

Title: A Local Visitor Economy Partnership for South 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>   | 6/6/23   | Ella Billiald  |
| <b>Finance</b>  | 13/6/23  | Andrew Rollins |
| <b>Legal Services</b>   | 6/6/23   | Ross Chambers  |
| <b>Chief Executive</b>  | 13/6/23  | Chris Elliott  |
| <b>Director of Climate Change</b>   | 13/6/23  | Dave Barber    |
| <b>Head of Service(s)</b>   | 13/6/23  | Philip Clarke  |
| <b>Section 151 Officer</b>  | 13/6/23  | Andrew Rollins |
| <b>Monitoring Officer</b>   | 13/6/23  | Andrew Jones   |
| <b>Leadership Co-ordination Group</b>   | 19/6/23  |                |
| <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 1,369 – scheduled for 5 July 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). This report proposes that Warwick District Council gives support, in principle, for Shakespeare's England to be part of a wider Coventry & Warwickshire LVEP.

## Recommendation(s)

- (1) That Cabinet notes the paper "Shakespeare's England and Local Visitor Economy Partnerships" which is attached as appendix 1.
  - (2) That Cabinet indicates its support, in principle, for Shakespeare's England forming part of a Local Visitor Economy Partnership covering Coventry & Warwickshire.
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## 1 Reasons for the Recommendation

- 1.1 In March 2021, the government announced an independent review, led by Nick De Bois, Chair of the VisitEngland Advisory Board, to assess how destination management organisations (DMOs) across England are funded and structured, and how they perform their roles. The purpose of the review was to establish whether there may be a more efficient and effective model for supporting English tourism at the regional level, and if so, what that model may be. Its report and consultation response analysis was published in September 2021.
- 1.2 At the heart of this review was a proposal to introduce the new tiered structure system for England's DMOs. At the top of this structure would be Destination Development Partnerships (DDPs) and below this would sit a network of Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs). DDP status could be awarded to either an individual accredited LVEP covering a large enough geography (e.g. a city region) or to a coalition of willing accredited LVEPs within an area.
- 1.3 In responding to his review, the government announced its intention to introduce this new tiered structure. The DDP model is currently being piloted, however LVEPs are being introduced now. To date, 15 LVEPs have been announced. A second round of applications (initially through Expressions of Interest) closed on 12<sup>th</sup> June.
- 1.4 The criteria for becoming an LVEP has been set by VisitEngland. It will also assess bids with formal accreditation given by the government (Department of Culture, Media & Sports).
- 1.5 VisitEngland has developed some core draft criteria for LVEPs. These include the following. LVEPs should:-
  - Cover an important geography (such as county or city region) that avoids overlap with other LVEPs and is an area that can demonstrate the importance of its local visitor economy;
  - be well integrated with other important local and regional actors such as key attractions and local government.
  - demonstrate commitment from Local Government (local authorities /Combined Authorities/Mayoral Authorities) that the DMO is lead body in the area (incl. public funding where possible)

- have capacity within the organisation reflective of the size and importance of the destination.
- 1.6 Shakespeare's England (SE) is the DMO currently covering South Warwickshire (Warwick & Stratford-on-Avon districts). The Board of SE, on which the Council has a seat, has been considering how it should respond to the challenges and the opportunities afforded by the LVEP model. The paper attached as appendix 1 to this report was prepared for the April 2023 meeting of the Board. It considered four options for SE; (1) do nothing; (2) join an existing LVEP; (3) create a new Coventry & Warwickshire LVEP or (4) apply for LVEP status on its own.
- 1.7 Prior to the preparation of this report, officers from both WDC and Stratford-on-Avon District Council held meetings with other potential stakeholders to consider two of these options; closer working with Coventry & other Warwickshire authorities to create a new Coventry & Warwickshire LVEP, and closer working with Cotswold authorities. The following comments can be made about each.
- In respect of a potential Coventry & Warwickshire LVEP, this would see SE working much more closely and formally with Destination Coventry (Coventry's DMO) and other local authorities across Warwickshire. It would allow wider marketing and promotion of SE across Coventry & Warwickshire and make a stronger connection between SE and the business market in Coventry. Importantly, it would make stronger voice for tourism within the West Midlands region as a whole.
  - In respect of closer working with Cotswold authorities, there is already a proposed "Cotswold Plus" LVEP for which an Expression of Interest as part of the second round of applications was made in June. This proposed LVEP has a much wider geographic spread covering the whole of the Cotswold National Landscape (which goes as far south as Bath), Tewkesbury, Cheltenham, Gloucester and Stroud as well as the Forest of Dean and River Wye. This LVEP already has a proposed governance structure and is looking to create partnership agreements to formalize working relations. It is noted that whilst there is a strong link between visitors to the Cotswolds and those to South Warwickshire, Warwick district would very much lie at the edge of any "Cotswold Plus" LVEP, rather than at its heart.
- 1.8 For the reasons set out in the appendix 1, the SE Board unanimously agreed to support option 3 – the creation of a new Coventry & Warwickshire LVEP.
- 1.9 In view of the timing of application process for LVEPs, there was no opportunity for formal approval of the Cabinet to be given prior to the submission of the Expression of Interest on 12<sup>th</sup> June. In view of this, the Arts & Economy portfolio holder has written to Shakespeare's England to support a position in principle of creating a Coventry & Warwickshire LVEP on the understanding that a report would be brought to Cabinet at the earliest opportunity.
- 1.10 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 other 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.

- 1.11 All of these matters will be considered further by the SE Board in discussion with partners across the sub-region. Where decisions need to be made by this Council in relation to this, including in relation to any changes to the funding that Warwick District Council currently gives to SE, this will be brought back to Cabinet for future consideration.
- 1.12 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 are considered in appendix 1 (see also paragraph 1.6 above). The approach recommended in this report follows an assessment of these options.

## **3 Legal Implications**

- 3.1 There are no 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.

## **4 Financial Services**

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The Council currently contributes £100,000 per year towards the running of SE and the current agreement for this ends 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.

## **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 data protection implications arising from this report.

## **10 Risk Assessment**

- 10.1 There would be reputational and financial risks for the Council if a new Coventry & Warwickshire LVEP was formed. Although no decision has been made on this matter at this time, there would be an expectation that the Council would 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 contributed £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 (see paragraph 1.7 above).

**Background papers:**

None

**Supporting documents:**

None.