

Place Campaign for the District

Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee - 25 November 2021

Report of: Strategic Head of Property and Commercial

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

Portfolio Holder: Cllrs. Peter Fleming & Lesly Dyball

Contact Officers: Strategic Head of Property Ext. 7099

Recommendation to Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee:

The report be noted.

Reason for recommendation: To update Members on the emerging Place Campaign being prepared for the District.

Introduction and Background

1. In 2020 the Council prepared an “insights Study” to identify key issues affecting the District and identifying strengths and opportunities it needed to capitalise. This study set the scene for the development of a “Place Campaign” which would ultimately create a brand for the district.
2. Place branding should support the Council’s key corporate objectives, firmly linked to economic development and the support it provides to local businesses. A successful place branding campaign should:
 - Promote the Sevenoaks district as a visitor destination
 - Attract new businesses and inward investment
 - Attract new people/families to live in the district
 - Support regeneration projects
 - Promote civic pride amongst existing residents
 - Encourage local people to spend more time and money in the district
3. Place branding, destination marketing, all those things that bring people and money into an area will be vital to our relationship with businesses. Also, and of equal importance, is economic growth. Place branding is important because it helps us to:
 - Create jobs and opportunities for our residents
 - Support the growth of our business base

- Support local services through increased business rates
 - Support the visitor economy and a vibrant local cultural offer
 - Change the reputation of an area
 - Make our places better, which is at the heart of everything we do
4. Following a competitive tendering process, Pillory Barns, a Kent based marketing company, was commissioned to prepare a Place Campaign.
 5. An iterative and consultative process was adopted and a Steering Group consisting of internal and external stakeholders was established to review and provide comment on emerging ideas and processes.
 6. Placemaking activity is built around four pillars - live, work, invest and visit.
 7. Creating a place brand that encompasses each of these pillars ensures that the district can showcase everything the Sevenoaks district has to offer to various audiences.
 8. Effective place branding turns a location into a desirable destination for residents, businesses and visitors alike. Embedded with the stories, the sentiments and selling points unique to our district, the Sevenoaks place brand will help to sell the district's potential far and wide.

Process to Date

9. The first steps took place prior to the Place project being awarded, with an insights research project conducted by Pillory Barn in late summer / early autumn 2020. This consisted of desk research and interrogating existing data, reports and strategic context - as well as conducting new interviews with key figures across the district - to provide an overview of the district's overarching strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and to start to form an idea of its identity and developing themes.
10. By reflecting on the 'zeitgeist' of the period, with particular consideration of how things had changed during the Covid-19 pandemic, Pillory Barn highlighted emerging trends which would impact the district's narrative. The insights process (with Cabinet Members, Senior Management Team, business representatives and district stakeholders) provided the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of how the Council could start to communicate a stronger economic development story.
11. Following the re-appointment of the Pillory Barn, the next step was the creation and deployment of an in-depth yet flexible online survey to establish how people see and feel about the district, carried out in spring 2021. This survey was fronted by an introductory video by Cllr Peter

Fleming, and sent to a list of businesses, residents, and key stakeholders. Significant consideration was given to the methods of surveying and measuring the appropriate content and data capture options. From the 76 survey responses, the key words, sentiments and themes of the place brand campaign became clear, which chimed with the findings of the initial insights process and SWOT analysis. Using the data and feedback gathered, Pillory Barn started to create a 'place story', brand identity and values, and a creative suite in summer 2021. Pillory Barn regularly engaged with a Steering Group to ensure the development of the brand reflected their feedback. Key findings included:

- 61.6% of those surveyed commented on the nature, green spaces and wildlife associated with the Sevenoaks district. This comes across most strongly in the design through the supporting textures and shapes used (e.g. nature, running water, birds and tree rings.)
- 36% of people commented on the connectivity and community of the district, so it is only fitting that this comes through as one of the core brand values and part of the emerging brand narrative.
- 32.8% of people recognised the role heritage and history plays in Sevenoaks. Again, this is one of the brand values, as well as acknowledged through imagery, the rich and historic colour palette and headline font, which is traditional and elegant.
- 19.2% of responses mentioned the beauty of the district, which ties into the natural spaces as well as the visually pleasing design. It is also one of the five brand values.
- 16.6% of people saw Sevenoaks as an entrepreneurial, business location, which will be key within our work and invest pillars. It is also one of our brand values and will come through in future case studies.
- When asked which colours come to mind when they think of the district, 85.5% selected green and 35.5% selected blue. We have taken this on board to use them as lead colours for our creative concept, which are complemented by a vibrant supporting palette.

12. The final brand has been refined based on early feedback and testing, and awaits approval and 'adoption' by the council in Winter 2021/22. Once adopted, a suite of creative collateral will be available for promotional campaigns, advertising, posters, and online/print content for use across the district. The brand will ensure everyone is on the same page when speaking to the district's potential and that messaging and visuals are consistent.

Brand Values and key outputs

13. The proposed place brand showcases the core brand values - **historic, entrepreneurial, connected, vibrant and beautiful**, which while will be

complemented by wider messaging, reflects what the Sevenoaks district has to offer.

14. The principle strap line: “So much more” is proposed and reflects the core brand values and unique and undiscovered attributes of the district. It also provides significant collateral for various publicity campaigns.
15. A “Brand Book”, which includes the brand narrative, logo, colour palette, imagery and how to use the brand, has been prepared and this will be outlined in a presentation to the Committee. The aim is to share Sevenoaks’ identity in a fresh, exciting and aspirational way to potential new visitors, house-hunters and businesses, and to ensure all messaging reflects where Sevenoaks is today and where it aspires to go.
16. Other achievements/outputs to date include:
 - Brand book, including brand narrative, logo, colour palette, imagery and how to use the brand (to be presented at the Committee meeting).
 - Design, development and content population of a brand web portal ready for the official launch test site can be viewed [here](#).
 - Compiling imagery of the district, including stock images, business imagery and a professional photo shoot.
 - Filming and editing a video to showcase what the district has to offer, the emerging place brand and values.
 - Submitted our content for the Kent Annual Property Market Review which draws upon the brand guidelines.
 - Commission of an illustrated tourism map for Sevenoaks (for digital and print media and for PR/merchandising purposes. Regarding the print media, the map will form the base template of the reverse side of a pamphlet, whereby the text side will be themed and can be updated on a seasonal basis.

Next Steps and activity plan

17. The next steps of the Place Campaign are outlined below and the short-term activities outlined below will be used to test the brand. This test launch (“beta” launch) will then be reviewed and revised accordingly before medium- to longer-term activities are undertaken:

Short term (<6 months)

- Autumn PR campaign to complement the social media launch to promote Sevenoaks district as a place to visit. Content created around ‘48 hours in Sevenoaks’ targeting national travel media, and Kent/Sussex/Surrey/Essex media.

- Autumn “beta” launch of the place brand on social media scheduled for the end of September.
- Autumn/winter city event - promotional market-style stand or stall in Canary Wharf showing the best of Sevenoaks, highlighting harvest, food and drink and other products. Media and business invites lunchtime through to evening.
- Inflight campaign - targeting international audiences from the USA/Canada by exploring promotional opportunities with Jet Blue magazine and Ink Global. Editorial options and investigating advertising partnerships.
- Ambassador and stakeholders’ toolkit of the brand and December launch event promoting the brand and coming 2022 season.
- Christmas campaign - early seeding in of seasonal content promoting visits to Sevenoaks for the autumn and festive period (high quality imagery, high quality of life promotion to the media).
- Print advertising in high end press and in-flight, social media ad campaign and boost, paid search campaign for web in December.
- Inward investment collateral (digital and print) based on findings from “The Case for West Kent”.
- Winter seasonal promotional video.
- Update the tourism website with the brand book guidelines.
- Design and print of a festive tourism leaflet for Sevenoaks with one of the new maps.

Medium term (6-12 months)

- 2022 season second stage video promotion and PR campaign for Easter 2022.
- Influencer trip and endorsement - key travel, entrepreneur and lifestyle influencers to be invited to discover the district for a joint campaign.
- Summer launch campaign event - London train station takeover/stand to promote summer in Sevenoaks, and ***Seven things to do*** in the district.
- Local business takeover - collaboration digital campaign or event with local artists, food/drink producers and/or hospitality to give guests and customers a bigger taste of Sevenoaks life.
- Attendance and potential offers at key B2B trade events and lifestyle expos.

Long term (to be developed further subject to approval)

- An interactive digital version of the illustrated map for the web portal.
- Consider near-Europe trade events and expos for Sevenoaks (to be determined based on ongoing Covid-19 restrictions and Brexit reactions to ensure good value and positive impact).

18. The Brand Book, the activity programme and budget needs to obtain further approval. In this regard it is intended to undertake one final round of consultative review following the “beta” launch (test launch) with the Steering Group, Sevenoaks Business Forum, and Sevenoaks Visitor Economy Forum. The Brand book will then be updated where appropriate and submitted to Cabinet early next year.

Other options Considered and/or rejected

19. None

Key Implications

Financial

20. The short-term activities highlighted in Section 18 have an estimated budget of £45,300 which is within the Economic Development team’s 2021/22 year budget. The additional medium and long term activities are yet to be budgeted and would only progress once funding is confirmed.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

21. There are no legal or risk implications related to this report.

Equality Assessment

22. The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users at this point, but further assessments will be undertaken as the strategy begins to take shape.

Conclusions

23. Developing a strong place brand for Sevenoaks will support the wellbeing and economic development of the district, and the council’s key corporate objectives to promote the district as a visitor destination and attractive place to live, work and do business.

Appendices

A presentation will be given at the Committee meeting.

Background Papers

Pillory Barn (2020): Insight Report. Sevenoaks District Council.

Detlev Munster, Strategic Head of Property & Commercial