

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

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

DATE: 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.

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
<p>Comments:</p> <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
<p>Comments:</p> <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

<p>Comments:</p> <p>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:</p> <p>“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.”</p>
<p>Any other issues identified in the review that will require further development or research</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>Comments on options set out in the business case</p> <p>Comments as set out in this report.</p>
<p>Further suggestions for change that may have been overlooked or discounted</p> <p>Members support a review of tourist information signage within Dorchester and support opportunities to work with partners including with the Dorchester Heritage Committee.</p>
<p>Preferred option of the scrutiny working group and reasoning</p> <p>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.</p>

Report produced by the Scrutiny Working Group

Date: 7 November 2016