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**To: Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)**

**Date: 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

**Subject: Tourism Strategy**

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## **1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 To update Members of the Board on progress in establishing Destination Coventry as the new Destination Management Organisation (DMO) for the City. To review and update on progress in delivering the Coventry Tourism Strategy 2019-2023 and to provide an update on activity undertaken by the DMO to promote Coventry as a destination for business and leisure tourism.

## **2 Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board is recommended:
- 1) To note the contents of the presentation and report.

## **3 Background and Information**

### Destination Coventry

- 3.1 In July 2021, a collaboration between Coventry City Council and Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce was approved by the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to deliver a new pilot Destination Management Organisation (DMO).
- 3.2 A DMO is the umbrella term for arrangements in a place to support co-ordination and collaboration across the tourism sector's many stakeholders.
- 3.3 A two-year DMO proof-of-concept model was proposed and approved on the recommendation of an independent DMO Advisory Board comprising local sector stakeholders and industry specialists. The Advisory Board's findings validated that a public / private partnership model can be successful in destinations where the sector is more developed and where sector associations and collaborations are well established, as we are now experiencing in Coventry.
- 3.4 The Board considered that testing a proof-of-concept model through the next two years, with the opportunities afforded by UK City of Culture and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, would provide the best opportunities to establish the feasibility of such a new approach.
- 3.5 Destination Coventry was formally established to deliver this proof of concept model in August 2021, with a brief to test the viability of creating a formal public / private DMO entity for Coventry from 2023.

3.6 The following principles were established for this model:

- The new DMO must lead in the management, development and promotion of both leisure and business (meetings, events, conferences) tourism.
- It should also continue to operate the Coventry & Warwickshire Convention Bureau and assume responsibility for visitor information provision in Coventry.
- It should continue to deliver the 2019-2023 Tourism Strategy effectively and provide opportunities for visitor economy stakeholders to engage in strategic reviews and the development of future strategy iterations.
- The model should not rely solely on Council funding and must enable the private sector to contribute financially to the DMO's destination marketing activities, with the aim of amplifying continued growth of the city's visitor economy.
- Its activities must include the development of income streams to ensure sustained financial viability. These might be through access to Government funding, membership subscription products, Convention Bureau commissions, advertising sales, provision of destination marketing services and so on.

3.7 The management and operations of Destination Coventry are overseen by an Oversight Board, chaired by the Venue Commercial Director of Coventry Building Society Arena. The Board further includes representatives from the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, Coventry BID, Coventry City of Culture Trust, Visit Britain, events industry sector representation and Coventry City Council.

3.8 Destination Coventry's Business Plan 2021-2023 sets out the DMO's intended activities for the first two years of operation; the DMO's governance arrangements; and plans for monitoring and review of the model.

Coventry Tourism Strategy 2019-2023

3.9 Continued delivery of Coventry's Tourism Strategy 2019-2023 is a core principle and therefore key priority for the new DMO model.

3.10 Destination Coventry has commenced a detailed review of progress made against the actions outlined in the Coventry Tourism Strategy, across the four key themes of:

1. Partnership
2. Product
3. Place
4. Positioning

3.11 Positive progress (outputs/outcomes) is already noted across all four themes, notably through establishment of the Destination Management Partnership; move to a formal DMO proof-of-concept model; completion of a digital audit and framework; development of multiple packages for key product themes; completion of an accommodation study; review of business events strategy; development of visitor information strategies; improvements at key gateways; and development of campaigns to promote Coventry as a visitor destination.

3.12 The review of progress against Strategy actions will inform the action planning for Destination Coventry across 2022 and 2023.

DMO Marketing and Promotional Activity

3.13 Since its recent establishment, Destination Coventry has taken significant steps to build on the Visit Coventry and Conference Coventry brands and promote the City as a visitor destination, through the creation of new marketing collateral and promotional campaigns. These will be outlined in more detail through the presentation, but include:

- **Explore Coventry This Summer campaign** – featuring a website landing page; two ERDF-funded TV AdSmart campaigns; thematic blogs; outdoor media; boosted social media; Google paid search campaigns; and comprehensive events listings.
  - **Business Events Recovery PR campaign** - including 'Killer Stats' promotional film; multiple press releases; trade show attendance; social media campaign; and a series of short spotlight videos.
  - **Winter Wishes Christmas campaign** – including TV Adsmart campaign; radio campaign; digital outdoor media; thematic blogs; boosted social media; 200+ events listings; external website campaigns; and website landing page.
  - **Coventry Official Visitor Guide** – in digital and print format, for the period Autumn 2021 to Spring 2022. Distributed through Coventry's Visitor Information Centre (VIC); hotels and VICs across the region; and various visitor attractions and hotels throughout the City.
  - **Industry-facing website** – presenting and promoting Destination Coventry and its membership proposition to sector businesses and partners.
  - **Membership collateral** – materials promoting and supporting the launch of Destination Coventry as a membership body *supported by local private and public sector partners*.
  - **The Perfect Break couples' bookable product** - complementing the existing 'Stay, Play, Explore' bookable breaks for families, November saw the launch of a new couples bookable product featuring a selection of hotels combined with a wide range of the City's visitor attractions and experiences.
- 3.14 With regards to evidence of market reach and impact from the recent Destination Coventry campaigns, the *Explore Coventry* Sky Adsmart campaign achieved 120k impressions, reached 20k households in the UK, with each household seeing the advert 6.5 times on average.
- 3.15 By utilising a Google paid search campaign, the *Explore Coventry* promotional video has received 1.3 million impressions and over 630k views on Visit Coventry's YouTube channel.
- 3.16 During October 2021, Visit Coventry's Google paid search campaigns achieved 287,363 website impressions and 1,957 links clicked. This activity has increased the DMO's presence around the UK, with London being the top location for link clicks, followed closely by Coventry, Birmingham and Manchester
- 3.17 The Visit Coventry website saw double the number of visits in October 2021 compared with levels in both October 2020 and October 2019 (pre-the COVID-19 pandemic).
- 3.18 Conference Coventry and Warwickshire social engagements have also grown dramatically. On LinkedIn, 71 new followers registered in October and page views were 97% up on the previous month. On Twitter, in the four weeks from 4 October, impressions were up 77.3%, to 10,200 in total. Twitter profile visits were further up by 191% and the Destination Coventry LinkedIn page gained 89 followers, a 140% increase on the previous month.
- 3.19 After just six days after launch, the *Winter Wishes* Christmas promotional video has been viewed over 178k times on Visit Coventry's YouTube channel.

#### DMO Membership Scheme

- 3.20 The change in delivery model through the creation of Destination Coventry is expected to increase resources for tourism promotion and destination management, including through the creation of a DMO membership programme alongside current levels of secured investment.
- 3.21 The Destination Coventry membership proposition will be launched to the sector on 2 December 2021 at the Coventry Building Society Arena, at Destination Coventry's formal Launch Event.

- 3.22 The presentation to Scrutiny Board will provide feedback from the Launch Event, as Destination Coventry builds on momentum secured through the first few months of operation of the new DMO model.

#### **4 Health Inequalities Impact**

- 4.1 The establishment of Destination Coventry as a two-year proof-of-concept model for a new DMO is expected to increase resources for tourism promotion and destination management, thereby creating opportunities to improve service delivery, invest in the City's visitor offer and strengthen the business and leisure tourism economy within the City and its surroundings.
- 4.2 It is anticipated that the success of the new DMO model will contribute to sustaining and increasing employment in the tourism and hospitality sectors, creating positive opportunities for local people. This will further promote Coventry as a visitor destination and focus for investment, promoting opportunities for sustainable and inclusive growth in the City, thereby contributing to positive health outcomes for local residents.

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