

# Scrutiny Panel

## Tuesday, 27 March 2018

**Attendees:** Councillor Christopher Arnold, Councillor Phil Coleman, Councillor Beverly Davies, Councillor Adam Fox, Councillor Mike Hogg, Councillor Lee Scordis, Councillor Barbara Wood

**Substitutes:** No substitutes were recorded at the meeting

**Also Present:** Councillor Scott-Boutell, Councillor Young

### 155 Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2018 be reviewed and brought back to the next meeting for confirmation following a request to check the work programme discussion.

### 156 Review of tourism marketing and the tourism experience

The following Councillors and Officers attended the meeting to present the Review of Tourism Marketing and the Tourism Experience Report.

Councillor Young, Portfolio Holder for Business and Culture  
Lucie Breadman, Assistant Director of Community  
Claire Taylor, Visitor and Cultural Services Manager  
Stewart Henderson, Communications and Marketing Manager  
Katharine Sheppard, Communications and Marketing Business Partner – Tourism

The report invited the Panel to review the work of the Council in marketing the Borough of Colchester to visitors, the current marketing campaign and the Council's wider role in delivering the tourism experience. The report also invites the Panel to make any recommendations to the Portfolio Holder for Business and Culture regarding Tourism. The Panel were informed that the Cabinet awarded extra funding for a tourism marketing campaign in 2016 which enabled additional marketing and a dedicated resource. Further funding for this was provided in 2017 to continue this work.

Claire Taylor and Katharine Sheppard provided a presentation to the Panel. This set out the Council's core services for Visitors to Colchester and Tourism along with the activities that have been carried out as a result of the additional ring-fenced budget for more promotion and marketing. The presentation also included a number of promotional videos, which included showcasing the tourism offering in Colchester, Hidden Treasures

and the possibilities of Group Travel.

Officers highlighted the positive reactions to campaigns that have been run, and the use of digital billboards and social media to promote Colchester.

Officers also highlighted a new television advertising campaign. This will work interactively on the Sky TV platform targeting certain demographics in a number of areas within easy travel distance of Colchester. The advert will focus on the Borough's history and heritage appeal, and will be a total of 30 seconds long. The purpose of the advert is to raise awareness of what Colchester has to offer, challenge perceptions and promote Colchester as a key tourism destination in the East of England. Over time, alongside all the related activities undertaken within the campaign it is hoped that the work will result in building the visitor numbers that come to Colchester and increase the number of overnight stays. Officers highlighted that other areas had had success in using the Sky AdSmart campaign.

Councillor Young highlighted the hard work from officers that have assisted these schemes and taken Colchester to the next level in becoming a tourist destination. Councillor Young acknowledged the limited resource available and the clever targeting using AdSmart. Councillor Young also confirmed that Colchester is aiming high and looking to build on a positive reputation. A member of the Panel questioned whether links with Towns twinned with Colchester had been encouraged. Officers confirmed that marketing material is supplied to the twinning society, with the material translated into the relevant language if appropriate. In addition, the Wezlar Tourist Office had previously visited Colchester as part of an exchange and are keen to be a partner. A further comment was made from a Panel member that it would be useful to undertake direct contact with the twinned towns, rather than just through the twinning society.

With regard to the Sky AdSmart commercial, officers confirmed that this could reach approximately 460,000 people. In terms of measuring whether this increased visitor numbers in Colchester, officers confirmed that this would be difficult, if not impossible, to measure precisely. A visitor who sees the advert may not actually visit for a year or more, and whilst it would be possible to ask questions relating to the television advert in visitor surveys, the best evidence will be increased visitor numbers to attractions and the wider tourism industry.

Claire Taylor highlighted that the current tourism figures refer to trips made not individual visitors and are supplied to the Council through their membership of Visit Essex. There are more expensive models for measuring visitor numbers that the Council could commission independently and that may give you slightly more information, but no models will capture the detail required in its entirety. Claire Taylor highlighted the amount of anecdotal evidence which assists in highlighting whether visitors are from and the campaigns they have seen.

In response to a question about whether Essex University is used as a way to highlight the tourist offering in Colchester, given the number of overseas students. Claire Taylor confirmed that there is a good relationship with the University, examples of which included a commercial and conferencing offer, a remote information point at the Waterstones on campus and that the University Arts Officer can update events on the Visit Colchester website. Following fresher's week there is an increase in the number of visitors to the tourist information centre.

A member of the Panel commended the team in the way in which the social media accounts are handled and requested further information about the barriers to hitting the next level. In response Councillor Young highlighted that there is a reputational view of Essex which needs to be overcome. In addition the close proximity to London provides both an opportunity and a difficulty. Councillor Young stated that it would be necessary to play up Colchester and work on the reputation with the resources available and that the Sky television advert will assist with this.

With regard to the social media feeds, Claire Taylor stated that these were managed by staff at the visitor centre who have a good knowledge of the facilities in the Borough of Colchester. Due to the limited resources many of the pictures used are taken by others, with permission sought by the visitor centre. The visitor centre also keep an eye on national trends, which they can then use as another method to publicise Colchester. A comment was also made that there was not a mention of the Roman Circus on the history section of the website. Officers confirmed that whilst there is extensive content and links relating to the Roman Circus Visitor Centre available on the website they would check to see if further information could be included. It was also confirmed that those involved with the Roman Circus are able to upload information to the website and manage their own entry as many other attractions can also do.

A member of the Panel questioned how the hotels and bed and breakfast establishments were chosen to be included on the website. Claire Taylor confirmed that whilst attractions and events are listed for free there is an annual fee charged to the owners of accommodation, restaurants and shops, which covers the cost of the website. In terms of increasing the number of providers on the website, the team do their best to visit accommodation providers. Claire Taylor highlighted that certain hotel chains have restrictive marketing policies and do not engage with individual destinations.

In terms of working with other Local Authorities, Claire Taylor confirmed that rather than working with individual authorities, this is currently managed on a regional basis through regional destination management organisations, such as Visit Essex. Claire Taylor confirmed that the Council would happily talk with neighbouring districts where there are structures that can be worked with and already promotes areas like the Stour Valley, which is in Babergh District Council and Beth Chatto Gardens which is in the Tendring District Council area.

In response to a question about working with Destination Colchester, Clare Taylor confirmed that there is an operational relationship, but not a formal relationship. Materials from Destination Colchester are stocked in the Visitor Information Centre. It was acknowledged that more links could be provided on the tourism site to destination Colchester and to other tourist resources in Colchester. Officers confirmed that they would be happy to work with and support other tourist organisations that promote Colchester.

Responding to a question regarding how far and wide promotions occur, Claire Taylor confirmed that Colchester tourism literature is circulated to a variety of other tourist information centres, and other outlets such as accommodation, attractions and road side service stations nationally, however it is ultimately their choice as to whether they wish to display the information provided. The distribution of literatures has led for instance to a regular coach tip from Lancashire visiting Colchester.

In terms of recent developments, the Council has supported plans and is working with Colchester Archaeological Trust to deliver interpretation boards and graphics for the Roman Circus. In addition to this there is now a mobile application 'Ancient Colchester' which includes a tour and uses augmented reality. In Dedham, the Parish Council have just opened a tourist information point with the craft centre. Responding to a query regarding electronic tourist information kiosks, it was explained that there is not the funding for these given the significant capital outlay and then the revenue support costs.

A member of the Panel highlighted that the current tourism focus is on the Roman period, however there are other periods of history that Colchester has, including Norman and Tudor era buildings. Councillor Tim Young acknowledged the point made and highlighted that Colchester works closely with Ipswich to provide the best offerings, but this is something where further work could be undertaken.

With regard to promoting Colchester to visiting football supporters Lucie Breadman confirmed that they would be airing the Sky TV advert prior to and after matches and are working with them to connect the town and the club.

In terms of attracting people from the train station up to the Town Centre, Councillor Young confirmed that the next stage of fixing the link would improve this area. Claire Taylor also confirmed that colleagues had put together a Heritage Lottery Fund bid for the enhancement of the North Bridge conservation area. This could look at facades as well as other construction work, with possible match funding.

RESOLVED that;

The Panel reviewed the work of the Council in marketing the Borough of Colchester to visitors, the current marketing campaign and the Council's wider role in delivering the tourism experience.

The Panel thanked the officers and Portfolio Holder for attending the meeting.

## **157 Review of Refuse and Recycling Collections from Flats**

Victoria Weaver attended the meeting to have her say regarding the review of refuse and recycling in flats in Colchester. Victoria Weaver stated that she agreed with the move to a fortnightly collection, given that it has improved the recycling figures.

Victoria Weaver acknowledged that there are still gaps in the coverage provided and that some residents feel they have to go to the recycling centre to recycle their plastics. Victoria Weaver suggested that further information be readily available for residents to inform about the changes that had occurred.

With regard to the new waste service, Victoria Weavers felt that the collection arrangements could prove on occasions insufficient for large families or after large social events and should be more flexible. However, she commended the work achieved so far and the figures that have been reached.

Councillor Lissimore.

Councillor Lissimore attended the meeting to have her say on the review of refuse and recycling collection from flats. Councillor Lissimore questioned why recycling in flats and the issues raised were not dealt with at the beginning of the process, when the service was reorganised in June. The mixed approach has caused confusion for residents.

Councillor Lissimore acknowledge that whilst storage is out of the control of Colchester Borough Council, many of the issues can be overcome through providing education to residents and informing them of the different ways they could recycle. With regards to capacity in the service, Councillor Lissimore questioned why these issues had not been fixed when the Waste Service review was conducted in June. A further query was raised about the full cost of introducing the collections from flats, which had not been included within the report.

Councillor Lissimore concluded by urging the Panel to look to increase the level of recycling for those residents in flats as they should receive the same service as that provided to householders.

Cllr Scott-Boutell

Councillor Scott-Boutell thanked those attending for having their say. Councillor Scott-Boutell confirmed that this report follows on from the update provided to the Panel in December and sets out the refuse and recycling collections in flats.

Councillor Scott-Boutell highlighted that Colchester Borough Council had informed Essex County Council about the intentions and requested their support. In addition Councillor Scott-Boutell highlighted the difficulties in storage space for bins at each

development.

Richard Block, Assistant Director for Environment, highlighted that there has been a historical difficulty with introducing recycling in flats. Wherever feasible flats have been provided with recycling facilities. The main hurdle remaining is with regards to the collection of plastics which is due to the capacity of collection vehicles and the provision of bins. Richard Block highlighted that the reason for the capacity issue is a result of the recycling rates increasing from the changes in June. An additional vehicle would be required to provide the extra capacity required.

Richard Block informed the Panel that the bins required would have a one off capital cost. Consultations would be required with management agents for flats which would take some time and support to complete.

With regards to food waste, this is another gap in the service for those who live in flats. This has been further examined, however there are more significant barriers to implementing food waste collections in flats. This is because communal food waste bins would be required and would also need to be regularly cleaned. This would also require both capital and revenue funding to implement.

Members of the Panel welcomed the report and agreed that recycling in flats should be increased. This would further the work already done to increase recycling in the Borough. Further comments were made with regard to the significant work that will be required to speak to the management companies who run the developments to implement recycling facilities. A member of the Panel suggested that residents of flats could be contacted in the first instance to put pressure on the management companies to provide recycling facilities. Officers confirmed that the approach would look at each development individually assessing what the best method of introduction plastic recycling would be. This could include using clear plastic sacks or the use of a communal bin. Councillor Scott-Boutell confirmed that there would also be a focus on education when this is rolled out.

In response to a question regarding whether there was an existing database with information about recycling in flats, Richard Block confirmed that work has started and that there is information regarding the number of developments, locations and flats that are already served by the three bin collection. Further work will be required on those more challenging locations.

Panel members voiced their concern that there had been missed opportunities to implement recycling in flats in the past and that developments could have been constructed in without the space to store recycling facilities. Comments were made as to whether planning policy was being adequately enforced. Officers highlighted that whilst providing recycling facilities had been discussed for some time, it was not possible to do this at the same time as the Waste Service Review due to the amount of work required.

This report provides a view of the current position prior to it going through the standard decision making process. The Panel did acknowledge that whilst it would be difficult to implement food waste collection in flats, this would not be a reason not to attempt to implement it and that it should remain an aspiration given the environmental benefit of collection. It was suggested that conditions be placed on new developers to make food collection from flats feasible and that the Council have the facilities to collect the waste. Officers confirmed that whilst the focus of the report is to introduce recycling, removing the waste that does not decay, food waste may be considered if feasible. Officers also highlighted that with the new garden communities development this may present an opportunity to change the collection methodologies and ensure collection of all types of waste.

The Chairman of the Panel suggested that the Panel be kept informed and up to date with developments on recycling for flats.

RESOLVED that;

Recycling collections provided to flats be increased, with the view to provide a service similar to that provided to other properties.

The Panel thanked the officers and Portfolio Holder for the report and attending the meeting.

## **158 Work Programme 2018-19**

Councillor Davies, introduced the Work Programme 2017/18. The report requests that the Panel consider and note the contents of the Work Programme for 2017/18. The report also includes the forward work plan for the Cabinet and a draft work programme for 2018/19.

Members of the Panel acknowledged the additional meeting scheduled in April for the bus companies. It was agreed that no briefing would be required for this meeting as the Panel had already held one before the meeting in February was postponed. Panel members also highlighted that any substitutes would need to be informed of the discussions that had already taken place.

RESOLVED that the work programme 2017-18 be noted.