

REPORT TO: Employment, Learning and Skills and
Community Policy Performance Board

DATE: 19th February 2018

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Enterprise, Communities and
Resources

PORTFOLIO: Economic Development

SUBJECT: Scrutiny Topic - Culture

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the Culture Scrutiny Topic Group and set out some next steps arising from the review.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

i) Members note progress to date and agree the next steps outlined in the report.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Employment, Learning and Skills and Community Policy Performance Board, (ELS&C PPB), established a scrutiny topic group to, "Review Halton's Cultural Offer within a City Region context". The aim of the review was to determine if, "the Halton cultural offer is being captured within a wider city region cultural narrative", and, "there is synergy between a local and city-region wide cultural offer and where added value could be obtained".

3.2 The scrutiny topic group has met three times. It has considered the background to the Liverpool City Region's 'creative conversation' and devolution. The Topic Group received a briefing from Paula Williams (Knowsley MBC, Lead Officer on cultural matters in the Liverpool City Region,

3.3 The group considered how Halton is contributing to the development of a cultural strategy for the Liverpool City Region.

As part of the scrutiny topic review it has become evident that the development of a Cultural Strategy for the City Region, the governance arrangements and prioritisation of activities in the City Region are still emerging. Furthermore, the cultural landscape in the City is complex. There are proposals to streamline the current arrangements, if appropriate, but no decision has been made on how this would work.

- 3.4 Given this uncertainty, the Topic Group decided to focus on developing an understanding of what is meant by 'Halton's Cultural Offer' and following on from this, how Halton's cultural assets could be better promoted and maximised.
- 3.5 To assist with this analysis, the Topic Group completed a mapping exercise to identify and also better understand Halton's cultural sporting and heritage offer in the borough. (Appendix x).
- 3.6 Having completed the mapping exercise It became clear that Halton's cultural offer is wide ranging and plays an important role in making Halton a great place to live and work. Our cultural offer also generates a sense of identity, place and community in the borough.
- 3.7 In addition, Members concluded that a strong cultural offer plays a key role in growing the borough's economy, and at the same time can help to improve our residents' quality of life and well-being.
- 3.8 Members of the Topic Group concluded that there needs to be a strong interaction between Halton's cultural offer and the visitor economy. The Topic Group also concluded that with reducing resources, the borough needed to focus on a discrete set of priorities which would enable the borough to brand and package its cultural assets and visitor attractions in a clear and consistent way.
- 3.9 The work of the Topic Group coincided with the production of a report that had been led by the Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to undertake a brief review of the borough's visitor economy. Similar reviews were undertaken in some of the other LCR Local Authorities.
- 3.10 The purpose of this work has been to assess how, through additional investment, the sector could be developed to support Halton's wider economic strategy and help shape its sense of place.
- 3.11 The project undertook a brief review of Halton's current and potential visitor markets, assessed the existing destination offer and sought views of the borough's visitor economy businesses and organisations.
- 3.12 The Chair of this PPB and Members of the ELS and C PPB Scrutiny Topic Group were invited to contribute to the production of the report and helped to shape the key findings and recommendations outlined in the report.
- 3.13 The approach is now being used to determine the key aspects of Halton's core visitor proposition, as well as establishing a broad range of opportunities for product development and destination marketing.

Next Steps

The Visitor Economy Summary Report presented 12 recommendations and actions. However, given limited resources available a short-list of priorities

based on potential impact and deliverability has been produced. Therefore, in terms of the next steps Members of the PPB are asked to endorse the prioritised recommendations below

Prioritised Recommendations

Priority Ranking	Output	Resource Implications	Responsibility\Action
Bring a group of stakeholders together to review and refine Halton's visitor proposition & consider the options for developing a coherent brand for Halton.	A coherent Halton VE brand incorporating the Borough's key attractions	Time and commitment of wider group + design and visualisation costs	HBC facilitated task and finish group
Reform the Halton Visitor Economy Network, using this review and recommendations as the basis to establish a new operating model.	A viable voice, information exchange and delivery group for the VE sector	Group facilitation, venue hire & refreshments	HBC to facilitate. Network to elect a chair from another organisation than HBC
Undertake a full review of current partner marketing and develop a Halton-wide destination marketing strategy.	Fully developed destination marketing strategy	Competitively procure an external agency	HBC and new Halton VE Network
Using the proposition, products and markets that have been identified, establish a range of itineraries that have the ability to create full/half day experiences.	Pilot a limited number of economically viable, themed, itineraries	Time, commitment and coordination	HBC and new Halton VE Network

<p>Develop an investment strategy to upgrade paths and cycle ways that link experiences. Interventions should include developing interpretation, way marking, all abilities access and enhanced interpretation at key visitor locations</p>	<p>Enhanced walking and cycling routes and interpretation assets that link 'Hidden Halton'</p>	<p>Considerable. HBC staff time and existing budgets plus resources secured from external sources</p>	<p>HBC and new Halton VE Network</p>
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As part of the prioritisation process described above, in the future it will be necessary to consider what distinguishes Halton from other areas, and what gives Halton competitive advantage. One approach would be to link the borough's physical assets to leisure and cultural themes for example,
The Stadium - Music
Norton Priory – Heritage
Catalyst – Heritage
The Brindley - Leisure

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 In undertaking the Scrutiny Review, Members of the Topic Group emphasised the importance of obtaining the views of 'the customer' when determining the borough's priorities for investment in cultural and visitor attractions.
- 4.2 In light of this, Halton Borough Council launched a survey to find out what local people know about culture and leisure in the borough. The survey asked questions about what residents know about visitor attractions in Widnes and Runcorn (Appendix 1). A summary of the results of the survey is provided in Appendix 2.
- 4.3 An article for Inside Halton Spring Edition being produced this will cover 'Hidden Halton' a combination of existing as well as lesser known visitor attractions.

5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Unfortunately, there are no human or financial resources specifically allocated to producing a Cultural Plan/Visitor Economy Plan for the borough.

Therefore, the implementation of the next steps outlined in the report will need to be set alongside other competing priorities and from within existing budgets.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

Employers will often take into account the quality of the cultural and visitor offer in an area when taking inward investment decisions

6.3 A Healthy Halton

N/A

6.4 A Safer Halton

N/A

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Linked to the above point on Inward Investment, the borough's open spaces contribute to presenting the borough in a positive light.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are no risks arising from this report.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no specific Equality and Diversity issues arising from this report.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.