Tourism VFM Task Group Notes

Notes of the meeting of the Tourism VFM Task Group held on Wednesday 8 August 2012 at the Civic Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde

Members present:

Councillor E Anderton   Councillor Brooks
Councillor M Anderton   Councillor M Gandhi
Councillor Lady Atkins  Councillor Cocker
Councillor Balmain      Councillor Perkin

Officers present:

Duncan Jowitt, Democratic Services Officer
Andy Heath, eCommunications Officer

TM.47 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Anderton, Hewitt, Turner and Wilson.

TM.48 Declarations of Interest

None.

TM.49 Notes of previous meeting

The notes of the meeting held on Tuesday 3 July 2012 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

TM.50 Use of the Internet to promote tourism in Wyre

At their previous meeting the task group had asked for more detailed information about the way in which the Internet is used, and how it might be developed in the future, to promote tourism in Wyre. Andy Heath, Wyre’s eCommunications Officer, attended the meeting to provide the
group with information on the latest trends in electronic communication and the Internet.

The main points made were that

- There had been a 10% increase in access to the website using mobile devices over the last 12 months largely due to people now being able to use touchscreen technology on their mobile phone or i-Pad to access the Internet.
- A laptop or home PC was no longer necessary to access the Internet due to mobile technology and was likely to be less used in the future.
- Any “Wyre app” that might be developed would have built-in obsolescence because of the fast pace of change occurring in modern technology. Because of the cost of development of apps for different platforms, it will be preferable to design the web site in such a way that where a mobile device was used to access it, it would be displayed on screen with a similar look and feel to a mobile phone app and could also then be developed to work with any new emergent technologies.
- The nature of mobile technology made council boundaries even less relevant to the user and would necessitate closer links with neighbouring authorities to design systems that would work seamlessly together.
- The fact that tourism information for individual towns in Wyre was contained on the Visit Wyre website that encompassed all of Wyre does not affect most people searching for information about a specific town in the borough as a Google search provides a link to the relevant pages within the Visit Wyre website. 54% of visitors to the council’s website come via searches on Google.
- The increase in use of mobile technology could make touch screen information points quickly become obsolete.
- People now used the trip advisor website to decide where to stay or where to eat, even though there had been instances where people had been known to have been paid to post good or bad reviews.

The Group also discussed

- whether, rather than including only members of Wyre Tourism Association, all relevant accommodation and other tourist information should be listed on the Visit Wyre website with a disclaimer stating that inclusion does not imply a recommendation of any of the businesses listed.
• whether it might be worthwhile investing in local privately-run websites.
• whether it was the council’s business to be promoting hotels and other businesses reliant on the tourist trade.

Andy Heath had circulated statistics of visitors to the council website. And agreed to email statistics for visitors to the Visit Wyre website to the group the following day.

**TM.51 Next Steps**

Councillor Brooks circulated a list of members of the Wyre Tourism Association (WTA), bringing the group’s attention to the fact that most of the WTA members were in the rural areas and that the coastal/urban areas of Wyre were very poorly represented.

The task group asked for Alexander Holt to provide a summary of the responses so far to the Wyre Visitor Guide questionnaire if possible.

To draft a report to Cabinet concentrating on recommendations regarding WTA with a further report to come later regarding Tourist Information Centres.

**TM.52 Date and time of next meeting**

September date to be agreed to discuss the draft report.