

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

10 APRIL 2013

**REPORT OF REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Report prepared by Clare Wood

1. VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE REVIEW

1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To consider the recommendations within the 'Visitor Information Centre Review' report attached at **Appendix A**.

1.2 Recommendation of Regeneration & Economic Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee

1.2.1 That Cabinet agrees the following recommendations:

1. That the use of technological tools for engaging with and providing information for visitors is investigated.
2. That staff members providing visitor information receive customer services training and undertake the Visitor England on-line training programme.
3. That a consistent methodology for logging visitor numbers to the VIC at the Museum and the Town Hall is put in place to monitor the use of the service.
4. That a visitor information presence in the gateway is investigated.
5. That the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive revisit the way portfolios are arranged and officer duties allocated to create more cohesion and improved clarity of purpose.
6. That there should be a Visitor Information Centre presence at the Town Hall;
7. That a Visitor Information Centre presence at the Town Hall be supported through Visitor Economy Business Unit resources;

8. That no arrangement should be entered into that would compromise this; and
9. That in consultation with relevant stakeholders that the Council clarifies the value of visitors to the borough by putting in place visitor strategy setting out how Maidstone's offer can be enhanced and publicised.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 1.3.1 At its meeting in May 2012 the Regeneration & Economic Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed that they would review the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) to determine if there was an economically viable and/or beneficial scenario to return the visitor information centre or part of the VIC to the town hall.
- 1.3.2 The Committee has undertaken site visits to Bexley and Rochester's Visitor Information Centres to understand the different delivery models for visitor information. They have also held select committee style interviews in formal and informal settings and considered other research on the topic such as visitor information data.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

- 1.4.1 The Cabinet could decide not to endorse any of the recommendations within the "Visitor Information Centre Review" report, however the recommendations are based on evidence from a range of sources and support the Council's objectives with regard to being a decent place to live and having a growing economy outlined at 1.5.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

- 1.5.1 The Council's Strategic Plan 2011 -15 lists "For Maidstone to be a decent place to live' as a key priority, under which sits the outcome 'Continues to be a clean and attractive environment for people who live in and visit the borough'. The recommendations within the report contribute to the fulfillment of this outcome. The Strategic Plan also identifies for Maidstone to have a growing economy a flourishing tourist industry supported by appropriate visitor information clearly supports this priority.

1.6 Risk Management

- 1.6.1 The Recommendations contained within the report will need to be risk assessed as part reviewing whether they should be accepted or not.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

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|----|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. | Financial | X |
| 2. | Staffing | X |
| 3. | Legal | |
| 4. | Equality Impact Needs Assessment | |
| 5. | Environmental/Sustainable Development | |
| 6. | Community Safety | |
| 7. | Human Rights Act | |
| 8. | Procurement | |
| 9. | Asset Management | X |

1.7.2 Depending of the acceptance of the recommendations within the report there could be financial, staffing, procurement and asset management implications. For example using the Town Hall to deliver visitor information would have implications on how the Town Hall is managed, such a facility would also need to be staffed therefore there could be staffing and financial implications.

1.7.3 Appendices

Appendix A – Regeneration & Economic Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Visitor Information Centre Review.
Appendix B – Scrutiny Committee Response Implementation Action Plan.

1.7.4 Background Documents

Visitor Information Centre Review Evidence Pack.

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?

Yes

No

If yes, when did it first appear in the Forward Plan?

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This is a Key Decision because:

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Wards/Parishes affected:

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