

Draft Minute extract from Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 22 November 2016

Service Review Programme – West Dorset Tourist Information Centres - Dorchester

The committee received and considered the report of the scrutiny working group following the scrutiny exercise in relation to the Service Review of West Dorset tourist information centres (TICs) and with particular regard to the TIC in Dorchester. In addition, members considered the Business Case for the Dorchester TIC and the associated Equality Impact Assessment.

Members noted that a petition had been received and referred to the committee by Full Council in respect of the Tourist Information Centre at Antelope Walk, Dorchester and this was considered alongside the report of the scrutiny working group as part of the scrutiny of the service review process. As the principal petitioner, Councillor Bundy addressed the committee to express his support for the retention of the TIC service within the town. He noted his disappointment that the service had to move out of its current location in Antelope Walk but accepted that the move had to take place. In addition he raised points with regard to the need to monitor retail sales and the need to protect the valuable and knowledgeable staff working in the TIC. Related to this, he asked that Job Evaluation for these staff be delayed for at least two years. In response, the Chairman noted that the equality impact assessment addressed most of the staffing issues being raised.

The Chairman referred members to an email that had been sent to all members of the committee from Andy Canning as Chairman of the Dorchester Heritage Committee.

The committee considered the report of the scrutiny working group, the draft business case and draft equality impact assessment and during discussion the following points were made:

- The preferred option proposed in the draft business case which had been supported by the scrutiny working group was seen as providing a viable solution to securing the service in the town long term;
- A concern was raised with regard to negative comments that it was claimed had been made by a member of another council;
- In response to a question raised, it was noted that a review of the service operating within the library should be undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee after one year of operation;
- The committee agreed that reference should be made in the scrutiny working group report to the district council providing a capital contribution in the case that the tourist information centre moved out of the library into new premises in the future;
- Members noted that the move to the library could be achieved in the current financial year;
- The two petitions presented in connection with the service review had been taken into account by the scrutiny working group during their review of the service review process.

It was proposed by J Sewell seconded by J Haynes

Decision

- (a) That the committee note the petition regarding the Tourist Information Centre at Antelope Walk, Dorchester, referred from Full Council on 3 November 2016 and have considered it as part of the scrutiny of the service review process;
- (b) That the report of the scrutiny working group attached at appendix 1 of the report be agreed as the formal response of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the Dorchester Tourist Information Centre part of the West Dorset Tourist Information Centres Service Review, for inclusion within the report to the Executive Committee;
- (b) That the committee agree that the completed equality impact assessment for the Dorchester Tourist Information Centre part of the service review attached at appendix 3 of the report, ensures that equality issues have been fully considered and that any adverse impacts of the proposed changes on different groups have been considered and, where possible, mitigated.

To respond to the request from Full Council to consider a petition received in respect of the Tourist Information Centre at Antelope Walk, Dorchester.

To agree the formal response of the committee in respect of the scrutiny of the Dorchester Tourist Information Centre part of the West Dorset Tourist Information Centres Service Review process and viability of the options presented.

To provide the committee with the opportunity to consider the completed equality impact assessment for this part of the service review.

**SERVICE REVIEW: WEST DORSET TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRES –
DORCHESTER TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE (TIC)**

**REPORT OF SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

DATE AGREED: 22 NOVEMBER 2016

Scrutiny of Dorchester Tourist Information Centre (TIC) element of the service review process complete with no additional work recommended.

Preferred option of scrutiny working group:

The scrutiny working group support the recommendation in the business case to move the TIC service into the Dorchester Library at the current time in order to maintain the service. Members support a review of the location of the service at an appropriate time in the future and ask that the district council provides a capital contribution in the case that the tourist information centre moves out of the library into new premises in the future.

A review of how the service is working within the library should be undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee after one year of operation.

SCRUTINY OF SERVICE REVIEW: WEST DORSET TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRES – DORCHESTER TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

Membership of Scrutiny Working Group:

Lead member: Councillor Daryl Turner

Councillors: Sandra Brown, Patrick Cooke, Dominic Elliott, Susie Hosford and Molly Rennie

Lead officer: Matt Ryan (Tourism and Events Manager) / Trevor Hedger (Senior Economic Regeneration Officer)

Responsible Strategic Director: Martin Hamilton (Strategic Director)

Responsible Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mary Penfold (Enabling)

Brief description of service review subject to scrutiny:

West Dorset District Council operates four Tourist information Centres (TICs) located in Bridport, Dorchester, Lyme Regis and Sherborne. In 2013/14 the TIC's had over 419,000 customer visits together with enquiries by letter, phone and email. At Dorchester and Bridport TICs 50% of customers are local residents; with 70% in Sherborne and 15% in Lyme Regis. Total service costs were £1,130,000 in 2013/14 offset by £840,000 of income giving net running costs of £291,000.

The way in which visitors access information has changed in recent years. Developments in new technology and in consumer behaviour require a step change in information delivery across the tourism sector. The TIC review has been reframed by the Partnership Board (the Programme Board for the Service Review Programme) on 26th February 2015 as a Fundamental Review of all aspects of the service, including functions, budgets, staffing and systems within the service. Possible outcomes include TICs remaining but being run by other partners (Town councils, volunteer organisations or trusts), reduced District Council services or closure of TICs and greater reliance on on-line information provision.

Risks associated with this review include reputation damage linked to changing the model of service delivery; potential impacts on tourism experience and local economy if alternative information channels are not provided.

Please note that this report is with relation to the Dorchester tourist information centre only.

Role of scrutiny: To ensure that the service review process undertaken is fit for purpose and that the options for change have been fully assessed using the agreed principles set out below.

To check that equality issues have been fully considered and mitigated through the equality impact assessment.

To comment on the options proposed by the service review project team, make further suggestions for change that may have been overlooked or discounted and to provide comment to the Executive Committee on their preferred way forward.

Area examined	Key principle met?
Has the review considered all the stages of the service review process and have these been effectively carried out?	Yes

Comments:

Members noted that as part of the review, officers have held discussions with the landlord of the property of the current location of the TIC with regard to opportunities to reduce the rent level and that this has been unsuccessful.

Area examined	Key principle met?
Have the linkages and impacts on other services and partners been properly explored and accounted for?	Yes

Comments:

Area examined	Key principle met?
Are the proposed options for change deliverable, realistic in the timeframe and accurately costed?	Yes

Comments:

Members feel that the timescale for relocating the service into the library is achievable noting that the current lease on the Antelope Walk premises expires at the end of March 2017.

Area examined	Key principle met?
Are the savings proposed deliverable and represent value for money?	Yes
Comments:	
<p>The scrutiny working group note the need to continue with a valued service but within a limited budget. The council has a duty to reduce the revenue cost of running the service and note that this will be in the region of an £80,000 saving year on year from 1 April 2017.</p> <p>There are opportunities for the council to work together with partners including Dorset County Council to continue to provide a service for visitors and residents.</p>	
Area examined	Key principle met?
Has the customer been placed at the centre of the review process and has all stakeholder requirements been focussed on appropriately?	Yes
Comments:	
<p>Stakeholder and public consultation have been undertaken.</p> <p>Members accept that there is a body of opinion that would like to see the TIC retained in the current location but there is an acknowledgement that the service has to relocate in order to achieve necessary savings and to put the service in the best possible position for any potential review in the future linked to possible changes in local government.</p> <p>The service review has considered other options in addition to the library option, which have been ruled out and has also rejected the option of stopping the service.</p>	
Area examined	Key principle met?
Have equality issues been fully considered and where possible mitigated, including clear identification of the adverse impacts of the proposed changes on different groups?	Yes
Equality Impact Assessment complete?	Yes

Comments:

The scrutiny working group feel that the library option offers a number of benefits over the existing TIC location and note the following paragraph included within the equalities impact assessment:

“Public consultation revealed that the positive aspects of the library included the availability of disabled car parking, the proximity of car parks/train stations, level access to the building and the availability of full disabled facilities, including on site accessible WC facilities, in a building already adapted to meet the needs of those with protected characteristics.”

Any other issues identified in the review that will require further development or research

The relocation of the TIC service into the library is seen as phase one of this project with a recognition that a further move of the service being possible at an appropriate time in the future.

Comments on options set out in the business case

Comments as set out in this report.

Further suggestions for change that may have been overlooked or discounted

Members support a review of tourist information signage within Dorchester and support opportunities to work with partners including with the Dorchester Heritage Committee.

Preferred option of the scrutiny working group and reasoning

The scrutiny working group support the recommendation in the business case to move the TIC service into the Dorchester Library at the current time in order to maintain the service. Members support a review of the location of the service at an appropriate time in the future and ask that the district council provides a capital contribution in the case that the tourist information centre moves out of the library into new premises in the future.

Report produced by the Scrutiny Working Group - 7 November 2016

Report agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 22 November 2016