

## POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE – 21 APRIL 2010

### TOURISM INITIATIVE

#### INTRODUCTION

1. Members will be aware that the District Council intended to close the Visitor Information Centre after Easter this year. A separate item is included on the Agenda to enable the District Councillors, who are also Town Councillors, to report on the outcome of discussions on this item.
2. Elsewhere on the Agenda, there is also a request from Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee for approval to seek the District Council's agreement to use Section 106 monies to undertake a Feasibility Study for works to The Mount Open Space and Narrow Lane to create a viewing platform to give a 360° view across all of the land surrounding the town. This would provide an improvement to The Mount Open Space and Narrow Lane and an unusual tourist attraction.

#### TOURISM IN THE TOWN

3. Ringwood has rightly expressed its location as being the 'Gateway' to the New Forest National Park. That is correct, but it does perhaps take away from the town the fact that it has as many tourist attractions as some other places in the New Forest that market themselves as visitor destinations.
4. Your Officers have looked at this issue and also the economic benefits that would accrue to the town and local traders. It is believed that with the existing attractions and some of those that are currently in the pipeline, it would be perfectly possible for Ringwood to not only market itself as a Gateway to the National Park, but also as a place to visit for a day out. It appears to Officers that the problem is not so much that there are no attractions in the town, but more that they have not been publicised or marketed in a co-ordinated manner.
5. A co-ordinated approach to a marketing campaign for the town could highlight the following tourist facilities and visitor attractions. These are not listed in any particular order and Members may be aware of other facilities which should be included :-

The Owl, Raptor & Reptile Centre  
The Town & Country Experience  
Tour of Ringwood Brewery  
The Castleman Trail Walk and Avon Valley footpath  
Danny Cracknell Pocket Park – the riverside park  
Raymond Brown Nature Reserve  
The Mount Viewing Platform (subject to Council approval) giving access along Narrow Lane to the National Park  
Historic town centre with the Market Place incorporating the Jubilee Lamp and adjoining Church and brick effect tiled buildings  
The quality shopping facilities at the Furlong Centre  
The quaint, local shops in and around the town centre and High Street

The horse-drawn Omnibus

The wide variety of cafes and restaurants catering for all tastes

6. It is recognised that the list may not be complete and it does not include any reference to places for overnight stays. Nonetheless, it is believed that there are possibilities that would enable a good 'day out in Ringwood' programme to be achieved.
7. In addition, there are also a number of one-off 'events' which enhance the attractiveness of the town for tourists. Clearly, this would include the Festival weekends, which incorporate the British Pedal Car Grand Prix. In future, the Festival Committee is looking to hold a Rock Concert in the years when there is not a Pedal Car Grand Prix. Similarly, there is the regular Carnival procession every year and there are the Christmas activities organised by the Chamber of Trade. Taken together, these additional short term attractions can add to the possibilities available to the town.
8. The National Park Authority has to date concentrated its publicity and marketing on the National Park itself. Only a small part of the Park and, indeed, not a part which attracts large numbers of visitors, is actually within Ringwood. However, it is understood that District Councillors for the town have had discussions with the National Park Authority on this point. The District Council also does not appear to have an effective publicity or marketing programme for the town.
9. The Town Council does not have the resources or expertise to promote and resource marketing and publicity for tourism. However, Officers believe that it would be appropriate to consider trying to facilitate more interest in tourism by taking action in a similar manner to that taken by the Town Council for the re-establishment of the Twinning Link with Pont Audemer. For twinning, there were several Town Councillors who were interested in taking the lead, at least initially, which appears to have led to the re-invigoration of the Twinning Group. That Group no longer needs administrative support from the Town Council and is fully self-sufficient.
10. It is therefore suggested that the Town Council could consider following a similar route to re-establish a Ringwood Tourism Group by promoting one or two public meetings to try to stimulate public interest and involvement. If there is sufficient interest, then the group would operate independently of the Council. If there is no interest, it would not be possible to take this initiative forward.

**For further information, please contact :**

Terry Simpson, Town Clerk

Tel: 01425 473883 or e-mail : [Town.Council@ringwood.gov.uk](mailto:Town.Council@ringwood.gov.uk)