

**TO: ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 4 MARCH 2003**

**SUBJECT: SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE TOURISM LTD - SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT**

**FROM: POLICY SERVICES**

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**1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 Provide a review of the performance of for South Warwickshire Tourism Ltd against the Service Level Agreement for 2001/2.
- 1.2 To consider the draft Service Level Agreement see Appendix 1 for 2003/4.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 South Warwickshire Tourism (SWT) was formed in 1997. It is a not-for-profit tourism company, set up by the private and public sectors in South Warwickshire, which now has over 400 subscribing members spanning all sectors of the tourism industry. Its core purpose is to provide tourism marketing, visitor services and visitor management activities to maximise the contribution of tourism to the economic, social and environmental well being of the area.
- 2.2 In the last full financial year, 2001/02, the turnover of the Company was c £1,267,956. Warwick District Council's contribution was £196,830, representing 15.5% of turnover. The Company has a Board of Management, which is made up of key business interests, plus representatives from Stratford and Warwick District Councils. This Council is represented on the Board by Councillors Sarah Boad (who is also the Company's Vice-Chair), Bill Evans and Gerry Guest.
- 2.3 In the Summer of 2002 the Board of Directors with the full support of the two authorities engaged Roger Carter a specialist tourism consultants who had drawn up the business plan which formed the basis for the companies establishment, to draw up a 5-year strategic business plan for the Company. This plan sought to identify the key challenges and development opportunities, 2003-2007. A one-day business planning workshop, involving the private sector and officers and councillors of WDC, was convened to facilitate the process. The following concluding paragraph, drawn from the document, identifies the broad themes, which were identified as priorities:

SWT faces a major challenge to maintain the momentum of the successes it has enjoyed in building and sustaining a dynamic private/public partnership over the last 5 years.

The key priorities identified for the Company over the next 5 years are:

- **Strategy and resource development**, engaging with new key players, such as AWM, to build support for tourism.
- **TIC services**, especially the contact centre, retail activity and an expanded Stratford operation.

- **Marketing**, especially to domestic overnight visitors, conference visitors, the travel trade, and overseas independent visitors.
- **Visitor management**, re-focusing energy on activities, which add greatest value.
- **ICT development**, with a focus on developing an extranet and ongoing investment in the website.
- **Staff development and training**.

Underpinning all this work is the essential, challenging task of managing the budget. To achieve more, with potentially less, remains the single biggest challenge to the organisation as it embarks on its second five-year business plan.”

- 2.4 In 2001/02 and continuing into 2003 there was a loss of income to the industry, and subsequently revenue to SWT as a result of the ongoing effects of foot and mouth and September 11th. The worlds current instability caused by the Iraqi problem is already having an impact and will make the next year possible even more difficult. Further problems have been caused by the need for Stratford District Council to reduce their contribution by £39,000 and the loss of £24,000 as a result of American Express withdrawing from the Stratford TIC.

### **3 REVIEW OF 2002/3**

- 3.1 Cllr Sarah Boad Vice chair of SWT supported Mr Alex Holmes the chief executive presented an update of the companies activities for 2002/3 at the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on 3rd December 2002. It is proposed to present a full report on 2002/3 and a progress report on 2003/4 at the Autumn meeting of the committee. Appendix 1 includes the performance for the first three quarters.

### **4 SLA FOR 2003/2004**

- 4.1 Understanding the difficulties facing the industry and the company the proposed SLA (Appendix 1) seeks to consolidate the benefits to the area from tourism making sure that the service from SWT is not diminished despite the reductions in financial support from Stratford. The new SLA has only a marginal increase in the targets set in recognition of the potential problems.
- 4.2 The SLA is set out so as to show the four key service objectives and within this the core activities and it is not proposed to change these. Under each service objective the key achievements are listed. In addition to this the key performance indicators are detailed showing targets previously set and what was achieved. Members are asked to consider the new targets set for the forthcoming year. Finally four areas are highlighted which the company will be required to give particular attention to.

### **5 OUTCOMES REQUIRED**

- 5.1 That members comment on the performance of SWT against the existing SLA.

- 5.2 That members agree to a further report being brought forward in the autumn to report on the companies activities more fully for 2002/3 and receive an interim report on performance of the company and industry for 2003/4.
- 5.3 Members are asked to comment on the SLA for SWT for 2003/4.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

### **Tourism Strategy and Action Plan**

<b>Areas in District Affected</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Executive Portfolio Area and Holder</b>	Development Services Richard Tamlin

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**WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT: SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE TOURISM**  
**2003/2004**

Broadly, there are four main categories of service provided by SWT, as detailed below.

## **1. MEMBERSHIP SERVICES**

**Service Objective:** To consult with, represent, and serve the tourism business community in South Warwickshire, in order to support a prosperous and successful local tourism industry.

### **Core Activities:**

Information management: maintain databases to supply accurate information on all member businesses.

Member communications: newsletters, regular liaison with tourism associations, networking meetings.

Support and advice: covering the spectrum of professional marketing and visitor services (see below).

Representation: secure an effective voice for tourism in South Warwickshire, participating in regional and national tourism forums (eg. Heart of England Tourist Board, English Tourism Council). The Director of Tourism represents the Council's tourism interests on Advantage West Midlands' tourism cluster opportunity group.

### **Achievements in 2001/02:**

- Won over £100,000 in external funding from AWM post-FMD.
- Membership satisfaction levels: 61% of members voted SWT services either good or very good value for money.
- Achieved "Investors in People" status.
- Set up new procedures for monitoring industry and SWT performance: HETB digest of performance statistics and "Best Value" benchmarking group.

## **2. TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE SERVICES**

**Service Objective:** To provide a high quality, efficient Tourist Information Centre (TIC) service in Leamington Spa, for residents and visitors to Warwick District. To work closely with Warwick Town Council in support of the Warwick TIC, and Warwickshire County Council in relation to Kenilworth TIC, in providing high quality, efficient tourist information facilities.

### **Core Activities:**

Information services: Service counter enquiries and provide information displays on accommodation, attractions and facilities in the area.

Accommodation and ticketing: Provide accommodation bookings and ticketing services.

Central Information Unit: Maintain accommodation availability information; handle telephone and e-mail enquiries and bookings.

Retail services: Sell publications, souvenirs and other merchandise.

The TIC is open 7 days a week year round. Hours of opening vary according to the season.

### **Achievements in 2001/02:**

- Helped establish new TIC displays at Kenilworth.
- TIC visitor satisfaction survey at Leamington Spa and Warwick: achieved high mean scores of 4.13 and 3.86 respectively (equating to "good" and above average for the region).
- Leamington TIC generated a record turnover of over £96,000 (+16%) and doubled to 763 the number of local accommodation bookings, worth £70,000 to the local economy.
- Investment in new cabling, IT and communications equipment, including ADSL and multi-user access to the Internet and e-mail within Leamington TIC.
- New services introduced: London/Birmingham/NEC concert, hotel and theatre booking service.

### **3. VISITOR MANAGEMENT SERVICES**

#### **Service Objective:**

To raise the quality of visitor information and welcome services, in order to encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more money in the local economy.

#### **Core Activities:**

Leaflet display: Provide a leaflet dispenser network in accommodation/attractions across S Warks.

Visitor Information Patrollers: VIPs greet visitors to Warwick and give directions and information.

Visitor Attractions Maps: provide 150,000 copies of a comprehensive free guide to attractions.

New Technology: Maintain a comprehensive, up-to-date, information database, which feeds data to the TIC and the SWT web site. Provide 24-hour public access "kiosks" at the Royal Pump Rooms TIC.

#### **Achievements in 2001/02:**

- Successful VIP service operated at Warwick during summer 2002.
- Visitor attraction maps expanded to A5 booklet format.

### **4. MARKETING SERVICES**

#### **Service Objective:**

To undertake a programme of marketing activity, which raises the profile of South Warwickshire as a tourism destination, spreading the benefits of tourism throughout the year, and encouraging visitors to stay longer.

#### **Core Activities:**

Consumer advertising and direct mail activity.

Marketing the rural areas: Develop and promote a leisurely country tour in the Warwick District area.

Domestic Short Breaks: Implement marketing campaign, including production and distribution of the main South Warwickshire "Holiday Guide". The campaign is to target domestic short break holidaymakers, encouraging year-round travel, especially in the winter/off-peak period.

Accommodation Guide: Print and distribute 60,000 copies of an Accommodation Guide for Warwick District by 10,000.

Overseas Marketing: Produce and distribute an overseas accommodation supplement included within 70,000 copies of the main holiday guide through the overseas offices of the British Tourist Authority. Work in partnership with other agencies to raise the profile of the District overseas especially in the USA and Australia.

Conference and Business Tourism: Produce a conference manual, attend exhibitions, organise a conference open day, and provide a dedicated conference desk service to promote South Warwickshire for business tourism both at home and abroad.

Travel Trade Marketing: Implement a marketing campaign comprising dedicated travel trade print, themed itineraries, and exhibition attendance at the British Travel Trade Fair.

Press and PR: Secure regional, national and international media coverage for Warwick District.

Continued investment in the Shakespeare Country web site.

### **Achievements in 2001/02:**

- ◆ Co-ordinated extensive FMD recovery programme for South Warwickshire, in partnership with HETB, which included:
  - Direct advertising.
  - Direct mail.
  - Printing and distributing an extra 10,000 copies of the Warwick accommodation guide.
  - Creating special offers and promoting them through flyers and a new section of the website.
  - Subsidised advertising for members in our holiday and accommodation guides.
  - The Shakespeare Country Explorer.
  - Consumer research.
  - Out and About in Shakespeare Country- marketing campaign to promote the wider South Warwickshire area.
  - Web development.
  - Brochure fulfilment.
- ◆ A sustained press and PR programme, including:
  - Handling 60 press enquiries relating to foot and mouth and September 11<sup>th</sup>.
  - Proactive mailings to regional and national press.
  - Media Fact File distributed on the theme of the Gardens of Shakespeare Country.
  - Competitions in 12 regional newspapers, generating 3,000 enquiries.
  - Distributing 850 press and trade passes.
  - Managing a photographic library.
  - 50 press familiarisation visits.
- ◆ Media conversion research showed that 30% of enquirers visited South Warks.
- ◆ An extensive range of print targeting our key markets.
- ◆ New "Gardens of Shakespeare Country" leaflet and campaign.
- ◆ Overseas marketing activities included Australia for the first time, plus participation in the All about Britain Road shows in the States.
- ◆ Travel trade promotions including information desk, newsletters and familiarisation visits.
- ◆ Conference desk business continued to grow by 23% over the year reaching £293,050 in value.
- ◆ Major overhaul and re launch of our web site: [www.shakespeare-country.co.uk](http://www.shakespeare-country.co.uk)
- ◆ Winter/spring advertising and direct mail enquiries rose by 70% to over 21,000.

### **Key Issues for the SWT to report on by October 2003**

1, Develop a forward plan for the TICs in Warwick and Kenilworth. so as to create a more integrated service in the District and support them in the challenges ahead and in particular the increased use of new technologies.

2, Work closely with the Town Centre Managers in helping to achieve effective and coordinated marketing of the individual towns.

3, Develop a programme to spread more of the benefits of Tourism to the rural areas.

4, Work closely with the Economic Development agencies in South Warwickshire so as to achieve both SWTs key priorities and those of the area as identified in the developing South Warwickshire Economic Development Action plan.

### **Reporting Process**

The company is expected to meet quarterly with the Economic Development officer to review progress.

Report in October 2003 on the outcome of performance in 2002/3 and an interim report on 2003 including progress on the key issues.