



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY**

**to
PLANNING AND LICENSING COMMITTEE
5 JUNE 2018**

BURNHAM-ON-CROUCH TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE PROVISION UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members on the performance of the Burnham-on-Crouch Tourist Information Centre (TIC) and to seek agreement to operate for a further two years.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- (i) That Members review and make comment on the contents of the report;
- (ii) That Members endorse a continuation of the service for a further one year.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

3.1 Background

- 3.1.1 Members will be aware that until 2015 the Dengie Project Trust, through *One Place*, provided Tourist and Community Information services on behalf of the Council.
- 3.1.2 In late 2015 the Dengie Project Trust gave notice to withdraw from the agreement and Officers put forward a proposal to operate a TIC as a satellite to the Maldon District TIC, sharing resources and expertise (Minute No. 126 refers).
- 3.1.3 Members considered the proposal and agreed that a two year trial be undertaken to demonstrate the sustainability and viability of an alternative service model. The trial was funded through the existing tourism budget with Burnham-on-Crouch Town Council contributing £5,000 per year to cover a small shortfall. Paragraph 6.5 of the report provides a financial overview of the service.
- 3.1.4 A new retail premises was found in a High Street location and 1.1 full time equivalent staff were appointed on fixed term contracts to provide the service.
- 3.1.5 The new Information Centre opened in September 2016 and has been open five days a week (Tues, Thurs, Fri, Sat and Sun) from 10am till 3pm. The centre is also open on bank holidays.
- 3.1.6 All TIC staff are multi-disciplined and required to work across both sites to ensure there is a consistent level of service between Maldon and Burnham-on-Crouch.

3.2 Performance

- 3.2.1 **APPENDIX 1** of this report details key statistics that have been recorded at the Burnham and Maldon TICs. A total of 6,029 customers have made use of the Burnham-on-Crouch offices, either face to face, on the phone or via email. Whilst the levels of footfall are moderate, the member of staff based there is busy working on additional tourism project areas, such as the online and social media presence promoting the District, guide production and partnership working with local businesses.
- 3.2.2 The number of customers visiting the centre has stayed consistent across the period but with a predictable drop in footfall during the winter months. As with most tourism businesses, weather conditions impact on visitor numbers. The wet and cold winter has meant a general drop in footfall into the TIC in comparison to the first year of operating. This is consistent with the Maldon Office but could also be linked to an increasing web presence.
- 3.2.3 Overseas visitors have been significant over the whole year with a good number of those from the USA and Canada researching family history amongst other things. These links are going to be further developed by the team over the next few months in partnership with Visit Essex and their 'Friendly invasion' campaign to be sold to American tour operators.
- 3.2.4 Retail sales have also been on trend with expected increases during the summer months and in the run up to Christmas. Conversion rates are healthy for this type of business and footfall, averaging 29% and an average £9.47 per transaction (gross). Now the service has been operating for over a year the team have a good understanding on what sells well and what further merchandising opportunities there might be in the future, including bespoke Burnham souvenirs.
- 3.2.5 The service has been delivered on budget for the trial period and subject to the continuation of the partnership with the Town Council and retail sales, it is set to continue as such without the need for further investment. The current financial year 2018 / 19 contribution has been agreed with Burnham Town Council at the same rate.

3.3 Visit Maldon District Website

- 3.3.1 Since its launch in 2016 traffic to the Visit Maldon District website is increasing with on average over 14,000 unique users a month and over 74,000 page views. The Burnham-on-Crouch Town page is consistently the third most popular page viewed every month after the homepage and events calendar. This relates to an average of over 1,000 views a month.
- 3.3.2 A significant proportion of officer time is invested in developing and maintaining the website, to ensure it is kept dynamic and relevant.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The Burnham-on-Crouch TIC trial has demonstrated that a satellite facility can be operated within existing tourism budgets but with a contribution from Burnham-on-Crouch Town Council.

4.2 In light of the positive impact the facility is having on the local economy and promoting Burnham-on-Crouch, it is recommended that a further two year extension be agreed to enable the further development of the service.

4.3 A two year extension would enable staff to be retained and the lease to be extended on existing terms.

5. IMPACT ON CORPORATE GOALS

5.1 The Council has a corporate goal to create opportunities for economic growth and prosperity. Tourism is a major contributor to the local economy and the sector employs 3,500 people across the District. The Districts TICs promote the area to visitors and residents to encourage spend within the local economy.

6. IMPLICATIONS

(iii) **Impact on Customers** – The Provision of an information service in Burnham-on-Crouch has had a positive impact on customers visiting the town. Great efforts have been made to improve the amount of information provided via the visit Maldon district website to supplement face to face service provision. Should the service be stopped customers would have to access information via an alternative provision or be unable to access information. This may have a negative impact on the local economy.

(iv) **Impact on Equalities** – None identified.

(v) **Impact on Risk** – There are no corporate risks associated with this report.

(vi) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – The Burnham-on-Crouch TIC operates within existing budgets but receives a financial contribution from Burnham Town Council. The following sets out headline budget figures

Staffing Costs	£18,800
Rents	£5,200
Supplies and services	£400
Financial Contribution BTC	-£5,000

(vii) **Impact on Resources (human)** – If Members do not wish the service to continue then it would have an impact on staffing levels currently employed.

(viii) **Impact on the Environment** – None identified.

Background papers: None.

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