

Report of Director of City Development

Report to Executive Board

Date: 21 September 2016

Subject: Visitor Economy and Vibrant City Centre

Are specific electoral wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. From 2013 onwards there have been significant investments which have made a marked improvement on the breadth, depth and quality of the product offer in Leeds city centre, delivering an enhanced vibrant city centre offering for a range of leisure and conferencing visitors and local audiences.
2. This improved offering has had a direct impact on Leeds' visitor economy including increased visitor numbers, visitor spend, length of stay, value of conferences, jobs created and supported, thereby continuing to demonstrate its importance in the wider local economy.
3. The momentum in delivering world class events in Leeds supplemented by Council run and independent festivals, events and conferences has been successfully complemented by city centre public realm initiatives with a focus on ramped up activity in Summer 2016. This has been profiled through initiatives including the VisitLeeds summer campaign.
4. Looking forward the Council plans to build on this success with the opening of Victoria Gate, continued development of Kirkgate Market, the Autumn and Winter events programming and the city wide MagicalLeeds campaign.

Recommendations

5. Executive Board is recommended to note:

- 5.1. The continued growth of the Leeds visitor economy figures between 2013 to 2015 which is supported by the VisitLeeds strategy, the improved product, the successful delivery of world class events and the continued momentum this gives towards the Leeds 2023 European Capital of Culture bid.
- 5.2. The Council is to work with the Leeds Business Improvement District to seek to align their marketing and promotional activities with the work of the Council and with VisitLeeds as the principal destination management organisation leading on visitor economy.
- 5.3. The successful implementation of a range of interventions to embrace the vibrancy of Leeds city centre and to endorse the further development and financial support to deliver tactical interventions such as the pop up parks in the future in order to improve further on the attractiveness and vibrancy of Leeds city centre as a visitor destination.
- 5.4. Build on success demonstrated to date to ensure the Council continues to take advantage of critical developments including Victoria Gate and Kirkgate Market, Leeds Business Improvement District and world class events hosted in Leeds.
- 5.5. Continue to support the strong city collaborative approach with all partners to increase momentum and ramp up activity in the context of national and international competition.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members of Executive Board on the success of a number of initiatives during Summer 2016 to enhance the vibrancy of Leeds city centre, and the completed 2015 research and evaluation demonstrating continued growth in the Leeds visitor economy.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Members will recall that in June 2016 Executive Board considered and approved the recommendations of the Growing the Leeds Visitor Economy report and the relevant economic strategy in the context of Leeds City Council (LCC), Best Council Plan including supporting economic growth and economic opportunities, supporting a resilient, inclusive cultural and creative sector, and the breakthrough project of world class events and a vibrant city centre that all can benefit from.
- 2.2 From 2013 to date there has been a concerted effort from the Council to deliver improved product which has supported significant growth in the visitor economy and contributed to a lively and vibrant city centre for all.
- 2.2.1 **First direct arena** continues to thrive and has also been to increasing the city's conferencing venue portfolio. It has seen another successful summer period playing host to a number of events spanning the business and leisure market, from international superstars such as Barry Manilow and Gladys Knight, to large multi-day conferences including Teach First. For the first six months of 2016, the arena out performed established arenas in Sheffield, Birmingham and Liverpool (POLLSTAR). The arena attracts one million extra visitors to the city and contributes £25m to the local economy (FSP Research).
- 2.2.2 **Trinity Leeds** is currently the city's newest and biggest shopping and leisure destination, and was named one of the UK's coolest brands by CoolBrands, the influential annual list of the UK's most fashionable brands. Trinity Leeds' one million square feet of space hosts over 120 shops, cafes, bars, restaurants and the boutique Everyman cinema and attracts 23million visitors per year.
- 2.2.3 The independent sector in the city continues to play a pivotal role. The **Big Disco** in July 2016 attracted significant numbers of visitors. **Leeds Indie Food** continues to grow in popularity and the music scene, such as **Slam Dunk**, **Made in Leeds**, and **Live at Leeds** attract local, regional and national audiences and add to the vibrancy of the city centre.
- 2.2.4 During the same period the city hosted major world class events such as the **Rugby League World Cup in 2013**, the most successful **Grand Départ** ever staged in 2014, the **Rugby World Cup 2015**, the **MOBOs**, **British Art Show 8** the **BBC Sports Personality of the Year**. Whilst also being home to a wealth of **Museums and Galleries**, an inspiring and vibrant cultural scene, sitting alongside strong heritage and history with a shopping destination currently ranked 4th in the UK outside of London.
- 2.2.5 Building on our ambition to continue to stage world class events, the **Columbia World Triathlon Series** delivered in June 2016 was a major success. Over

80,000 spectators lined the route, the city centre and Roundhay Park. The event was broadcast live around the world to over 20 countries for four hours, with one million people watching live in the UK alone. As a result this world class event will return to Leeds in 2017.

3 Main Issues

3.1 Linked to the improved product there has been a noticeable improvement to the performance of the Leeds visitor economy during this period of time.

3.1.1 **VisitLeeds** has measured since 2013 using best practice monitoring recognised by local and national stakeholders including Core Cities, VisitEngland and VisitBritain. July 2016 saw the successful announcement and PR coverage in national and regional titles of the STEAM survey and additional research results to give a robust report on the economic impact of the tourism industry to Leeds. Key headlines are as follows and are illustrated in Appendix 1 (paragraph 1.1):

- Leeds welcomed 26.21 million tourism visits in 2015, a 5.3% increase from 2013 (STEAM 2015).
- The Leeds visitor economy sector is growing at an impressive rate with day visitors up by 4.7% and overnight stays increasing by 12.5 % (STEAM 2015).
- Economic impact delivered by the visitor economy is valued at £1.532 billion, up 10.7% on 2013 (STEAM 2015).
- Employment delivered by this sector is valued at 18,288 full time equivalent jobs, up by 4% on 2013 (STEAM 2015).
- Leeds city centre hotels data shows that average hotel occupancy for 2015 was 78%, up 1.56% on 2013. The average daily rate charged for 2015 was up 16.65% on 2013 (Source STR Global Ltd. Republication or other re-use of this data without the express written permission of STR Global is strictly prohibited). This performance is spread evenly from Monday to Saturday and demonstrates the strength of the leisure and business markets attracted to the city.
- Leeds hosted conferences and meetings delivering over 58,000 events up 4.1% to 2013; attracting 4 million delegates, down 6% to 2013 but an increase of 1.7% to 2014; delivering an economic impact of £501 million to the visitor economy, up 4.7% to 2013 (UKCAMS 2015). Leeds is also successful in sustaining its ranking as 6th in the UK as a conferencing destination (BMEIS 2015).
- During this period VisitLeeds has delivered a step change in strategy and approach as outlined in the June 2016 Growing the Leeds Visitor Economy executive board paper. This includes a range of national and international focused initiatives in target markets including the Leeds Conferencing City Campaign, delivering the 2013-15 VisitEngland “Growing Tourism Locally” regional growth fund (RGF), being a lead destination in delivering the 2015/16 Northern Tourism Growth Fund RGF, and a lead partner in delivering the 2015/16 GREAT UK Challenge Fund.

3.2 In order to build on the progress and success during 2016 and to deliver the Best Council Plan including supporting economic growth and economic opportunities, supporting a resilient, inclusive cultural and creative sector, and the breakthrough project of world class events and a vibrant city centre that all can benefit from, there have been a series of initiatives delivered to further enhance the vibrancy and attractiveness of Leeds city centre.

3.3.1 Public Realm Initiatives

- **Sovereign Square Greenspace** is the most significant piece of new green space in Leeds city centre for decades. The £2.3m scheme, delivered on a former Council-owned surface car park, uses high quality materials and planting to create a distinctive, relaxing space. See Appendix 1 (paragraph 1.2).
- **Cookridge Street Pop-Up Park** is the first of a number of temporary public realm schemes which was provided on a closed to traffic section of Cookridge Street, adjacent to the Henry Moore Institute and Radisson Blu hotel. Surveys revealed that nearly 80% of people spent more time in the city centre as a result. Total cost of £23,000 for reusable infrastructure. See Appendix 1 (paragraph 1.3).
- **Greek Street Pedestrianisation** is being delivered between April and October 2016 on Thursday and Friday evenings and at the weekends. It was inspired by the very successful pedestrianisation of Merrion Street East and is significant as every ground floor unit on the street is a bar/restaurant occupier enabling all to place tables and chairs outside to create “the largest outdoor dining area in Leeds”. This initiative is successfully driving footfall and sales, and is now a key night time destination in the city centre delivered at nil cost to the Council. See Appendix 1 (paragraph 1.4).
- **St John’s Playscape** is a small children’s ‘playscape’ being delivered in St John’s Churchyard from September 2016. Delivered using Section 106 funding, the scheme was aimed at providing somewhere for young children to play within easy reach of the main shopping area, entice families to the city centre. See Appendix 1 (paragraph 1.5).

3.2.2 Millennium Square Summer Series

- The programming of this year’s Summer Series on Millennium Square catered for a wide range of audiences and launched with Ocean Colour Scene performing to a sell-out crowd over two consecutive nights.
- Sports enthusiasts enjoyed watching Wimbledon and 2016 Rio Olympics on the Big Screen. The Square provided a unique setting for an outdoor cinema experience with music concerts covering Motown, Classical and Salsa, all culminating in Pride and the ever popular City Beach.

3.2.3 Leeds Business Improvement District (LeedsBID) Initiatives

- The city's welcome has been improved by a provision of a "relax & chill" project in Park Square, where deck chairs were made available to workers over summer, encouraging vibrancy in Park Square, in support of workers in the financial, legal and professional services.
- Twelve welcome ambassadors in distinctive uniform providing guidance to visitors and all users of the LeedsBID city centre area. This is one of the largest ambassador schemes in the country.
- Four rangers have also been employed with the remit of supplementing the Council's cleansing service. They are a rapid response team whose focus is to uplift the quality of the public realm by providing an additional and quick cleansing response.

3.2.4 VisitLeeds Summer Campaign

- VisitLeeds has delivered an umbrella campaign to raise the profile and drive national attendance to all these initiatives. This has resulted in excellent engagement with increase in traffic to visitleeds.co.uk and on social media. The second phase of our campaign is currently underway and is in partnership with Virgin Trains East Coast, targeting cities and towns on the train line from Leeds to London. Further details are in Appendix 1 (paragraph 1.6).
- The summer period has also seen continuation of the ConferenceLeeds Conferencing City Campaign with critical bids won and some excellent national and international press coverage.

3.4 These initiatives all form part of the Councils strategy to enhance the city's public realm, make it more people friendly, to extend and raise the profile of the offering making it more rounded, and therefore more inclusive to increased dwell time across the day and night time economy for all users of the city.

3.4.1 **Victoria Gate** opening on the 20 October 2016 is an exciting addition to the vibrant shopping scene in Leeds. Delivering John Lewis's first store in the city, the first phase will capture the heritage of the Victoria Quarter and offer a range of high quality and designer brands. Alongside regenerating the physical space, the first phase will also deliver up to 1,000 retail and hospitality jobs. Victoria Gate will in total accommodate around 42,000m² of retail and leisure space taking Leeds from fourth to third in the National Retail Ranking as the best place to shop in the UK. (Source Javelin Group Venue Score 2015 – 2016). This premium aspirational retail centre is expected to attract visitors to the city who normally travel elsewhere. With rooftop restaurants and 17 new brands to Leeds, for some this is their first retail store outside London. The redevelopment of this area of the city sees the refurbishment of **Kirkgate Market** drawing to a close, whilst the expected re-modelling of the **West Yorkshire Playhouse** will start during 2017.

3.5 **Looking forward** it is recognised that the city is about to approach the busy Autumn period which will include a city-centre parade to welcome home all Yorkshire's Olympians and Paralympians in partnership with Welcome to Yorkshire, an enlarged Light Night programme, the Leeds International Film Festival and the Leeds International Concert season. VisitLeeds will commence

delivery of the Autumn/Winter MagicalLeeds national campaign in partnership with all relevant city wide stakeholders and national transport partners. VisitLeeds international activity will ramp up with in market sales and marketing initiatives in China working in partnership with VisitBritain, Hainan Airlines and Marketing Manchester. The team have also been successful as a supporting partner in an incentive travel VisitEngland Discover England Fund bid to commence delivery in October, and they are awaiting decisions on cultural and conferencing bids in September.

4 Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

4.1.1 Consultation and engagement has been embedded in the overall partnership approach including detailed conversations with all relevant stakeholder groups not limited to but including those in accommodation, retail, culture, attractions, hotels, venues, event organisers, transport providers and investors.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

4.2.1 To be a successful visitor destination and deliver a vibrant city centre it is critical that the infrastructure and services are accessible to all. The diverse background of all users of the city centre has been recognised and the offering provided to accommodate to harness this diversity.

4.2.2 Equality and diversity, cohesion and integration have and will be continued to be picked up at various stages of continued implementation.

4.3 Council policies and best council plan

4.3.1 The objectives for the visitor economy and vibrant city centre are in line with the priorities in the LCC Best Council Plan including supporting economic growth and economic opportunities, supporting a resilient, inclusive cultural and creative sector, and the breakthrough project of world class events and a vibrant city centre that all can benefit from.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 The recommendations in this report demonstrate the continued approach of the Council working in partnership with private and public sector stakeholders to drive and support infrastructure developments, visitor economy initiatives, and attracting and delivering city centre events into Leeds.

4.5 Legal Implications, access to information and call In

4.5.1 This is not a key decision and there are no legal or access to information implications.

4.6 Risk management

- 4.6.1 There is a risk that should the commitment to deliver the program of events, city centre initiatives and the VisitLeeds strategy change then there will be an impact and down turn on the Leeds visitor economy. This in turn will impact critical investments including Victoria Gate and hotels and may impact on momentum with the Leeds 2023 European Capital of Culture bid.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 It is clear that Leeds has made significant progress in the development of its visitor economy in recent years. This success has been delivered through strong partnership working linking private sector development and investment alongside initiatives which the Council has also bought forward.
- 5.2 The work during Summer 2016 to further enliven Leeds city centre has been well received and supports the further development of this approach and in particular the need to maintain collaborative working across all sectors including major private sector investors and stakeholders, Welcome To Yorkshire, LeedsBID and the Council.

6 Recommendations

Executive Boards is recommended to note:

- 6.1 The continued growth of the visitor economy figures between 2013 to 2015 which is supported by the VisitLeeds strategy, the improved product, the successful delivery of world class events and the continued momentum this gives towards the Leeds 2023 European Capital of Culture bid.
- 6.2 The Council to work with the Leeds Business Improvement District to seek to align their marketing and promotional activities with the work of VisitLeeds as the principal destination management organisation leading on visitor economy.
- 6.3 The successful implementation of a range of interventions to embrace the vibrancy of Leeds city centre to endorse the further development and financial support to deliver tactical interventions such as the pop up parks in the future in order to improve the attractiveness and vibrancy of Leeds city centre as a visitor destination.
- 6.4 Build on success demonstrated to date to ensure the Council continues to take advantage of critical developments including Victoria Gate and Kirkgate Market, Leeds Business Improvement District and world class events hosted in Leeds.
- 6.5 Continue to support the strong city collaborative approach with all partners to increase momentum and ramp up activity in the context of national and international competition.

7 Background documents¹

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

7.1 None.