

For publication

Chesterfield Visitor Economy Strategy 2021-26 (ref TV010R)

Meeting:	Council
Date:	23 rd February 2022
Cabinet portfolio:	Town Centres and Visitor Economy Economic Growth
Directorate:	Economic Growth
For publication	

1.0 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To seek Council approval of the Chesterfield Visitor Economy Strategy (2021-26).

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Chesterfield Visitor Economy Strategy (2021-26) be recommended to Council for approval.
- 2.2 That Cabinet provide an in-principle approval to the development and resourcing of an enhanced markets and events programme, subject to a specific funding proposal being presented at a future Cabinet meeting.

3.0 Reason for recommendations

- 3.1 To secure the adoption of the Chesterfield Visitor Economy Strategy (2021-26).
- 3.2 To support the development of an enhanced markets and events programme.

4.0 Background

- 4.1 The Chesterfield Visitor Economy Strategy sets out the role of the Council in supporting the growth of the visitor economy in the next five years. The purpose of the strategy is to attract more day and staying visitors to Chesterfield, generating additional visitor spend that will support existing employment and create new jobs in the local economy.
- 4.2 The draft Visitor Economy Strategy was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 2nd November 2021, where it was resolved that the draft strategy be approved for wider consultation.
- 4.3 This report was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 8 February, 2022 where it was resolved that the report and its recommendations be supported and referred to Council for approval.

5.0 Visitor Economy Strategy

- 5.1 Following Cabinet approval, an on-line public consultation on the draft strategy was held for a four week period, closing on the 8th December 2021. Alongside the on-line consultation, a presentation on the strategy was made to Scrutiny Project Group on the 8th November 2021 and to Chesterfield Champions on the 1st December 2021.
- 5.2 There were 33 responses to the on-line consultation, together with written responses from Scrutiny Project Group, comments from businesses at the Chesterfield Champions meeting and other written responses. A summary of the consultation comments, together with the Council's response to those comments and proposed amendments to the strategy, is attached as Appendix 1. The revised version of the strategy is attached as Appendix 2.
- 5.3 The on-line consultation was structured around a short questionnaire which sought views on the strategy's core proposition; the relative importance of the seven priorities in developing the visitor economy over the next five years; other priorities or projects that the strategy should look to deliver; and any other comments about the strategy document.
- 5.4 The majority of respondents supported the core proposition (which seeks to encapsulate how Chesterfield will position itself in relation to the development of the visitor economy), although some minor changes have been made to the wording which now reads as follows:

'A lively market town, Chesterfield inspires day and staying visitors with the iconic Crooked Spire and its unique mix of independent businesses, markets, events, festivals and attractions, providing a great base from which to explore the Peak District and Derbyshire.'

- 5.5 The strategy is based on seven strategic priorities (listed in the table below) and all of the priorities received some degree of support, although some were more strongly supported than others. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 was not a priority and 10 an absolute priority, the percentage of respondents scoring a priority 8-10 (ie a high priority) and 1-3 (ie a low priority) was as follows:

Priority	Score 8-10	Score 1-3
1. Quality Place Making	95%	0%
2. Crooked Spire Experience	51%	15%
3. Peak Resort	48%	15%
4. Speciality Markets and Events	81%	3%
5. Culture and Heritage	85%	6%
6. New Hotel Development	42%	24%
7. Chesterfield 'Inspired' Marketing	60%	3%

The highest rated priorities were 'Quality Place Making', 'Culture and Heritage' and 'Markets and Events'. The other priorities received a lower level of support, but all showed a net positive balance between the high and low priority score. As such, it is not proposed to make any changes to the strategic framework provided by these seven priorities.

- 5.6 In response to the consultation (and as highlighted in Appendix 1), a number of changes / clarifications have been made to the strategy document. These include:
- Providing greater clarity about the role of the Council in delivering the priorities, particularly in relation to Priority 2 – Crooked Spire Experience and Priority 3 – Peak Resort, where the role of the Council is primarily one of facilitation and support, rather than direct delivery;
 - The addition of a guiding principle supporting the development of an 'Accessible and Inclusive' visitor economy, as well as strengthening the sustainability principle; and,

- Reference to supporting the delivery of Basin Square (part of the Chesterfield Waterside site) and the further development of Chesterfield Canal under Priority 1 – Quality Place Making.

5.7 An initial three year Action Plan, setting out the development / delivery of activities against the seven strategic priorities, has been added and is considered further under 'Section 8 Implications for Consideration – Financial and value for money'.

5.8 The strategy includes a section on 'Delivery and Resources' which seeks to ensure that appropriate working structures are in place (both internally and externally) to support the effective delivery of visitor economy related services. This work is underway and currently includes the review of the Visitor Information Service, as well as consideration of joint working arrangements between the Economic Growth and Leisure, Culture and Community Well-being Directorates. Future work will include a review of the destination marketing function (a role currently delivered by the Council, Destination Chesterfield and Marketing Peak District and Derbyshire) and this will be informed by the ten year review of Destination Chesterfield which has recently commenced.

6.0 Alternative options

6.1 The alternative option would have been to not develop a visitor economy strategy and action plan and continue with current arrangements whereby the Council's Growth Strategy provides the broad strategic framework and activities are guided by different team service plans. However, the preferred option, as covered in this report, delivers the action 'to prepare a Visitor Economy Action Plan to help realise opportunities to grow both the number and value of visits to Chesterfield' which has previously been agreed and is included in the Economic Programme of the Growth Strategy.

6.2 The preferred option will better support the development of Chesterfield as a visitor destination as it is based on an independent and evidence-based review undertaken by visitor economy specialists Team Tourism. And, leading on from this, they have identified a focussed series of priorities that set out where the Council is best placed to add value to support the growth of the visitor economy over the next five years.

7.0 Implications for consideration – Council Plan

7.1 The development of the Visitor Economy Strategy and Action Plan supports the achievement of the Council Plan aim of 'making Chesterfield a thriving borough' including each of the objectives 'Chesterfield borough - a great place to live, work and visit', 'vibrant town centres' and 'building a stronger business base'. It also supports the aim of 'improving the quality of life for local people', for example, through a focus on high quality place making in the town centre and borough.

8.0 Implications for consideration – Financial and value for money

8.1 The Visitor Economy Strategy includes an Action Plan that will guide Council activity over a rolling three year period. The action plan will be a working document which will be used as the primary tool for identifying priorities and monitoring progress. As a working document it will be subject to regular review and updated on an annual basis. The action plan is based on financial years and Year 1 began in April 2021.

8.2 The action plan is structured around the delivery of activities against the seven strategic priorities and includes actions which can be delivered using existing budgets (including grant funding) and actions which will require additional resources. Actions delivered using existing budgets provide a comprehensive programme of activity (particularly around new place making investment in Chesterfield town centre and the Staveley Town Deal area) which will have a significant positive impact on the quality of Chesterfield's destination offer.

8.3 The 'actions requiring additional resources' have been identified (in conjunction with the consultants Team Tourism) as the most appropriate opportunities for the Council to maximise the value of the existing programme of activity. The actions are only proposals at this stage and would require further development through a business case approach to identify a specific resource request.

8.4 Whilst the actions effectively comprise a long-list of proposed interventions, the action plan does include an indicative prioritisation of these activities. The highest priority activities have been identified as: the delivery of the Chesterfield Station Masterplan proposals; the development of a 'Chesterfield Inspired' marketing campaign; and the delivery of a year-round enhanced markets and events programme.

8.5 Grant support for public realm works to Corporation St (comprising the station approach element of the Chesterfield Station Masterplan) has

been secured via the Connecting Chesterfield Levelling Up Fund bid. These works, alongside the clearance of the former Chesterfield Hotel site and the construction of the first stage of the station link road, demonstrate clear progression of this project in the immediate term, with opportunities to secure capital funding for other scheme elements currently being explored.

- 8.6 The development of a 'Chesterfield Inspired' marketing campaign will seek to bring a sharper focus (in terms of both destination promotion and targeting of visitors) to our destination marketing activity. In the first instance, this will involve a review of the current approach to destination marketing (as highlighted at paragraph 5.8), elements of which are presently undertaken by different organisations. The outcome of this review will then inform any future request to Cabinet for additional resources.
- 8.7 The delivery of a year round enhanced markets and events programme is considered central to the overall purpose of the Visitor Economy Strategy, which is to attract new visitors and drive a high level of repeat visits. A focus on quality place making in Chesterfield town centre (with the reconfiguration of the outdoor market and the development of new event spaces in Market Place and New Square) will only achieve its potential if it is matched by a programme of markets and events that can animate these spaces and provide an enjoyable experience all year round.
- 8.8 Whilst the physical works are likely to cause some disruption in the near term, this could be considered to place a greater necessity on the need for a programme of compensatory events, to encourage visits to the town centre during the works period. As such it is recommended that Cabinet agree the principle of resourcing an enhanced events programme and that a specific funding proposal is presented at a future cabinet meeting.

9.0 Implications for consideration – Legal

- 9.1 There are no legal implications highlighted in this report.

10.0 Implications for consideration – Human resources

- 10.1 There are no human resource implications highlighted in this report. However, the review of service delivery options and development of activities in the action plan could have implications for human resources and this will be reported at a future Cabinet meeting.

11.0 Implications for consideration – Risk management

Description of the Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigating Action	Impact	Likelihood
There is a risk that the Council's approach to supporting the growth of the visitor economy will be less focused and more fragmented in the absence of the strategy	L	M	The Visitor Economy Strategy provides an evidence based and coherent framework / programme for the future delivery of Council activity	L	L
Further Covid waves could result in a disproportionate impact on visitor economy businesses (retail, hospitality and leisure)	H/M	M/L	Continue to implement actions in the Council's Recovery Plan, with a particular focus on the Covid safe functioning of the town centre	M	M/L
Bids for funding to support future delivery of visitor economy initiatives are less likely to be successful in the absence of the Visitor Economy Strategy	H	M	The Visitor Economy Strategy strengthens business case making for future funding applications.	M	M/L

12.0 Implications for consideration – community wellbeing

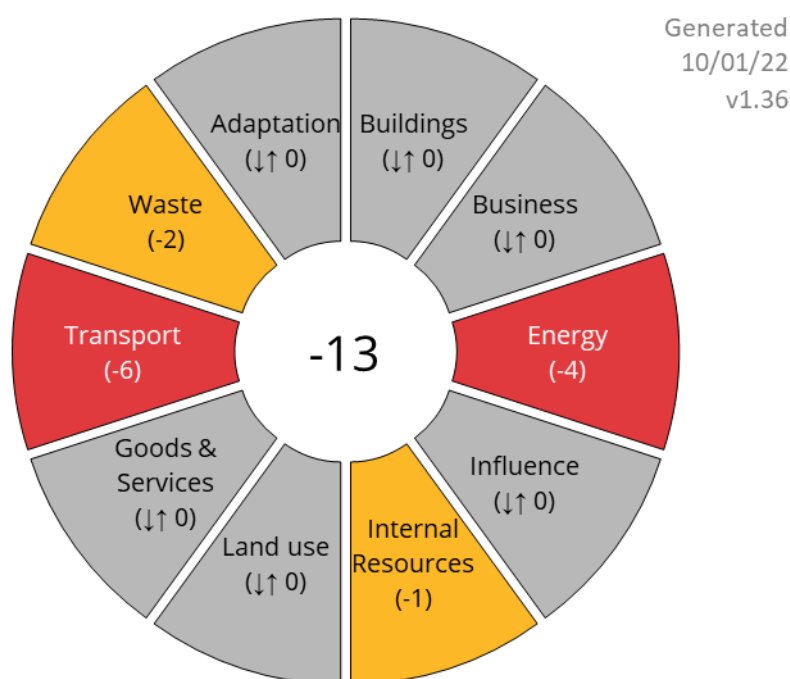
12.1 The Visitor Economy Strategy includes a number of priorities (for example 'speciality markets and events', 'culture and heritage' and 'quality place making') that will deliver activities that will promote community well-being and help improve overall quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

13.0 Implications for consideration – Economy and skills

13.1 The main aim of the Visitor Economy Strategy is to increase the number of visitors (and associated visitor spend) that come into Chesterfield borough in order to support existing employment and new job creation. The town centre is facing many structural challenges (such as the growth of on-line retail and competition from larger destinations) which are acting to take footfall out of the town centre. Many of the activities in the strategy are specifically focussed on attracting new footfall to the town centre (as the key visitor asset), which will help to underpin the viability of existing businesses in the centre and also support new start-ups.

14.0 Implications for consideration - Climate Change

14.1 A Climate Change Impact Assessment has been completed and is illustrated below (attached as Appendix 4).



Chesterfield Borough Council has committed to being a carbon neutral organisation by 2030 (7 years and 11 months)

14.2 Chesterfield is primarily a day visit destination (accounting for over 90% of all visitors) and increasing the number of day visitors is seen as the primary market opportunity for Chesterfield. The aspirational growth scenario included in the strategy sees the number of day visitors increasing by 720,000 and the number of staying visitors increasing by 46,000 by the end of 2025 (compared to a baseline recovery scenario). In

total these visitors will generate additional expenditure of over £30m and support an increase of 380 FTE (Full Time Equivalent) jobs.

- 14.3 The Visit Britain - Day Visitor Survey (2019) identified that over two-thirds of day trips in the East Midlands were undertaken by car, with 16% by some form of public transport or coach trip. Applying this proportion to Chesterfield would equate to an additional 515,000 visitors a year arriving by car, or 345,000 vehicle journeys (assuming an average of three occupants per vehicle and a return journey). Even allowing for a degree of displaced visits from other destinations (and therefore not an additional journey as such), this is still likely to represent a large net increase in the total number of car journeys and a significant negative climate change impact. In addition, it is reasonable to assume that a large increase in the number of day and staying visitors is also like to increase local energy demand (in terms of investment in visitor infrastructure and the consumption of local services) and the generation of waste products.
- 14.4 In relation to mitigation measures, there is an opportunity for Chesterfield to establish itself as a sustainable visitor hub, seeking to attract a greater proportion of visitors by public transport and encouraging more over-night stays for visits to Chesterfield, the Peak District and surrounding attractions. Chesterfield is an established public transport hub, with a mainline station acting as a key rail gateway for the Peak District and public transport links to destinations such as Bakewell and Matlock, as well as local attractions such as Bolsover Castle. There is an expanding local cycle network (including links to the Trans-Pennine Trail) alongside investment in electric vehicle charging points in town centre carparks. The proposed development of the PEAK Resort Gateway will also see the provision of hydrogen shuttle bus services providing zero carbon transport access to the Peak District and links to Chesterfield town centre and the station.

15.0 Implications for consideration - Equality and diversity

- 15.1 A preliminary Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed for the Visitor Economy Strategy (attached as Appendix 3). It is not considered that the strategy will have a disproportionate impact on the groups listed and will have a potentially positive impact on the young unemployed, with young people having high levels of employment in visitor economy sectors such as hospitality, leisure and retail.

15.2 An underlying principle of the Visitor Economy Strategy is to support the development of an inclusive visitor economy, aiming to ensure that Chesterfield is accessible and welcoming to all potential visitors.

Decision information

Key decision number	1075
Wards affected	All

Document information

Report author	
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Background documents	
These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when the report was prepared.	
<i>This must be made available to the public for up to 4 years.</i>	
Appendices to the report	
Appendix 1	Response to Consultation
Appendix 2	Chesterfield Visitor Economy Strategy
Appendix 3	Preliminary Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix 4	Climate Change Impact Assessment