

# Birmingham City Council

## Report to Cabinet

28<sup>th</sup> June 2022



**Subject:** Birmingham Visitor Destination Plan 2022-27  
**Report of:** Rob James, Strategic Director of City Operations  
**Relevant Cabinet Member:** Councillor Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member for Digital, Culture Heritage and Tourism  
**Relevant O &S Chair(s):** Councillor Jack Deakin - Commonwealth Games, Culture and Physical Activity O&S Committee  
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Are specific wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No – All wards affected
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):		
Is this a key decision?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference: 009996/2022		
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:		

### 1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the recommended work themes and actions for the delivery of the Birmingham Visitor Destination Plan 2022-27.

### 2 Recommendations

That Cabinet;

- 2.1 Notes the background to recommendations for the proposed work streams and actions to deliver the Plan.

- 2.2 Approves the proposed work streams and actions to deliver the Plan set out in Appendix 3.
- 2.3 Notes the contribution that this Plan has in helping deliver Council Priorities including the 'Be Bold Be Birmingham' Legacy plan for the Commonwealth Games year 2022.
- A thriving city - by bringing greater awareness of Birmingham's vibrant tourism, culture and hospitality sectors to drive visits from residents of the city, the West Midlands, and domestic and international tourists.
  - An aspiring city – by supporting the visitor economy to continue to grow and develop as world class leisure tourism destination.
  - A welcoming city – by supporting the visitor economy to become more inclusive and accessible and provide a world class welcome to residents and visitors.
  - A green growth city – by supporting the visitor economy to follow the Council's lead in becoming a sustainable destination to compete with major cities around the world.

### **3 Background**

- 3.1 Following the demise of Marketing Birmingham in 2017, the subsequent Inward Investment Agency West Midlands Growth Company (WMGC) took on the remit for Tourism which accounts for 20% of their overall work programme.
- 3.2 The development of a Visitor Destination Plan for Birmingham was identified as a priority by the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Culture in March 2020. This necessitated the recruitment of a skilled Tourism Officer with the appropriate tourism qualifications and experience to lead and manage the delivery of the plan.
- 3.3 Prior to this, the Council had no Strategic Tourism Lead or officer support in place (except for part-time support for the Tourist Information Centre at the Library of Birmingham) although, the Capital Investment officer has a focus on Inward Investment with some links to Tourism matters.
- 3.4 In April 2021, the Council appointed a Tourism Officer to support the growth of Birmingham's visitor economy and maximise the benefits to the sector provided by the Commonwealth Games 2022. WMGC has welcomed the appointment and now has Strategic Officer level representation for tourism from five out of the six authorities. This Regional Tourism Strategy Officers Group exists for; networking, coordinating project delivery, coordinated marketing campaigns, information exchange, training needs/ updates etc.
- 3.5 The Tourism Officer held extensive meetings with stakeholders including visitor attractions, the Birmingham Hoteliers Association, Culture Central and Birmingham Heritage Forum to gain an understanding of Birmingham's tourism landscape.
- 3.6 Desk research was conducted including a comprehensive visitor economy product audit, an audit of the VisitBirmingham.com website, an audit of Birmingham's

tourism collateral as well as reviewing VisitBritain's COVID-19 Consumer Sentiment Tracker.

- 3.7 The Tourism Officer has been supporting the work of WMGC's Business and Tourism Programme (BATP) to ensure that Birmingham's visitor economy businesses benefit from workstreams including travel trade training, familiarisation trips, updating visitor maps, the Digital Visitor Information Network and customer service/ welcome training in preparation for the Commonwealth Games.
- 3.8 The Tourism Officer worked with WMGC to run a structured Stakeholder Engagement programme to support the development of the Visitor Destination Plan. This consisted of ten one-to-one interviews with industry leaders and five focus groups with representatives from attractions, public transport companies, business improvement districts and major event organisers.
- 3.9 The Visitor Destination Plan 2022-27 has been developed to complement the West Midlands Regional Tourism Strategy 2019-2029. The plan addresses the need to support Birmingham's visitor economy as it recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic and for continued growth following the Commonwealth Games. The plan reviews the performance of Birmingham's visitor economy and how it has been impacted by the pandemic. The plan sets out 10 priority actions to assist in raising greater awareness of Birmingham's tourism offer and as an attractive leisure destination to domestic and international consumer and travel trade markets.

#### **4 Options considered and Recommended Proposal**

- 4.1 Do nothing
  - 4.1.1 The result will be that Birmingham has no Tourism Strategy and therefore have any meaningful engagement or influence with local stakeholders to develop and grow tourism or contribution towards the Regional Tourism Strategy.
  - 4.1.2 There is a need to build on the momentum of The Commonwealth Games 2022 and to develop future tourism-related Inward Investment initiatives.
- 4.2 Support occasional tourism campaigns or initiatives organised by The West Midlands Growth Company and/or VisitBritain.
  - 4.2.1 No cohesive or structured plan to develop and grow tourism with stakeholders.
  - 4.2.2 A weak and ad-hoc approach to developing visitors.
- 4.3 Outsource tourism planning and delivery to a third party/ agency.
  - 4.3.1 Reduction in direct control and co-ordination of comprehensive campaigns and initiatives.
  - 4.3.2 Less cost effective and reduces opportunity to source external funding for campaigns/ projects.

4.4 Develop in-house Visitor Destination Plan and adopt actions based on comprehensive research and consultation.

4.4.1 Retains direct Council ownership, co-ordination and management of initiatives and campaigns.

4.4.2 Increases opportunity to develop partnerships and funding for Tourism.

4.5 It is recommended that 4.4 above is adopted as the best option for delivering and monitoring a Visitor Destination Plan for the city.

## **5 Consultation**

5.1 The following stakeholders have been consulted through one-to-one interviews, focus groups and presentations:

- West Midlands Growth Company
- Birmingham Hoteliers' Association
- Business Improvement Districts
- Stakeholders groups including Heritage Strategy Group, Lunar Society, Birmingham Heritage Forum, Culture Central, Sutton Coldfield Heritage Forum
- Transport stakeholders including Canal and River Trust, West Midlands Trains, Avanti West Coast, National Express, Birmingham Airport, Transport for West Midlands
- Visitor economy stakeholders including Birmingham Museums Trust, Ikon Gallery, Cadbury World, Unique Venues Birmingham, National Sea Life Centre Birmingham, Winterbourne House and Gardens, Birmingham Pride, Birmingham Frankfurt Christmas Market, Birmingham Weekender, Birmingham International Dance Festival, Staying Cool at Rotunda, Edgbaston Stadium, The Mailbox, Bullring Grand Central, Digbeth Dining Club
- Officers from City Finance and Legal Services, Commonwealth Games Communications and Engagement Committee, Commonwealth Games Legacy Team, Inclusive Growth
- Council members

5.2 The proposals in the plan have been discussed with the West Midlands Growth Company and Stakeholders who all support the recommendations for action.

## **6 Risk Management**

6.1 Further variants of COVID-19 could potentially have an impact on the visitor economy if travel and business restrictions are brought back into place. The Council will follow Government and VisitBritain guidelines in supporting businesses and when communicating with customers.

6.2 The funding for some aspects of tourism support from West Midlands Growth Company will expire when the Business and Tourism Programme ends in March 2023. The Council will work with WMGC to create a plan on how support programmes can be carried forward.

## **7 Compliance Issues:**

### **7.1 How are the recommended decisions consistent with the City Council's priorities, plans and strategies?**

7.1.1 Outcome 1 - Birmingham is an entrepreneurial city to learn, work and invest in.

- Priority 1: We will create opportunities for local people to develop skills and make the best of economic growth.
- Priority 2: We will strive to maximise the investment in the city and engage local employers to create quality jobs and opportunities for citizens.

7.1.2 Outcome 2 - Birmingham is an aspirational city to grow up in.

- Priority 3: We will foster a sense of pride in Birmingham as a vibrant and diverse leisure destination, amongst our children and young people.

7.1.3 Outcome 3 - Birmingham is a fulfilling city to age well in.

- Priority 4: We will work with our citizens to take pride in the city's tourism, cultural and natural assets as places to visit and enrich their lives.

7.1.4 Outcome 4 - Birmingham is a great, clean and green city to live in.

- Priority 5: We will foster local influence and involvement to ensure that local people have a voice in how their area is run.
- Priority 6: We will work with partners to build a fair and inclusive city for all.
- Priority 7: We will enhance our status as a city of culture, sports and events.

7.1.5 Outcome 5 - Birmingham residents gain the maximum benefit from hosting the Commonwealth Games.

- Priority 8: We will work with our diverse communities to ensure that we deliver a Games for Birmingham that connects our citizens and fosters civic pride, welcoming visitors from around the country and the world to leave a lasting impression that encourages them to return.

7.1.6 Addressing the challenges outlined in the Council's 'Be Bold Be Birmingham' Legacy Strategy for the Commonwealth Games 2022 including;

- Employment, Skills and the Local Economy.
- Health and Wellbeing by supporting accessible and environmentally sustainable tourism not only for those from outside the city but also for residents.
- Community Resilience and Cohesion by helping tourism businesses to engage with and become more relevant to the diverse communities on their doorstep.

## **7.2 Legal Implications**

- 7.2.1 Under the general power of competence per Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, the Council has the power to enter into the arrangements set out in this report which also are within the boundaries and limits of the general power of competence Section 2 and 4 of the Localism Act 2011.
- 7.2.2 The requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and Human Rights Act 1998 have been taken into consideration in terms of the processing, management and sharing of data involved in these proposals. The City Council has processes to protect any release of sensitive information.

## **7.3 Financial Implications**

- 7.3.1 The annual revenue budget for Tourism is £25,000 and has been supplemented in 2022-23 by an additional allocation of £50,000 from the Tourism Development Fund. The total resource available to meet the commitments in this report is £75,000.
- 7.3.2 The £25,000 budget allocation in 2022-23 will support Tourism initiatives and campaigns, memberships of travel trade associations and attendance of travel trade events to promote Birmingham (e.g. UKInbound), organising and hosting familiarisation trips for group travel operators, and for producing tourism collateral (e.g. bespoke visitor maps and itineraries).
- 7.3.3 It is anticipated that further spend will be identified through the findings of the tourism commissioning briefs such as costs for implementing a City Attractions pass, promoting the accessible tourism hub, hosting sustainable tourism events etcetera. The Council will work with West Midlands Growth Company to create a plan on how Business and Tourism Programme support programmes can be carried forward. The Tourism team will have the ability to access resources from the £50,000 development pot, the remit of which is to pump prime and support Tourism initiatives.

## **7.4 Procurement Implications (if required)**

- 7.4.1 Three of the research projects have been processed through the procurement tender process. Contracts for Support for Accessible Tourism, Support for Sustainable Tourism and a Feasibility for a City Attractions Pass will be awarded in 2022-2023.

## **7.5 Human Resources Implications (if required)**

- 7.5.1 There are no implications for the Council.

## **7.6 Public Sector Equality Duty**

- 7.6.1 A copy of the Equality Act 2010 – Public Sector Duty statement is appended (Appendix 1) together with the existing equality assessment screening (Appendix 2). There is no perceived adverse impact

## **8 Background Documents**

- 8.1 West Midlands Regional Tourism Strategy 2019 - 2029
- 8.2 Birmingham Visitor Destination Plan Focus Group Report
- 8.3 Birmingham Product Audit

### **List of appendices accompanying this report:**

Appendix 1 Equality Duty Statement

Appendix 2 Equality Assessment Screening (EIA)

Appendix 3 Birmingham Visitor Destination Plan 2022-27

Appendix 4 WMGC Research Report

Appendix 5 Birmingham Visitor Destination Plan Environment and Sustainability Assessment