

Report title: Annual Report 2019-20	
Report to: Committee to Consider Applications to Undertake Certain Duties by Members and Foreign Travel by Officers	
Report author: Gemma Bint, Democratic Services Officer	
Date: 15 September 2020	For: Decision
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County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To ask the Committee to agree to publish the attached report on foreign travel activity for 2019/20.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the report at appendix 1 be published on the Council's website.

3. Summary of issue

- 3.1 The Foreign Travel Policy says that all foreign travel by Members must be approved by the Committee. It also says that Foreign Travel by officers must be approved by the Committee unless the officer is in a team where the Committee has given pre-approval to foreign travel because it accepts that there is a need to travel abroad. Those officers need to obtain prior approval from managers.
- 3.2 The Policy states that all foreign trips which have not been approved by the Committee (i.e. travel by pre-approved teams) must be reported to the Committee on an annual basis.
- 3.3 The report for 2019/20 is attached. The report shows all trips and the actual expenditure.
- 3.4 Appendix 1 shows details of all trips reported centrally or where we have identified from checking payments for hotel bookings or flights. The only omissions are a Youth Orchestra tour to Germany in August 2019 led by the Council's music service, the cost of the tour is fully covered by the Arts Council grant and not ECC budgets and also all organised school trips by Essex Outdoors.
- 3.5 The reasons that overseas travel is necessary are many and varied but most travel falls into one of the following categories:

- Travel to maintain and develop trading links with other parts of the world which brings trade into the County and its businesses, for example our links with the Jiangsu Province in China.
- Travel to obtain funding from international organisations.
- Travel as part of an education service.
- Travel as part of the Council's social care functions.

4. Options

- 4.1 The policy states that the Council will publish the cost of travel so any decision not to publish would require that policy to be changed. In the interests of openness and transparency this option is not recommended.

5. Issues for consideration

5.1 Financial implications

- 5.1.1 The cost of foreign travel is an expense which the Council must sometimes incur in order to discharge its functions, as described above. All overseas travel is subject to prior approval in accordance with the policy and the Council's procurement rules.

5.2 Legal implications

- 5.2.1 Robust arrangements for managing expenditure are a key internal control which the Council is required to have in order to discharge its duties to council taxpayers. The arrangements need to be proportionate and appropriate to the risks and concerns.

6. List of appendices

- 6.1 Annual report 2019/20