

Visit Surrey accommodation meeting group

**24th February 2010, 2pm
Hurtwood Inn Hotel, Peaslake**

Minutes

Attendees

Sherill Bell	Hurtwood Inn Hotel
Sue Bertram	The Stanwell
Daniel Hollett	Holiday Inn Guildford
Alison Budlington	Denbies B&B
Belinda Kiely	Gatton Manor Hotel & Golf Club
Joyce Cawthorne	Royal Holloway, University of London
Louyse	Barnet Hall
Julie Gore	Barnet Hall
Jeanette Simpson	Denbies Vineyard
Catherine Knight	Tourism South East
Martyn Milford	De Vere Gorse Hill
Diana Lumsdaine	Wotton House

Laura Holman
Stephen Hay
Paul Jones

Louise Martin

Woking Borough Council
Mandolay
Manor House, Newlands
Corner
the runnymede~on~thames

Apologies

Diana Roberts Guildford Borough Council
Nathan Chart Marriott Lingfield Park
Jane Clement Mercure Burford Bridge
Laura Andrews The Talbot
Manny Sawhney The Asperion

1. Welcome and introductions

Catherine Knight, Tourism South East

Visit Surrey Manager role to promote the visitor economy in Surrey supporting businesses in training, networking and Tourism South East membership. Keen to work more with hostel/ accommodation sector. Increase engagement. Hurtwood had also noted in parallel previous existence of an accommodation group in Guildford and wish to resurrect network. This group pan Surrey. Not a replication of Guildford B&B group (Guildford Borough Council led) or Guildford Conference desk, cost for membership for lead referrals again led by Guildford Borough Council.
Saw group as sector specific sub group of Visit Surrey Partnership committee.
Attractions working well together in Surrey cross referring, sharing costs ie. Excursions exhibition

2.

Round table update

Holiday Inn Guildford, Daniel Hollett

Two venues in Surrey. Cost focus, rate negotiations. Shortage in Guildford until Radisson opens. Tues/ Wed = key. Weekend down. ie. Sundays

Barnet Hall, Sundial Group, Louyse and Julie Gore

Conference centre moving into B&B. SOS events also. Business, 2010 up from 2009. B&B increasing. License an issue before can really promote. Wedding business increasing, conferences static. Trend overall.

The Mandolay, Stephen Hay

72 room hotel, Guildford town centre, 8 conference rooms. Weather didn't help business, not booking ahead. Patterns uncertain, unpredictable. Conference business ok, weddings, same. Restaurant and bar investment as customers' expectations increasing.

Denbies B&B , Alison Budlington

7 bedrooms. Busy in week, work with Denbies vineyard, ie. weddings pick up business

De Vere, Gorse Hill, Martyn Milford

4x properties in Surrey. 42 nationwide. Drastic cut in rates for group, harder for all? Conference and training venues primarily, accommodation secondary. Business model, contract client on site. Supports business. ie. Surrey two venues have contract clients for training. Others open market business. Qtr 1 very good.

Gatton Manor, Belinda Kiely

18 rooms, specialise in golf breaks and weddings. Rate squeeze hard for independents. Will take years to recover fully. Value added is key. Tues/ Wed – strong. Weekend good with golf but wet and snowy weather not been great for golf business. 2011 wedding business secured already.

Hurtwood Inn Hotel, Sherill Bell

21 rooms, 2 conference rooms

Tues/ wed business good. Rates lower. Thurs/ Mon ok. Weekends private dining working well. Conference business lower but ok for March/ April. Jan 10 > Jan 09

The Stanwell, Sue Bartram

£3 million facelift, opening next month. 54 rooms, one of four hotels.

Looking at marketing model for opening, e-marketing. *Travelclick* services can assess competitors. *Synix* offers connectivity. Major marketing now revenue, e-distribution, pay per click, SEO and social media.

Manor House Newlands Corner, Paul Jones

56 bedrooms. Tues/ Wed good. Wedding, everyone price conscious. Deals important for consumers.

Wotton House, Diana Lumslaine

11 rooms, conference hotel, increasing weddings business and private stays.

Aggressive procurement from corporates. No corporate not asking for a reduction. Jan very good. Leisure rate driven. Hotels often less than a local bed and breakfast! Looking at new markets.

Royal Holloway University, Joyce Cawthorne

Vacation business. 2,000 rooms. Academic conferences year's in advance so slightly different issues to other providers. 2009 language school were very successful and looking for more attendees 2010. Local corporate market down. Weddings down. Soccer school popular. Rate £33 for groups.

Runnymede-on-Thames, Louise Martin (Was Runnymede Hotel and Spa).

4 star deluxe. Refurbished, finalising landscaping etc. new product, strong on rates. £290 24 hour rate, £82 DDR. Also own the Grove in Herts and Athenaeum, London so not looking to be 5 star.

The Talbot, Laura Andrews (via email)

willing to work with the other local suppliers to refer business as and when required.

Business is good, February a little slower than expected but things definitely picking up.

We are still in administration but have been informed that they new owners will take ownership as of the new financial year, but we still don't know who that will be. This hasn't put client's off and we still have a lot of client's continuing to book.

3. Discussion how help one another - ie. weddings/ accommodation/ rates/ partnerships, packages

- The Stanwell can only cater for weddings for up to 60 guests so would be happy to refer larger groups to other businesses.
- Hurtwood and the Manor already cross refer.
- VS produce a rate card for quick referrals?
- Jeanette Simpson, Denbies suggested working with your local attractions, take their brochures etc
- Networking important, many around table not aware of all other properties.

Challenges

- New hotels in area, Brooklands Hotel, MacDonald property in Windsor.
- Self classification rating, consumers don't understand and it confuses them. Wotton House made a complaint for the system, ie can't be 4 star as don't offer room service though product is four star. Customers arrive with varying expectations levels.

4. Tourism South East/ Visit Surrey Partnership update – networking opportunities, events and marketing Catherine Knight/ Jeanette Simpson, chair of the Visit Surrey Partnership marketing group, Denbies Vineyard

Tourism South East, official tourist board for region. In Surrey, 125 businesses and 5 local authority members working together in absence of any strategic leadership from Surrey County Council over last few years. The Visitor Economy is worth an estimated £1,5 billion per annum to the county and employs 33,000 people.

The Visit Surrey Partnership was created. Chaired by Kevin Lorimer, The County Club and vice chaired by Laura Holman, Woking Borough Council Strategy and action plan. Information distributed. www.industry.visitsoutheastengland.com/site/benefits-of-membership
www.visitsurrey.com/site/information/visit-surrey-partnership

Partnership is key to informal group.

Attractions work well together, hasn't happened overnight, taken time.

Marketing focus on specific sectors due to limited funds. Groups, national marketing with Tourism South East to couples and families. Ie. Telegraph 28th Feb 2010 – six partners. £400 each for part of £5,000 coverage and PR company support.

Year one at Excursions 8 partners sold themselves under Visit Surrey banner. This January, 7 partners cross sold, had joint marketing, joint competition, advertising and fam trip and were given opportunity to attend three other group travel fairs for free if sold "Surrey", themselves and partners. Saves money and time and means more opportunities.

Keen attractions work with accommodation providers to extend dwell time in Surrey therefore economic benefit.

Wotton House added working with Chessington in a package had worked very well despite our perception of distance, consumers didn't mind.

5. Tourist information Centre update - referrals and upcoming events

Catherine Knight for Diana Roberts

If in Visit Surrey brochure promoted by TIC staff. Online enquires very important

B&B Group

This group was started many years ago and is officially the South West Surrey B&B Group. It was started by B&B owners themselves and chaired by one of them but she then left the area. GBC have always had an input into the group, relaying relevant news and information and organising venue, minutes etc.

Since April 2009 the group has been chaired by Diana Roberts, Tourism Marketing and Development Manager, GBC. The group feeds up to the Tourism Sector Group. This will continue until 2012 when a chair from within the B&B owners will be sought.

Two meetings are held each year and the venues are local attractions. The attraction is given 5 mins at the start of each meeting to outline their venue. There are usually one or two speakers on subjects such as small business advice, training and development, customer service and tourism. The meeting is used as a leaflet exchange for local events and attractions and the group has a guided tour of the attraction at the end of the meeting.

Offers are passed on to the group such as free pre-visits for grading applicants and other offers from Tourism South East.

There is no charge to join this group. If you do not receive emails and details of group meetings – email tic@guildford.gov.uk and request to go on the list.

Members of this group **who have achieved a grading with AA or Visit Britain** are invited to advertise in Visit Surrey Guide and Visit Guildford website.

Conference and Hospitality Group – now called Conference Desk Guildford

This group was formed in 2006 from the old Conference Group and the Hospitality Group. Although originally Guildford based businesses were in the group, this has now been extended to Surrey based businesses.

Annual membership is £385 (2009/10) and this has been held for 2010/11. Membership benefits include:-

- Double page entry in Conference Desk Guildford Venues Guide
- Page on website
- 4 networking/information meetings a year
- Copy of all leads generated from joint advertising
- Training and deals from Tourism South East
- Group Membership to MIA and Eventia

Meetings are held quarterly at a member venue with the opportunity for a familiarisation trip at the end of the meeting. The group ethos is to pass business within the group if one venue cannot handle the enquiry.

Money left over from the membership fees after the brochure is produced is spent on advertising and mail shots as agreed by group members.

Associate membership is available for free. Associate members are invited along to the networking meetings but do not get sales leads or an entry in the brochure or website.

News

The following events are taking place in 2010 offering opportunities to the Hospitality/Accommodation providers in the area:-

- Surrey County Show. 31 May 2010. Stoke Park Guildford. Visit Surrey Stand. 400 Goody bags will be produced and venues are welcome to provide 'goodies' for inclusion – these cannot be brochures but must be items such as pens and keyrings, or vouchers for money off i.e. 2-for-1 or 10% off or kids go free – that type of thing. All vouchers/goodies must be delivered to Tourist Information Centre by 21 May 2010 – marked **Diana Roberts – Surrey County Show Goody Bags**.
- Womens Rugby World Cup – August/September 2010 at Surrey Sports Park on the University Campus. The University will provide all the accommodation for the athletes and the Holiday Inn Guildford for Press/VIP's but there will be lots of accommodation needed for friends, family and spectators. All matches are taking place in Guildford apart from semi's and final (which will be at Harlequin's ground). The organisers will have the Visit Surrey Guide for help with accommodation finding and be given the website address to link to.
- Lewis Carroll Celebration – Guildford Town Centre (Museum and Gallery and some retailers) – June/July

6. AOB

All

Farnborough Air show

- Official booking agent – Zibrant, 20,000 bed nights being held. CK contacted with details of Visit Surrey. On reserve list only.
- Feedback use search engine optimisation to attract customers if not on preferred list. ie The Stanwell, number one preferred word for launch.
- If you don't have Farnborough business you will receive other businesses moved by event.

2012

Surrey county Council employed new 2012 co-ordinator. Focus on attracting pre-training camps. Form to be distributed for accommodation providers and attractions to complete and send to CK to be added to pre-training camp folder to attract countries. All surrounding facilities to 20 possible camp locations very important in decision making process. (attached document)

- Tourism South east with VSP and Surrey County Council to offer Welcome Host, customer service training, Welcome Gold with Surrey element.
- VSP/ SCC to offer fam trips to concierge staff to encourage cross referrals to attractions and improve customer service
- Marketing with SCC and VSP to be confirmed. Looking at opportunities with VisitBritain and Visit London to raise awareness of excellent location and product in Surrey. Need to find budget!

Events In Surrey – Wotton House asked if there was a mechanism to inform have vacancies during an event and also to pre market and benefit. CK advised please refer to www.visitsurrey.com for events calendar. Updated on a regular basis No service offered by Visit Surrey the TIC in Guildford will promote/ book. Tel: 01483 444 333

Clear aims of group – What do you want? How can we work together?

Woking Borough Council –challenges for working together to increase dwell time, added value is important to consumers and increasing their spend.

Runnymede – networking opportunities, guest speakers, The Bench, HBAA, member of Windsor Acc Group. Windsor group, three no shows ad you're out, don't receive minutes and information. Plus people send updates via email in advance to avoid typing by chair!

Holiday Inn – with competition, packages work well. Dinner, bed and breakfast rates work well. New ideas.

Barnet Hill – nice feedback to meeting, direction more towards B&B.

Mandolay – good to meet face to face, increase awareness. With lowering rates difficult to ensure maintenance. Two bed and breakfasts closed recently as couldn't afford to reinvest. What is happening to the Angel?

Denbies – would like to see Surrey as a significant leisure destination.

Denbies B&B – useful to see how much work is going on

DeVere – attraction packages key. Strategic plan as an area would be good. Offer to support

Gatton Manor – good to share information

Hurtwood Inn Hotel – as an independent good to have colleagues to chat too.

The Stanwell – Surrey centric, press are key as use rooms as money for coverage. Will offer accommodation for Surrey fam trips.

Manor House, Newlands Corner – key to ensure non attendees positivity of meeting and encourage good attendance in the future.

Wotton House – marketing feedback gained from this meeting although have a sales role, useful for business.

Actions for the future

- Quarterly meetings
- 2pm start works well
- Hosts – De Vere next meeting May
- Itineraries, two hours, half a day, an evening in Surrey for Visit Surrey website - CK