

Title: Local Visitor Economy Partnership Agreement for Coventry & Warwickshire

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Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ella Billiald

Wards of the District directly affected: All

<b>Approvals required</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>
<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	6/9/23	Ella Billiald
<b>Finance</b>	29/8/23	Andrew Rollins
<b>Legal Services</b>	21/8/23	Ross Chambers
<b>Chief Executive</b>	29/8/23	Chris Elliott
<b>Director of Climate Change</b>	29/8/23	Dave Barber
<b>Head of Service(s)</b>	29/8/23	Philip Clarke
<b>Section 151 Officer</b>	29/8/23	Andrew Rollins
<b>Monitoring Officer</b>	29/8/23	Graham Leach
<b>Leadership Co-ordination Group</b>	04/09/23	
<b>Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Cttee / Council?</b>	Yes	
<b>Contrary to Policy / Budget framework?</b>	No	
<b>Does this report contain exempt info/Confidential? If so, which paragraph(s)?</b>	No	
<b>Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)?</b>	Yes, Forward Plan item 1,395 – scheduled for 20 Sept 2023	
<b>Accessibility Checked?</b>	Yes/No	

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## Summary

The Government has proposed a new national structure for Destination Management Organisations to be grouped into Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs). The LVEP for Warwick District will be one which covers all of Coventry and Warwickshire. This report seeks to agree the approach that the Council take towards agreeing a partnership agreement as a first step towards forming this new LVEP.

## Recommendation(s)

- (1) That Cabinet notes the paper "Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEP) programme" which is attached as an Appendix, and in particular the indicative timeline.
- (2) That Cabinet indicates its continued support for Shakespeare's England in the formation of a Local Visitor Economy Partnership with Destination Coventry covering Coventry & Warwickshire.
- (3) That Cabinet delegates authority to the Head of Place, Arts and Economy in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Arts & Economy to agree the terms of any partnership agreement, noting that any final decisions about how Warwick District Council will work within the new LVEP, including any financial contributions that the Council will make to it, will be brought to Cabinet for approval in due course.

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## 1 Reasons for the Recommendation

- 1.1 As Members will be aware, in July 2023 Cabinet considered a report which set out the Government proposals for how Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) will be organised in the future. It 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. The July Cabinet report contains background information to this decision.
- 1.2 SE submitted an Expression of Interest, and in late July, VisitEngland confirmed that it had officially awarded accreditation to the proposed Coventry & Warwickshire Destination Partnership LVEP. In doing so, it set out a timetable for creating this new structure. This timetable is set out in the appendix to this report. As members will see, the timetable is challenging as it requires several key decisions to be made by June 2024.
- 1.3 It is recognised that there are still many issues to be discussed and resolved before a new Coventry & Warwickshire LVEP can take shape. These include the governance and staffing arrangements of the new organisation, and what role and funding contributions, will be made by all local authorities across Coventry & Warwickshire to this LVEP. There is also a decision to be made about whether to stay as a Partnership or set up a new Company, possibly a Community Interest Company (CIC) with a new Governance Structure.
- 1.4 All of these matters will be considered further by the SE Board in discussion with partners across the sub-region. The Council will play a full role in these discussions. When key decisions need to be made in relation to how the Council

works within this new LVEP, including what financial contribution it will make to it, these will be brought before Cabinet for formal approval.

- 1.5 As a first stage, however, VisitEngland is requiring all LVEP partners to sign an agreement to work together to shape the new LVEP. As the timetable indicates, we are required to sign this by 30<sup>th</sup> September. At the time of preparing this report, officers and the portfolio holder had not seen a draft of this agreement, and so could not include it for approval. We fully anticipate, however, that it will simply include an agreement to continue to work in partnership together to develop the LVEP and to seek to do this in accordance with the timetable set out by VisitEngland. It is therefore recommended that delegated authority be given to the Head of Place, Arts and Economy in consultation with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Arts & Economy to progress discussions with SE, Destination Coventry and the wider partnership, and to sign the agreement.
- 1.6 It should finally be noted that whilst a new LVEP would replace SE as the DMO covering Warwick District, the "Shakespeare's England" brand would remain. (It would also be expected that the "Visit Coventry" and "Conference Coventry & Warwickshire" brands operated by Destination Coventry would remain as well.) These brands are well-established and there is no intention to dismantle them. The LVEP structure would sit behind these brands, helping to promote and maximise their effectiveness, whilst delivering economies of scale for the DMO as a whole.

## **2 Alternative Options**

- 2.1 The alternative options to supporting the LVEP proposal were considered in the July 2023 Cabinet meeting and support was given for SE and Destination Coventry to apply for accreditation to become a LVEP. They were successful in this bid. Had the bid not been successful the other less favourable options would have had to have been explored.

## **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 organisation. This will be subject to a separate report in due course as appropriate. It is hoped that more detail will become available following the joint stakeholder meeting and issues will be brought back to Cabinet for consideration.

## **4 Financial Services**

- 4.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report. The Council currently contributes £100,000 per year towards the running of SE with the current agreement ending in September 2024. In the event that SE is replaced by another organisation, the Council will need to consider its financial responsibilities to this organisation. This will be subject to a separate report in due course as appropriate.

## **5 Business Strategy**

- 5.1 This report directly addresses the objective of nurturing a thriving, innovative and inclusive economy by seeking to strengthen the tourism and hospitality sectors, that are key to the local economy.
- 5.2 Health, Homes, Communities: supporting a thriving visitor economy is part of wider initiatives to make Warwick district a great place to live, work and visit.

- 5.3 Green, Clean, Safe: No impact.
- 5.4 Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment: a thriving visitor economy will support jobs and prosperity in the district.
- 5.5 Effective Staff: an effective DMO will better support the development of staff at the Council who work to support DMO activities.
- 5.6 Maintain or Improve Services: an effective DMO will help support the Council's work in terms of both economic development and events.
- 5.7 Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term. An effective DMO has no direct impact on the firm financial footing of the Council, however the absence of an effective DMO may put the Council under pressure to find other means of supporting the visitor economy. An effective DMO will support a thriving visitor economy which will have a positive impact on the Council's finances.

## **6 Environmental/Climate Change Implications**

- 6.1 It is recognised that supporting the visitor economy does increase the carbon footprint of the district. LVEPs will, however, operate at a wider and more strategic level than the current patchwork of DMOs, and this will enable more strategic consideration of the impact of the visitor economy on climate change. As the LVEP is established, the Council will use its influence to seek to ensure climate change implications are at the heart of the LVEP's terms of reference. This will include cross-boundary issues and initiatives relating to reducing the carbon emissions relating to the visitor economy. 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.
- 6.2 The tourism economy is likely to be susceptible to changes in the local climate and any new LVEP should therefore support the tourism economy to adapt to these changes. SE is currently progressing with a 'Green Tourism' accreditation for the sector.

## **7 Analysis of the effects on Equality**

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

## **8 Data Protection**

- 8.1 There are no data protection implications arising from this report.

## **9 Health and Wellbeing**

- 9.1 There are no health & wellbeing implications arising from this report.

## **10 Risk Assessment**

- 10.1 There will be reputational and financial 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. The Council has a seat on the SE Board and currently contributes £100,000 per year (currently committed up to September 2024) towards the running costs of SE. As noted elsewhere in this report, the recommendation in this report is for agreement to a new Coventry & Warwickshire LVEP in principle only, subject to further work. At this time, no financial commitment beyond September 2024 is being made. Where appropriate and necessary, further decisions in relation to

the new LVEP, and this Council's role in it, would be brought back to the Council for further approval.

- 10.2 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 Consultation**

- 11.1 No formal consultations have been undertaken as part of this process, however SE arranged meetings with stakeholders to consider alternative models of LVEPs at which officers from the Council were involved. It was at such meetings that a joint SE and Destination Coventry LVEP was considered the best option. As stated previously now that VisitEngland has announced that the Coventry & Warwickshire bid has been successful to form a LVEP SE arranged a stakeholders' meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> September to discuss next steps. Timeline for further steps is outlined in the letter from SE detailed in the Appendix.

### **Background papers:**

None

### **Supporting documents:**

None.