



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY**

**to
COUNCIL (EXTRAORDINARY)
12 JULY 2018**

**BURNHAM-ON-CROUCH TOURISM INFORMATION CENTRE PROVISION
UPDATE**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek agreement to extend the trial of the Burnham-on-Crouch Tourist Information Centre until the end of the financial year 2018 / 19.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Council endorses an extension of the trial service until the end of the current financial year (March 2019).

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

3.1 Key Issue

- 3.1.1 At its meeting on 5 June 2018, Members of the Planning and Licensing Committee (P&LC) considered a report detailing the performance of the Burnham-on-Crouch Tourist Information Centre. Members will recall that the centre was established as a trial in order for the Council to test providing the service in-house. Following discussion, Members of the P&LC deferred a decision and sought further information on service outputs including net income (Minute No. 127 refers). Deferring the decision to extend the trial now presents an operational challenge as the current lease will expire on 31 July 2018.
- 3.1.2 The Council is about to embark on a major review of all its services through Ignite's 'Future Council' model. It may be considered premature to end the trial of the Burnham-on-Crouch Tourist Information Centre (TIC) ahead of the conclusion of that process or in isolation to other service choices. It is therefore recommended that the trial be continued at least until the end of this current financial year to allow the Ignite work to be concluded.
- 3.1.3 This report provides the additional information sought by Members of the P&LC (**APPENDIX 1** refers) and seeks the Council's approval to extend the current trial until at least 31 March 2019.

3.2 Background

- 3.2.1 Members will be aware that until 2015 the Dengie Project Trust (DPT), through *One Place*, provided Tourist and Community Information services in Burnham-on-Crouch on behalf of the Council.
- 3.2.2 In late 2015, the DPT 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). The Centre was set up on a trial basis and funded through the existing tourism budgets and specifically, the amount previously paid to the DPT.
- 3.2.3 In addition, Burnham-on-Crouch Town Council (BTC) agreed to contribute £5,000 per year to cover a small shortfall. For the sake of clarity BTC have confirmed that this funding will continue to be made available this financial year.
- 3.2.4 A new retail premises was found in a High Street location and 1.1 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff were appointed on fixed term contracts to provide the service.
- 3.2.5 The new Information Centre opened in September 2016 and has been open five days a week (Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday) from 10am till 3pm. The centre is also open on bank holidays. 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.
- 3.2.6 **APPENDIX 1** to this report provides a high level overview of key performance information.

3.3 Service Model

- 3.3.1 The current Burnham-on-Crouch TIC operating model is based on using the income received from both retail sales and contributions from BTC to offset the cost of rent and utilities effectively making the shop front cost neutral. Staffing costs are then funded through existing Tourism budgets. It is worth noting that the staff are employed at all sites and undertake a range of tourism related duties at quiet periods that benefit the district as a whole.

3.4 Lease

- 3.4.1 The lease for the premises can be extended for one year at the end of the original lease period. In this case 31 July 2018. Negotiations with the landlord are currently underway, with Officers seeking a shorter extension in line with the recommendation of this report. However, there is a risk that the landlord may not agree to a shorter extension and the Council will either, need to vacate the premises on 31 July 2018, or if it wishes to extend the trial, pay a full years rent but close the TIC at the end of the trial in March 2019.
- 3.4.2 In the latter scenario the Council may be required to pay four months' rent (which includes utility costs and business rates) to cover the period from 31 March and 31 July 2019, the expiry of the extended lease. This would be a maximum of £1,800.

4. CONCLUSIONS

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

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 District's TICs promote the area to visitors and residents to encourage spend within the local economy.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **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.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None identified.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – There are no corporate risks associated with this report.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – The Burnham-on-Crouch TIC operates within the existing tourism budget detailed within section 3.4 and **APPENDIX 1**.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – Should Members choose to end the trial with immediate effect then staff contracts could be terminated at the end of their fixed term which is aligned with the end of the current lease period i.e. 31 July 2018.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – None identified.

Background papers: Previous reports to the Planning and Licensing Committee 5 June 2018.

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