

Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee

Date: 1 February 2022

Reporting officer: Tourism and Town Twinning Manager
Assistant Director (Communities)

Subject: Gravesham Tourism and Heritage Strategy

Purpose and summary of report:

To report progress on the delivery of the Tourism and Heritage Strategy's objectives, the achievements and challenges of the past year and the aims for the year to come.

Recommendations:

1. That Members review and comment on progress in delivering the strategy.

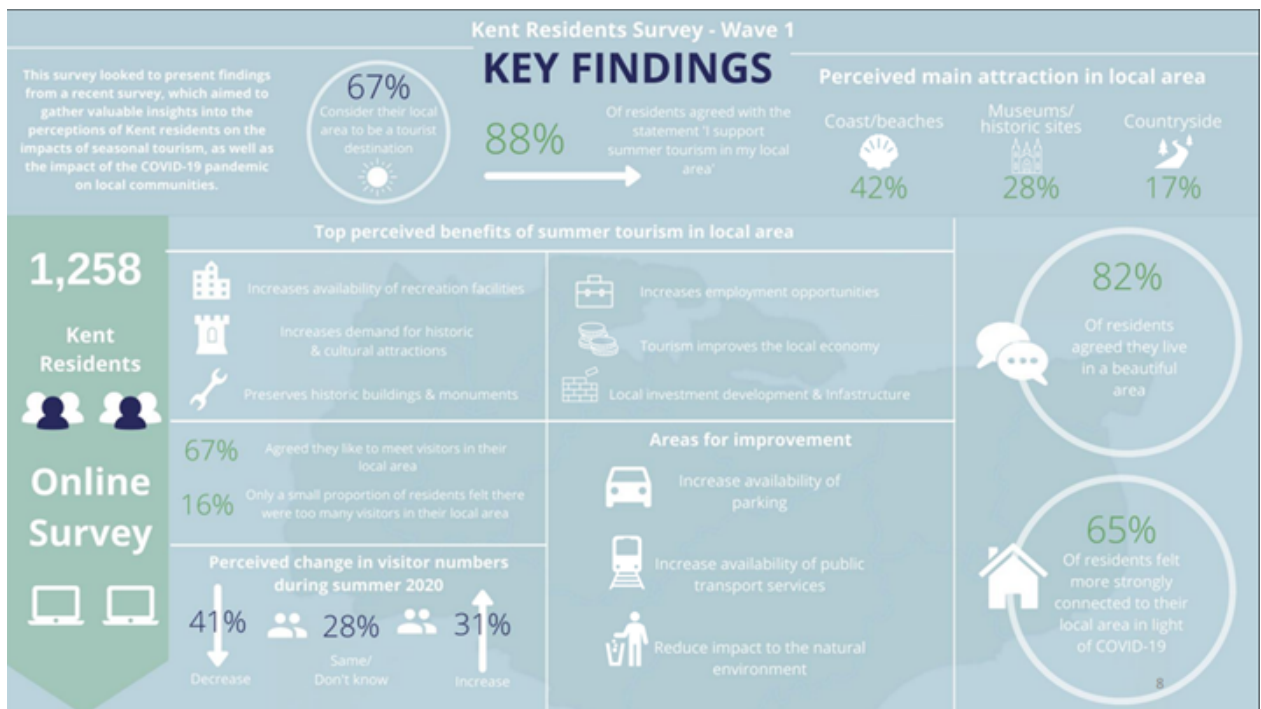
1. Delivery of the Tourism and Heritage Strategy's objective

- 1.1 Gravesham's Tourism and Heritage Strategy was reported to the Cabinet Committee last February and subsequently adopted by the Cabinet Member for Community & Leisure. Thereafter, the Tourism and Town Twinning Manager confirmed an action plan to deliver the objectives set out in the strategy.

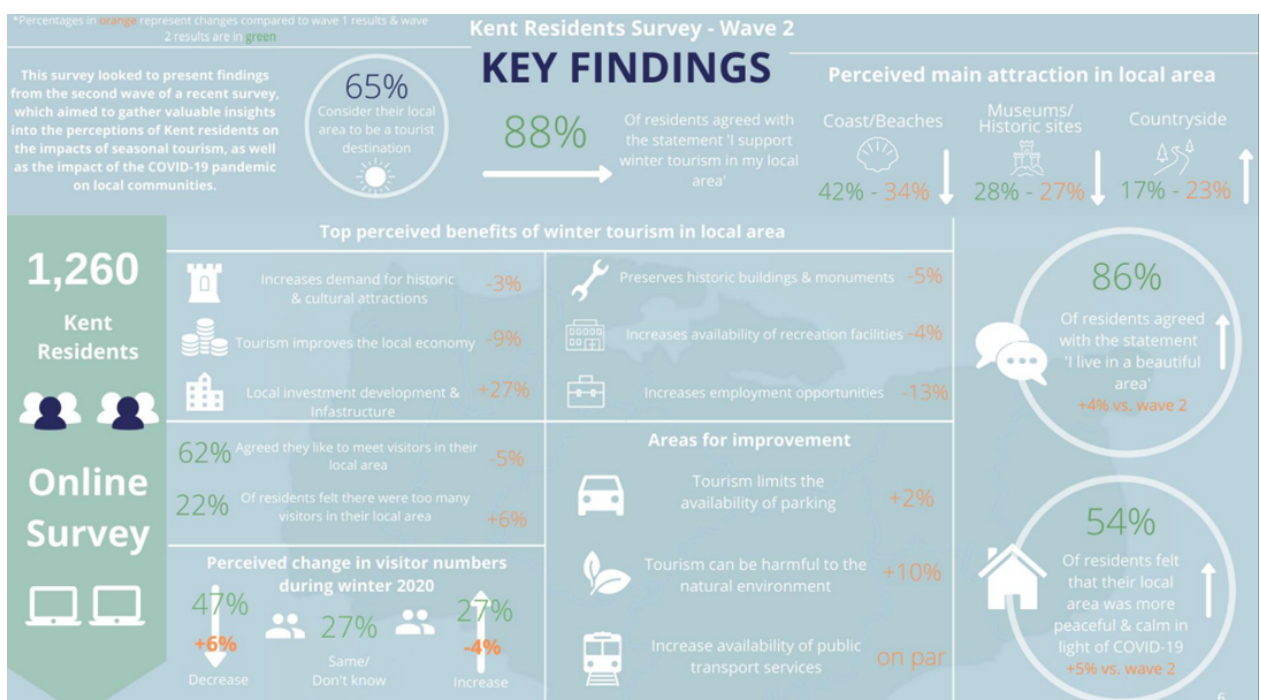
2. Research and surveys

- 2.1 As a response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the inability for the tourism sector to operate fully, an opportunity arose via the Interreg Experience Project to carry out some research and surveys that would help identify the needs, changes, and expectations of tourism businesses, travel trade and visitors alike.
- 2.2 A *Business Needs survey* aimed to capture the needs of visitor economy businesses in Kent and focuses on identifying training and skills development businesses now needed to inform and adapt their product offering. The survey's recommendations and key findings about North Kent are included as part of the report found at – <https://www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk/media/63554/business-needs-survey-report-final.pdf>
- 2.3 A *MICE (meeting, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) survey* aimed to establish what products are in demand from that sector. This survey's recommendations and key findings were provided as part of the report found at - <https://www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk/media/63556/experience-mice-survey-report-final.pdf>

- 2.4 A Travel Trade survey aimed to gather insights from domestic and international tour operators and travel trade buyers that work primarily in the leisure and educational sectors, to establish the type of products that are in demand with their clients and what is required in order to work with them. Its recommendations and key findings were provided as part of the report found at – <https://www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk/media/63555/experience-travel-trade-survey-report-final.pdf>
- 2.5 Following the Travel Trade and MICE surveys, Travel Trade and Business Events Insights took place. It aimed to provide guidance to Kent businesses.
- 2.5.1 Some product concepts were selected to give an overview of the 125 businesses involved in the Experience development programme. The products were based around “Food and Drink and Artisans Experiences”, “Nature and Well-Being Experiences”, “Photography, Arts and Craft Experiences”.
- 2.5.2 Recommendations and key findings were provided as part of the report found at - <https://www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk/media/67326/experience-b2b-product-concept-testing-report-final.pdf>
- 2.6 Customer Testing Campaign
- 2.6.1 The campaign was based around 8 themes – Creative Experiences, Food and Drink, Health and Well Being, History and Culture, Escape the Ordinary, Outdoor Experiences, Off the Beaten Track and Shared Experiences.
- 2.6.2 The full report is available <https://www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk/media/67325/visit-kent-research-report-partners-v3-002.pdf>
- 2.7 Resident Surveys
- 2.7.1 Residents are often overlooked when it comes to local tourism and the aim of these surveys was to find more about their thoughts and perspective of tourism in the area where they lived.
- 2.7.2 Two Social Impact Monitoring took place. The first one looking at the Summer tourism activity (Wave 1) and the second looking at the Winter tourism activity (Wave 2).
- 2.7.3 Both reports are based on findings from surveys sent out to Kent residents, to gather valuable insights into their perceptions of seasonal tourism, as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on local communities.
- 2.7.4 Full reports of both surveys can be found at <https://www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk/media/63557/interreg-experience-kent-residents-survey-report-final.pdf>



<https://www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk/media/67308/experience-kent-resident-survey-report-wave-2-final.pdf>



3. What has been achieved so far via the Experience Project

- 3.1 Gravesham is taking part in the AirDNA study and research to get access to local data and get a clearer idea of how many AirBnB properties are on offer in the borough.

- 3.2 The Gurdwara and St George's Church have both come on board the Experience project and worked with the Tourism Manager and Visit Kent to develop and offer new visitor's products. St George's Church is working on a "coffee and tour of St George's", which will see the church open to visitors on a more constant and regular basis.
- 3.3 Local tourism and hospitality businesses have also come on board to develop new experiential products and tours.
- 2 New Food and Drink Experiences – "Northfleet and Gravesend Beer Trail" (The Iron Pier and The Compass Alehouse) and "Scrumptious Afternoon Tea" (The Pantry and Marie's Tearoom)
 - "White Horse Farm Horse Shires" Experience in Harvel.
 - "Mindful Meditation" at Owletts, Cobham.
 - "Meopham Valley Vineyard" Wine tour
 - "The Panic Room" Battle Masters Axe throwing
- 3.4 A North Kent Peers working group was created via the Experience Project and some networking workshops took place. The aim is to enable Gravesham businesses and the Gravesham tourism network to strengthen their co-operative working and marketing goals.
- 3.5 Business and skills training webinars organised in partnership and via Visit Kent, Kent AONB and Visit Britain.
- 3.6 Growth of engagement via the tourism social media channels and implementation of online booking via Visit Gravesend Website. The Visitor Information Point is proving a key focal point for locals and visitors alike.
- 3.7 Successful Estuary Festival last summer with a substantial amount of promotion via the Visitor Information Point and its social media channels.
- 3.8 Creation of an AR (Augmented Reality) Town Centre Historic Trail accessible on phones via Instagram and Facebook – In Gravesham Footsteps.
- 3.9 New guided tours and itineraries developed.
- 3.10 In Partnership with the Kent AONB and the Experience Project, Shorne Woods Country Park got some funding to install "Changing Places Toilets". It is the only park/place in Kent with those facilities and it is therefore enhancing its accessibility to visitors.
- 3.11 In Partnership with the Kent AONB, Gravesham Borough Council has offered training to its accredited tour guide to develop and conduct guided walks in the local countryside.

4. Challenges

- 4.1 The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has proven very difficult for the local tourism and hospitality sector and engagement has been low at times.
- 4.2 The Dickens 150 programme of celebrations had to be cancelled.

- 4.3 Gad's Hill Place has not been able to open its doors to visitors and has lost some of its volunteers.
- 4.4 Group tours cancellation (cruise ships tours, cold war bunker tours).
- 4.5 Drop in domestic and overseas visits, both day visits and overnight stays, therefore drop in visitors' spend in the local area.

5. Upcoming projects

- 5.1 Work on updating and redeveloping the "Discover Gravesham" website.
- 5.2 HLF expressions of Interest to help with the maintenance, repair and development of some of the borough's heritage assets.
- 5.3 The existing hand held historic audio tours are due to be converted into phone applications.
- 5.4 Bespoke guided tours for Cruise ships visitors in May.
- 5.5 Working with Thames Clippers in the development of fast river services to Gravesend, including the promotion of itineraries for visits to the Borough.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 There are no background papers pertaining to this report.

Anyone wishing to inspect background papers should, in the first place, be directed to Committee & Electoral Services who will make the necessary arrangements.

IMPLICATIONS	APPENDIX 1
Legal	No implications at this stage
Finance and Value for Money	No additional budget requests at this point in time. Any future budgetary requirements will be sought following existing procedures i.e. via a Management Team report.
Risk Assessment	This report is a positive action to raise the profile of Gravesham as a tourism destination and bring economic benefits to the Borough.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i>
	<p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner’s Office website via the above links.</p>
	<p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice?</p>
	<p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk.</p>
Equality Impact Assessment	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. No</p>
	<p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. No</p>
	<i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i>
Corporate Plan	<p>#2 Place - a dynamic borough; defined by a vibrant and productive local economy taking advantage of growth in the area, supported by its strong and active community.</p> <p>Promote Gravesham’s arts and heritage: support local groups and community reach and expand the visitor economy</p>
Climate Change	The strategy needs to complement the Council’s carbon neutral commitments.
Crime and Disorder	No direct implications

Digital and website implications	Promotion of our key themes and priorities will be delivered through the Visit Gravesend website and social media channels.
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	No direct implications