

29 May 2019

Cabinet response to recommendations of the Tourism Management Scrutiny Review Group

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member for Culture and City Centre to recommendations made by the Tourism Management Scrutiny Review Group. These recommendations were endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee on 15 May 2019. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

Recommendation	Agree?	Cabinet Member Comment
<p>Recommendation 1: That the Council convenes with key partners (e.g. the universities and Experience Oxfordshire) to develop a shared vision for tourism in Oxford. This should also recognise the needs and wishes of residents, and be made public and promoted through the Council's media channels. Key principles of the vision should situate Oxford as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A city that welcomes all visitors (local, national and international) b) A city that aspires to have high quality, low carbon, transport facilities c) A destination which is best experienced through an overnight stay d) A gateway to other tourism destinations in the region 	Yes/in part	<p>The council can convene with partners. Given officers are about to procure support for the Oxford Economic and City Centre Vision and Plan, these commissions can be used to inform engagement with stakeholders.</p> <p>We feel it is premature to make assumptions as to what the vision should be.</p> <p>The resources to deliver such a vision and for its communication beyond Oxfordshire are perhaps not available at present, so this will need consideration.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: That the Council, through its membership on the Boards of Experience Oxfordshire and OxLEP, actively supports local efforts to prepare for the Tourism Sector Deal (such as bidding to become an official Tourism Zone), which would lever in investment to extend the tourism season and improve transport access for visitors to the City.</p>	Yes	<p>This can be supported through existing resource and partnerships</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: That the Cabinet reviews the process and assessment undertaken which led to the proposal to phase out funding to Experience Oxfordshire, and undertakes to work with partners to jointly ensure there is a suitable and sustainable funding model for destination management in the future.</p>	Yes/in part	<p>It was a budget decision made in February 2019 in accordance with the council's procedures. Councillors then assessed this alongside all other budget reductions and proposals.</p> <p>It is important we engage in conversation with all relevant stakeholders on finding the most appropriate funding model to permit a sustainable approach to tourism promotion and destination management. The city council is one of those stakeholders and we are willing to discuss the possibility of commissioning services from Experience Oxfordshire as a possible way of providing funding.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: That the Board member for Culture and City</p>		<p>Good communication and consistency are the most important issues</p>

Centre becomes the Council's representative on the Board of Experience Oxfordshire, and consideration is given to how their portfolio title can better reflect their remit for tourism matters.		here rather than the person who takes on the role of representative. As Cabinet Member I have regular meetings with the Chief Executive of Experience Oxfordshire and I am not certain that having the Cabinet Member as EO Board member is essential.
Recommendation 5: That the Council has a named officer or team to be recognised as the lead on tourism matters.	Yes	<p>The team should be Regeneration and Economy (Economic Development and City Centre Management), also ensuring links with other relevant service areas</p> <p>However, many of the recommendations to follow could pose an unsustainable workload on the broader set of council officers affected. Additional resource would need to be identified or we prioritise the most effective and deliverable actions from the long list</p>
Recommendation 6: That the Council continues to encourage employers within the hospitality and tourism sectors in Oxford to pay the Oxford Living Wage, including the universities and colleges. Further, that the Council's promotional activity around the Oxford Living Wage incorporates customer facing marketing, which encourages conscience driven spending with Oxford Living Wage accredited shops and services.	Yes	This is already resourced in line with previous recommendations. It will be addressed specifically in the Living Wage City action plan being prepared over the summer, to be agreed with employers on the Living Wage City Group. Customer facing marketing is already part of the OLV plan.
Recommendation 7: That the Council, having secured support from the County Council, develops an action plan to become a 'Coach Friendly' city, with key performance indicators and milestones, in accordance with the seven criteria set out by the Confederation of Passenger Transport. This should incorporate short, medium and long term strategic infrastructure plans for improving drop off and layover facilities in the City, linking with key wayfinding routes and providing sufficient facilities for passengers and coach drivers. Key stakeholders including the bus companies and the DMO should be engaged with through this process.	Yes/in part	Both Councils are committed to improving the coach operation for the benefit of residents and visitors. We recognise that effective management of coaches can assist in reducing congestion, improving air quality and safety. There are number of challenges that need to be addressed before the Council could meet the seven objectives set by the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT). However, we would be happy to engage the CPT in this process. It will probably require a joint city and county resource to be employed/identified for a defined period to be effective.
Recommendation 8: That the Council makes representations to Oxfordshire County Council concerning the need to distinguish standalone transport and infrastructure plans for tourist coach access in future strategies and policy documents. Further, the Council takes an active role in raising the profile of the tourism sector within key strategic documents, such as the emerging Economic Growth Strategy and Local Transport Plan 5.	Yes	This can be done as part of the usual consultation process. Moreover, Oxford City and Oxfordshire County Council are currently reviewing the wider policy on coaches. The Council recognises that the tourism can bring benefits to a city, although this needs to be well managed in order to prevent a detrimental impact. Any policy adopted needs to ensure that tourism positively contributes to residents as well as visitors. Whilst the economic impacts must be appraised, social and environmental issues will also need to be carefully considered.

Recommendation 9: That the Council reviews and updates the current drop-off and layover advice for coach operators, as set out on the Council's website, and commits to more frequent engagement with the Confederation of Passenger Transport and the Coach Tourism Association.	Yes	The layover information is currently being reviewed and will be issued to coach operators imminently. The Council would welcome the opportunity to engage with the CPT and will commit to doing so. However, it should be noted that the County Council are responsible for the management of on-street parking issues and therefore as a main stakeholder their participation would be required in this process.
Recommendation 10: That the Council issues and resources a survey to tourist coach companies, in partnership with Experience Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire County Council, to better understand; the number of coaches that enter the City, their movements, and barriers to making best use of existing facilities. This should broadly reflect the research approach taken in Cambridge.	Yes/ in part	This will be discussed with Experience Oxfordshire and Oxon County Council, to ascertain what information already exists, and what more is needed. We know from Experience Oxfordshire that decisions about destinations and the length of visits are made by tour operators several years in advance. Experience Oxfordshire is already making progress in influencing these early stages and encouraging visitors to spend more time in Oxford. We already know that the main barriers to coaches making better use of facilities is the short length of tourist visits to Oxford, currently an average of 90 minutes.
Recommendation 11: That the Council remains involved in discussions with similar cities about the introduction of an overnight tourism levy, and supports national efforts to lobby for the ability to introduce such a levy. Any plan must capture all providers of commercial paid accommodation, not just hotels, and assurances are needed that the revenue generated will go towards improving the visitor experience. Consideration should be given to the Local Government Association's role in supporting this effort.	In part	<p>We will continue to monitor the situation, liaise with cities and lobby where appropriate. We will build a greater set of background information and data. As Cabinet member I have already visited Edinburgh and discussed their proposed Transient Visitor Levy (TVL) with their officers and councillors.</p> <p>The principles suggested will be considered if and when a plan is developed.</p>
Recommendation 12: That the Council takes an active role in promoting and supporting digital innovations and tourism products that benefit the City and its residents. For example, the Oxford Pass, Wayfinding apps, the Sociability App and Refill Oxford. Official partner status should be sought if considered appropriate.	In part	The City Council can take a partnership/coordination role in identifying the digital provision of information and apps for visitors and residents, with Experience Oxfordshire, who recently launched the Oxford Pass. Some of this work can be under the Smart Oxford banner but will need resourcing. Re marketing and promotion - only by using existing channels available to officers. Resources to set up new campaigns are not currently available. We are not the Visitor promotion organisation but will work closely with stakeholders to identify opportunities to promote that are deliverable.
Recommendation 13: That the Council writes to local Members of Parliament, inviting the support of Experience Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire County Council, to make the case for the Discover England Fund to continue beyond 2019. Consideration should be given to whether this action is time appropriate in light of any parallel bid to become an official Tourism Zone as part of the UK Tourism	Yes	This will be coordinated with partners.

Sector Deal (see recommendation 2).		
Recommendation 14: That the Council reviews its current role in the administration and development of an annual events calendar, and seeks opportunities to be proactive and strategic in shaping a calendar that will increase the City's appeal to regional domestic visitors.		<p>Early feedback from city centre businesses suggests interest in knowing more about, and learning earlier of the events calendar so that they can explore options to tie in with / prepare for what's occurring.</p> <p>The City Council events team is currently resourced to be reactive, and to focus more on resident events. Officers are bringing in an external auditor in October as part of an events management review to. In light of this, further recommendations may come forward, and may carry resource requirements. Opportunities to work more closely with key partners (County Council, EO) can also be explored further.</p>
Recommendation 15: That the Council undertakes to revive the Community Toilet Scheme with local businesses, and that it is explicitly within the remit of the Council's new City Centre Management function.	In part.	Experience suggests that in Oxford this is a challenging ask given the potential for ASB issues. The City Centre Manager will consider the options available and feed this into the City Centre Vision work..
Recommendation 16: That the Cabinet commissions an options report on concerning the long term future provision of adequate public conveniences in the City Centre. This should be produced in consultation with Oxford Direct Services.	In part	<p>This may be a much needed step, based on visitor feedback, and a help if there is to be an initiative to ask businesses to engage on this.</p> <p>Budget and management resource needs to be identified to allow effective options to be developed and any new provision should be based primarily on the needs of local people rather than visitors.</p>
Recommendation 17: That provision is made in the Cabinet's draft budget proposals for 2020/21 to include an allocation for updating and/or upgrading the current static maps and signage in the city centre. This should specifically include creative signage between the Westgate Centre, the Covered Market and Cornmarket Street. An ongoing revenue allocation should be provided for their maintenance and review.	Yes/in part	<p>Agreed, with the proviso that consideration is given to options that use existing space / street furniture / buildings, that anything done on this is future-proofed and that the emphasis is on innovation and takes into account the need to limit 'street clutter'.</p> <p>Feedback from other cities suggests a combination of effective finger-post signage, visitor map availability, transport hub information and effective use of google maps would be the key.</p> <p>Project resource will needed, and physical and digital resources must be effectively integrated in the short and long-term.</p>
Recommendation 18: That the Council considers the potential of the City's waterways as a visitor attraction and leisure asset in future policy making (e.g. planning and licensing) and investment decisions,	Yes	The Waterways officer resource is in place and the Oxford Waterways Project is due to publically launch in coming weeks. A key theme to the project is Tourism – exploring both how to use the waterways to

and works to support the Oxford Waterways Project to create new tourism opportunities through regenerating and improving facilities (e.g. in particular, boating facilities).		attract new tourists to the city and also as a means of adding to the general attraction of the city. A significant challenge remains as to how to manage moorings and supply additional services for boats, and finding investment to support improvements in the physical environment.
Recommendation 19: That the Council reviews to what extent codes of conduct exist for managing the behaviour of students at language schools (including the management of large groups in public spaces), and seeks to ensure they are being used to safeguard visitors, and satisfy the behaviour expectations of residents.	In part	Significant resource issues if new policies are to be developed and delivered/ monitored effectively.
Recommendation 20: That the Council makes representations to Oxford University, welcoming greater publicity concerning public opening hours for the colleges, and other practical steps to improve resident and visitor awareness of, and access to, the colleges.	Yes	This would require a combined approach with Experience Oxfordshire and the Conference of Colleges but better awareness would be helpful.
Recommendation 21: That where business led opportunities arise; the Council should take a full and active role in leveraging in the influence of the business sector to improve the public realm and wider visitor offer.	Yes	As part of development proposals, accessing planning gain funds

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