

SENIOR CITIZENS' EXCURSIONS

AGENDA ITEM No. 6

MEETING: EVENTS SUB-COMMITTEE

DATE: 5TH OCTOBER 2022

REPORT BY: HEAD OF LEISURE AND EVENTS

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to update members on the 2022 Senior Citizens' Excursions and to request members to consider the locations and itinerary for the 2023 Senior Citizens' Excursions.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 The Senior Citizens' Excursions are held on weekdays during June and July each year.

2.2 Applicants for the trips must be aged 60 or over and reside in the Parish of Great Aycliffe on 1st April in the year of travel.

2.2 Passengers travel in air conditioned, executive coaches with toilet and hand washing facilities. In addition to the driver, a courier is present to tend to passengers' requirements, account for numbers etc.

2.3 One executive coach with a wheelchair lift is provided to venues and areas which are suitable for wheelchair users. This enables people with mobility problems or those who are confined to a wheelchair to access the coach without difficulty. This coach is also used by people without mobility problems. The number of seats on the coach reduces by 3 when a wheelchair users is booked on excursion.

2.4 This year passengers were able to choose from twenty-eight excursions to five destinations:

- Thirsk and James Herriot World;
- York and the Jorvik Viking Centre;
- Leeds and the Royal Armouries;
- Ripon and the Black Sheep Brewery; and
- Malton Eden Camp.

2.5 A typical excursion itinerary is shown below (Thirsk and James Herriot World).

| Time | Instruction |
|-------------|---|
| 09:15 | Leave Newton Aycliffe |
| 10:30 | Arrive Thirsk time in James Herriot world |
| 12:45 | Lunch at the Golden Fleece |
| 13:45 | Free time in Thirsk (Market day) |
| 15:45 | Leave Thirsk |
| 17:15 | Arrive Newton Aycliffe |

- 2.6 The excursions were held from 6th June to 11th July.
- 2.7 The format for the trips changed this year to include an additional attraction. This was funded from the COVID Recovery Fund and was in recognition of the cancellation of the excursions during the Coronavirus pandemic.
- 2.8 The excursions left Newton Aycliffe at around 9am, going straight to the destination as all destinations were within a maximum 1 hour and 45 minutes' drive and every coach has toilet facilities. There were two pick up and drop off points outside St. Clare's and Aycliffe village.
- 2.9 Lunch was a two-course meal, other than the Eden Camp where a voucher was issued for food and drink. After lunch there was free time in the afternoon. There were no stops on the journey home.
- 2.10 This year the Council paid for the cost of the bus, lunch and entry into the attractions.
- 2.11 Most food outlets required payment in advance meaning the Council pays for meals and refreshments even if the users did not attend. Vegetarian and medical variations to the set menu are catered for.
- 2.12 Due to low numbers attending this year, several trips were cancelled taking the total number of excursions to 19. Most of the deposits were used against the remaining bookings. The coach provider did not charge for cancellations.

3.0 Current Situation

- 3.1 Passengers can post or e-mail their application forms or attend at the offices to apply.
- 3.2 The process of administration was changed for 2022 with every application form being checked for authenticity and stamped with the time and date and then, at a later time, admin staff processed the forms meaning no-one needed to wait around to be seen. Confirmation was then either posted or emailed out.
- 3.3 The vast majority of people preferred this process rather than standing and waiting in long queues outside the building. The Council Chamber was used for bookings, giving users a warm and dry environment while admin staff checked their paperwork.
- 3.2 The Council received 841 applications in total, a decrease of 499 from 2018.
- 3.3 Applications, attendances and cancellations are shown below
- 841 applications were received.
 - 744 people attended on their due date.
 - 97 people either cancelled or failed to turn up.
- 3.4 The number of non-attendees is higher than in previous years, the reason for which could have been anyone with symptoms of Covid.
- 3.5 Only two people paid for the trips as an unofficial carer for someone else on the trip. Several people decided they could manage without a carer if they had to pay. Official carers went free of charge.

4.0 Customer Survey Results

- 4.1 Passengers were given one survey form per party and a total of 335 survey forms were collected from passengers on the return journey to Newton Aycliffe.
- 4.2 Overall, the results are extremely good. The vast majority of people rated the service excellent or good.
- 4.3 Only one person rated the experience as poor. This related to the trip to Leeds, where one person was lost and Council staff had to guide the gentleman back to the coach over the phone. The vast majority of people on the coach were understanding of the situation. Inevitably, there were passengers who were not totally satisfied with all aspects of their excursion.

4.4 Analysis of Survey Results

All Venues

| | Overall | Weather | Council Staff | Transport | Driver-Courier | Lunch |
|-----------|---------|---------|---------------|-----------|----------------|-------|
| Excellent | 256 | 189 | 274 | 304 | 302 | 231 |
| Good | 70 | 121 | 60 | 31 | 33 | 85 |
| Average | 8 | 25 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 17 |
| Poor | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |

Thirsk

| | Overall | Weather | Council Staff | Transport | Driver-Courier | Lunch |
|-----------|---------|---------|---------------|-----------|----------------|-------|
| Excellent | 83 | 42 | 90 | 97 | 97 | 87 |
| Good | 24 | 52 | 18 | 12 | 12 | 20 |
| Average | 2 | 15 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Poor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

York

| | Overall | Weather | Council Staff | Transport | Driver-Courier | Lunch |
|-----------|---------|---------|---------------|-----------|----------------|-------|
| Excellent | 79 | 62 | 79 | 91 | 91 | 70 |
| Good | 20 | 37 | 22 | 10 | 10 | 24 |
| Average | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Poor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |

Leeds

| | Overall | Weather | Council Staff | Transport | Driver-Courier | Lunch |
|-----------|---------|---------|---------------|-----------|----------------|-------|
| Excellent | 27 | 23 | 34 | 36 | 36 | 22 |
| Good | 12 | 13 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 17 |
| Average | 2 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Poor | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Ripon

| | Overall | Weather | Council Staff | Transport | Driver-Courier | Lunch |
|-----------|---------|---------|---------------|-----------|----------------|-------|
| Excellent | 54 | 46 | 55 | 61 | 60 | 44 |
| Good | 9 | 16 | 9 | 3 | 4 | 17 |
| Average | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Poor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Eden Camp

| | Overall | Weather | Council Staff | Transport | Driver-Courier | Lunch |
|-----------|---------|---------|---------------|-----------|----------------|-------|
| Excellent | 13 | 16 | 16 | 19 | 18 | 8 |
| Good | 5 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 7 |
| Average | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Poor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |

4.5 As well as getting feedback from those who attended the trips, as requested at the previous Events Sub Committee Meeting, a request for feedback was made in the local paper.

4.6 The feedback from this request has been summarised below. Please see Appendix 1 for full details.

- Age limit being inappropriate, and fairer use of Council funds
- Did not like the venues
- Covid
- No-one to go with
- Ill health

5.0 Venues for 2023

5.1 Part of the survey forms referred to in Section 4 asked passengers to choose one place to visit in 2023, the result was as shown below:

| Request by numbers | | Requests by numbers | |
|--------------------|----|---------------------|---|
| Lakes | 57 | Morecambe | 2 |
| Whitby | 54 | Newcastle | 2 |
| Harrogate | 34 | Northumberland | 2 |
| York | 26 | Filey | 1 |
| Scarborough | 22 | Glasgow | 1 |
| Skipton | 20 | Grassington | 1 |
| Alwick | 13 | Grosmont | 1 |
| Berwick | 8 | Hawes | 1 |
| Seahouses | 7 | Dales | 1 |
| Bamburgh | 6 | Beverley | 1 |
| Carlisle | 6 | Holmfirth | 1 |
| Knaresborough | 5 | Howarth | 1 |
| South Shields | 5 | Jedburgh | 1 |
| Edinburgh | 4 | Ilkley | 1 |
| Benidorm | 3 | Bridlington | 1 |
| Amble | 3 | Scottish Borders | 1 |
| Ripon | 3 | Dalton Park | 1 |
| Blackpool | 3 | Liverpool | 1 |
| Helmsley | 3 | Newbiggin by sea | 1 |
| Leeds | 3 | Teignmouth | 1 |
| Thirsk | 3 | Richmond | 1 |
| Tynemouth | 3 | Redcar | 1 |
| Beamish | 2 | Pickering | 1 |
| Hexham | 2 | Ravenglass | 1 |

6.0 Matters for Consideration

- 6.1 Members are requested to consider which five venues to offer for 2023, whether the excursions are to continue in their present format or whether to offer alternatives to the traditional trips.
- 6.2 Please note that the core budget for the Senior Citizens' Excursions does not provide for an enhanced trip as was the case this year. The cost of the additional attractions was met from the COVID Recovery Fund on a one-off basis this year.
- 6.3 It should be noted that passengers chose Whitby and York as two of the top choices for trips next year, neither of which are suitable for all the Senior Citizens' who go on the excursions.
- 6.4 York does not allow coaches within 'the walls' but the Hilton will allow pick up and drop off from outside of the venue. Whitby has no suitable venues that can cater for 50 people at one time for lunch.
- 6.5 Some possible alternatives for these locations would be for staff to issue money to each person on the coach which would then allow them to get refreshments from wherever they chose, investigate whether a voucher would be accepted by an establishment allowing senior citizens to eat at the establishment at some point during the visit, or to ask the Oak Leaf Sports Complex to make up packed lunches for distribution on the coach.
- 6.6 Officers would suggest a mixture of previous style outings and new style outings. For example Beamish offered entry and a picnic style lunch for £21.50 in 2022, which works out around the same price or less than a meal in a hotel. The Council could also consider giving cash to the users to get food from wherever they choose, meaning they are not being governed by the time restraints of a sit-down meal.
- 6.7 Members may also wish to try other alternatives for those senior citizens who do not feel they can travel on coaches. One suggestion could be to ask the Oak Leaf Sports Complex to host an afternoon of bingo, food and natter. People could either make their own way to the Sports Complex or the Council could run a shuttle bus picking up at various locations around the town.
- 6.8 Officers noted that the later trips this year proved less popular than those in early June, and that it was the later dates which were cancelled. For this reason, as well as the possible events and celebrations linked to the 75th Anniversary of the Town in 2023, officers would request that the trips be condensed into a three-week period from 5th June to 30th June next year. This would assist with the higher level of events in the community which may take place in 2023.

7.0 Policy Implications

- 7.1 The Senior Citizens' Trips help the Council to deliver Strategic Aims 2 and 3 from the Service Delivery Plan:-

"To Manage the Council's Finances and Assets in a Responsible Manner".

"To Provide Accessible, Affordable Leisure Facilities and Opportunities".

8.0 Staffing Implications

8.1 The Head of Leisure and Events and Events Assistant plan and organise the Senior Citizens' Excursions.

9.0 Financial Implications

9.1 The predicted outturn cost of the trips in 2022/23 including lunch, attractions and transport is approximately £35,600.

9.2 This is an average of £47.85 per person which is an increase of £18.98 per person compared to 2018.

9.3 This is attributable to the enhanced trips with entry to an attraction that were offered last year using additional resources from the COVID Recovery Fund as well as the increased food costs due to the lack of ability to recoup monies for non-attendees.

9.4 This needs to be considered for future years as the future costs will not be known due to the unpredictable cost of living at the moment.

9.5 At the moment it is not known if the trend of payment in advance will be continued in to 2023 by hotels but costs will be driven by the economic crisis.

10.0 Crime and Disorder Implications

10.1 None

11.0 Equal Opportunity Implications

11.1 The trips are limited to an age range of 60 plus, and this might be seen as an equal opportunities' infringement. See the feedback in Appendix 1.

12.0 Environmental Implications

12.1 There is a negative impact on the environment as the coach travel produces carbon emissions.

13.0 Risk Assessment

13.1 It is not considered that the matters contained in this report pose a risk to the health and safety of staff or to the financial or public standing of the Council to a degree that a risk assessment should be appended to this report.

14.0 Recommendations

14.1 It is recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) Members decide upon the areas to be visited in 2023.
- iii) Members consider the format and content of the excursions.