-a7516856.html>

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