

TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE

10 MARCH 2020

Report Title	Closure of Newton Abbot Tourist Information Centre (TIC) and opening an Information Point at Newton's Place
Purpose of Report	To agree the closure of the Tourist Information Centre in Newton Abbot and support the creation of an Information Point within Newton's Place, the new home for Newton Abbot Town Council and the Newton Abbot museum
Recommendation(s)	The Committee RESOLVES to: (1) Approve the closure of the Tourist Information Centre in Newton Abbot ; and (2) Support the provision of an Information Point in Newton's Place.
Financial Implications	Financial implications are set out in section 2.1 of this report. The proposed changes could result in an initial saving of around £7,000 and increased income of around £1,625 with ongoing savings of £17,000 per annum after the first year of provision of an information point. Martin Flitcroft, Chief Finance Officer Tel: 01626 215246 Email: martin.flitcroft@teignbridge.gov.uk
Legal Implications	There are no legal implications arising from this report. Paul Woodhead, Legal Services Team Leader and Deputy Monitoring Officer Tel: 01626 215139 Email: paul.woodhead@teignbridge.gov.uk
Risk Assessment	There are no risks as a result of this change. Neil Blaney, Head of Place and Commercial Services Tel: 01626 215233 Email: neil.blaney@teignbridge.gov.uk
Environmental/ Climate Change Implications	There are no climate change implications as a result of this change Neil Blaney, Head of Place and Commercial Services Tel: 01626 215233 Email: neil.blaney@teignbridge.gov.uk
Report Author	Neil Blaney, Head of Place and Commercial Services Tel: 01626 215233 Email: neil.blaney@teignbridge.gov.uk
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Nina Jeffries, Portfolio Holder for Business, Economy and Tourism
Appendices	None
Background Papers	1. None Business Impact Assessment

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 Tourist Information Centres (TICs) are a non-statutory function of the Council. The role of the TICs is to provide information and advice to visitors and local residents covering a variety of issues, supporting local businesses and events. The main usage of TICs relates to public transport, activities, 'things to do', 'what's on' and suggestions for visitors to explore the towns and surrounding areas. The team seek to encourage return visits and increase overnight stays. The Council operates TICs in Newton Abbot and Dawlish throughout the year, albeit with a reduced service in Dawlish in the winter months.
- 1.2 With an increase in the availability of information online, along with the ability to book or purchase directly, demand for TIC services have reduced and footfall has decreased year on year. As a non-statutory function, the fall in demand has raised the question of the long-term viability of providing this service. This report focuses on Newton Abbot, as further work is required to consider the TIC at Dawlish.
- 1.3 The TIC in Newton Abbot is jointly funded by Newton Abbot Town Council and operates from the Market Hall.
- 1.4 The Town Council is due to relocate to the former St Leonard's Church on Wolborough Street, along with the museum and a community meeting space, which will be known collectively as Newton's Place. As a visitor attraction in its own right, Newton's Place is considered to be a suitable location for an Information Point for visitors and locals alike.
- 1.5 Following discussions with the Clerk to the Town Council and the team that will be running Newton's Place, there is support for the Information Point approach. Newton's Place will be supported by volunteers, and taking on an Information Point won't require any additional staff or costs to the Town Council. The Town Councillors are aware of the proposed change and supportive, and the advice of the clerk is that no formal approval from Town Councillors is required for this change to take place.
- 1.6 The service provided will differ from the current TIC offer, as the focus will be on the town, Newton's Place and local events, rather than booking tickets, travel timetables, providing advice or holding information for places, venues or events outside of the town and district. It should be noted that the volunteers at

Newton's Place will still be able to give good local advice and support to visitors.

- 1.7 Mindful of the environmental impact of numerous leaflets and handouts, along with the limited space available with Newton's Place for storage, it is proposed to focus on the digital offer. To support this, it is proposed that Teignbridge helps with the acquisition of a new touch screen for visitors, similar to the offer at Pavilions Teignmouth, and helps with the creation and production of new town maps. There is no agreed cost yet for the touchscreen or maps, as investigations into options is still being undertaken. Touchscreens can range from between £1,000 and £7,500, depending on the specifications and development required. With additional work to create maps, it is anticipated that an overall budget of £10,000 is set, as a one-off contribution from Teignbridge. Further support will also be provided through Visit South Devon, to help with online promotion and marketing.
- 1.8 For customers who currently use the TIC service, while it is still operating from the Market Hall we will signpost customers to where to find information that won't be provided at Newton's Place, for example, bus and train timetable information, or ticket sales for events.
- 1.9 Existing staffing levels will remain, but they will only be based at Dawlish. Staff at the Dawlish TIC will still be contactable by phone and email, and the Visit South Devon website will continue to host information of relevance and interest to local visitors.

2. REPORT DETAIL

2.1 Financial

- 2.1.1 The TIC at Newton Abbot is part funded by the Town Council, who pay 50% of the running costs, excluding staff. This equates to around £3,400 per year. This income would no longer be received.
- 2.1.2 If a new tenant can be found for the unit, the Council can maintain its income stream while reducing the running costs and trading expenses associated with the unit.
- 2.1.3 There will be initial outlay for a new screen and digital maps, after which there will be no further cost to the District Council, and it is recommended that a budget of up to £10,000 is set aside for this.

- 2.1.4 There are no staff at risk of redundancy as a result of this proposed change. Staff savings will come from reduced level of seasonal staff and vacancy saving from a current permanent member of staff who is due to cease employment in April 2020, which will result in a saving of approximately £17,000 per year.
- 2.1.5 A report will be brought back to the Council regarding the Dawlish TIC by June 2020, following detailed discussions with Dawlish Town Council.

2.2 Legal

- 2.2.1 There are no legal considerations as a result of this change.

2.3 Risks

- 2.3.1 There are no risks as a result of this change.

2.4 Environmental/Climate Change Impact

- 2.4.1 There is no environmental or climate change impact from this change.

3. OPTIONS

- 3.1 There are three possible options for consideration. They are: to continue to provide the TIC service in Newton Abbot; to transfer the role of local information to the Town Council as part of its move into 'Newton's Place'; and to stop running the TIC service without looking to make alternative provision. An option of the Town Council running the TIC function under a service level agreement has not been considered as the Town Council is keen to keep all of its services within Newton's Place and encourage footfall into there.
- 3.2 Option 1: To continue running the existing service – consideration has been given to ways in which the TICs could become more commercial, generating income to cover running costs. This includes a greater focus on sales, seeking commissions on products sold and potentially sub-leasing part of the site to other uses. The sub-leasing option wouldn't work at Newton Abbot as the TIC is too small.
- 3.3 Option 2: Section 1 of this report sets out this option in more detail and is the preferred approach. This options sees Teignbridge continue to engage with the offer by providing support and assistance to the Town Council either directly

through the maps and touch screen, or indirectly through the support of Visit South Devon. This option wouldn't be a traditional TIC function and will require clear communications so that current customers are aware of the changes.

- 3.4 Option 3: Completely stop providing the TIC function – this option would see the service stop completely with no replacement offer or engagement with the Newton's Place project.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The preferred approach supports the Town Council, continuing the strong working links between the authorities. It also supports the ongoing provision of an Information Point for the town, albeit different to the current offer.
- 4.2 There will be a small financial benefit from the changes, with a reduction in expenditure in the rent for the TIC unit and an increase in income of that space when it is re-let. There will be an investment in helping the Town Council create the Information Point, but no on-going costs.
- 4.3 If Executive approve the proposed change the TIC will close once Newton's Place has opened. This is due to be in April 2020, although the exact date is yet to be confirmed.