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Dear Martin,

We would like to begin by thanking you and the other contributors to our Joint Select Committee meeting last week, Philippa Batting, Bucks Business First, Lucy Dowson, Visit Buckinghamshire and Bill Morris, Buckinghamshire Culture and the Council officers, Lisa Michelson and Sophie Payne. It was a very interesting and informative meeting on the Visitor Economy in Buckinghamshire and Committee Members were incredibly engaged, with lots of suggestions and questions about how the Council can support the growth of the Visitor Economy going forward.

It was obvious that there has been lots of good work going on across all the partners in Buckinghamshire and the synergies between Buckinghamshire Culture, the Council and the County's Business community are clear to see. It was also interesting to understand the visitor data from 2019 and to reflect on the impact of the pandemic on visitor numbers and behaviour. Members understood that the meeting was about scene setting and early engagement on the proposal to develop a Visitor Economy Strategy for Buckinghamshire.

The Joint Select Committee are very supportive of the Council developing a Visitor Economy Strategy with an associated Action Plan, in order to provide strong direction, enhanced co-ordination and renewed vigour to this agenda. It would be helpful to understand the timeline for the development of this strategy and to identify further opportunities for the Select Committees to be involved in scrutinising the details and the delivery of the strategy in the future. Please can you advise us of when it is envisaged that a Visitor Economy Strategy would be agreed?

During the meeting, you emphasised that the Council's budget is under pressure and Members recognise this. However, if a robust business case, supported by credible evidence, demonstrates that a modest increase in investment would lead to a significant upturn in visitor numbers and their associated spending locally, then Members feel that this would merit serious consideration during the Medium Term Financial Planning process.

Best wishes

Councillor Mimi Harker OBE
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Communities & Localism

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