

## **Preparations for managing anticipated increased visitor numbers – Summer 2021**

- Summary:** With continued uncertainty about the opportunities for people to take overseas holidays this summer due to the ongoing COVID pandemic, it is expected that demand for staycation holidays in the UK will be strong; such that tourist destinations, such as North Norfolk, will need to make some contingency arrangements to manage larger numbers of staying and day visitors to the district than might be the case in a more “normal” year. This report details the consideration the District Council is giving to the management of larger numbers of visitors to the District during the summer of 2021.
- Options considered:** Do nothing and potentially see overcrowded seaside resort locations where a lack of parking, overcrowded beaches and town / village centres mean that visitors do not have a positive experience of the District and may not make repeat visits in future years.
- Conclusions:** That the Council seeks to take a number of actions as detailed in the report to accommodate larger numbers of visitors to the District during this summer as part of the District’s Recovery from the COVID pandemic in a way which seeks to minimise transmission of the virus, protects local residents and visitors, supports local businesses and economic recovery in the short, medium and longer terms.
- Recommendations:** Council is asked to note the report and actions proposed to accommodate large numbers of visitors to the District this summer, including:-
- Provision of advanced road signage promoting the large capacity of the Runton Road Car Park in Cromer, including the overflow “Carnival” field;
  - Proposed provision of chargeable weekend and Bank Holiday parking at the District Council’s Holt Road offices in Cromer;
  - Exploring the operation of a Park and Ride service to serve Sheringham in conjunction with a private landowner in the A148 corridor to the south of the town, with a frequent bus service to the town centre (to operate throughout July and August);
  - Exploring the provision of a food court area from which to serve takeaway food / street food by local businesses from the vacant former tennis court area of North Lodge Park, with additional

- seating and bins in the park to reduce queues and congestion in the town centre
- Refreshing our social distancing measures and signage as appropriate
- With Visit North Norfolk promote less busy parts of the District for visitors to explore to “avoid the crowds” through social media and other campaigns
- Review the provision and servicing of litter bins and public toilets in main visitor locations in the District to manage larger visitor numbers
- Provision of a composting toilet at the Beach Road car park in Weybourne in response to increased numbers of visitors to this car park.

Reason for Recommendations:- To ensure the Council makes appropriate advance planning arrangements to accommodate larger numbers of visitors to the District’s principal coastal resorts over the 2021 summer.

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Richard Kershaw	Ward(s) affected:- All, but particularly coastal wards and wards in The Broads area
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**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 With continued uncertainty about the opportunities for people to take overseas holidays this summer due to the ongoing COVID pandemic, it is expected that demand for staycation holidays in the UK will be strong; such that tourist destinations, such as North Norfolk, will need to make some contingency arrangements to manage larger numbers of staying and day visitors to the district than might be the case in a more “normal” year.
- 1.2 This report details the consideration the District Council is giving to the management of larger numbers of visitors to the District during the summer of 2021.

**2. Key issues**

- 2.1 As the UK emerges from long periods of national lockdown and uncertainty remains about overseas travel, demand for UK holidays is strong, with all types of accommodation in the District reporting very high levels of bookings throughout the whole of the summer.
- 2.2 The Council can therefore anticipate long periods of the summer having large numbers of visitors, perhaps as many people as might be seen during the week of the Cromer Carnival in a more “normal” year. This will create pressures particularly on our coastal communities in terms of the availability of parking,

servicing of public toilets, emptying litter bins, managing queues outside of takeaway premises etc.

- 2.3 Planning a positive response to this opportunity / challenge will seek to provide visitors with a positive experience of the District, hopefully encouraging further visits in future, providing opportunities for local businesses and employment and supporting the District's economy recover from the uncertainties of the prolonged COVID restrictions and lockdown; whilst also respecting some of our residents hesitancy around seeing large numbers of visitors return to the District.

### **3. Proposed response**

- 3.1 A key issue for the Council in accommodating additional visitors to the District will be the provision and management of car parking. Many of the District Council's coastal car parks already operate close to capacity in the peak summer weeks of July and August, such that the identification and provision of additional parking sites might be required – particularly in Cromer, Sheringham and Wells. The Council has therefore assessed the potential to provide additional parking in these towns and has developed the following proposals:-

- In Cromer, as the town's Carnival is not going to be staged this year because of the uncertainties around COVID, social distancing measures etc, opportunity exists to accommodate large numbers of cars, motor homes etc for daily parking on the Runton Road Car Park site, including the overspill Carnival Field and it is therefore proposed that we look at additional directional signage on main approach roads into the town directing vehicles to that car park, where it is believed capacity would exist on most days. Consideration is also being given to whether additional ticket machines can be installed on the car park and provision of additional signage promoting payment by phone to manage queues at payment machines.
- Further, it is suggested that the car park at the Council's Holt Road offices be made available for weekend and Bank Holiday parking with charges levied at the Resort charging tariff, with a ticket machine installed for weekend and Bank Holiday charging periods.
- At Sheringham, opportunities to secure additional parking close to the town centre and seafront are severely constrained such that consideration is being given to working with a private landowner in the A148 corridor to the south of the town and a local bus company to provide a Park and Ride facility for the town – piloted during the week of the 29<sup>th</sup> May (Spring Bank Holiday week) and then in the July / August period (dates to be confirmed) possibly between the hours of 10:00 – 19:00.
- In Wells discussions are being held with the Wensum Trust about whether additional parking could be secured on either the Alderman Peel High School and/or Wells Primary School sites for the school summer holiday periods.
- Further details of each of these proposals will be confirmed and promoted in the coming days and weeks as final arrangements are made.

- 3.2 As queues have built, particularly outside of takeaway premises on narrow pavements in Cromer, in recent days and based on experience of last summer,

thought is being given to operating a “food court” on the former tennis courts in North Lodge Park from which takeaway food / street food by local businesses could be served with additional seating and bins in the park. The Council has already granted a licence to The Gangway business to serve alcohol in part of the park, initially on Friday and Saturday evenings recognising the demand for outdoor service as part of the current Roadmap arrangements. Discussions are therefore taking place with the Chamber of Trade about how such a food court arrangement might operate with priority given to local businesses.

- 3.3 The Council is refreshing its social distancing and “You are Welcome” signage across the District to reinforce the Hands, Face, Space, Fresh Air messages, which it is believed will continue to be advice throughout the summer period in attempting to minimise transmission in the months ahead alongside the ongoing roll-out of the vaccine programme to younger age groups some of which are unlikely to receive both vaccines before the end of the summer, such that caution of crowded indoor spaces will need to be maintained.
- 3.4 With Visit North Norfolk the Council will promote less busy parts of the District for visitors to explore to “avoid the crowds” through social media and other campaigns. Whilst it is anticipated that the District’s main coastal resorts and some coastal villages will be very busy, if not crowded, at times this summer with large numbers of staycation holidaymakers and day visitors, there are quieter parts of the District where people can explore, picnic etc and where they too will be welcomed by local pubs, cafes and restaurants. Essentially North Norfolk has lots of space for people to enjoy and explore away from the crowds and an opportunity exists to promote these places too for visitors this summer.
- 3.5 Given the large number of visitors anticipated and many people expected to bring picnics or purchase takeaway food to eat and enjoy outdoors, the Council is reviewing the provision and servicing of litter bins in main visitor locations in the District so as to maintain a clean and tidy environment upon which the Council has a strong record. Similarly, we will review the frequency of servicing public toilets in response to higher levels of use in conjunction with our contracting partner, Serco.
- 3.6 Finally, the Council is proposing to provide a composting toilet at the Beach Road car park in Weybourne in response to increased numbers of visitors to this car park where the lack of utilities mean provision of a traditional toilet block would be very costly to provide.

#### **4. Corporate Plan Objectives**

- 4.1 All of the above actions support the Council’s Corporate Plan objectives of supporting the local economy, quality of life, maintaining an improving our local environment and the Council’s financial sustainability alongside the need for the Council to support and promote the Recovery of our economy from COVID.

#### **5. Medium Term Financial Strategy**

- 5.1 These proposals sit outside of the Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy but can be resourced by the Council from funding received from the Government through the Welcome Back Fund and Controlling Outbreak

Management Fund programmes; so shouldn't require financing from the Council's base budget or have long –term implications on the Council's budget.

## **6. Financial and Resource Implications**

- 6.1 The Council will incur additional costs in managing large numbers of visitors to the District over the summer months through expenditure on increased street and beach cleaning, emptying of bins, cleansing of public toilets etc such that making advance preparations to respond to increased visitor numbers is good practice.
- 6.2 Some of the costs of the measures outlined in the report can be met from external Government funding through the Welcome Back Fund and Controlling Outbreak Management Fund programmes and it would be anticipated that additional income will be earned by the Council from car parking charges, albeit that additional costs will also be incurred in the management of car parks, employment of COVID Support Officers and Foreshore Inspectors to provide a safe welcome to visitors during which it is believed that some COVID-secure measures will continue to operate.
- 6.3 It is believed that the costs of the additional measures proposed can however be met through the grant funding programmes detailed and additional car park income generated through the additional measures proposed, with no costs having to be met from the Council's base budget.

## **7. Legal Implications**

- 7.1 Consideration will be given to the legal implications of the proposals, but in the main the measures proposed are on Council owned land. Where third party land is proposed for parking relevant contracts ./ partnership agreements will be put in place to ensure that both the Council's and the third party providers interests are clearly outlined and understood in advance.

## **8. Impact on Climate Change**

- 8.1 None directly – whilst a larger number of staycation holidaymakers will result in fewer airmiles in a national context, some environmental pressures might be increased locally through high numbers of visitors to North Norfolk, which the proposals outlined in this report seek to address.

## **9. Equality and Diversity**

- 9.1 This report does not raise any specific equality and diversity issues.

## **10. Section 17 Crime and Disorder considerations**

- 10.1 Not applicable

## **11. Recommendation**

**Council is asked to note the report and actions proposed to accommodate large numbers of visitors to the District this summer, including:-**

- **Provision of advanced road signage promoting the large capacity of the Runton Road Car Park in Cromer, including the overflow “Carnival” field;**
- **Proposed provision of chargeable weekend and Bank Holiday parking at the District Council’s Holt Road offices in Cromer;**
- **Operation of a Park and Ride service to serve Sheringham in conjunction with a private landowner in the A148 corridor to the south of the town, with a frequent bus service to the town centre (to operate throughout July and August);**
- **Exploring the provision of a food court area from which to serve takeaway food / street food by local businesses from the vacant former tennis court area of North Lodge Park, with additional seating and bins in the park to reduce queues and congestion in the town centre**
- **Refreshing our social distancing measures and signage as appropriate**
- **Review the provision and servicing of litter bins and public toilets in main visitor locations in the District to manage larger visitor numbers**
- **Provision of a composting toilet at the Beach Road car park in Weybourne in response to increased numbers of visitors to this car park.**