

Marketing Edinburgh cost the council millions to mothball

We have written many times about the fate of the city's marketing body, and make no apology for doing so.

Now, more than ever, it seems to us that the marketing body which drew in a ninefold return on investment on its Edinburgh campaign is very much needed, to help rekindle the city's tourism business.

Instead, the Arms Length External Organisation with three councillors at the helm, has cost the council just over £1.6 million with further funds retained as contingency funding. And that figure according to the council does not include 'payments for services'. We had previously calculated that it had cost around £1.2 million, but the figure revealed to us is more than that.

In the reply to our Freedom of Information request, the council confirmed that the Board of Marketing Edinburgh did appoint an external organisation to undertake the preparation and auditing of the company accounts. But, they go on to say that the cost of that is not known to them. However, they were able to confirm that the board appointed external HR consultants at a cost of around £2,345. This presumably dealt with the voluntary and compulsory redundancy matters. The company has now been taken in house by the council.

If the council had accepted the October 2019 business plan drawn up by the previous board, that would have cost £450,000 with a defined strategy to reduce its dependence on council

funding.

Instead the company headed up by three city councillors, Cllr Kate Campbell, Cllr Claire Miller and Cllr Mandy Watt, has incurred fines of an estimated £1500 due to late filing of its accounts with Companies House. It is now officially sidelined, and the council has agreed to pay £55,000 to Edinburgh Tourism Action Group to create a tourism message for the city now.

We believe that a new tourism message will be made public soon, in line with the current circumstances when the city is no longer suffering from over tourism, but seeking people to come to the city centre and spend some cash. Watch this space!