

MEETING:	COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE:	7TH DECEMBER 2009
TITLE OF REPORT:	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN FOLLOWING THE SCRUTINY REVIEW OF TOURISM WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRES
PORTFOLIO AREA:	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

CLASSIFICATION: Open

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To consider Cabinet's response to the recommendations made to it in the Scrutiny Review of Tourism with Specific Reference to Tourist Information Centres.

Recommendation

- THAT (a) Cabinet's response to the findings of the Scrutiny Review of Tourism with Specific Reference to Tourist Information Centres be noted, subject to any comments the Committee wish to make; and**
- (b) A further report on progress against the action plan be made after six months with consideration then being given to the need for any further report being made.**

Key Points Summary

- The Cabinet Member's response to each recommendation is set out in Appendix 1.
- The recommendations are agreed or agreed in principle, with the exception of two which are outlined in the action plan response.

Alternative Options

- 1 That scrutiny does not accept the response from the Herefordshire Council executive.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 2 To complete the process of the Tourism Review outlining which recommendations have been accepted.

Introduction and Background

- 3 At the meeting of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee on 20th December 2006, the Committee agreed to undertake the review, however, it also agreed to delay the review until the new Destination Management Partnership had become more fully established. The Committee at its meeting on 2nd July 2007 agreed the Scoping Statement and the membership of the Review Group.
- 4 At its meeting on 18 April 2008 the Committee received a report on the findings of the Review Group. The report which included: the terms of reference, the findings, membership of the group, and work undertaken was included in the agenda for the Committee meeting and is available via the Councils web site.
- 5 Since that time the report's findings were submitted to Cabinet for consideration on 30th June 2009. However, Cabinet deferred consideration of the report and the report has since been revised. At its meeting on 26 November 2009, Cabinet agreed the recommendations as set out in the report to it.
- 6 In accordance with the scrutiny process the Committee needs to consider Cabinet's response and assess whether a further report on progress against the action plan is required.

Key Considerations

- 4 Many issues raised in the review are still relevant. However, the financing of the service has become more critical considering the TICs are a non statutory service and does not directly contribute to any priority indicators.
- 5 Relating to many of the points made in the review an asset management plan for TICs is in production and will be presented to the Cabinet Member for consideration.
- 6 Since the review a number of the activities have already taken place that relate to the recommendations in the Tourism Review. These include:
 - TIC stakeholder day to review the work of the TICs and inform an asset management plan.
 - Telephone linked to the Ross Tourist Information Centre for accommodation bookings.
 - Display cabinet for the sale of gifts to enhance the offer.
 - Review of the Destination Management Partnership commissioned.
 - Review of literature published to ensure value for money and relevance.
 - Improved front page of the web site with links to the events with special themed banners for the different seasons.
 - Request a booking of accommodation has increased the number of bookings via the web site and increased e shop to enable more tickets for events to be sold.
 - Establish an area for food and drink businesses thereby increasing awareness of the range of food and drink made in the county.
 - Added travel Buddy to enable people to connect to the data via their mobile phones.

Community Impact

- 7 TICs are seen as a key market town presence and a “symbol” of the Council’s investment in market towns and tourism. They are used approximately 50% by local people, though visitor numbers have generally been declining as people use pre-visit web information.

Financial Implications

- 8 All costs must be met from within existing budgets if the recommendations, as presented, are accepted.

Legal Implications

- 9 Legal requirement regarding early termination of leases.

Risk Management

- 10 Failure to provide effective tourism services would impact on the economic life of the County. The Executive’s response to the recommendations made by Scrutiny seeks to balance this against finite budgets and existing policy.

Consultees

- 11 None.

Appendices

- 12 Appendix 1 Action Plan to address the recommendations arising from the scrutiny review.

Background Papers

- None.