

TOURISM AND TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

9 MAY 2022 (VERSION 9)

Introduction – Tourism and Tourist Information Centre (TIC)

The TIC is located in Guildford House in the High Street. Pre-Covid, the service was open on Mondays to Saturdays plus Sundays from the beginning of May until the end of September. The TIC is currently operating reduced hours and this is under review.

The TIC provides the following services:

- Information and advice to visitors to the borough
- Promotion of Guildford to encourage visitors to the borough
- Shop offering a mix of souvenirs and local products

(A Box Office providing ticketing services for local events is no longer provided.)

The most common requests received by the TIC are for bus timetables and maps. The most frequently asked questions include what's on, where to eat and the location of particular shops. Many of the functions performed by the TIC align with the responsibilities of Experience Guildford in the town centre area.

Introduction – Tourism and Tourist Information Centre (TIC) (continued)

As part of Phase B of the Future Guildford transformation programme, the tourism and heritage marketing functions and associated budgets transferred to the Strategy and Communications Team. Operational management of the TIC and associated budgets were the responsibility of the Customer, Case and Parking Team.

The Strategy and Communications Team was given responsibility for leading an online visitor economy and marketing function and two additional officer posts were transferred to the service to support this role. A new approach will need to be developed, including:

- closer collaboration with Visit Surrey and other partners, such as Experience Guildford and Surrey Hills Enterprises
- an improved online offering to replace Visit Guildford (which is now unstable and unsupported)
- utilising expertise from the University's Centre for Digital Transformation in the Visitor Economy
- increased targeted promotional campaigns

Although Future Guildford delivered significant financial savings, the Council is facing a substantial projected budget deficit over the next four years and we are having to make savings across our discretionary services. Therefore, this mandate considers options for further changes to the future delivery of visitor information services that will also secure financial savings as part of our Savings Strategy.

TOURISM AND TIC - STRATEGY

1. Why should a programme/project be started now?

We are facing severe budgetary pressures and need to deliver substantial reductions in discretionary spending in the short and medium-term. We also need to develop a modern, fit-for-purpose visitor economy offer.

2. What is the good idea or problem to be solved?

In the context of our challenging financial position, we need to consider options for the future provision of visitor information services, whilst delivering financial savings.

3. What is the purpose of the project and what outputs and outcomes will it deliver?

Depending on the preferred options, the project will deliver financial savings to the Council and potentially more effective, modernised visitor information services.

4. What priority, corporate objective or strategy is fulfilled by this project?

A reduction or cessation of funding for the TIC would contribute to savings required as part of the Council's Savings Strategy.

An effective visitor information service would have a positive impact on the local economy and, therefore, contribute to our corporate priority of "supporting our business community and attracting new inward investment".

TOURISM AND TIC - OPTIONS

5. What are the strategic options available to GBC to deliver a solution?

a) **Do Nothing**

Continue with the current TIC and service in-situ at Guildford House Gallery.

(This would maintain a physical face-to-face presence in the High Street, but would not deliver savings required by the Savings Strategy. It would also restrict other potential opportunities for the use of the space.)

b) **Do Something (1)**

Move the TIC and staff to another location.

(Whilst making space available at Guildford House for other purposes, this would result in a loss of a High Street presence, retain staff overheads and place significant limits on potential savings.)

c) **Do Something (2)**

Remove the physical TIC and provide an alternative digital and online communications and marketing service, incorporating increased targeted promotional campaigns. This would be accompanied by a review of future strategy/approach and required resources.

(This could provide a modernised, improved service and deliver savings in the region of £70k - £80k. The physical presence in the High Street would be lost and there would be potential redundancy costs.)

d) **Do Most**

Close the TIC and end the visitor service offered by GBC.

Savings would be slightly higher than Option (c) by removing digital and marketing spend, but an important service supporting the visitor economy would be lost leading to possible reputational damage. There would be potential redundancy costs.

TOURISM AND TIC - CONSIDERATIONS

6. Who are the lead Director and Service Manager who will lead and direct the project and use/maintain the projects products once they are handed over?

Dawn Hudd, Strategic Services Director

Ian Doyle, Service Delivery Director

Steve Benbough, Strategy and Communications Manager

Nicola Haymes, Interim Head of Customer, Case and Parking

Councillor James Steel, Lead Councillor for Environment

7. What are the impacts on other Operational Service Leaders or projects?

Strategy and Communications are responsible for digital marketing and communications.

Customer, Case and Parking are responsible for the management of TIC and visitor information service.

Heritage Services are responsible for the management of Guildford House.

Decisions on the future of the TIC impact on separate proposals for the consolidation of Heritage Services at the Guildford House site.

8. What general approach will the project take to deliver?

The project will be managed by the Strategic Services Director and Service Delivery Director.

9. When and why must the project start and finish?

A decision is required as part of the Savings Strategy and will also provide clarity to facilitate the delivery of the outcomes of the review of Heritage Services.

TOURISM AND TIC - RESOURCES

10. Which stakeholders are or, will need to be, involved in the project?

Relevant service leaders and managers
Corporate Management Team
Lead Councillor/Executive
Executive Advisory Board
TIC and tourism staff
Experience Guildford
Visit Surrey and other visitor economy groups

11. What specialist resources (internal and external) are needed to consider this mandate and develop a strategic outline business case?

a) External
None

b) Internal
Legal, Procurement, Finance, ICT, Assets, Human Resources, Heritage Services, Strategy and Communications and Customer Case and Parking

12. What Rough Order of Magnitude (ROM) are the likely Whole Life Costs (WLC) of the project and live service?

Potential annual savings in the region of £70k - £80k could be delivered.

TOURISM AND TIC – RISKS, ASSUMPTIONS & ISSUES

13. What are the strategic Risks, Assumptions, Issues, Dependencies, Constraints & Opportunities?

Risks

Failure (real or perceived) to deliver an effective alternative digital visitor information service

Reputational damage in connection with the closure of the TIC and significant opposition in some quarters

If savings are not made in TIC and tourism services, cuts in funding for higher priority frontline services will be needed

Assumptions

That the Council wishes to make savings in accordance with its Savings Strategy.

That the Council wishes to consider alternative options for the delivery of visitor information services

Issues

Staff concern and uncertainty about the future of the TIC

Consultation with staff and possible redundancies.

Subject to the preferred option, an equality impact assessment will be required.

Retaining the TIC at Guildford House will impact on potential consolidation of Heritage Services and restrict potential income generation opportunities

TOURISM AND TIC – DEPENDENCIES, CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Dependencies

Review of Operational Assets

Heritage Services Review and configuration of Guildford House

Collaboration and joint working with Waverley Borough Council

Constraints

Financial pressures require savings in discretionary services, including tourism services

Opportunities

Provision of a modern, innovative, visitor information service

Future options for collaboration with Waverley on the visitor economy

Greater strategic collaboration with Visit Surrey and other partners

More flexibility on use of vacated space at Guildford House as part of the consolidation of Heritage Services

Continued visitor information to be made available at Guildford House and other locations

Greater collaboration with Experience Guildford and reduced duplication

Internal GBC Stakeholders (Contributors to this Issue/Mandate)

Involved or sighted so far

Steve Benbough, Strategy and Communications Manager (author)
Sam Adam, PMO Officer
Ian Doyle, Service Delivery Director
Faye Gould, Procurement Manager
Amanda Hargreaves, Heritage Lead
Dawn Hudd, Strategic Services Director
Emma McBriarty, Senior Policy Officer (Communications)
Peter Stevens, Deputy Head of Customer, Case and Parking
Nicola Haymes, Interim Head of Customer Case and Parking
Claire Morris, Resources Director
Louise Odell, Interim Project Officer
Diane Owens, Lead Specialist (Legal)
Marieke van der Reijden, Head of Asset Management
Jonathan Sewell, Head of Culture, Heritage and Leisure
Francesca Smith, Lead Specialist (Human Resources)
Vicky Worsfold, Lead Specialist (Finance)
James Beach Lead Specialist (ICT)
Corporate Management Team
Councillor Joss Bigmore, Leader of the Council
Councillor James Steel, Lead Councillor
Councillor John Redpath, Lead Councillor for Economy
Executive Liaison Group

To be consulted at the next step

Executive Liaison Group
Executive Advisory Board

TOURISM AND TIC – NEXT STEPS

CMT considered the mandate at its meeting on 15 December 2021 and approved its submission to the Executive Liaison Group on 5 January 2022. CMT confirmed that an Equalities Impact Assessment would be required in relation to some of the options. Affected staff would also need to be informed of the proposals prior to the mandate being placed in the public domain.

Consideration of the mandate was deferred at the meeting of the Executive Liaison Group on 5 January 2022. A meeting was held with Councillors James Steel and John Redpath to discuss the mandate. Amendments were subsequently made to the mandate to explain responsibilities for visitor economy services following reorganisation as part of the Future Guildford programme. Option (c) was also amended to state that any closure of the TIC would be accompanied by a review of our future strategy/approach to visitor economy services and required resources.

The Executive Liaison Group considered the mandate at its meeting on 16 February 2022. Option (c) was supported in principle, but the Group asked that opportunities be considered for the continued provision of visitor information at Guildford House and other town centre locations in consultation with Experience Guildford.