

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes**Destination Management Plan**

Final Decision-Maker	Heritage, Culture & Leisure Committee
Lead Director or Head of Service	Head of Commercial and Economic Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Head of Commercial and Economic Development
Classification	Non-exempt
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

1. That the Committee approve and adopt the Destination Management Plan for the Borough of Maidstone.
2. That the Committee endorse the Action Plan accompanying the DMP.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Great Place: Keeping Maidstone an attractive place for all
- Great Opportunity: Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

Timetable

<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>
Policy and Resources Committee	N/A
Council	N/A
Other Committee	N/A

Destination Management Plan

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report gives the background to the work which has been undertaken to develop a Destination Management Plan (DMP) for Maidstone Borough. The Final Draft Destination Management Plan is attached at Appendix I.

A DMP is a shared statement of intent to manage, develop and promote a destination over a stated period of time. It articulates both the roles of the different stakeholders, identifies clear actions that they will undertake and the resources they will allocate.

The shared statement of intent sets out the stall for the place for both visitors and those looking to invest in the area and can provide a powerful tool in attracting inward investment, resources and funding.

Following on from the success of other authorities that have used this process to develop their visitor economy we commissioned Blue Sail and Visit Kent to work with us on this project to deliver a DMP for Maidstone Borough.

Blue Sail is a specialist destination consultancy which has worked with over 100 destinations in the UK and Ireland. The company's mission is to breathe life into places and spaces - from cities and regions to areas and attractions. They work with the people who shape them, invest in them, manage and market them, seeking to secure the benefits for local people, organisations and businesses.

Visit Kent is the Counties Destination Management Organisation.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

Destinations that have a full understanding of the power of place-making and the need for well managed places that really “work” for both residents and visitors will be more likely to generate `wise growth' in their visitor economy. These sustainable places are more likely to maximise the benefits of that growth in long term, additional income and jobs. The best managed destinations are also likely to excel in attracting new investment, in keeping value-added jobs, in bringing in new talent and in stimulating innovation. Great destinations are great places to live and work as well as to visit. There are national and international examples that show that strong public sector leadership, in both initiating and maintaining the discussion about quality place-making, amongst the myriad of stakeholders that are needed in creating great places, is one of the key differentiators for the most successful places.

The Visit England DMP Guidelines are very clear that their model is about total place – looking at development, marketing and management together. That

means we need to be clear about target markets, identify the transformational place development interventions and place marketing which will get you where you want to be and then look at the visitor journey to ensure that the welcome, presentation and management of the place supports that.

There is no quick fix to place-making and regeneration. We had to agree what the end goal looks like and then prioritise the actions for the next three years that will set us on the road to reaching the vision set out in Borough's Economic Development Strategy.

2.2 Our approach

We used a five stage process, reflecting an approach developed and planned between Blue Sail and Visit Kent, to develop our DMP so that it is robust because it is evidence-based, taps into what is distinctive about Maidstone, prioritises inclusive and engaging consultation and delivers a short focused DMP.

Stage 1: Inception

As part of the preparation for developing the DMP, we liaised with Visit Kent to create a Project Group who we work closely with to develop the DMP.

Output: A note of key points and a revised timetable including key meeting dates.

Stage 2: Research and review

We gathered market intelligence about current and potential visitors and begin to think about target market segments for Maidstone.

Output: Reported on our research and audit to the Project Group as part of Stage 4.

Stage 3: Shared Story

We planned and facilitated a Shared Story Workshop as a creative event for stakeholders. We had an audience that embraced a wide set of interests including economic, transport, attractions, accommodation, retail, activities, events, specialist interest e.g. local historical groups, local community, arts and culture.

Output: We developed a Shared Story for Maidstone Borough which created a framework against which helped to evaluate projects and develop marketing approach and content.

Stage 4: Scoping & Analysis

We used the findings of Stage 2 to work up more detailed analysis on the product gaps, destination experiences, visitor management and marketing needs. We focused on those areas that were identified as important, namely – retail, river, rural, heritage and the night time economy

Output: We captured the emerging findings in a PowerPoint interim report and presented this to the Project Group. We set out emerging priorities and long-term

goals for the DMP. At this meeting we also worked to identify headline actions and their fit with the economic development strategy.

Stage 5: Developing the DMP Framework

This final stage was bringing together all the work done to date to create the framework for a DMP for Maidstone District. The final document:

- Sets out the Shared Story for Maidstone Borough
- Identifies target market segments
- Captures key issues and opportunities
- Sets out a list of agreed actions against clear headings for the Project Group to use subsequently as the basis for developing prioritised and costed Action Plans

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1** The Committee can decide to adopt the DMP and endorse the accompanying Action Plan.
- 3.2** The Committee can decide to reject the DMP.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1** It is recommended that the Committee adopt the DMP and endorse the accompanying Action Plan for the reasons described at parts 1 and 2 above.

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1** Around 70 people – from private, public and third sectors – have contributed their views and been involved in helping to shape this Plan. As well as the Project Group, there have been interviews with industry representatives, including leading visitor attractions and hotels, and with other public agencies, a workshop and three Action Planning sessions – to tap into a wide range of knowledge and expertise, and to make sure there is buy-in to the process and the recommendations. Visit Kent gathered together existing research and carried out new primary research about the Borough of Maidstone as a visitor destination, to make sure that the DMP is market focused.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1** The DMP will be published and shared with all stakeholders connected to the visitor economy.

- 6.2** The Project Group which has managed the development of the DMP will evolve into the DMP Group, responsible for overseeing the delivery of this Plan. The DMP Group will meet quarterly to review progress. It may want to meet more frequently in the first 6 months, as it moves forward with early tasks.
- 6.3** The Group will also set up a number of themed task and finish groups over the period of the plan.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities		Head of Commercial and Economic Development
Risk Management	None	
Financial	None. The action plan will be delivered through a combination of exiting related budgets, collaboration with the sector and bids for funding to appropriate sources.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	None. This project will be delivered by the MCL Marketing and Sales Team.	
Legal	None	
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	None – the DMP is an inclusive document.	
Environmental/Sustainable Development	None	
Community Safety	None	
Human Rights Act	None	
Procurement	None	
Asset Management	None	

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- **Appendix I: Draft Destination Management Plan**
- **Appendix II: DMP Maidstone Shared Story Report 12 May 2015**

- **Appendix III: DMP Think Tank March 2015 Report**

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.