

**LEDBURY TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE****Report By: Head of Economic and Community Services****Wards Affected**

Countywide

**Purpose**

1. To update Members on the proposal to relocate the Tourist Information Centre in Ledbury.

**Financial Implications**

2. The lease costs of Ledbury Tourist information Centre are £27,350, plus £8,094 rates per annum. This would present a saving when relocated to a Council owned property.

**Background**

3. The decision to move Ledbury Tourist Information Centre (TIC) was called-in by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2006. The proposal was to relocate the TIC to the Masters House in Ledbury to make a budget saving and to utilise an under-used site. However, there was considerable local objection due to moving the TIC from the main High Street and withdrawal of window space to promote local businesses, as well as a view that the Masters House in its current state was not suitable and would be subject to vandalism.
4. The Scrutiny Committee recommended an approach from the Ledbury and Area Development Trust to commission a business plan for the future use of the Masters House. The Cabinet Member agreed this recommendation based on producing an Audience Development Plan (commissioned by Herefordshire Council but funded by Heritage Lottery Funding to the value of £15,000) to inform a business plan paid for by Ledbury Town Council and Ledbury Civic Society.
5. The Ledbury and Area Development Trust have conducted a wide range of consultation and research involving 2 open days and questionnaire responses from 500 people. The initial timetable for completing this work was 31<sup>st</sup> August 2007 to allow time for any works to be complete on a new location for the TIC before the lease expires in February. However, following the failure to secure £2 million lottery funding for a new library in Ledbury, the report will not be complete until the end of October, which will be presented to Council to coincide with work completed by officers on the future use of facilities in the town – both reports are tied together.
6. However, key findings emerging from the consultation on the Masters House, show that people are supportive of the TIC being based at the site but only as part of wider improvements of the Masters House.
7. It is worth noting that since the meeting in November 2006 a strong recommendation from the Audit Commission was to revisit the TIC operation to be more relevant and

responsive to visitor needs, whilst being more efficient. They endorsed the approach to rationalise TICs, but wanted it to take place at a quicker pace.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT the report be noted, subject to any comments the Committee wishes to make.**

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- None