

Report to Leisure and Environment Committee 8 March 2023

Subject: Employment of a Marketing and Events Coordinator

1. Background

It has become apparent in recent years that to support the economic sustainability of the town its assets and events need to be better marketed. More visitors will spend more in the shops and cafes and increase attendance at the many cultural events. Residents will benefit from the vibrant shopping centre as well as more and better events catering for all ages and interests.

The action plan of the People and Places initiative identified the need for a marketing strategy and ESC have funded workshops to help progress this. That is nearing completion with the East Suffolk Town's Initiative (ESTI) money, recently granted to Halesworth, available to complete it and to employ the technical expertise needed to improve the digital access points (landing page website, social media etc)

The next longer-term need is to have resources to 'get the messages across' on all forms of media in ways that will encourage visitors. In the budget for 2023-24 it was agreed that £25K per year for two years would be made available from reserves so such resources could be employed.

A steering group comprised of the Tourism Group, Business Group, HTC and ESC has worked together and what follows has been agreed as the best way forward.

2. Marketing and Events Coordinator

Aim/Role

Market Halesworth's many assets to enhance its vitality and ensure its future viability as a good place to visit, live and work.

Support the economic development of the town centre and its key cultural and heritage assets so ensuring the longer-term sustainability as a vibrant market town for both residents and visitors.

Key Tasks:

1. *Create the unifying messages*– use and build on what is there already and is being used e.g the H. The reports of People and Places, Xtrahead, Yellobelly/Tourism Group, Wayfinding and Signage project, Neighbourhood Plan express similar core thoughts in describing the town and what its key assets are. Develop broad brand guidelines that include the agreed messages, guidelines on style (colour, fonts) and bank of imagery that local groups can use if they chose to on their own websites

2. *Establish a unified digital access point* – at present there is a range of websites none of which provide or signpost all the information needed by someone wanting to visit or for residents wanting to know what is on. Create a landing point from which all of the above will be captured. The agreed unifying message needs to be at the heart of the website.
3. *Maintain and enhance this 'landing page' website* – once established the website will need regular updating to encourage visitor and resident engagement and continually improve its position on Google rankings.
4. *Support the coordination, development, delivery, and marketing of events* – this must be in partnership with the local groups already putting on events. New agreed events will need new resources.
5. *Enhance the town's presence on social media channels and create new platforms where appropriate* - generate news and engagement to promote Halesworth as a visitor destination.
6. *Support other information websites where appropriate and needed* – offer some time to groups to help to ensure information is updated and shared.
7. *Market the town through appropriate media opportunities* - external organisations e.g. The Suffolk Coast Ltd, newsprint working in partnership with these organisations on joint campaigns to raise the profile of the Town to a wider, including national audience.
8. *Ensure there is a consistent and updated approach to Halesworth information* (hard copy and electronic) at Visitor Information Points, on wayfinding information points and community notice boards, making use of the agreed messaging and brand guidelines.

Recruitment.

It has been agreed that the ESTI money will pay for Xtrahead, who ran the workshops, to undertake the technical work to complete task 2 above.

The remaining tasks will be incorporated into a brief and person specification to recruit a self-employed person(s). Although the market will need to be tested it is envisaged that the pay range will be between £15/20 per hour for an average of 15 hours a week for 46 weeks per year. The person would be expected to work independently and flexibly making themselves a known presence in the town and amongst the relevant organisations.

Establish a Stakeholder Group.

The steering group suggests establishing a wider stakeholder group to oversee and shape the work required to deliver on the tasks, supported by the Marketing and Events Coordinator.

In addition to the present membership, people who can represent the key areas that could benefit from marketing – art, heritage, events, cultural, environmental/countryside pursuits – would need to be identified.

Smaller task and finish groups could be set up to work on key themes/projects as and when necessary.

A Chair would be needed to keep the group on focus and on task with the responsibilities of the town council clearly defined.

3. Recommendation

It is proposed that the money identified in the budget (£25K per year for two years) can be used to advertise for and contract with a suitably qualified person(s) to become the Marketing and Events Coordinator for Halesworth.