



Minutes

Name of meeting	ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY PANEL
Date and time	WEDNESDAY, 3 FEBRUARY 2010 COMMENCING AT 6.00PM
Venue	COMMITTEE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, IOW
Present	Cllrs Ian Ward (Chairman), George Cameron, Julie Jones-Evans, Wayne Whittle
Officers Present	Jonathan Baker, Stuart Love, John Metcalfe, Paul Thistlewood
Cabinet Members	Cllrs George Brown
Stakeholders	Kevin Smith – Chief Executive - IW Chamber of Commerce, Tourism and Industry, David Grocock – Chairman of the IW Tourist Development Board, John Allen, Simon Dabell – IW Tourist Development Board
Other Members	Cllrs Vanessa Churchman,

14. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

It was noted that on item 12, Parking Report – 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009, members made reference to the report of the British Retail Consortium and the success of “Pay on Exit Car Parks” in relation to Island car parks as well as the mention of the success of two hour free parking periods.

RESOLVED:

THAT, subject to the above being noted, the minutes of the meeting held on Monday [16 November 2009](#) be confirmed.

15. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Wayne Whittle declared a personal interest in Minute 16 as he ran businesses in Ryde which depended on the tourism industry.

16. Isle of Wight Economic Strategy - Tourism

The Deputy Director for the Economy and Tourism gave an informative PowerPoint presentation to members on the tourism industry and its relationship with the Isle of Wight Council.

The presentation provided a series of statistics on visitor activity collected via a quarterly survey of passengers of the Island ferry services. The surveys had been carried out since 2000 / 2001 and the figures collated were relevant up to September 2009.

The data provided also formed the basis of planned promotional activity as well as giving links to the wider economic aspirations of the Island.

Members were also given an overview of the Memorandum of Understanding between the council and partners in support of the Island Strategic Partnerships (ISP) overall vision of the Island to be an Eco Island and support, promote and develop the Island as a world class visitor destination with a thriving economy.

Despite the difficult economic times, there had been a steady increase in the estimated total number of visitors to the Island since 2005/06.

Domestic visitors made up the vast bulk of tourists to the Island over overseas visitors and whilst there was a large intake of day visitors, the majority of those that came to the Island did stay for a set period of time. However despite this, findings showed there to be a downward trend in staying visitors, whilst the opposite seemed to be the case with those visiting for the day. Of those who did stay for a period of time, the majority was for a period of up to 4 nights.

The purpose of visits to the Island was also analysed and whilst people did come to the Island for many reasons such as business and visiting friends or relatives, the main cause was for holidays and leisure.

However, one area of concern that was highlighted was the estimated bed nights in commercial accommodation which had hit its lowest point in 2008/09 since the surveys began. It was also noted that the Island had changed as a popular destination for adults with children over recent years to a more favourable place to visit for adults only.

Whilst overseas visitors were not as numerous as those from the domestic sector, figures had shown a steady increase over the previous four years.

The Panel were also advised that the majority of repeat visitors had been from those who had previously come to the Island within the last 12 months.

Whilst the coach holiday trade was a popular mode of transport for visitors, figures did demonstrate that the car was still the chosen choice, particularly for staying visitors. Foot passengers also made up a large percentage.

In terms of economic value to the Island, domestic staying trips provided the most income by far and it was noted that tourists were still supporting the “pay to see” attractions.

Members of the panel were reminded of the various promotional activities that had been carried out, including the successful “Just Add Water” campaign that targeted various customers from the traditional seaside holiday maker to the tourist who would visit for events such as Cowes Week or one of the music festivals.

The presentation concluded with an Economic Development Delivery Strategy that set out a series of actions with a purpose that could aid the development of the sector.

The Cabinet Member for the Economy, Tourism and Planning stressed the huge importance of tourism to the Island. He advised members that compared with the rest of the South East Region and the UK as whole, Island residents claiming job seekers allowance was, particularly within the 18–24 age groups, high. It was therefore recognised that there was a big challenge to promote the Island in a favourable light as well as encourage investment.

Members of the panel commented on the presentation and suggested that there could perhaps be more statistical analyses on tourist spend. The panel also suggested that whilst some figures showed a downward trend in various areas, it should perhaps be remembered that the weather in recent years had not been particularly ideal and coupled with the economic crises, could be worse. Members also stated that comparisons with other tourist destinations with the UK would probably find a similar pattern as the tourist sector as a whole in the UK would be suffering.

Members then raised the issue of brown tourism road signs on the mainland leading to the ferry ports which could indicate the Island location more clearly as well as taking advantage of the many aspects popular media culture such as You Tube and Facebook. Some members were of the opinion that some potential tourists to the Island were not totally aware of the island location and as such a promotion on this could be useful.

Members of the IOW Tourist Development Board (IWTDB) advised that tourists were booking later than before owing to the ever expanding use of the internet. As a result there was a constant need to promote the Island all year round. It was also recognised that a good marketing campaign in the national press at weekends also proved to be an effective means to attract visitors.

Members of the IWTDB advised that there was a need to target people who had never visited the Island as opposed to concentrating on repeat business on those who had. Members also felt that a better understanding of the market and what actually encouraged visitors to come to the island was required.

Comments were made by members of the IWTDB in relation to the IOW Festival and Bestival and the problems visitors experienced in getting off the Island on the Monday following the events. It was noted that board members were of the opinion that lessons should be learnt from this. A better infrastructure needed to be in place to make the experiences of travellers leaving the Island a better one.

The Cabinet Member advised the Panel that there had been plenty of dialogue between the council, ferry companies and event organisers over these issues but people should be realistic about the logistics of transporting large numbers of people off the island within a short space of time.

It was noted that members of the IWTDB indicated that it was unclear as to how many bed spaces existed. This could be a factor in the actual number of visitors that the island could receive. It would therefore be appropriate for a specific survey to be undertaken on the number of bed spaces as part of the strategy.

Members of the panel agreed that whilst there were a number of attractions available to people on the Island for all ages, 70% of visitors were adults without children. With regard to the length of stay the offers available from the ferry companies could have an influence of this.

A member of the public who was the proprietor of a Caravan Park on the Island stated that all areas of visitor accommodation should be looked at and it was noted that visitors from as far as Scotland had come to the Island and stayed at the park.

Another member of the public commented on the planning process in establishing a tourist business and enquired if it could be possible for the process to be made easier and quicker in order to encourage new business. The Strategic Director for the Economy and Environment responded by stating that the council was looking at ways to ensure that there was a better understanding so to assist people in the processes involved.

RESOLVED:

THAT the Cabinet Member for the Economy, Tourism and Planning be recommended to include within the tourism element of the revised Isle of Wight Economic Strategy the following :-

- a. The undertaking of a bed space survey ;
- b. Work to achieve a better understanding of the island's tourism market

17. Local Area Agreement (LAA) Summary Performance Report for the ISP 1 July – 30 September 2009

Members of the panel were advised that the report was relatively old and that the figures for quarter 3, 1 October to 31 December 2009 would be presented to the panel at its next meeting.

The panel enquired about NI -185 - CO2 reduction from local authority operations and specifically the fitting of a Global Positioning System (GPS) tracking device to council vehicles in order to monitor mileage.

The Strategic Director for the Economy and Environment advised the panel that six low emission pool cars had recently been acquired by the council. However it was not clear if these new vehicles had a GPS tracker fitted. Members were reminded that some council vehicles are taken home at the weekend by employees and personal use of them was allowed within reasonable parameters.

RESOLVED:

THAT the Local Area Agreement (LAA) Summary Performance Report for the ISP 1 July – 30 September 2009 be noted.

CHAIRMAN.....