

# Business Case

<b>Project Name:</b>	Service Review – Bridport Tourist Information Centre
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## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 West Dorset District Council operates four Tourist Information Centres (TICs) in Bridport, Dorchester, Lyme Regis and Sherborne at a total annual operating cost of approximately £353K, excluding central recharges of £221K.
- 1.2 The Council started a review of the Tourist Information Service in 2014, with the aim of achieving £300K savings from the operating costs which are managed by the Economy, Leisure & Tourism division.
- 1.3 Since the start of the service review, discussions have been held with Bridport Town Council regarding the future TIC operation and the Town Council has submitted a proposal for taking over the management of the TIC. This also includes a request to consider changes to the Bridport Charter market agreement with the District Council as part of the TIC transfer.
- 1.4 At present, Bridport Charter Market is run by Bridport Town Council under licence from the District Council. The Town Council pays a fee to the District Council. The District Council is budgeted to receive an income of £18,893 for 2016-17 although the 10 year average payment is approximately £13,500 per annum (based on the performance of the market). The Town Council has requested that this arrangement be considered as part of the TIC review, that the power to run the Charter market is devolved to the Town Council or a revised agreement is provided and that the annual fee is waived. This move would be seen as very positive by the Town Council.
- 1.5 As part of the Service Review programme, extensive stakeholder engagement was undertaken in June 2015, in the form of a widely-available and extensively-promoted survey and drop-in sessions for the public, with the results informing options for future service delivery.

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- 1.6 The Scrutiny Working Group, chaired by Cllr Daryl Turner, has met regularly and has been kept up to date with discussions and proposals and the options and the preferred solution for Bridport TIC has been discussed fully.
- 1.7 It is recommended that the management of Bridport TIC is transferred from WDDC to Bridport Town Council with a one-off payment of £150K, without undertaking further public consultation, and that the legal power to run the Bridport Charter Market is devolved from the District Council to the Town Council, or a revised agreement provided, with no future fee payable.

## 2. Reasons

- 2.1 Bridport TIC relocated from commercial premises to the Town Hall, owned by Bridport Town Council, in January 2012 in order to reduce operating costs and to work in partnership with the Town Council to enable the Town Hall to open to the public following a major Lottery funded restoration project.
- 2.2 Operating from the ground floor, the TIC's presence allows the Town Hall's historic interior and permanent exhibition of paintings and murals to be accessible, free of charge, to the public six days a week year round, thereby meeting Heritage Lottery Fund's conditions. The building also hosts a wide variety of community and private events and functions, for which the TIC manages the bookings.
- 2.3 The 2016 -17 budget for Bridport TIC is approximately £60K, excluding £51K of central recharges.
- 2.4 A stakeholder engagement survey was undertaken in June 2015 and was distributed by email to stakeholders, including tourism businesses, event organisers, tourism associations and town and parish councils.
- 2.5 Paper copies were available at the four West Dorset Tourist information Centres, South Walks House and Town Council offices. The survey was available online through the Consultation Tracker on dorsetforyou.com.
- 2.6 The survey was widely promoted via press releases, planned social media messages and on the visit-dorset.com website and a commitment was made to full public consultation, both on the engagement survey and in press releases, once options had been evaluated. However, the extensive promotion of the engagement survey afforded members of the public and businesses the opportunity to provide their views as they would in a public consultation and the recommended option proposed reflects the main findings of the engagement survey (maintaining a professional service and the importance of face-to-face interaction), thereby meeting the public's expressed feedback.
- 2.7 The transfer of the service to the Town Council will be a change of operator only; the transfer will not lead to any reduction in the service provided, it remains in the same location, offering the same services and employing the same workforce.

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- 2.8 Existing TIC employees would be transferred under TUPE regulations, requiring a period of consultation with affected employees and unions. This will necessitate up to a 12-week lead-in period ahead of the transfer.
- 2.9 The Town Council’s intention is to maintain the service at existing levels and look to enhance services and income through use of the space afforded to the Town Council within the Town Hall, which is not part of the District Council’s leased area.

### 3. Business Options

- 3.1 The service review has focussed on the transfer of the service to the Town Council, as the Town Council expressed interest in taking over the running of the TIC early in the service review process and a transfer would meet the objectives of the service review.
- 3.2 Bridport Town Council has submitted a formal proposal for taking over the management of the TIC and officers have discussed a one-off payment of £150K from WDDC to the Town Council in the event of a transfer to assist with transitional arrangements. The proposal also includes the changes to the licensing of the Bridport Charter market as outlined in paragraph 1.4.
- 3.3 The alternative would be for WDDC to continue to run the service at a greatly reduced level to reduce operating costs, or replacement of the existing service with an unstaffed Tourist Information Point (TIP).

### 4. Expected Benefits & Dis-benefits

- 4.1 The expected benefits and dis-benefits of transferring the TIC service to Bridport Town Council are as follows:

Expected benefits	Expected dis-benefits
a) Savings will be achieved in 2016/17 financial year with no cost to the Council thereafter.	a) TIC policies (racking, promotion etc) no longer determined by the marketing of visit-dorset.com; potential adverse impact on businesses whose advertising packages currently include TIC racking/promotion.
b) Potential for Bridport Town Council to increase use of the building and enhance the services offered by the TIC.	b) Loss of the annual Bridport Charter market licence fee, although this will be offset through transfer of TIC functions and associated ongoing savings.
c) Continuity of service. There is unlikely to be any discernible change to the TIC	

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service to public.	
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### 5. Milestone Plan

- 5.1 Following consideration of the Business case and agreement to proceed by Executive Committee during August 2016, a 12-week TUPE process will be undertaken with a transfer of the service completed by the end of November/early December 2016.

### 6. Costs

- 6.1 One-off payment of £150,000 from the Council’s reserve identified for services transferring to alternative providers. Phased funding arrangements were discussed with BTC, but dismissed in favour of a single payment to reduce bureaucracy.
- 6.2 Loss of income of £18,893 per annum that the District Council has budgeted to receive for the operation of the Bridport Charter market.

### 7. Major Risks

- 7.1 A commitment was made to full public consultation both on the engagement survey and in press releases, once options had been evaluated. This could be interpreted as having created a legitimate expectation of public consultation, an important aspect of consultation law, and therefore not undertaking public consultation carries the risk of judicial review.
- 7.2 However, as this is a proposed change to the management organisation responsible for the future delivery of the TIC only, and not a change to the services being offered nor its location, it is suggested that the risk of judicial review is minimised.
- 7.3 In addition, over 2100 responses were received as part of the extensive stakeholder engagement survey in June 2015, with 353 respondents identifying Bridport as their ‘usual’ TIC to visit. Of these 353, 94% rated the staff/customer service as the most important aspect of the service, followed by a town centre location, the provision of free information and ticket sales. All the main findings from the survey will continue to be provided under the Town Council, thereby meeting the public’s expressed feedback.
- 7.3 Discussions have been held on BTC’s future intentions for the service. In order to ensure that the TIC continues to operate along broadly similar lines to the current service, an exchange of letters will set out the Council’s expectations and requirements for the future operation.
- 7.4 To maintain continuity of service, it is anticipated that the Visitor Services Manager and the TIC Manager will maintain a close working relationship to ensure continued support for visit-dorset.com and a connection to the work of the Dorset LEP.

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### 8. Document History

<b>Revision History</b>	Date of next revision:
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Version Number	Revision date	Previous revision date	Summary of Changes	Changes marked
			What changes have been made since the previous version	Yes/No
V 2.1	15/07/16	12/07/16	General updates	No
V 2.2	22/07/16	15/07/16	General updates	No

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