

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **ECONOMY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

At a Meeting of the **Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Friday 4 September 2015 at 9.30 am**

#### **Present:**

**Councillor R Crute (Chairman)**

#### **Members of the Committee:**

Councillors E Adam, J Armstrong, M Davinson, T Henderson, C Kay, B Kellett, H Nicholson, P Stradling, O Temple and A Willis

#### **Co-opted Members:**

Mr T Batson

#### **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Batey, J Clare, D Hall, R Ormerod, S Zair and I McLaren.

#### **2 Substitute Members**

There were no substitute members.

#### **3 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4 Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties**

There were no items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties.

#### **5 Scrutiny Review of Marketing Activity Undertaken by Visit County Durham:**

Members considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive, which presented the key findings and recommendation of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Review Group report of tourism marketing activity undertaken by Visit County Durham (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

Diane Close, Overview and Scrutiny Officer provided members with a presentation which set out the focus of the review, what the review group did, Key findings in relation to the marketing role of Visit County Durham and partnership working, marketing approach, partnership working with the Durham Strategic Marketing Partnership (DSMP), performance monitoring of Visit County Durham's marketing activity, national marketing

campaign – case study, evaluation of national marketing campaign, future marketing activity of Visit County Durham and next steps (for copy of slides, see file of minutes).

The committee was advised by the Chairman, Councillor Crute that following each key finding highlighted in the presentation by the Overview and Scrutiny officer members would be asked to consider and comment on the resulting recommendation contained in the attached draft review report and detailed in the presentation.

Members of the committee considered each resulting draft recommendation and commented as follows:-

*Recommendation 1*

*In relation to the partnership approach to marketing, VCD seeks to extend its work with partner destinations and the Durham Strategic Marketing Partnership and also use major events to attract out of region visitors to raise the profile of the county as a visitor destination.*

Members agreed the recommendation as set out in the draft review report and presentation.

*Recommendation 2*

*That VCD continues to develop and redesign the 'thisisdurham.com' website and ensure that it remains responsive to the increasing and changing information demands resulting from developments in technology.*

Councillor Adam asked how the performance of VCD's 'thisisdurham.com' would be measured both currently and in the future. Officers advised Members that detail of the performance monitoring undertaken by VCD was covered in key findings and the resulting recommendation in a later slide. The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer indicated that specific reference had been made to the need for VCD to ensure that its website developed to keep pace with technological advances and ensured that its functionality delivered appropriate performance information capture. This had been a key issue for the Council during its recent work to update its own corporate website.

The Chairman advised Members that a distinction had been drawn during the review between online and offline marketing with the majority of marketing activity now undertaken online and that it had been confirmed by VCD that online marketing provides the best return on investment.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer indicated that offline marketing was more expensive and as VCD has a limited budget offline marketing was only used where it was externally funded.

Members agreed the recommendation as set out in the draft review report and presentation.

*Recommendation 3*

*That VCD continues to research and identify national marketing campaign opportunities which benefit partners within the DSMP and wider tourism industry and promote County Durham as a tourism destination.*

Members agreed the recommendation as set out in the draft review report and presentation.

*Recommendation 4*

*VCD ensures that robust performance targets and monitoring procedures for all online and offline marketing activity are in place.*

Councillor Armstrong highlighted the need for the continued monitoring of VCD's marketing activity to ensure the best use of resources and maximum impact. Officers advised that performance monitoring of VCD marketing activity was also covered in recommendation 5.

Councillor Kellet referred to Ramside Hall and asked if they had been approached by VCD to join the DSMP.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer responded that recent conversations with VCD had indicated that 4 more partners had joined the DSMP one of which was Ramside Hall.

Members agreed the recommendation as set out in the draft review report and presentation.

*Recommendation 5*

*That the performance evaluation of the effectiveness of marketing activity undertaken in relation to the national marketing campaign is promoted and reported to the County Council as part of its performance management process.*

Members agreed the recommendation as set out in the draft review report and presentation.

*Recommendation 6*

*That VCD maximises all identified future marketing opportunities for 2015/16 including:*

- *The use of major events and developments at attractions in County Durham.*
- *The Northern Tourism Growth Fund, promoting northern destinations to overseas markets.*
- *Championing as a future priority with the NECA the importance of the visitor economy.*

Members agreed the recommendation as set out in the draft review report and presentation.

*Recommendation 7*

*That a review of this report and progress made against the recommendations will be undertaken six months after the report is considered by Cabinet.*

Members agreed the recommendation as set out in the draft report and presentation.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised Members that a report detailing progress made against the recommendations contained in the review report would be considered by committee at the February/March meeting

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer concluded the presentation by advising member of the next steps which consisted of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreeing the draft review for submission to Cabinet for consideration at the meeting on the 21 October, 2015.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer also advised Members that the draft report had been circulated to the individual departmental management teams and the Corporate Management Team for their comments which had been incorporated into the draft report. The respective management teams had indicated that they were happy with the draft recommendations.

The Chairman and Members commended the work of the staff of Visit County Durham and they asked that this be included in the report to Cabinet.

The Chairman also thanked the members of the review group and scrutiny officers for all their work and members of the committee for accepting the report.

**Resolved:**

- i) That the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree the report of the Scrutiny Review Group looking at the marketing activity undertaken by Visit County Durham.
- ii) That the report of the Scrutiny Review Group be submitted for consideration by Cabinet on 21 October 2015.