

RUGBY BOROUGH COUNCIL

QUESTION PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 10

COUNCIL – 15 DECEMBER 2020

QUESTION A

Councillor Douglas to ask the Growth and Investment Portfolio Holder, Councillor Mrs Simpson-Vince:

“Following the announced plans for a major regeneration of the town centre with the development of an ambitious new strategic masterplan, can the Portfolio Holder outline what initial plans Rugby Borough Council has to promote and maximise tourism to support the local economy?”

Councillor Mrs Simpson-Vince, Growth and Investment Portfolio Holder, to reply as follows:

“In answer to Cllr Douglas’s question, there are two current initiatives in progress that are relevant to maximising tourism in support of the local economy as described below.

Firstly, Rugby Borough Council has recently entered into a partnership with destination management organisation, Shakespeare’s England (SE). SE works to promote Warwickshire as a destination for tourists in the UK and overseas and work as part of the UK VisitBritain tourism network. Whilst having a Warwickshire-wide remit, SE has in the past mainly received engagement from South Warwickshire districts. Our new partnership with them will correct this imbalance and enable the Council to participate in website promotion of Rugby’s tourism assets as well as joint campaigns to attract tourists to the county, enticing them to stay in Rugby accommodation and visit heritage attractions and businesses here.

Shakespeare’s England has an international reach with key members including Birmingham Airport, Royal Shakespeare Company, Warwick Castle and the British Motor Museum. The partnership with SE will ensure a collaborative and strategic approach to the Council’s tourism marketing, PR, and social media activities.

As a result of this partnership, Rugby Borough Council will have a dedicated website space for the promotion of Rugby Art Gallery and Museum, World Rugby Hall of Fame, The Benn Hall and Caldecott Park. The aim is to progress and reach privately-owned hospitality and tourism venues to invite them to feature their venues on Rugby’s dedicated webpage within the SE website.

The Place Marketing Officer for Rugby Borough Council is already working as part of Shakespeare’s England tourism team providing the information to collaborate on tourism schemes, initiatives, and campaigns. In addition to this, the Council will be engaged with Shakespeare’s England tourism forums and intelligence gathering. This will be vital for sharing best practice and to monitor the success of the schemes.

It is hoped that as we enter a recovery phase of COVID-19, then this will offer additional support to our businesses and encourage visitors and international tourism to the town. This complements our project to regenerate Rugby town centre and support the local economy as it will encourage new visitors and overnight stays.

Secondly, we are working with Warwickshire County Council, Warwickshire districts and WCC-commissioned consultants Creative Giants (CG) on a project to use art and culture to increase the vitality of vibrance of our town centres. CG will co-ordinate the delivery of artist interventions in key locations across Warwickshire and we plan to have one in Rugby through the creation of what is known as a Social Hub or Parklet. The intention is that these Parklets will activate spaces in playful ways and enable people to come together.

Artists are invited to design a Parklet-style Social Hub that includes opportunities for seating, planting and recreational activities. The briefing process will focus on the design and CG plan to pair artists with an appropriate designer to make the design feasible and suitable for outdoor spaces. As well as being inviting dwell spaces, these could also include platforms for busking and local live performance.

We plan to engage CG with our commissioned regeneration consultants to ensure that this opportunity is full explored as part of the refreshed town centre vision and masterplan.”