

# Report

<b>Body:</b>	Scrutiny Committee
<b>Date:</b>	3rd December 2006 – original report 20 <sup>th</sup> November 2007 – Updated
<b>Subject:</b>	Coach Tourism
<b>Report Of:</b>	Coach Scrutiny Task Group
<b>Ward(s)</b>	All
<b>Purpose</b>	To update Scrutiny Committee on the progress of the action plan for the value of coach tourism.
<b>Decision Type:</b>	Not applicable
<b>Recommendation:</b>	The key recommendations from the progress review are as follows:  (a) The progress review will confirm that Scrutiny should note that coach tourism continues to maintain its market share (b) That coach tourism continues to have a sustainable future and would continue to generate income to Eastbourne’s economy (c) That the updated marketing strategy for the town will commit to the industry whilst developing new markets for the future (d) That the updated Action Plan continues to be monitored as part of the long term marketing strategy for the town.
<b>Contact:</b>	Annie Wills, Tourism Manager – Economy Tourism & Planning, Telephone 01323 415410 or internally on extension 5410. E-mail address: annie.wills@eastbourne.gov.uk

## **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> December further recommended that an Action Plan be compiled detailing points to follow up. This report will focus on the Action Plan and agreed timelines for delivery.

1.2 The Scrutiny Board consisted of Councillor Barry Taylor (Chairman) and Councillor Mrs Irene Sims. Detailed below are details of the scope for the review:

- Usage of Eastbourne by coach companies and hotels
- Eastbourne Buses – use of facilities by coach companies
- Research into the potential increase in coaching tourism
- Facilities required by coach users and drivers

- Ways of increasing the Tourism spend in Eastbourne

1.3 A programme of review was agreed which would include:

- Volume and Value
- Parking
- Current and future markets
- Facilities for the future
- Stakeholders questions
- Consultation list of selected coach companies and hoteliers

1.4 Conversely the members were advised that a year long survey namely the strategic intentions of coach tour operators, had been undertaken by the University of Brighton and Eastbourne Borough Council. This comprehensive research included face to face interviews with Managing Directors of key coach companies, including Shearings and Wallace Arnold. (now merged as one company)

## **2.0 The Review**

2.1 As part of the review, research was undertaken to establish the priorities for coach drivers. As part of this research a comparison study was undertaken to compare the coach park facilities provided at Eastbourne with competing destinations.

2.2 Further research was undertaken to establish the changes in the trends of coach tourism, along with the reliance on the industry.

2.3 Additional research was completed to confirm the number of hotels that have changed or closed over the past 10 years.

## **3.0 Action Plan**

3.1 The progress of the Action Plan was monitored and updated in January 2007.

3.2 The Action Plan has been further updated showing the progress to date. The revised Action Plan is attached as **Appendix 1**

## **4.0 Resource Implications**

4.1 Financial - There are no financial implications arising from the Scrutiny Review or the progress review.

4.2 Staffing - There are no staffing implications arising from the outcome of this review.

## **5.0 Environmental and Community Safety Implication**

5.1 There are no implications from this review

## **6.0 Conclusion**

6.1 A year after the Scrutiny report was completed, coach tourism continues to maintain its share of the market. Whilst gradual changes within the industry

have been identified, for example the merger of Wallace Arnold and Shearings has seen a shift in the companies marketing strategy, with targeted brochures and a lively, young website. Furthermore WA&Shearings coach tours are predominantly itinerary led.

- 6.2 In May 2007 one of the key coach hotels on Eastbourne seafront took part in a TV documentary called the Hotel Inspector. This programme advised the proprietors to move away from the high occupancy/low turnover coach market to the lower volume/higher turnover independent traveller. This hotel has significantly invested in updating rooms. After the TV programme all of the upgraded rooms were booked for the foreseeable future.
- 6.3 The Scrutiny Board undertook the review on the basis of establishing the value of coach tourism. The research undertaken has explored reliance on this industry whilst trying to ascertain the long term aspirations of coaching hotels. The key points from interviews and research are listed below:
- Most hotel owners work to a five year vision and no further ahead
  - Overall the expectation is that the market will continue
  - Whilst the market will continue, it will demand more, interestingly enough the hotels think that EBC should provide more
  - Hoteliers are reluctant to invest strategically or financially to strengthen their position and keep their share of the market. i.e meeting the higher expectations of coach travellers, ensuite rooms, themed breaks
6. The review of the scrutiny report confirms that the value of coaching tourism continues to add to the economy and is sustainable and that Eastbourne Borough Council continues to facilitate the offer, whilst developing a longer term marketing strategy to ensure the sustainability of the prominent hotels that rely on this market segment.

**Sarah Lamy Assistant Director –Economy Tourism & Planning**

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**Background Papers:**

The Background Papers used in compiling this report were as follows:

Strategic Intentions of Coach Tour Operators – *University of Brighton Coastal Tourism Research Unit*

Cambridge Model Tourism Statistics – *Tourism South East*

To inspect or obtain copies of background papers please refer to the contact officer listed above.