

Title: Update on Local Visitor Economy Partnership for Coventry & Warwickshire: Governance Structure

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Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ella Billiald

Wards of the District directly affected: All

Approvals required	Date	Name
Portfolio Holder	14/5/24	Ella Billiald
Finance	7/5/24	Andrew Rollins
Legal Services	7/5/24	Ross Chambers
Chief Executive	7/5/24	Chris Elliott
Director of Climate Change	7/5/24	Dave Barber
Head of Service(s)	7/5/24	Philip Clarke
Section 151 Officer	7/5/24	Andrew Rollins
Monitoring Officer	7/5/24	Graham Leach
Leadership Co-ordination Group	20/5/24	
Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Cttee / Council?	Yes	
Contrary to Policy / Budget framework?	No	
Does this report contain exempt info/Confidential? If so, which paragraph(s)?	No	
Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)?	Yes, Forward Plan item 1,449	
Accessibility Checked?	Yes/No	

Summary

This report provides an update of the activity that has taken place with other local authorities in Warwickshire and Coventry, together with the two Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) in the sub-region, to create a new Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP). It also seeks to agree the proposed interim governance arrangements for the LVEP. The purpose of the interim structure is to enable effective discussions to continue over the next 12 months and to ensure that Warwick District is represented in discussions about the future direction and activities of the LVEP.

Recommendation(s)

- (1)** That Cabinet notes the work that has been undertaken over the last few months to create a Local Visitor Economy Partnership for Coventry and Warwickshire.
- (2)** That Cabinet supports the proposed governance structure and Warwick District Council's role within this as set out below and in Appendix 1 and in doing so, agrees for Warwick District Council to become a member of the Local Authority Advisory Group.
- (3)** That Cabinet, subject to recommendation 2, delegates authority to the Head of Place, Arts & Economy and Head of Governance in consultation with the portfolio holder for Arts & Economy, to agree any minor further changes to the governance structure as discussions on this continue with local authorities and partners across Coventry & Warwickshire.
- (4)** That, subject also to recommendation 2, Cabinet notes that the appointment of a councillor to be a member of the Member Reference Group will be a Portfolio Holder who the Leader will confirm in due course.

1 Reasons for the Recommendation

- 1.1 As Members will be aware, Cabinet has received two reports relating to the creation of Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs). In July 2023 Cabinet agreed to support, in principle, an Expression of Interest from Shakespeare's England (SE), the DMO covering Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon Districts, to become part of a wider Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) covering Coventry & Warwickshire. In September 2023, Cabinet received an update report on discussions including in relation to any partnership agreement that was being prepared for how the LVEP discussions would be taken forward.
- 1.2 The July 2023 Cabinet report contains background information relating to the creation on LVEPs. In summary, LVEPs are part of a new model from Visit England, with the support of the Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), for delivering leadership and governance for tourism destinations across the country. At the top of this structure are Destination Development Partnerships (DDPs) and below this are a network of Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs). For Coventry and Warwickshire, it has been agreed that the creation of a single new "Coventry & Warwickshire LVEP" is the most appropriate response to strategically deliver a destination management service.
- 1.3 LVEPs are proposed as collaborative initiatives involving local government, tourism organisations, businesses, and other stakeholders within a specific geographic area. The primary goal of LVEPs is to promote and develop the local

visitor economy, which encompasses tourism, hospitality, recreation, and related sectors over a wider structural geography compared to the previous Destination Management Organisations (DMOS). LVEPs are seen as having a crucial role in driving economic growth, job creation and community development within the sub region and for Warwick District to leverage the district's tourism potential.

- 1.4 Government has made clear that DDPs and LVEPs are to be the vehicle by which funds and initiatives to support the visitor economy will be distributed. As an example, Visit England has established a Green Accreditation Scheme for local tourism businesses which will be delivered through the West Midlands DDP.
- 1.5 The Coventry and Warwickshire LVEP offers numerous benefits for the WDC and the whole of Warwickshire. The ambitions of the LVEP are driven by various factors that contribute to the development and promotion of the local visitor economy.
- 1.6 The LVEP will strengthen the collaboration between a range of stakeholders including local government, tourism boards, businesses, community organisations, and residents. Working together allows for shared resources, expertise, and decision-making. It will focus on ensuring Coventry and Warwickshire has a competitive compelling visitor economy to support its world class offer, to continue to attract and capture visitor spend whilst ensuring this is underpinned and supported by a resilient and skilled economy with sustainable actions.
- 1.7 The LVEP will be well placed to engage with current and future government policies, funding initiatives, and strategic plans at the local, regional, and national levels, to ensure the aims and objectives of Warwickshire are represented and to secure potential resources.
- 1.8 This report provides an update on the work that has been undertaken to develop the proposed governance structure and approach for the next 12 months.

LVEP Growth Plan

- 1.9 A key feature of the Coventry and Warwickshire LVEP will be the submission of a Growth Plan. This is a requirement of the LVEP and will focus on a range of areas related to supporting, enhancing and building resilience in the sub regions visitor economy, that includes:-
 - Promoting Tourism – the aim to attract visitors through marketing campaigns, events and promotional activities.
 - Supporting Local Businesses – to provide support and resources to local businesses in the tourism and hospitality sectors to help them thrive and grow
 - Enhancing Infrastructure and Service – to improve infrastructure such as transportation, accommodation and recreational facilities that will enhance the visitor experience.
 - Sustainable Development – to focus on sustainable tourism practise to minimise environmental impact and supporting the long – term viability of the local visitor economy.
- 1.10 The South Warwickshire Economic Strategy recognises tourism and the visitor economy as one of our strengths and a core sector to support. Having an active part in the emerging LVEP will ensure we maximise opportunities for Warwick District.

Governance structure

- 1.11 An interim governance structure has been developed to provide a framework for the LVEP to begin to operate over the next 12 months. This structure needs to reflect both the requirements of the two existing DMOs in Coventry and Warwickshire and the desire to begin to draw all local authorities in to

discussions about how the tourism potential of the sub-region may best be achieved. This interim structure is predicated on the two current DMOs operating as separate organisations but with a single officer team to work across both. Areas currently not being covered by the DMOS are represented by their corresponding local authorities through the stakeholder group.

- 1.12 In developing this governance structure, three things need to be born in mind.
- 1.13 Firstly, active participation and engagement of local communities, businesses, and residents will be critical drivers for the success of LVEPs. The proposed governance structure needs to provide a route to connect a range of stakeholders and interested parties to ensure that initiatives are aligned with community values, needs, and aspirations. Although local authorities will have a major role to play, LVEPs need to be a true partnership with partnership with local businesses.
- 1.14 Secondly, it needs to be remembered that – certainly for the time being – both SE and DC will remain as separate legal entities. The opportunity created by the LVEP will be to enable these DMOs to work more closely together, acting more strategically and benefitting from economies of scale to deliver a tourist and visitor offer more efficiently and effectively. The governance structure needs to reflect this situation.
- 1.15 Thirdly, the governance structure needs to be a way of bringing in those local authorities that have historically has less direct engagement with the visitor economy through formal membership of either Shakespeare’s England or Destination Coventry.
- 1.16 Following several meetings with Districts and Boroughs, Warwickshire County Council, Shakespeare’s England (SE) Coventry City Council (CCC) and Destination Coventry (DC) a proposed structure setting out the governance to oversee this work has been shaped. This will be led through the establishment of an **LVEP Board** with links to three stakeholder **Advisory Groups**.
- 1.17 Appendix 1 sets out this proposed LVEP Governance Structure.
- 1.18 **LVEP Advisory Board**
 - It is proposed that the Board will comprise of nine Board members. There will be two Board members each from SE and DC; four local authority members (two of whom will be from Coventry City Council and Warwickshire County Council). Finally, there will be one representative from Visit England/visit Britain.
 - The SE Board will decide who will represent them on the LVEP Advisory Board. Warwick District Council will have a voice into the LVEP Advisory Board through its seat as a voting member of the SE Board. WDC could also, potentially, be one of the Local Authority Stakeholder representatives on the Board.
- 1.19 **LVEP Advisory Groups**
 - Sitting below the Advisory Board will be three Advisory Groups. Two of these will be the Boards of SE and DC. The third will be a new **Local Authority Stakeholder Advisory Group** made up of representatives from all seven local authorities in the Coventry & Warwickshire area. Warwick District Council will have two seats on this Stakeholder Advisory Group.
 - The governance arrangements for the Advisory Groups are still being finalised, however the current scope is as set out in appendix 1. It should be noted that as the Local Authority Stakeholder Advisory Group will be a newly-formed group, it will need more specific Terms of Reference. These are currently being prepared.

- This group will have a direct link in to the LVEP Advisory Board via the Board members representing the Group, ensuring a clear line of communication with all partners and help build a connection with emerging actions and objectives into and from the LVEP Advisory Board.
- Members from all three Advisory Groups will also be offered the opportunity to attend the LVEP Boards as an observer if they wish.
- It is proposed that the Local Authority Stakeholder Advisory Board will be an officer group. It is also proposed that a separate **Member Reference Group** will be formed. The frequency of these meetings is yet to be agreed, but the Local Authority Stakeholder Advisory Group will convene meetings of this Member Group to provide a platform for ensuring there is member engagement and understanding of the LVEP. This will be particularly important for those local authorities which are not currently part of SE or DC.

1.20 This report seeks agreement for this Council to support the governance structure. With regards to the Member Reference Group, Cabinet is asked to recommend to Council that the appointment of a councillor(s) on that group is a decision of the Leader.

2 Alternative Options

2.1 There are several alternative options open to the Council. Firstly, it could decide not to support further work on the LVEP and not be part of any Advisory Group. For the reasons set out in this report, including the ability to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of delivering a service to support the visitor economy, this option is not supported. Warwick District Council would not, in any event, be able to use its seat on the Board of Shakespeare's England to prevent the Board supporting the LVEP.

2.2 Secondly, it could support the principle of the LVEP governance structure but seek amendments as to how this is constituted. It should be noted that minor amendments to this structure, including the Terms of Reference, are envisaged as the governance structure is finalised, and members are asked to delegate authority to the Head of Place, Arts & Economy in consultation with the portfolio holder for Arts & Economy, to agree these. More fundamental changes are not supported in this report. For the reasons outlined in the report, any emerging governance structure must have the support from local authorities across Coventry and Warwickshire. The structure which is contained in appendix 1 is currently also being discussed by all other local authorities, and the model which is being proposed reflects those discussions and the need to balance different aspirations and priorities of different councils.

2.3 A third option would be to support the recommendation but additionally recommend that a new LVEP for Coventry & Warwickshire is created immediately as a single new organisation whereby SE and DC are disbanded and formally merged into a new organisation. At the present time, this approach is not supported by the two DMOs immediately, however both have committed to keeping this under active review as the new interim structure and governance arrangements take place. Warwick District Council will have plenty of opportunity to ensure this is kept under review moving forward using its influence as a member of the SE Board and on the Stakeholder Advisory Group.

3 Legal Implications

3.1 There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report. The Council has a seat on the Board of SE. If SE ceases to exist as a legal entity and becomes part of a larger organisation, the Council will need to understand its

legal and governance relationship with this new organisation. This would be subject to a separate report in due course as appropriate.

4 Financial Services

- 4.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report. The Council currently contributes £75,000 per year to SE, however this was increased in September 2022 for a two-year period to £100,000. This additional £25,000 funding ends in August 2024, after which time funding for SE will revert to its usual level. In the event that SE is replaced by another organisation, the Council will need to consider what financial commitments it wishes to give to this organisation. This would be subject to a separate report in due course as appropriate.
- 4.2 Matters relating to the Council's financial contribution to SE, and whether this provides value for money, are not within the scope of this report.

5 Corporate Strategy

- 5.1 Warwick District Council has adopted a Corporate Strategy which sets three strategic aims for the organisation.

6 Delivering valued, sustainable services – An effective LVEP has no direct impact on the firm financial footing of the Council, however the absence of an effective LVEP may put the Council under pressure to find other means of supporting the visitor economy. An effective LVEP will support a thriving visitor economy which will have a positive impact on the Council's finances.

- 6.1 Low cost, low carbon energy across the district – the visitor economy does bring additional visitors into the district with an impact upon energy consumption. This is explicitly recognised in the South Warwickshire Economic Strategy which contains the action to work with Shakespeare's England and the new LVEP to de-carbonise the tourism sector including through more sustainable travel. Visit England has initiatives such as the Green Accreditation Scheme which can support this objective and is being delivered through LVEPs. A strong visitor economy can also promote opportunities for local people to enjoy visitor attractions in the local area, reducing their need to travel.
- 6.2 Creating vibrant, safe and healthy communities of the future – a successful visitor economy is important for the economic vitality of the district including our town centres. This in turn supports local businesses, supporting jobs and prosperity in the district.

7 Environmental/Climate Change Implications

- 7.1 We must ensure that as we support the visitor economy to grow and develop, we respect environmental boundaries and continue to reduce waste and pollution.
- 7.2 The actions in the joint Climate Emergency Action Programme to reduce net carbon emissions across South Warwickshire by a minimum of 55% by 2030, with plans to further reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2050, include measures to supporting public transport. This will assist in limiting any growth in the carbon footprint of the visitor economy.
- 7.3 A vital consideration in the LVEP Growth Plan is to set out how the sub region will ensure its actions cause minimum environmental impact. Within the Growth Plan the LVEP will have to set out how partners will work together to ensure we have a sustainable tourism model.

8 Analysis of the effects on Equality

- 8.1 There are no direct equality implications arising from this report.

9 Data Protection

9.1 There are no data protection implications arising from this report.

10 Health and Wellbeing

10.1 There are no data protection implications arising from this report.

11 Risk Assessment

- 11.1 There will be reputational risks for the Council when a new Coventry & Warwickshire LVEP is formed. Now that a decision has been made to form a Coventry & Warwickshire LVEP there is an expectation that the Council will continue to be a full partner in a new LVEP, as it does with SE. An LVEP which does not deliver a high-quality tourism and visitor service will reflect poorly on all stakeholder, of which the Council is one. This risk can be mitigated by the Council using its role on the SE Board and its influence as a member of the new LVEP Local Authority Stakeholder Advisory Group to help shape the work and priorities of the LVEP.
- 11.2 There is a risk that the LVEP may develop in a way that the Council considers does not best reflect and respond to the needs of the district. The Council does not have a right of veto to any of the advice or recommendation that are made by the Advisory Board or decisions taken by SE. This risk can be mitigated in two ways. Firstly, as this governance framework is only a temporary arrangement for a 12-month period, there will be a chance to review it. Secondly, the Council is a major funder of SE and it could, if it chose, reduce or withdraw funding from SE if it considered this did not deliver good value for money for the Council and Warwick District.
- 11.3 There are no direct financial risks to the Council arising from this report. Were the LVEP to not deliver a high-quality service, this may raise questions about the Council's funding of SE, and more widely how the Council funds its support for the visitor economy. A different model may have additional consequences for future funding, however this would be brought back to the Council for consideration at that time.
- 11.4 Conversely, there is a risk associated in not actively exploring how a new LVEP may benefit the district. The government has made clear that it sees LVEPs as the way that DMOs are organised nationally, and it is appropriate that the Council considers the role of SE in this moving forward.
- 11.5 There are no risks associated with the future of the Visitor Information Centre in Warwick. This receives separate grant funding from this Council (currently £25,000 per year), and is not linked to SE.

12 Consultation

12.1 No formal consultations have been undertaken as part of this process. This has been considered by the Board of Shakespeare's England on which the Council has a seat.

Background papers:

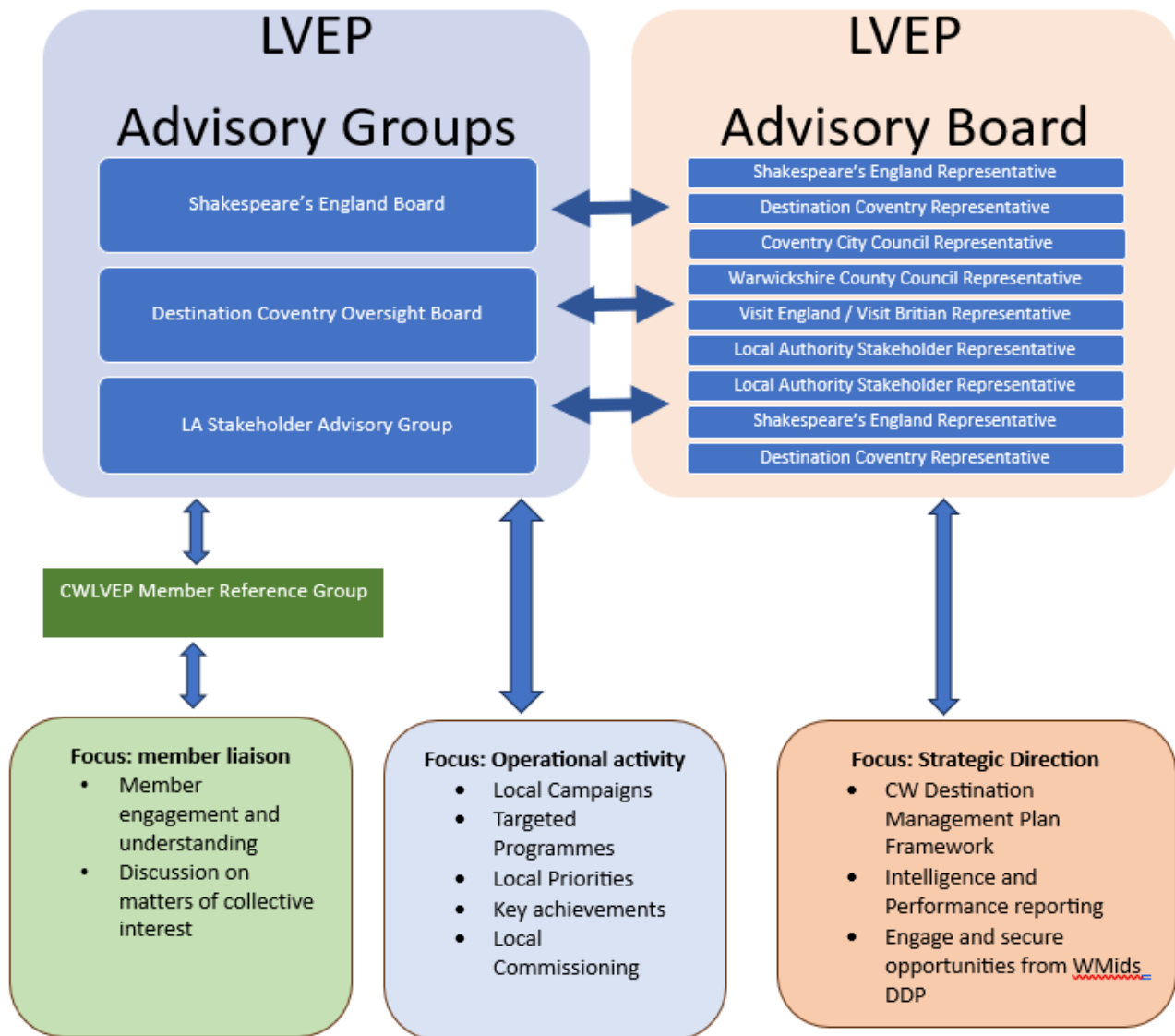
None

Supporting documents:

None.

**DRAFT Coventry and Warwickshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership
Proposed interim governance model April 2024 – March 2025**

C&W LVEP Governance Model



NB: This model is predicated on the two current DMOs (SE & DC) operating as separate organisations but with a single officer team to work across both organisations. Areas currently not being covered by the DMOS are represented by their corresponding local authorities through the stakeholder group.

The CWLVEP is a strategic partnership which will hold the responsibility for driving the interests of the sub regional Visitor Economy to Visit England and the regional DDP. The purpose, to protect, enhance and grow the Visitor Economy within the sub region of Coventry and Warwickshire. It will be essential that partners in the area work together to collaborate on strategic objectives set out in the Coventry and Warwickshire Growth Plan, that through this collective position it will strengthen the individual partners as well as identifying efficiencies and providing a strong sub regional voice to the West Midlands and central government.

CWLEP Advisory Board Principles

There would be a new LVEP Advisory Board. The membership of this would be:-

- 2 x Shakespeare's England Representatives
- 2 x Destination Coventry Representatives
- Warwickshire County Council
- Coventry City Council
- Visit England and Visit Britain Advisor
- 2 x Local Authority Stakeholders

The Chair and Vice Chair of the board will be selected internally from within the board, these positions represent both the geography of Warwickshire and Coventry and the private or public sector.

The purpose of the CW LVEP Advisory Board is to provide the strategic oversight and direction for the LVEP partnership. Broadly these are:-

- Development and monitoring of an agreed Growth Plan and upcoming Regional Destination Management Framework.
- Representation of the sub region at the regional DDP
- Identify and agree priorities, informed by the advisory groups to support the visitor economy.
- Enable and develop a continued support mechanism for the visitor economy, across the geography of Coventry and Warwickshire. To benefit from Visit England and Visit Britain support and give economies of scale across the sub region.

Advisory Group Principles

There will be three main groups who will lead on operational activities undertaken in the sub region. Two of these would be the current Boards of Shakespeare's England and Destination Coventry. The third would be a new **Local Authority Stakeholder Group** made up of 2 x representatives from each local authority.

These three groups hold the responsibility for delivering local activities including programmes, commissioning, tourism events, and to present local tourism priorities relevant to the DMO and or local authority areas. It is expected that each group will represent their members interests, or local council priorities. They will be responsible for disseminating information from the LVEP Advisory Board to their organisations, and to inform and shape on behalf of their organisation the Coventry Warwickshire Tourism Growth Plan.

Member Reference Group

Sitting below the Advisory Group will be a Member Reference Group. Each local authority will commit to nominating a member to attend this group which will meet on a quarterly basis. The group will have the following role and purpose. The role and purpose of the Member Reference Group is as follows:-

- To ensure that councillors gain a greater understanding of the working of the Local Authority Advisory Group and LVEP Advisory Board and to allow discussion and greater understanding between councillors from all parts of the sub region.
- For councillors to receive feedback from the LA Advisory Group on matters being discussed at the Advisory Group and Advisory Board.
- For councillors to advise on matters where the local authorities may need or wish to take a collective position in views they will be taking to the Advisory Board.
- To enable discussion to take place about the desire and scope for greater collaborative working through the new LVEP.