



EXECUTIVE – 31 March 2010

Core Council Review: Tourist Information Centre

Report of Growth & Development Manager, Tim Burton

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor, Mrs Fran Smith.)

Executive Summary

This matter is being reported back to the Executive for further consideration following call-in to the Corporate Scrutiny Meeting on 18 March 2010, taking into account the Committee's desire to consider further the Health and Safety implications of reduced staffing. Having further reviewed the balance of level of staff levels against income, taking into account these concerns, it is proposed to reinstate a further Tourist Information Assistant post equivalent to 0.28FTE.

1. Background to This Report

- 1.1 The Core Council proposed approved by Full Council on 23 November 2009, included a saving of £50,000 through a review of the Taunton Tourist Information Centre which had been identified by Members, as an area where investment should be reduced.
- 1.2 The review process has looked at a range of issues, including reducing opening hours, focus on more profitable areas of business, reduction in staffing levels, shared location and potential for joint service delivery.
- 1.3 Following discussions with the Tourist Information Centre Manager and taking into account the findings of the Buckley Young Associates report into the service in October 2008, it is clear that there is little scope for the required saving to the General Fund to be derived from additional income.
- 1.4 A new 3 year lease has been negotiated with Somerset County Council, which has reduced the accommodation costs from £23,000 to £12,000 per annum. When the Executive considered this matter on 9 November 2009, it was agreed that the Tourist Information Centre should remain at the library (at least in the short term) whilst other options for co-location or possible joint service delivery are continued to be explored.

- 1.5 The areas of Members concern which lead to the call-in surrounded the impact of reducing staffing upon opening hours, staff welfare and the provision of the service in general.
- 1.6 The Corporate Scrutiny Committee resolved that the challenge be supported and the decision be referred back to the Executive for further consideration, as to how the Tourist Information Centre will run with the reduction in staff, taking into account the Health and Safety appraisal.

2. **Appraisal of Health and Safety Welfare Issues Resulting From Reduction in Staff Levels**

2.1 The Council's Corporate Health and Safety Advisor, David Woodbury, has assessed the impact of reducing staff levels from 3.7 FTE to 2 FTE and has identified a number of risks and control measures as a result. The findings are summarised as follows:-

- Opening and Staffing – No increase in risk. Use Kilkenny for automated lone worker reporting.
- Working and Serving Customers – No significant increase in role. Consider installing linked CCTV, alarm buzzer linked to library reception, issue personal attack alarms, ensure safe access to refuge.
- First Aid – No significant increase in risk. First Aiders available in library.
- Welfare – No change, but lone worker will need to shut Tourist Information Centre to take welfare breaks.
- Security of Monies/Goods and Stock – No significant increase in risk for routine transactions. Need to review layout to minimise risk of distraction theft.
- Welfare Implications for Staff from Increased Work Pressure, Changes for Workers, No Sickness Cover or Peak Load Resource Available – Inevitable reduction in quality of service needs to be communicated to customers, increased risk of hostile response, revised layout of information display, call diverts, consider retaining more resource to provide cover and retain expertise.

3. **Revised Proposal**

3.1 As previously stated, a saving of £11,000 has been achieved through the renegotiation of the lease. The remaining saving of £39,000 needs to come from reduced staffing. However, there also needs to be a balance made between the saving and the potential resultant loss of income. The proposal reported to the Executive in February identified a staff saving of £49,000 allowing for a £10,000 reduction in income

from the impact of these staff changes. I have concluded that if 6 day working can be achieved, minimising lone working, the reduction in income may be considerably less than that.

- 3.2 Following Corporate Scrutiny's considerations of this matter further discussions have taken place with the Tourist Information Centre Manager. By retaining an additional resource to the service, equivalent to 10.5 hours per week (which can be used by the Lead Officer to minimise lone working at peak times and provide some cover for holidays and sickness), staff welfare issues raised by the Health and Safety Advisor can be addressed, whilst maintaining a 6 day a week service, albeit with slightly reduced opening hours (9.30am – 4.30pm). The cost of this additional resource will be approximately £7,000, although it is hoped that these changes will mean that income can be maintained at close to existing levels and, therefore, the overall saving to the General Fund of £50,000 can still be achieved.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 In order to achieve savings to the General Fund of £50,000 it is inevitable that levels of current staffing will be reduced. However, taking into account concerns of Members at the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and further assessment of impact upon income, it has been concluded that a third member of staff can continue to be employed, albeit on a part-time basis to cover peak periods during lone working and holiday/sickness cover.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 Revised staffing structure should comprise:-**

**Tourist Information Lead (Grade G)
Tourist Information Officer (Grade E)
Tourist Information Assistant – 0.28 FTE (Grade D)**

- 5.2 That the Health and Safety welfare control issues identified should be considered further and implemented, as necessary, in consultation with the Council's Corporate Health and Safety Advisor.**

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