

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
COMMUNITY SERVICES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

**AGENDA
ITEM NO
6c**

6 DECEMBER 2018

Report Title	REPORT OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP: STROUD TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE (TIC) REVIEW
Purpose of Report	To consider recommendations by the Task and Finish Group regarding the future of the Stroud Tourist Information Centre
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES to: Approve the recommendation by the Task and Finish group to close the SDC funded Stroud TIC on 31 March 2019 and change the service by encouraging the District Town Councils to develop a district wide tourist information service with the help of an SDC one off grant payment of £2,000.
Consultation and Feedback	A Task & Finish Group meeting was held at the Subscription Rooms on 3 August 2018 where members of the group met separately with TIC staff and representatives from Stroud Town Council, to receive feedback.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	There are Financial implications associated with the recommendation of this report. Any redundancy costs would have to be met in this financial year, if the decision is to close it by the 31 March 2019. The one off grant payment could be met from the budget savings of £81k (excluding support service costs) in 2019/20. Should members wish to consider another option further Financial implications would apply. Adele Rudkin, Accountant Tel: 01453 754369 Email: adele.rudkin@stroud.gov.uk Risk: a decision is required as there will be no accommodation in the Subscription Rooms for the Stroud based TIC after 31 March 2019 Report Author joanne.jordan@stroud.gov.uk
Legal Implications	Legal implications are outlined in the report concerning employment issues. Since the Council owns the property on which the service is sited, no legal formalities are required to alter occupation. Nicola Swan, Interim Head of Legal & Monitoring Officer Tel: 01453 754369 Email: nicola.swan@stroud.gov.uk
Report Author	Joanne Jordan on behalf of the Task and Finish Group Director of Customer Services Tel: 01453 754005 Email: joanne.jordan@stroud.gov.uk

Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To retain the SDC funded Stroud TIC service and operate from an alternative building in Stroud 2) Stop the SDC funded Stroud TIC service 3) Change the service by encouraging the Town Councils to develop a district wide service with a one off grant payment
Appendix A	TIC summary actual financial performance data 2016/17 and 2017/18

1. Background

- 1.1 At the 31 May 2018 meeting this committee set up a cross party task and finish group to review the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) based in the Stroud Subscription Rooms. The group consists of Councillors Gordon Craig, John Jones, John Marjoram, Steve Robinson, and Ken Tucker.
- 1.2 The decision to review the TIC service was made as a consequence of the decision to transfer the Subscription Rooms building and business to Stroud Town Council/Stroud Subscription Rooms Trust on 31 March 2019 and also the need to reduce ongoing SDC revenue costs due to increasing financial pressures. The TIC may have to close slightly earlier than the transfer date of 31 March 2019 to enable the service to be decommissioned.
- 1.3 The TIC is located within the Subscription Rooms and the room currently used to accommodate the TIC is going to be used for a different purpose after the transfer. The business plan from the Stroud Town Council/Stroud Subscription Rooms Trust shows no other suitable floor provision to accommodate the TIC within the building following the transfer and it is not part of the legal transfer agreements.
- 1.4 Following a meeting with Stroud Town Council in the Subscription Rooms and recent reviews of serviced office space in Stroud, indications are that any outside body would find it difficult to secure and fund suitable premises from which to sustain a stand-alone, district wide tourism operation.
- 1.5 There are three permanent staff who have a split role covering tourist information and the Subscriptions Rooms box office. If there is a split role and part of that role (i.e. the tourist information centre) will discontinue in its current form a decision has to be made whether or not the staff transfer under the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) Regulations. HR advice, based on the current TUPE guidance, is that you should consider what the 'majority' of the work is. Analysis of their work has shown that the majority of their work is on tourist information rather than box office. Consequently the three TIC/Box office permanent staff will not TUPE transfer with the Subscription Rooms as the TIC service is not included as part of the transfer agreements. The staff concerned have been consulted and notified of their redundancy with effect from 31 March 2019.
- 1.6 The TIC in Stroud Town Centre was established to provide tourist information for the whole district. However, there are clear indications from the district that a central model is not supplying all the answers. This is evidenced by setting up of additional TICs in Nailsworth, Painswick and Wotton-under-Edge

and both Dursley and Berkeley are in the process of setting one up. These TICs are operated by volunteers, supported by their local town and tourism information which includes surrounding parishes.

- 1.7 It should be noted that with the increasing availability of local tourist information on line, customers can self-serve by doing their own research and bookings so there is less need to visit or contact a TIC.
- 1.8 The actual financial cost to the Council of running the TIC varies each year depending on the level of income (see Appendix A). However, the General Fund budget includes an allowance of £81k as the subsidy to the service. It is this £81k which will be included in the budget as a saving if the decision is made to close, less the cost of any grants awarded in the first year post closure.

2. Alternative Options considered by the Task and Finish Group

2.1 To retain the SDC funded Stroud TIC service and operate from an alternative building in Stroud.

2.2 This option would require the service to move into a different vacant building in the centre of Stroud.

2.3 A recent review by the Asset Management team of a serviced office space of a similar size for the TIC in the centre of Stroud would be around £11,000 to £13,500 per annum. Additional costs would also be incurred with setting up the office space such as the initial fitting out, furniture, installing IT and phone connections.

2.4 There would also be an increase in staff management costs as currently the staff are supervised as part of the Subscription Rooms service which would not be possible following the transfer to Stroud Town Council/Stroud Subscription Rooms Trust on 31 March 2019.

2.5 This option could use volunteers instead of paid staff but would require significant staff resource in recruiting, maintaining and managing a pool of volunteers.

2.6 Stop the SDC funded Stroud TIC Service

2.7 This would mean that there would be no SDC funded TIC service in Stroud. However this does reflect the model in the rest of the district whereby the TICs are mainly run by volunteers and are funded by the local town council.

2.8 There would be a cost of making the three permanent staff redundant as we would have to decommission the service.

2.9 Change the service by encouraging the Town Councils to develop a district wide service with a one off grant payment

2.10 This option would still stop the SDC funded Stroud TIC service which would mean that the staff would be made redundant.

- 2.11 This option would provide for a one off grant of £2,000 to encourage the promotion of district wide tourist information. This would assist the existing volunteer led TICs in Nailsworth, Painswick, and Wotton-under-Edge and also help to develop tourist information in Town Council areas where this facility doesn't currently exist.
- 2.12 The one off grant in 2019/20 would only be available to the seven Market Town Councils (Berkeley, Dursley, Nailsworth, Painswick, Stonehouse, Stroud and Wotton-under-Edge). The Town Councils would be encouraged to apply for the grant and to work with their neighbouring Town/Parish councils to discuss how to best use the funds to promote and develop a district wide tourism service. The total amount set aside for awarding the one off grants would be £14,000 and would be funded by the revenue savings in 2019/20 relating to not running the SDC funded Stroud TIC service.
- 2.13 After careful consideration the Task and Finish group are recommending this option to committee as this is considered the most cost effective way of continuing to provide an element of a district wide tourism service.

Stroud District Council

Finance and Business Services

Tourist Information Centre - Financial Data 2016/17 to 2017/18

Summary Table

Cost Type	2016/17	2017/18
Tourist Information Centre - Controllable Costs		
Staff Costs - Contracted (e.g. Wages, National Insurance)	51,521	48,840
Staff Costs - Casual (e.g. Wages, National Insurance)	17,630	24,182
Premises Costs (e.g. Electricity, Repairs and Maintenance)	0	2,000
Transport/Vehicle Costs (e.g. Mileage)	38	0
Running Costs (e.g. Stationery, Software, Advertising, Equipment Maintenance)	58,006	55,008
Contractor Payments (e.g. PA Equipment Hire, Recycling)	0	0
Income (e.g. Ticket Sales, Room Hire)	-78,934	-62,318
Subtotal	48,261	67,712
Tourist Information Centre - Non-Controllable Costs		
Salary Costs (e.g. FRS17 Pension Cost)	3,108	6,036
Premises Costs (e.g. Planned & Responsive Maintenance)	0	0
Support Charges (e.g. Finance, HR, Audit, IT Support Charges)	22,003	23,022
Capital Charges (e.g. Depreciation)	0	0
Subtotal	25,111	29,058
Tourist Information Centre Total	73,372	96,771