Growth, Infrastructure and Environment
Policy Committee

Thursday 9 March 2017

2:00pm, Council Chamber
South Norfolk House, Cygnet Court, Long Stratton,
Norfolk, NR15 2XE

If you have any special requirements in order to attend this meeting,
please let us know in advance

Large print version can be made available

Contact Sue Elliott on 01508 533701 or democracy@s-norfolk.gov.uk
Members of the Growth, Infrastructure and Environment Policy Committee:

Cllr B Stone (Chairman)
Cllr J Larner (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr P Broome
Cllr M Dewsbury
Cllr K Kiddie
Cllr T Lewis
Cllr K Worsley

This meeting may be filmed, recorded or photographed by the public; however anyone who wishes to do so must inform the chairman and ensure it is done in a non-disruptive and public manner. Please review the Council’s guidance on filming and recording meetings available in the meeting room.
Agenda

1. To report apologies for absence and identify substitute voting members (if any);

2. To deal with any items of business the Chairman decides should be considered as matters of urgency pursuant to Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act, 1972. Urgent business may only be taken if, "by reason of special circumstances" (which will be recorded in the minutes), the Chairman of the meeting is of the opinion that the item should be considered as a matter of urgency;

3. To receive Declarations of Interest from Members; (see guidance attached page 6)

4. Minutes of the meeting of the Growth, Infrastructure and Environment Policy Committee held on 4 October 2016; (attached – page 7)

5. Visitor Economy Initiative; (report attached – page 11)

6. Dates of Future Meetings (to be discussed at the meeting)
Working Style of Cabinet Policy Committees

Member Leadership
Members of the Committees will take the lead in understanding the direction provided by Cabinet and delivering work to Cabinet requirements. Whilst recognising political allegiances, members will work in a collaborative manner with officers and cabinet portfolio holders to consider the relevant issues when developing Council policy.

Collaborative Working
All meetings of the Committees will be constructive and conducted in a spirit of mutual respect and trust. Officers will commit to supplying meetings with information relevant to making informed decisions on policies and matters. Members will commit to thoroughly reading and understanding papers, raising questions that are pertinent to the issues at stake. Members will, where feasible, agree definable actions to be taken forward by officers to develop policy, rather than having items for noting or simply to discuss.

Frequency and Nature of Meeting
Each Committee would usually have 3 formal, public meetings per year. In assessing items delegated by Cabinet for review, the Committee may decide that it wishes to meet on a more or less frequent basis.

The Committee may also hold informal meetings should it require in order to progress specific items in detail. However, if the Committee is meeting to determine whether to refer items for Cabinet approval, the meeting should follow the Council’s Standing Orders and thus be subject to a formal agenda, be held in public and the meeting recorded.

Informal meetings may be held in any manner suitable for conducting business (e.g. via meeting, conference call, circulation of information via e-mail, or site visits); while relevant information will be supplied by officers where appropriate, these meetings will not be subject to a formal agenda or minutes. Where business of the Committee is undertaken through informal meeting, all members of the Committee will be provided opportunity to participate. Members will expect to be able to participate in a free and frank exchange of views when deliberating subjects.
Training
Members commit to undertaking development – for example, attending formal training sessions, or reading relevant background material, in order to properly equip themselves to deliver their expected role fully.

Accountability
The Policy Committees will be accountable to Cabinet. They will not be able to make decisions themselves, but can recommend decisions to Cabinet. Cabinet may review whether the Committees are discharging their duties effectively, and may receive progress reports on how the Policy Committee is working to discharge its duties.

Work Programmes
The Work Programmes for the Policy Committee will be established by Cabinet. Members of the Committee will not be able to raise items to be included in the work programme. Where topics have been identified for inclusion in the work programme, the Committee will work to identify how it will discharge its responsibilities, including the resources required to do so.

Managing Time
However the Committee is meeting, it will attempt to conclude the business of each meeting in reasonable time. The Chairman will be responsible for ensuring the meeting stays focused on pertinent issue, and does not become side-tracked on issues that are not relevant to the policy under consideration, or those that should be discussed by a separate committee.
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AT MEETINGS

Members are asked to declare any interests they have in the meeting. Members are required to identify the nature of the interest and the agenda item to which it relates.

- In the case of other interests, the member may speak and vote on the matter.
- If it is a pecuniary interest, the member must withdraw from the meeting when it is discussed.
- If it affects or relates to a pecuniary interest the member has, they have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public but must then withdraw from the meeting.
- Members are also requested when appropriate to make any declarations under the Code of Practice on Planning and Judicial matters.
- In any case, members have the right to remove themselves from the meeting or the voting if they consider, in the circumstances, it is appropriate to do so.

Should Members have any concerns relating to interests they have, they are encouraged to contact the Monitoring Officer (or Deputy) or another member of the Democratic Services Team in advance of the meeting.
Growth Infrastructure and Environment Policy Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Growth, Infrastructure and Environment Policy Committee held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Tuesday 4 October 2016 at 2:00pm

Committee Members Present:

Councillors: B Stone (Chairman), P Broome, M Dewsbury, K Kiddie, J Larner and K Worsley

Apologies: Councillor: T Lewis

Substitute: Councillor: M Gray

Ex Officio: Councillor: K Mason Billig

Other Members in attendance: Councillor: V Thomson

Officers in Attendance: The Director of Community Services (P Boyce) and the Head of Environmental Services (B Wade)

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the Growth, Infrastructure and Environment Policy Committee meeting held on 21 June 2016 were agreed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.
5. PROPOSED COMMUNITY ASSETS STRATEGY

Members considered the report of the Head of Environmental Services, which sought to update the Committee on the proposed Community Assets Strategy following consultation with members, town and parish councils, and its earlier consideration by the Growth, Infrastructure and Environment Policy Committee on 21 June 2016. It was noted that the report had been referred back to the Committee for further consideration regarding the Council’s future approach to the adoption of public open spaces, playgrounds, Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes (SUDS), and street and footway lighting.

In summarising the salient points in his report, the Head of Environmental Services informed the Committee of the Council’s current practice regarding the adoption of assets using Section 106 monies contributed by developers. Members were advised that, due to the increase in development and the anticipated future housing growth within the District, and the associated costs and responsibility for maintaining public areas and playgrounds, it was necessary for the Council to consider whether to continue to adopt such assets or whether, in the future, these should instead be transferred directly from the developer to town/parish councils or management companies.

The Committee was asked to consider three options listed in the report to determine whether the Council should;

1. continue with its current processes;
2. increase the required Section 106 contribution from developers to cover maintenance costs for a longer period; or
3. cease adopting new assets from developers.

In response to a member’s query, the Chairman clarified that, if the Council was minded to continue to adopt new open spaces and play areas, as detailed in Option 1, there would continue to be an upfront cost to the developer for Section 106 monies as a commuted sum to cover maintenance costs for ten years, although Option 2 allowed for this sum to be increased to 15 years, or longer. Members noted that, following this period, the costs would need to be met by the Council and therefore would be passed onto council tax payers. Alternatively, if the assets were passed from the developer to a management company on completion of the development, as detailed in Option 3, each purchaser would enter into a contract with the management company, as part of the purchase contract, and, as the home owner, they would be responsible for the yearly charges. This service charge would stay with the property and passed on, should the property be sold at a later date. The Committee was advised that, currently, in the event of the asset being transferred from the developer to the town/parish council via the Section 106 process, the maintenance costs would be met from the town/parish precept.
The Director of Community Services stressed the importance of developing long term, robust and sustainable management and maintenance strategies. She informed members that, should the Council decide to cease adopting new community assets, there would be changes made to the initial development management enquiry and application processes to focus on communication and detailed discussions regarding the developers’ future intentions for the management of such public spaces, once the development had been completed. The Committee was advised that a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) would be drawn up which would set out guidelines for developers and officers as part of the process when discussing and determining applications for new developments, so that that strict requirements for the ongoing maintenance of public open spaces would form part of the planning approval conditions.

Members discussed how a change in the Council’s policy not to adopt assets from new developments could be implemented and agreed that, should the Council decide to change its policy in this way, it should only affect new applications after the date agreed for the policy change.

There were some concerns regarding the potential situation if a management company responsible for a public open space went into liquidation. Members were of the opinion that, in such circumstances, another management company would be likely to take over the contract and assume responsibility for maintenance costs in exchange for the service charge income received from residents. It was suggested that it might be prudent to obtain a security bond from developers so that in the event of a company ceasing to trade, monies would be available for maintenance costs to be met. Officers advised that they would look into the legal and practical aspects of this suggestion.

The Committee discussed street lighting and it was suggested that developers could deal with street lighting in the same way as public open spaces, transferring ownership and maintenance to either the town/parish council or a management company. Cllr Mason Billig advised members that, in parts of Europe, it was common legal requirement for each house to be fitted with a light so that residents provided their own form of street lighting.

Members considered the three options listed in the report for the Council’s future approach to the adoption of public open space, playgrounds, SUDS, and street and footway lighting. Following a vote, members decided that Option 3 was the Committee’s preferred option but it was suggested that the wording should be altered to the following:

“This Council will accept no further transfer of S106 infrastructure (other than those developments currently in the pipeline and being considered as part of the development management process). The Council’s expectation being that the developer is expected to make arrangements for the adoption of open spaces, street lighting, SUDs etc as part of the development management process and to arrange long term robust management and maintenance strategies to cover all future maintenance responsibilities”.

SE – GI 04/10/2016
It was suggested and agreed by the Committee that a three-week consultation should take place, after which the draft strategy would be referred to Cabinet. It was further suggested that, should the Committee’s recommendations be approved by Cabinet, an implementation date for the strategy should be set for April 2017.

Members requested that an update on the progress of the consultation be given at the next meeting of the Committee.

Following a further vote on the amendments to Option 3, above, it was;

RESOLVED:

1. to support Option 3 (as amended above) as the Council’s future approach to the adoption of Community Assets;

2. that a three-week consultation be undertaken, prior to Cabinet’s consideration of the draft strategy;

and

3. to RECOMMEND TO CABINET that the Strategy be implemented with effect from April 2017.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted the date of the next meeting and it was confirmed that the next phase of the Market Towns Initiative would be considered at this meeting.

The Chairman advised the Committee that they had been invited to attend the next meeting of the Stronger Communities and Leisure Policy Committee on 3 November 2016 at 2pm, as there would be a presentation to members regarding Corporate Social Responsibility. Members were advised that this work crossed over between Communities and Economic Development so would be of interest to the Growth, Infrastructure and Environment Policy Committee’s members.

(The meeting closed at 3.10 pm)

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Chairman
Visitor Economy Initiative

Report of the Senior Economic Growth Coordinator
Cabinet Member: Cllr. Barry Stone- Growth, Infrastructure and Environment

CONTACT
Dave Disney 01508-533731
ddisney@s-norfolk.gov.uk
1. Introduction

1.1 The Market Towns Initiative has demonstrated South Norfolk Council’s commitment to supporting local businesses and communities in and around the hinterland of our Market Towns. The evolution of the programme has revealed a further need to coordinate a targeted place based programme and focus effort on the wider business community and the important visitor economy in particular.

This report examines how the new programme will increase visitor numbers, create jobs and boost economic growth with the following outcomes:

- Better definition of the distinctive offer and USP’s for each locality.
- Better understanding and connection of retailers to the visitor economy.
- Collaborative working across district boundaries to improve the tourism offer.
- Increased numbers of visitors in our towns and villages; boost to the local economy.
- Increased community awareness of the visitor economy and its importance to the growth of South Norfolk.
- Greater connectivity between localities in marketing the overall offer.
- Enhanced sense of place and identity for residents and visitors.
- Enhanced relationships between South Norfolk Council and local businesses.
- Increase in business support activity and networking events.
- Improved digital capacity of our businesses.
- Increased online presence of South Norfolk Businesses.
- Coordinated overarching visitor destination offer.
- Less reliance on public funds.
1.2 How will we achieve this?

We will:

- Set out a clear action plan for the programme.
- Work with the Funding Manager to focus on tourism grant opportunities.
- Define, coordinate and promote the visitor economy offer via Destination Marketing Organisations.
- Develop new products around themed itineraries with other District Councils and Local Tourism Action Groups.
- Continue to encourage the digital capability of our businesses and enable better online presence.
- Further develop digital interpretation of our heritage assets and Market Towns.

2. Background

2.1 The use of New Homes Bonus (NHB) to create the Market Towns Initiative (MTI) had a central principle which was outlined in the Cabinet report of December 2013:

*The MTI is a programme that brings together a mixture of new initiatives, partnerships with others and a refocussing and joining together of some Council core services. But the purpose is a clear unified one, to bring economic growth and vibrancy to the Market Towns as hubs for the whole of South Norfolk generating wealth which in turn will ensure the wellbeing of residents and provide the capacity to support those in need.*

*South Norfolk’s market towns play an important role for the local economy and the communities they serve; they play an important role in the future growth, and economic and social vibrancy, of the district. South Norfolk Council wants to do all it can to strengthen the economic and cultural base of our market towns but recognises neither it, nor any other single organisation can do this on its own.*
we are working with our partners on is a shared vision and approach which brings together stakeholders and expertise. Working with and alongside Town Councils is essential to the success of this initiative, but it is also important that residents and businesses are involved in the initiative.

2.1 Phase 1. The Market Towns Initiative saw successes since its launch in December 2013, including:

• The establishment of strong Town Teams that have shaped the programme of events and interventions.
• The creation of a strong “brand” for each of the market towns, based on the unique offer they present.
• Better cohesion between community groups and businesses.
• A series of events in the town centres that have drawn in large numbers of visitors.
• The improvement of the street scene, including directional signage and increased street cleaning.
• Capital investment programme including improved public facilities.
• The increase in capacity of high street shops via the Retail Skills Academy.
• Strategic co-ordination of the individual local initiatives.

2.2 Phase 2. An 8th December 2014 Cabinet report identified the following drivers for change:

• The need to deliver growth in our Market Towns in a manner that integrates the new housing areas into the existing town community.
• Need for a greater emphasis on drawing visitors to the towns, and increasing tourism.
• There is a need to widen the scope of the MTI, to include all sectors of economic growth and not solely focus on retail.
• Need for town teams to be sustainable in the long term, with a higher degree of autonomy.
• The need to start “future proofing” our market towns to ensure they evolve to maximise their contribution to economic growth.
• Changes to the Council’s approach to Community Development.
2.3 These drivers led to the following changes:

- Establishment of formal but flexible structures within the Town Teams to deliver locally devised projects.
- Terms of reference to clearly identify South Norfolk Council’s collaborative role within each Town Team.
- Engagement with local businesses in the town and promotion of the Town Teams.
- Internal realignment introduced Head of Growth and Economic Development strategic role.
- Daily operational lead - Market Towns Coordinator role created.
- New Homes Bonus (NHB) top slice £20k seed funding to kick start local projects.
- SNC programme of infrastructure investments in line with core activities.
- Workshops to deliver Phase 2 message and promote best practice collaboration.
- Established close links and support for Visit Norfolk and Visit Norwich to promote local activity.

2.5 These changes enabled the following:

- The complete immersion of the Market Towns Coordinator into the fabric of the teams led to a mutual trust and understanding between the Coordinator and the committees and this we believe has been invaluable in enabling the collaboration to deliver events and projects.

- A campaign on the high streets in the towns themselves saw the Market Towns Coordinator visit all retailers within the towns supporting them in their own development and encouraging membership of the Town Teams.
• A series of workshops to deliver the core messages of Phase 2 to both retailers and town team representatives saw presentations by a number of officers to 65 attendees outlining the strategy and included the release of the marketing toolkits which enabled retailers to utilise the jointly developed branding.

• The annual Independent Retailer Award programme which encouraged customers in each town to vote for their favourite retailer in each of three categories requiring retailers to utilise the skills picked up at the Retail Academy Workshops held during 2014.

• A full programme of town centre events across the district which increased footfall in every town which was widely reported in the local media including the EDP, Local Mercury and independent press. Increases of over 7,000 at Wymondham Carnival, some 3,000 at the Harleston Antiques Market and 2-300 at the St. Nicholas Fair held in the yards in Diss.

• Action for Market Towns benchmarking surveys in each town which showed a district average between 3% and 5% lower than national and regional average shop vacancy rates and at almost 50% across the district, higher than average levels of visitor numbers from outside the town postcodes.

• A 4% overall increase in business turnover from 2014 to 2015 as a result of tourism spending in South Norfolk, according to the Economic Impact report by Destination Research.
3. Current Position/Findings

3.1 A review of both MTI phases has led us to consider what we have learned from the intervention so far, and has highlighted what still needs to be done. In the context of our Economic Growth Strategy 5 year targets, we have considered where we need to concentrate our future efforts for maximum effect and how the next phase should be shaped- and why.

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<th>National Trends</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Opportunity</th>
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<tr>
<td>The UK population is changing in age, ethnic mix and household size, and these demographic shifts have significant implications for retailers.</td>
<td>There are more people aged 60 and above than under-18s. By 2020 the number of over-60s will hit 30 million. (Age UK). Smaller households and singles spend less on food, with smaller shops, more often. (Retail Week)</td>
<td>Retailers will need to change their traditional offer to attract customers. Improve the parking balance to accommodate multiple short stay visits. Make the High Street more of a destination with USP's to be experienced.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11% of business that would have traditionally gone through the tills of traders normally associated with the High Street is conducted on the Internet. Only 55% of High Street retailers nationally have an</td>
<td>90% of people under 30 research online before buying non-regular items. This involves review sites, social media and in only 10% of cases actually involves an ecommerce retailer site. (Nominet, UK domain name registry) and</td>
<td>Local businesses need to have an online presence in order to compete. Workshops to improve digital capability and create social media profile. Potential to exploit click and collect</td>
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online presence, and less than 40% having a social media profile, the rest are totally invisible. (FSB) opportunities across retail centres.

Nationally, footfall figures have been falling month on month since the last recession. Some areas of the country are suffering more than others, with shopping malls faring marginally better than traditional High Streets. UK Markets Index August footfall report shows an overall annual decline for the last year of 13.5%. To identify the USP’s of our Market Towns, creating a unique experience for each destination. To major on the Heritage and Cultural assets of South Norfolk, the Boudicca Way and the Waveney Valley.

The English tourism industry is booming and is predicted to grow faster than the overall economy every year for the next decade, outpacing the overall economy. The sector had an 11% increase in overnight trips in 2015. LGA research figures showed there were 103m overnight trips in England in 2015, an 11% increase on 2014, while expenditure jumped 8% to £19.6bn. To form Local Tourism Action Groups to coordinate and communicate the accommodation, heritage, attraction and retail offer via collaboration of our own and partners in house resources and all DMO’s.

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<td>The impact of the falling footfall is</td>
<td>Our own surveys find that Harleston is up</td>
<td>With a higher than national average number</td>
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inconsistent across the District and seems to be affected by different drivers in each locality.

We don’t have an accurate figure for the number of businesses who have an online presence.

year on year at + 0.5%, better than most -7% in Loddon, -12% in Diss, (in spite of the construction work taking place in the Triangle) but at -15% Wymondham has performed worse than the national average of -13%, the consensus of business owners attribute this to the new supermarket situated outside the town centre, drastically affecting footfall.

of visitors (50% of the total) we can work with the visitor economy sector to maximise the opportunities and changing demands of the High Street customer. Improved balance of car parking provision will encourage longer dwell times. Also to support online activity in attracting visitors to the area by feeding content to our DMO’s.

Local tourism has increased to Norfolk and is forecast to continue to grow. UK tourism is set to increase further as the staycation trend fuelled by Brexit implications and fear of terrorism in EU increase.

VEA volume and value report shows 3,364,600 trips to South Norfolk resulting in 875,000 overnight stays producing £212,355,170 boost to the local economy.

Opportunity for L-Tags to define the local heritage and cultural offer in Wymondham and Hingham, the Boudicca Way and the Waveney Valley to the South. To develop and market itinerary based themed products to draw visitors to South Norfolk.

Tourism employment in South Norfolk only accounts for 7.3% of total employment; however the County average is 17.3%

Destination Marketing volume and value survey released by VEA

Huge potential to increase better quality employment in the Tourism sector by a coordinated marketing of the offer to increase demand and confidence in the sector which will encourage growth.
Reduction in self-containment within the Market Towns in South Norfolk.

Locality audit reveals low self-containment and high commuting levels to other districts.

Work on encouraging local businesses to grow their workforce, work with skills agencies to provide a more work ready local resource.

Lack of availability of available spaces in our car parks and inconsistent tariffs.

Review of car parks and analysis of data, ticket sales and occupation surveys reveal a lower than the ideal 15% availability in Market Towns

Implementation of proposals agreed by members to rebalance provision, reduce space blocking and offer wider choice of payment methods on a district wide basis.

### 3.2 Key Drivers:

- People demand more unique experiences
- People demand richer cultural and educational based activities
- People seek new experiences in their leisure time – which might be cultural, heritage, outdoors, food and drink, quality shopping ambiance, entertainment and diversion.
- People increasingly prefer to engage with places and seek information in different ways – particularly in a digital and interactive based format
- People are seeking to interpret and interact with places in different and more meaningful ways
- Market Towns are too reliant on unsustainable local footfall
What is driving the strategy?

Regional
- LEP’s Strategic Economic Plan
- Greater Norwich Local Plan
- LEP’s Cultural Strategy

Drivers
- National Trends
- Shift in Consumer Behaviour
- Unsustainable High Streets too reliant on local footfall and low paid jobs.

Local
- South Norfolk Local Plan
- Economic Growth Strategy
- Neighbourhood Plans

Core Priorities
- Economic Growth, Productivity and Prosperity
- Place, Communities and Environment
- Health, Well-being and Early Help

Operational
- Tourism Framework
- Business Engagement Strategy
- Skills and CSR Programmes

Corporate Plan
- Sustaining the character and supporting the vitality of Market Towns
- Promotion of Tourism/ Focus on Visitor Economy
- Digital Infrastructure supporting online business presence

Visitor Economy Initiative
4. Proposals

4.1 Visitor Economy Initiative (VEI) - The VEI is initially a three year place based economic development programme for South Norfolk targeted at key rural population centres and their hinterland to enhance their unique sense of place and destination marketing activity, as well as focusing on specific local business growth and job generation initiatives. It builds on the Market Towns Initiative and overall, aims to improve economic self-containment and community cohesion.

4.2 It is rooted in the Economic Growth Strategy of South Norfolk Council and will collaboratively apply the principles of the LEP’s Strategic Economic Plan and Cultural Strategies, the Greater Norwich Local Plan and South Norfolk Local Plans, and will have a direct influence on the outcomes of the Corporate Priorities in our Business Plan.

4.3 The visitor economy has been defined as the food and drink offer, the accommodation offer, the leisure offer, the heritage and culture offer, the retail offer and of course the traditional tourist attractions. There are currently 3,811 jobs in South Norfolk associated with the tourism sector in approximately 1261 businesses and the economic impact of tourism in South Norfolk is £212,355,170. Tourism continues to be a key component of economic growth in the UK and the sector supports 1.6 million jobs across the Country. Last year tourism generated over £62 billion in Gross Value Added revenue to the British economy.

4.4 Following the referendum, the fall in the value of the pound has made holidays in the UK cheaper for overseas visitors. In August 2016 the number of overseas visitors to the UK was 3.8 million, an increase of 2% from the previous year. Overseas visitors spent £2.6 billion in the UK during their visits, an increase of 4% on the previous year. Britain’s residents are increasingly choosing domestic holidays also fuelling a boost to UK tourism. The rate of growth to some regions being higher than London, it presents a significant opportunity for places such as East Anglia within close proximity to London. With Norfolk’s tourism industry worth £3.1bn, almost 50% larger than Cornwall’s, the future opportunity for rural based tourism in the County is highly significant and looks to be a strong economic driver.

4.5 Looking ahead England’s tourism industry is predicted to grow faster than the overall economy over the next decade (Source: LGA study 2016). Domestic tourism is predicted to grow 2.9% per annum over the next 10 years outpacing the overall economy which is expected to expand by 2.5%p.a. There are significant opportunities for existing and new enterprises in rural areas; examples include farm based diversification and visitor attractions, promotion of local food and drink, walking and cycling trails and
development of the rich environmental, cultural and heritage offer. A District such as South Norfolk has high potential to develop its offer to visitors and residents alike. A significant proportion of the local ‘tourism offer’ is either hidden or untapped. This includes it’s wealth of important heritage sites located across the District and importantly the historical narrative that could be developed. The cultural and arts offer is also currently understated and could be promoted in a more coordinated and proactive way as well as the farm based and environmental offer and increasing interest in locally produced food and drink.

4.6 Visitors are attracted to places that have a defined or unique offer/product or specific attractions and events. Enhancing a strong ‘sense of place’ with a rich culture and heritage and unique identify wherever possible will help improve the attractiveness of a particular locality. Events and festivals can help also the quality of the built environment.

4.7 In August 2016 the Government published the ‘Tourism Action Plan’, a report setting out the Government’s next steps to make tourism more internationally competitive and resilient post-Brexit, while ensuring that its growth delivers for everyone.

As such, the action plan focuses on the following five areas:

- The tourism landscape: strengthening co-ordination and collaboration
- Skills: boosting apprenticeships and attracting more people to careers in tourism
- Common sense regulation: examining the scope for deregulation
- Transport: making it easier for visitors to explore by rail, bus and coach
- A GREAT Welcome: driving continuous improvements in our visa service

With local authorities playing a key role in the visitor economy due to its devolved nature, there is a need to ensure the way forward for local tourism to take full advantage of the benefits the country has to offer.
What are we going to do?

Place

• Improve a ‘sense of place’ through identifying and enhancing unique assets and creating place based narrative around the cultural and heritage offer in Wymondham and Hingham, the environmental draw and importance of the Boudicca Way through the spine of SN, and local food, drink and the experiential offer of the Waveney Valley to the South.
• Increase the level and promotion of key events and festivals activity across the District and beyond via Visit Norwich, Visit Norfolk, Norwich and the Broads.
• Increase the attraction of external public funding and private sector investment in rural areas to enhance the infrastructure and place shaping opportunities.

People

• Enhance collaboration across wider geographies to promote a stronger tourism offer e.g. Greater Norwich, Waveney Valley, The Broads, working in partnership with industry and benefiting from wider strategic marketing by Visit East Anglia and Visit Norfolk and neighbouring partner DMO’s.
• Support businesses in increasing their digital capacity and online presence
• Engage a dedicated Coordinator to be operational point of delivery of the initiative.

Innovation

• Improve the quality and quantity of the visitor destination offer with targeted marketing at key segment groups and more ‘product led’ activity and campaigns
• Improve the physical and digital infrastructure to support and encourage the growth of locally based enterprises, innovation and higher value job creation
• Increase the ‘digital offer’ and add to the Chronicle project with other interpretation products to engage with and attract visitors and residents
• To develop a Top 100 visitor economy/tourism business list to engage with in order to determine best practice, and then roll out the methodology.

Enterprise

• Engage with local enterprises active within the wider Visitor Economy and build stronger, more productive and sustainable businesses
• Develop key metrics to track the performance of the local visitor economy and allow us to measure the direct impact of interventions.
• Support home grown, high quality ‘lifestyle and boutique businesses’ in key niche sectors including food and drink and artisan arts and crafts; promoting the offer to a wide audience.
5. Action Plan

5.1 Provisional project plan and first steps.

First 12 months:
1. Complete an audit of accommodation providers using online review data to assess the offer (including digital presence/marketing strategy) and identify and define the target areas and audience; using Trip advisor, Booking.com reviews etc.
2. Assess the value of the segments i.e. Visiting friends and family, overseas visitors, business tourism, the grey pound, families, empty nesters and DINK’s (dual income, no kids)
3. Complete a similar audit of the food and drink offer outlets, including cafés, restaurants, and pubs.
4. Complete an audit of food and drink producers in or near the district.
5. Compile lists of the top accommodation, food and drink outlets and food and drink producers to provide an overall Top 100.
6. Create layered heat maps to provide natural trail and itinerary content information.

5.2 Review and analyse the research to inform and prioritise a coordinated series of projects for the three year programme which should include:

a. Capitalising and highlighting the potential economic benefits of our main assets; to the south of the district, reinforcing the Waveney Valley message, then showcasing the significance and historical importance of the Boudicca Way through the spine of the district and also developing the important Wymondham and Hingham heritage offer to the north. - This will provide us with three clear, separate and uniquely significant target areas to focus our intervention and resource.

b. To devise theme based itineraries to include day, weekend and weeklong products, promoting them through a managed marketing campaign financed separately via a potential L-Tag funding bid or working across district boundaries with our own in house joint resources, to provide a more complete and joined up offer for visitors, pushing relevant content via Visit Norwich, Visit Norfolk, The Suffolk Coast and Waveney Valley, Visit Suffolk and our own social media channels. –This will create product based
activities which will increase visitor numbers to the district, increase footfall to our Market towns and stimulate the visitor economy and encourage growth and better quality jobs to the industry with a more marketing focused approach.

c. To fully research the opportunity presented by Artisan Craft Markets/Vintage Memorabilia/Antiques and Book Fairs etc. in South Norfolk with provision for start-ups and micro-businesses to have a presence; to explore the possibility of managing or the joint venture operation of a unique product which could be run anywhere in the district to create an activity based draw, not necessarily tied to a specific location. -This will create both a local destination interest but also a regional and even national attraction to the area for those wishing to explore the local produce and craft scene, also creating a potential extra trading day for each market location if held on a Sunday, and will benefit the local economy. It will also provide a low risk foot on the ladder for tentative entrepreneurs.

d. To explore the opportunity of creating cycling hubs, i.e. equipment supplies, pit stop repairs, refreshments, etc. based at leisure centres for example; utilising the numerous cycling events that are already happening in the region to promote a food, drink and appropriate accommodation offer. -This will stretch out and piggy-back on the activity already happening and will encourage more stays and longer visits to South Norfolk; boosting the visitor economy.

e. To further enhance our digital platform offer, by adding to the Chronicle project with a Museum artefact digital interpretation and potentially a retailer offer using the platforms to carry advertising and other local offer information. –This will enhance the visitor experience, add to the overall tourism offer and provide another opportunity for retailers to maximise the important visitor spend.

f. To obtain funding to provide a series of workshops aimed at encouraging smaller business operators to improve their marketing strategy and develop an effective online presence and explore click and collect schemes; utilising best practice adopted and proven by the top 100. This will potentially create higher paid employment opportunities across the sector.

- This will ensure that our retailers and smaller accommodation providers are at least visible to the increasing number of people who research online. It will also promote best practice which will attract a bigger number of visitors, encourage shoppers to our
Market Towns, increasing footfall and vibrancy in our high streets. The introduction of click and collect hubs for local businesses will effectively offer a competitive alternative to the widely adopted online supermarket and national multiples.

6. Risks and implications arising

6.1 The risks of not continuing to support our Market Towns include:

- The reduction of footfall and economic growth within the district and its towns.
- The loss of momentum the three years of intervention has gained.
- The wasted opportunity the visitor economy presents.
- South Norfolk performing below County average in terms of tourism jobs.
- The reputation of South Norfolk Council.

6.2 Budget implications:

- Removal of the £20k per town top slice report.
- Coordinator role included in budget.

7. Other options

7.1 We opt to do nothing. This would undermine the three years of NHB investment and send the wrong message to both residents, Town Teams and Businesses in South Norfolk. It could also lead to job losses if we are not seen to be investing in our Market Towns and other localities. It would not encourage inward investment or economic growth and businesses may choose to re-locate to other areas.
8. Recommendation

8.1 The Growth, Infrastructure and Environment Policy Committee is requested to consider the report and to recommend the Visitor Economy Initiative to Cabinet.