

Item

WALKING TOURS

To:

Councillor Nicky Massey, Executive Councillor for Transport and
Community Safety

Environment & Community Scrutiny Committee 16/01/2020

Report by:

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Wards affected:

All

Not a Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 At the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee of 27 June 2019, the Executive Councillor approved a recommendation to monitor the situation with regards to how walking tours are being sold and also monitor the frequency of excessively large tour groups in the city centre, including on King's Parade during the summer, by:
- a) Advising coach companies and tour groups and other organisations hosting large visitor groups that the City Council supports a maximum of 20 people in any single group, and
 - b) Reviewing the issue of walking tour groups and reporting to Committee in January 2020 if the problem of large walking tour groups persists, including considering the option of consulting on a Public Spaces Protection Order and other options to set a maximum tour group size if there is assessed to be a serious problem.
- 1.2 Following the approval of the recommendation, a Working Group was set up to look at possible solutions to the issues raised in relation to walking tours. The Group included representation from the City Council's Community Safety Team, Corporate Marketing, Streets and

Open Spaces, Property Services, Legal Practice and (externally) Visit Cambridge and Beyond and Cambridge BID.

- 1.3 This report details the actions considered by the Working Group and recommendations for the future.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended to:
- Officially request Visit Cambridge and Beyond to include the management of walking tours in the development of their Destination Management Plan (DMP).
 - Approve the continuation of the monitoring of the sale and size of walking tours during the 2020 season in order to inform the development of the DMP.
 - Continue the dialogue with the County Council to examine the possibilities of coach permit parking in the city to include conditions to limit the numbers in any tour group.
 - Start a dialogue with the County Council to consider making park and ride sites more attractive to coach tours and to include incentives to direct groups from the sites to official walking tours of limited numbers.
 - Use the outcomes from the negotiations to inform the development of the DMP.

3. Background

Monitoring of walking tours, including the sale of tours and the size of groups

- 3.1 There were 22 complaints received by the City Council, in relation to walking tours and large groups, between May, when the monitoring began following a number of complaints to councillors, and December 2019. A summary of the complaints is attached as Appendix A.
- 3.2 The Executive Councillor, when recommending support of tour groups of a maximum of 20, did so on the basis that this is the maximum number in groups led by Blue Badge Guides and is considered the optimum number for engagement and enjoyment of the tour.
- 3.3 It should be noted that the complaints received are not solely concerning the size of walking groups, but include other issues related to the city as a tourist attraction and the perceived impact on residents and visitors. There is still some concern that touting generally impacts on the quality of experience of the city whether for residents or visitors and that the sale of walking tours by touts is at least in part responsible for large groups and the resultant nuisance.

- 3.4 A search of 'TripAdvisor' indicated seven operators offering walking tours some of which operate a free, tip-based model and therefore tend to generate large walking tour groups. It is suggested that some incentive to operators to move away from such models be included in the development of the Destination Management Plan (DMP) discussed in paragraph 3.6.
- 3.5 Guidance was circulated to Cambridge BID's City Ambassadors and Cambridge City's enforcement officers, to encourage the reporting of instances where large groups and walking tours were acting anti-socially or causing nuisance. No additional reports were received, however, it was already late in the season when they were asked to report and it is likely that given the opportunity to monitor a full season in 2020 a more detailed picture will emerge.

Advising coach companies tour groups and organisations hosting large visitor groups

- 3.6 The Working Group, including Visit Cambridge and Beyond (VCB) considered that a letter advising companies and organisations that the City Council supports a maximum of 20 people in any group, would be ineffective. However, VCB and Cambridge BID felt strongly that the emphasis should be on welcoming visitors and developing, promoting and encouraging sales of a great visitor experience. This approach would fit with the VCB's core purpose and align with plans to develop a DMP for Cambridge and the immediate surrounding area. The plan will be led by VCB and delivered in partnership with the City Council and will seek to address issues including coach access and overcrowding in busy months. Any interventions will be evidence-based and could be informed by issues raised by the public.
- 3.7 In the meantime, the VCB will include in the 'Information for Coach Drivers' section on their website, a message promoting the benefits of exploring the city in smaller groups. VCB are also in the process of commissioning a new website, due to launch in April 2020, which will include a dedicated Travel Trade section and any messaging will have significantly higher profile at that stage.
- 3.8 VCB is also working with the Cambridge China Centre on a conference with the aim of developing closer links with group operators bringing Chinese visitors to the city. They will be reinforcing the promotion of smaller tour groups at the two-day conference.

Request to the County Council to consider permits

- 3.9 Parking Control at the County Council was asked to consider the introduction of a permit system for coach parking in some areas of the city. The idea was that conditions of parking would be attached to the permit. This could include the need for a ratio of tour guides to visitors and control of the numbers in each walking tour group. They were asked to consider the option of parking permits for coaches at Queens Road, Trumpington Street and Chesterton Lane where there is no control of coach parking. They were not in favour of a permit system as they felt that it would merely result in coach companies moving to other areas of the city creating further issues for residents, such as parking on yellow lines or in residential parking bays. However, the Working Group felt that a permit system that would enable enforcement of a maximum group size was worth further consideration as they were not aware of alternative coach drop off points in the vicinity of the current sites without breaching parking controls.
- 3.10 The County Council also confirmed that there were no dedicated coach parking facilities in Cambridge, however, Madingley Road Park & Ride and the Cambridge Golf Range on Cowley Road are sometimes used at a cost of £10 per stay. There may be some work to do with the County Council around making these sites more attractive to coach parking and using the opportunity to direct groups from the sites to official walking tours of limited numbers.

Researching best practice in other Local Area Authorities

- 3.11 Desk top research was carried out to discover how other local authorities deal with walking tours. There were no indications that other districts had issues with walking tour sizes and therefore no controls in place were found. However, Tower Hamlets has a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in place to prohibit any form of touting or soliciting which is restricted to Brick Lane. Discussion on the introduction of a PSPO to address walking tour issues in Cambridge is presented below.

Introduction of a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO)

- 3.12 The Working Group discussed the introduction of a PSPO but considered this to be an inappropriate way to manage walking tours as the issues raised, such as the size and inconvenience caused by the tours, are unlikely to fit the criteria for the introduction of a PSPO, and the Working Group believed it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to enforce.

- 3.13 The legal requirements for the introduction of a PSPO require the Council to undertake the necessary consultation and to meet the conditions in section 59(2)(3) of the Act regarding activities in the area.
- 3.14 The first condition is that:
- (a) activities carried on in a public place within the Council's area have had a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality,
 - or
 - (b) it is likely that activities will be carried on in a public place within that area and that they will have such an effect.
- 3.15 The second condition is that the effect, or likely effect, of the activities:
- (a) is or is likely to be, of a persistent or continuing nature,
 - (b) is, or is likely to be, such as to make the activities unreasonable, and
 - (c) justifies the restrictions imposed by the notice.
- 3.16 The Working Group did not feel that, with the currently available evidence, restrictions on the size of walking groups would be justified within the legal requirements. Cambridge BID expressed concerns about limiting groups of people lawfully gathering on the streets through the use of a PSPO. It was felt that it would be sending out the wrong message to visitors, who they are keen to invite to the city on behalf of the businesses that they represent. The Working Group also felt that other approaches, as discussed in this report, should be tried before going down an enforcement path. Advice from the City Council's Legal Practice was that other methods to address the size and inconvenience of tour groups should be tried first.

Next Steps

- 3.17 By the time the Committee had taken place and the Working Group was set up, much of the busiest part of the season for walking tours had passed. Therefore:
- It was felt that further monitoring regarding walking tours would help to give a clearer picture of the issues arising and so walking tours should continue to be monitored through the 2020 season.
 - Further monitoring would also help to inform the development of the Destination Management Plan (DMP) and help in establishing initiatives.
 - It is suggested that follow up negotiations with the County Council, to explore the possibility of coach parking permits with conditions attached around the size of tour groups, be pursued.

- It is also suggested that a dialogue be started with the County Council to consider making park and ride sites more attractive for coach parking including incentives to direct groups to official tours of limited numbers.
- The inclusion of the management of walking tours in the development of the DMP is essential.

3.18 The recommendations in paragraph 2 are based on the conclusions above.

4. Implications

a) Financial Implications

None for the current recommendations.

b) Equality and Poverty Implications

Not currently, but it may be necessary in the future depending on the outcomes from the monitoring if approved.

c) Environmental Implications

None at present.

d) Procurement Implications

None.

e) Community Safety Implications

As indicated in the report.

5. Consultation and communication considerations

A working group was set up consisting of representatives from City Council, Visit Cambridge and Cambridge BID

6. Background papers

a) [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#)

b) [Anti-social behaviour powers: Statutory guidance for frontline professionals](#)

c) [Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee: Decisions 27 June 2019](#)

7. Appendices

Appendix A – Walking Tour - complaints

8. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact

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