



Warwick Visitor Information Centre Business Plan 2023-2026



'Community, Culture & Heritage'



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Foreword

The purpose of this Business Plan is to present the aims and objectives of the Warwick Visitor Information Centre over the next three years, until 2026. Warwick Visitor Information Centre is located within the heart of Warwick within The Court House, which is also home to Warwick Town Council and The Warwick Yeomanry Museum. In 2014 the 'Unlocking Warwick' project transformed The Court House with the support of a large grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Over the past eight years the Visitor Information Centre has reached out and broadened its appeal to local visitors and tourists alike. The Visitor Information Centre is lucky to have a wealth of experience of local attractions, businesses and events. Uniquely, the Visitor Information Centre team are ably supported by the 'Unlocking Warwick' group. The group is formed and operated with thirty dedicated volunteers that creates, operates and assists with a number of local projects and initiatives which include; tours of the town, research projects into local history and landmarks, local exhibitions and cultural activities including plays and local led talks and events. In addition to this work, the group also provide dedicated volunteer support to the day-to-day operations of the centre.

Since the last review period, a key aspect of development was the enhancement of the website and a review of the current offering of the centre. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Warwick Town Council took the opportunity to use staff resource to undergo a small refurbishment of the centre, which involved re-decoration, the removal of a rotunda and other displays in order to rationalise the offering and make it a more open and inviting space where visitors would use more of the floor space, this has been met with positivity from visitors and locals alike. Further consideration is going into how the second phase of the offering can be improved to enhance the visitor experience, although there are a number of ideas being explored. This includes the use of interactive information and means of telling the story of the Town to visitors throughout the year and local schools out of season. In addition, the ongoing development of the website, online shop and the Box Office is also seen as key areas going forward, together with a streamlined and professional social media presence. Integral to this success is working with the Chamber of trade through the #Buyin2Warwick platform.

Warwick Visitor Information Centre is also seeking to continue to develop the current offering by continuing with #LoveLocal Craft Fayre's and the Town Ambassador Project, which has been operating over the past two year's employing locals to greet visitors and provide guidance and assistance directing many to local businesses and attractions, but also to the wider area including Leamington Spa. Warwick Visitor Information Centre has the support of Warwick Town Council. The Economic & Tourism Committee are committed to delivering required changes to ensure Warwick Visitor Information centre remains vibrant and fit for purpose going forward.

Cllr Richard Edgington
Chair of Economic & Tourism Committee

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1.0 Introduction

Warwick Visitor Information Centre (WVIC) offers a year-round service providing information and advice to local, regional, national and international tourists and visitors. The team at The WVIC are a close-knit team who are passionate about Warwick and the wider District, with close links to Leamington Spa, Stratford upon Avon, Kenilworth and the surrounding countryside in particular. The aim of The WVIC is to be on hand for visitors through the telephone, email and face to face promoting local attractions, businesses, events and selling tickets to a range of attractions. As well as providing tips on 'hidden gems' within the area, which do not have a strong online presence.

One of the greatest attributes of the WVIC is the passion for what Warwick and the wider area has to offer. As such the team seek to be the 'first stop' and ensure that visitors have a positive perception of the thriving local area on cultural, social and economic levels. As a team, there is a distinct and unique passion to provide a warm and friendly customer service and a 'Warwick Welcome'.

WVIC is managed and run by Warwick Town Council and currently comprises a core team of;

- 1 full time manager
- 1 part time assistant working 28 hours per week
- 1 part time assistant working 21 hours per week
- 1 zero-hour contract
- Volunteers from Unlocking Warwick as and when required

WVIC has received a grant from Warwick District Council over a number of years, the past six years Warwick District Council has provided £25,000 per annum toward the cost of the service.

1.1 History of the Court House & Origins of The Warwick Visitor Information Centre

The Court House, the home of Warwick Town Council and the WVIC is a Grade I Listed Building situated in the heart of Warwick within the main High Street. The location stands at the central crossroads of Warwick, originally called 'High Cross'. There's evidence of a building on the site from 1340.

In 1694, the 'Great Fire of Warwick' destroyed a large part of the town centre. The Corporation found its Court House surrounded by smoking rubble and 'somewhat scorched'. Francis Smith was commissioned to design a new courthouse constructed in sandstone. It was opened in 1728 and immediately became the fashionable centre of Warwick life, with balls, assemblies, dinners and public meetings, and soon became used as the Town Hall.

The building was reopened in 2014 after a major restoration funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Warwick Town Council. It now houses a new Visitor Information Centre, the Warwickshire Yeomanry Museum of military artefacts, the Town Council Chamber and Offices and a magnificent Regency Ballroom. Behind the building, the Pageant Garden is a haven of calm in the centre of town.

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With its central town location on the pedestrian route from the Castle to St Mary's Church, the Court House is ideally situated for visitors exploring the town. A small office was established in 1975 in offices behind the Council Chamber, and in 1994 the Tourist Information Centre moved to the larger space of the room to the right just inside the front door on Jury Street.

By 2009 the building was in need of significant repairs, together with alterations to improve accessibility. The refurbishment project saw the building reopen in 2014 as a cultural centre for the Town.

WVIC has been successful since the refurbishment, although it is recognised that the Tourism sector is facing difficult challenges through changing customer attitudes and behaviours and the increasing popularity of online bookings and tourism guides, changes to visitation patterns have also been apparent as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. A summary of just some of the key service provision is indicated within Figure 1. As such, WVIC is seeking to continue to respond to the changing sector and challenges facing tourism to ensure WVIC remains a relevant hub which has a diverse offering.



Figure 1 – Current Offering Matrix

1.2 Vision & Objectives

Building upon the history and challenges of Tourism, the vision of WVIC has always been to welcome, inform and encourage visitors to stay and explore the town and local area. This is achieved through the provision of relevant information, assistance and services, whilst generating income to keep operating costs to a minimum. Over the business plan period however we have a series of objectives which form the overall vision of **'offering a unique customer experience to visitors and developing WVIC into a social and community space which exhibits the 'Best of Warwick''**, the ten key objectives to deliver this vision are presented as follows:

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1. Generate additional income to ensure the sustainable future of WVIC, whilst increasing operations through attendance at events and the Town Ambassador programme.
2. Expand and develop the audience to the VIC through exhibiting local artists, businesses and tourism focused events.
3. Continue to support the Events Team to promote The Court House as a venue, which has successfully achieved additional footfall.
4. Develop the existing box office to establish WVIC as the main box office for local events.
5. Continue to develop a strong level of customer service and explore options to provide online communications through social media.
6. Enhance the visitor experience within the centre through the use of technology.
7. Introduce historical displays to create an excellent, and changing, customer experience.
8. Continue to promote local businesses within Warwick Town Centre.
9. To respond to changing needs of tourism and operate pro-active tourism campaigns at regional events and launching pro-active tourist information initiatives.
10. To reach out to the local community by promoting activities and events.

1.3 Visitor Information Centre Opening Hours

The Visitor Centre is open seven days a week from Easter to December and closes for one week over the Christmas period. The VIC closes on Sundays from December to Easter, this is monitored very closely and is adaptable to suit the business needs of the VIC. Should there be an increase in footfall, or a prominent event within the town during this period, then provisions are made for the WVIC to be open. Sunday hours operate on bank holidays and should the VIC stay open late, staff are given time off in lieu. In addition, on events WVIC also opens during the evening, such events include Victorian Evening and summertime events on a case by case basis. Staff also attend Town Events as required to meet visitors and 'point them in the right direction', Staff also seek to promote the town and what it has to offer to a range of visitors such as those attending the Saturday market, Warwick Folk Festival to name a few as well as more occasional events such as Pub in the Park. Town Ambassadors also attend the array of well supported events of the summer months around Warwick to provide a service to visitors.

Monday	09.30-16.30
Tuesday	09.30-16.30
Wednesday	09.30-16.30
Thursday	09.30-16.30
Friday	09.30-16.30
Saturday	10.00-16.30

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Sunday	10.00-16.00 (Closed Mid Dec – Easter)

1.4 Stakeholders

There are a number of stakeholders associated with Warwick Visitor Information Centre, whilst all visitors are regarded as stakeholders, local businesses and locals are important to Warwick Visitor Information Centre. The development of the rapports with local businesses are key to the economic success of the Warwick and the aim of WVIC to exhibit the offerings of local businesses. Other key stakeholders include:

- Shakespeare’s England
- Unlocking Warwick
- Warwick Castle
- Warwick District Council
- Warwick Rotary
- Warwick Racecourse
- Hill Close Gardens
- Mill Gardens
- Chamber of Trade and other local businesses
- Lord Leycester Hospital (closed until 2023)
- Warwick Town Council
- Court Leet
- Community Organisations and Local Charities
- Volunteers
- Warwick’s Military Museums including the Yeomanry Museum, Queen’s Own Hussars and the forthcoming Royal Regiment of Fusilier’s Museum (which is to be located next door within Pageant House)

Warwick Visitor Information Centre is seeking to develop these rapports further, particularly with local businesses, volunteer networks and residents. WVIC identifies that local businesses and residents are a fundamental part of Warwick’s success and a thriving Town Centre with dedicated business owners whom are independents are a unique selling point for Warwick alongside the historic built environment and array of Tourist Attractions.

WVIC has also traditionally had a close relationship with Warwick Castle which is also invaluable going forward to the success of WVIC and the Town, the Management of the Castle attend Town Council Meetings and work with us to promote both the Castle and the Town.

With regards to the Lord Leycester Hospital, the hospital is currently undergoing a comprehensive series of works which, when complete, will further attract more visitors to Warwick. WVIC also has a good rapport with the Lord Leycester Hospital as one of Warwick’s

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main attractions and will provide support in raising awareness to the cause to visitors in the way of displays and stock in the VIC. Consideration is also being given between the Lord Leicester and WVIC to the re-launch of the Lord Leicester following its re-opening.

1.5 SWOT Analysis

As part of the business plan, a SWOT analysis has been undertaken which is provided below:

Strengths	Opportunities	Weaknesses	Threats
Regular in-house training and familiarisation visits to local attractions	Staff development and develop rapports with local attractions	Specialist IT skills to further develop the website and corporate social media presence to promote the attractions through in-house social media	Reduced staffing resource may reduce ability for time to network with local attractions.
Established Souvenir Sales	Ability to attract locals and visitors to purchase unique locally sourced products and identify a range of new lines of sales, local products will also reduce minimum order issues currently experienced with some suppliers	As existing, there is an issue with GP margins given the low quantities ordered at a given time, thus being unable to use stronger buying power from some suppliers, thus making products more expensive at cost	If footfall decreases sales would potentially decrease too
Social Media Knowledge We have over 8,000 followers on the VIC related sites	To increase followers on the box office social media sites to reach out to a larger audience to promote events and therefore sell tickets. Work with in-house WTC's Events Team to develop Social Media presence, and use volunteers to cover whilst inhouse training can take place	Due to the size of the team within WVIC there is limited time and resource to develop a more comprehensive skills base to fully use social media to the advantage of WVIC	Limited resources to have regular training sessions given the part time nature of the events team. Staff changes may result in a loss of basic social media knowledge in-house.
Tourism Ambassador Programme	Re-introduced in 2018, employment for local people throughout the summer. To run the service for a longer period and develop the programme to use ambassadors at key visitor attractions such as Stratford Upon Avon and Birmingham	Staff are employed for a short time and do not gain a full product knowledge	Loss of funding for the ambassador programme.
Visitors receive excellent customer service and are offered a friendly helpful experience. A well trained and	Look at new publicity, literature and new Warwick App which is under development	Time constraints given the number of visitors at peak times	Loss of funding for VIC may result in spending reductions which may have consequences on the service provision due to need to lower costs

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informative team with extensive knowledge of the destination	Use the ambassadors to assist with the development of the service		
The quality of Information on offer through the VIC and online	<p>Quality information and literature is provided on the local area, regionally and nationally. The Internet is a valuable source for supplying this information to visitors</p> <p>Visitors feel confident and are interested in what we say to help them find their answers</p> <p>Unlocking Warwick volunteers have and source a wealth of excellent local information</p>	IT skills curtail the articulation of some information at present	Budgetary constraints given the costs to promote and operate website and hard copies
Website	<p>Sharing our knowledge online via our informative website. Free listings for all businesses</p> <p>Providing immediate information</p> <p>The visitor is able to access online information prior to their visit to further enhance their experience</p> <p>Ability to use the online shop and expand the offering, as only started in 2022</p>	With the amount of information, events and news being continually renewed and updated, the small team face challenges to keep the website up to date during busy periods.	Loss of key staff who currently have the skills to update the website.
Presentation The visitor feels welcome and confident	<p>The Visitor Centre is kept clean, tidy and well stocked at all times. To work with local shops and display their goods</p> <p>Re-design and refurbishment will further develop the high levels of presentation and appeal to a wider audience</p>	To reach out to a larger audience in the current form	<p>Loss of man hours</p> <p>Loss of funding</p> <p>Redesign not taking place</p>
Introduction of the walk-in Town Box Office in 2018	<p>To sell tickets for local events and to add more venues. Bridge House Theatre and St Mary's Church</p> <p>Work closely with WDC to promote local events and enhance the box office offering for WDC.</p>	Ticket sales, other than for Warwick Words need to improve	More people buy online

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	Incentivise buying tickets in the VIC through promotion of tourist events or offers		
Volunteering opportunities	Increase the number and quality of volunteering Opportunities Create an extra resource in providing information. The volunteers are often local people with an extensive knowledge of the area	Volunteers not needed on a regular basis, in-house training is key so there is little time to achieve this	Loss of volunteers
Constantly looking at ways to improve the centre	Re-development of centre. Introduce social history to enhance the customer experience and look at future sustainability	Time constraints	Funding not available. Unlocking Warwick not available to provide valuable research

The SWOT analysis highlights a number of strengths of Warwick Visitor Information Centre, notably the quality of the information on offer to visitors and the establishment of the website. However, as part of the business plan period Warwick Town Council is seeking to address a number of the issues identified by providing training and assistance on social media networks. The information within social media and online will include information of what’s on in Warwick, but also will work with #Buyin2Warwick via the Chamber of Trade, and local businesses to help promote shops within Warwick.

In addition, the continuation and growth of the Town Ambassador project seeks to provide additional support during the busy months which, from feedback has been very well received and beneficial to local attractions and businesses within Warwick, particularly this year as the town has continued to recover and thrive following the pandemic.

There is also an identified weakness in the form of the size of the team and the limited capacity for additional projects and initiatives to be operated and run from Warwick Visitor Information Centre. In addition, there are considered to be a number of threats to the current operation including the further reduction of footfall as a result of tourism facilities online. Internally there are also threats with regards sickness and absences which may result in increased wages and accrued leave by colleagues. In addition, reviews to ticket sales commission from partners such as Warwick Castle is also a threat to the income of the VIC which would leave potentially a significant funding gap. However, within the plan period, the development of the offering and rationalising of the service seeks to mitigate the funding gap, therefore ensuring sustainability of the service into the future.

The key opportunities for Warwick Visitor Information Centre are the rationalising of the current offering to create an open visitor ‘hub’ which provides a range of information and guidance for those visiting locally. There is also opportunity to build on the craft fairs which regularly run throughout the year and expand such events by working with external partners,

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as well as expanding the online offering, including an online shop. This is also considered to assist with the wider promotion of WVIC going forward.

The network of volunteers also has a proven track record of their commitment to the success of Warwick Visitor Information centre, and their valuable time and resource for Warwick Visitor Information Centre is highly valued. Their continued commitment going forward is identified as an opportunity to promote tours of Warwick and provide visitors a glimpse of unusual quirks within Warwick's history which you could not find online!

Over the next three years WVIC will look to enhance its excellent reputation by continuing to work closely with key partners and to provide information of the highest standard to the visitor, whilst addressing the issues identified in the SWOT Analysis. Each year, a review of the operation will also be undertaken and the SWOT re-evaluated accordingly.

1.6 Warwick Visitor Information Centre Performance

A summary of the performance of the WVIC over 2019 and 2022 is provided below for counter, communications and footfall. 2020 and 2021 figures are available but not used as a comparison due to the pandemic.

Month	Footfall	
	2019	2022
Jan	1302	1021
Feb	1284	1643
Mar	1834	2232
Apr	2601	2409
May	3083	2740
June	3244	2433
July	4079	3317
Aug	4429	
Sep	2915	
Oct	2701	
Nov	2423	
Dec	1863	
Total	31758	
To date	17427	15800

Month	Website	
	2019	2022
Jan	4718	6040
Feb	5276	15238
Mar	5948	5213
Apr	7034	6978
May	7831	8905
June	6139	11723
July	7218	10534
Aug	8110	4188
Sept	5733	
Oct	5739	
Nov	4778	
Dec	3832	
Total	72356	
To date	44164	68819

From the statistics thus far, it is considered that the footfall has been stable and comparable to 2019. There have been a number of factors which have impacted figures at times of the year. Good weather in the summer months provided a relatively stable footfall in house, the figures within the VIC's performance is largely consistent with other main attractions within the Town such as Warwick Castle which has experienced a number of factors which have made footfall challenging over the last two years year including political uncertainty with

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Brexit and the global pandemic. The growth of the Town Ambassador programme also allowed the VIC to assist more visitors within and around the town.

It must be noted that footfall over a longer period has changed significantly as visitor behaviours have moved online. However, the stabilising of footfall since the pandemic is encouraging given that the footfall demonstrates there is an ongoing demand for the service, together with the popularity of the town ambassadors.

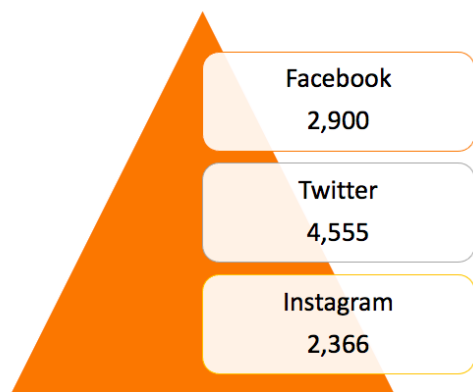


Figure Two - Total Social Media Followers

In 2021 the Visit Warwick website was re-designed, the table above indicates the popularity of the new website. The peak in February is due to videos and trails be added and the relaxing of facemask wearing.

The priority for Warwick Visitor Information Centre is to continue to deliver the service for the core visitation but develop the offering to increase the footfall. The purpose of this plan is to present ways to expand the existing offering of Warwick Visitor Information Centre and increase footfall over the next three years.

Figure two shows the total number of followers on social media which continues to grow at a steady pace. Warwick Visitor Information Centre does not pay for any social media advertising or post boosts and posts are therefore shared through local page groups and sharing and liking pages and posts from other attractions. With the development of social media, options to have a small budget to boost posts may be explored during the summer months to identify whether there is benefit. The Town Ambassadors have access to an Instagram page to post their 'Day around the Town' and to add reels.

1.7 Products and Services

The Warwick Visitor guide is the key source of information on arrival to the destination after the Visit Warwick website. A lot of day visitors are primarily here to visit Warwick Castle, WVIC plays an active role in attracting visitors to have a look around the town and other attractions and places of interest on offer.

Providing information on;

- Accommodation
- Attractions
- Eating out
- Shopping
- History and heritage
- Parks and gardens
- Outdoor activities

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- Local events
- Warwick town map and visitor guide
- Transport (bus and train)
- Area maps
- Fully comprehensive website
- Supporting local businesses
- Box Office service, supported by Warwick District Council

Additional services provided include:

- A fully stocked shop offering souvenirs, gifts and books for sale
- Displaying artwork by local artists, including Warwickshire Open Studios
- Using the space to support local events
- Warwick Outlet for the Cards for Good Causes
- Box Office
- Use of VIC for craft fairs
- The main point for annual allotment income
- Issuing the Mayor's Vouchers
- All administration for the Dedication Tree

1.8 Product & Service Development

In addition to the service development discussed within the development of the existing rapports with partners and stakeholders, social media and Town Ambassadors. The Council, through the Economic and Tourism Committee are committed to ensuring that the offering of WVIC remains relevant and vibrant in order for the facility to remain both viable and sustainable. A working group comprising the Chair of Economic and Tourism, Town Clerk and staff of the WVIC is operational and are having productive meetings to discuss and map potential changes.

At the time of writing, projects are being considered to promote the history of the building itself. Warwick Town Council is also seeking to re-design the space to create a changing selection of information, and invite local groups and historians, and indeed those with items of interest to use the space to create changing exhibits, and include topical dates within the year, for example Guy of Warwick Day. The overall aim of the re-design is to ensure that WVIC can respond to the changing landscape of tourism and exhibit what Warwick has to offer culturally, socially and economically.

With regards timescales for the project, the first part was completed in 2021, and we are finalising the remainder of the works over the coming months. Warwick Town council has allocated £7,500 for the extent of these works, and will be fully in place for the 2023 season.

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1.9 Marketing & Promotion

A summary of the existing marketing and promotion methodology is provided as follows:

- Warwick Visitor Information Centre has a fully comprehensive website which receives in the region of 7,000 visits per month with the events section being one of the most visited pages. An in house very well received town guide is funded annually by WDC with an equal amount being distributed to Warwick Castle to encourage the visitor into the town. This is produced in house by WVIC.
- WVIC Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages are regularly updated in house with some 8000 followers across the 3 sites
- The WVIC manager liaises regularly with other VICs, WCC, WDC, Shakespeare's England and other tourism bodies to investigate how the service can be improved
- To continue to work with local artisans and to encourage outside agencies to use the VIC for displays to encourage footfall
- Promoting events and local businesses on the Visit Warwick website
- Working closely with the DMO to assist in the promotion of Warwick
- Taking WVIC to external events
- To introduce new locally sourced product lines to sell
- Press releases

Going forward Warwick Visitor Information Centre as previously indicated is seeking to promote more online through social media channels. In addition to the website and Social Media pages, additional low cost boosted advertisements during the summer are to be tested in 2023 with 'Vlogging' during the summer months at key events by the Town Ambassadors. The objectives of these small clips will be to provide visitors with a taste of various attractions and businesses to promote a range of products within the Town.

In addition, during quieter months training on social media will be provided to staff and volunteers in house. As part of the rationalisation of the Visitor Information Centre advertising screens showcasing local businesses and events are proposed to be installed, external signage opportunities are also being discussed within Conservation and Planning Officer's to enhance the presence of the Visitor Information Centre within the High Street.

1.10 Financial Information

The operating costs (and income) of the Warwick Visitor Information Centre is presented as follows (2020/21):

Income	£	Expenditure	£
WDC Grant	25,000	Salaries	74,216
Sales	28,531	Training	58
Ticket Sales	25,137	Admin	6,501
WTC Contribution	51,857	Telephones	905

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		Insurance	2,552
		Printing	745
		Utility Costs	2,841
		Website	930
		Internet	304
		Leasing	348
		Bank Charges	753
		Cost of Stock	19,896
		Cost of Ticket Sales	20,476
Total	130,525	Total	130,525

As presented within the aforementioned figures, Warwick Visitor Information Centre with the existing grant from Warwick District Council, Warwick Town Council's contribution and sales as existing breaks even (including the total value of stock). The threat to Warwick Visitor Information Centre is with the shortfall of funding, the savings will have to be found through a reduction of costs which at this stage may impact upon the service and operations of Warwick Visitor information Centre. This is especially pertinent due to continual rising costs, particularly around energy and staffing costs.

There is to be a capital cost to Warwick Town Council for the rationalisation works to Warwick Visitor Information Centre which is estimated to be circa. £7.5k in the 2022/2023 budget. Warwick Town Council is aware of the issues facing Warwick Visitor information Centre in the form of the current offering and constraints and changing attitudes of tourists. The aim of Warwick Town Council over the plan period is to reduce the gap between expenditure and income by creating a space which is more versatile and flexible, which can promote town events and history in a flexible manner. In addition, the rationalising of the shop and development of the box office will cumulatively be intended to reduce WVIC's reliance on the grant funding of the present and past. As part of these proposals, a re-structure is being considered of staff to maximise the efficiency of staff. This time is deemed an ideal opportunity as two long standing permanent individuals are moving on from WVIC after a number of years of dedicated service. As part of this re-structure, there is going to be work undertaken to employ individuals with online sales and promotional skills to further develop the sales offering.

To achieve this in an effective manner, Warwick Town Council requires time to implement changes, which also accord with the conditions on the Heritage Lottery Funding Grant Funding.

1.11 Benefits of Warwick Visitor Information Centre

Whilst the aim of Warwick Town Council over the plan period is to reduce the reliance on grant funding to operate Warwick Visitor Information Centre, with the view in the long term to make the service as sustainable as possible. WVIC is ultimately a service provided by local taxpayers for the benefit of Warwick given that Tourism is a key economic and social contributor to the Town.

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The objective of WVIC is to therefore deliver value for money for this service as opposed to making a profit per se, although with additional resource through self-funding will enable WVIC to deliver additional benefits and services to assist in raising the profile of tourism within Warwick and Warwick District. There are ongoing reviews of the service offering, and engagement between staff at Warwick Visitor Information Centre and local stakeholders has been established over a number of years. There is a benefit within the WVIC that all of the existing staff are dedicated employees who have been part of the team for a number of years and know a vast array of information about Warwick, and individuals within stakeholder groups. This enables positive and ongoing engagement on both personal and professional levels, thus having a positive impact on information sharing and collaborative working.

Stakeholders have identified gaps and opportunities within the Warwick Visitor information Centre's offering which form the basis of the plan to rationalised WVIC going forward. However it must be noted that as existing there are very positive reviews of WVIC, and where improvements are identified WVIC works to address these issues where possible, for example in 2018 Town Ambassadors were excellent but with two employees were spready to far afield, in response 2019 saw a total of six employees which provided additional cover and service for visitors which was greatly received.

With regards the testimonials for the Visitor Information Centre itself three examples are provided below (Complete testimonials are provided within the appendices);

"We work in partnership with Warwick Visitor Information Centre to promote the castle and wider area, with the objective of drawing more visitors to the region from the rest of the UK and further afield. We're excited to continue to grow this partnership into the future to ensure Warwickshire is a "must see" region; offering new products and preferential rates to support the Visitor Information Centre and wider community."

Katy Potten, Trade Manager, Warwick Castle

"Warwick Visitor Information Centre has given much needed support to Hill Close Gardens through good information and understanding of what we / they offer. The new visitor map of Warwick has been updated allowing visitors to Warwick to get good up to date information about a number of attractions.

The last two years has seen Warwick ambassadors busy making sure we have leaflets and have been a real help collecting leaflets and spreading the word locally about us along with many other attractions.

The team are always happy to help and communication has been excellent. The Warwick events guide is well put together and information is collected in a timely and efficient way. Links between the chamber of trade are good and we are always kept in the loop.

The 'Visit Warwick' website is clear and informative and the link with Shakespeare's England I feel is positive, as we are also a member this brings together a wider reach and allows for greater support both through engagement and promotion.

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In summery – friendly and efficient – a really useful information service for visitors to Warwick with the perfect positioning in central Warwick. Online presence is good and appreciated”.

Richard Hayward, Centre Manager – Hill Close Gardens

“The Lord Leycester Hospital is a Warwick medieval heritage site in the centre of town.

In 2016 this remarkable Heritage site with 700 years of unbroken history was attracting a mere 5000 tourist’s year. For a site that is a unique national treasure this was a low footfall that required attention and improvement. A new business plan looked at the potential and realised that with capital investment in the offering and refurbishment of the fabric, the footfall of the Lord Leycester could be raised over a five year period to 35,000 annually.

Raising footfall exponentially would also require support and help from the Town – particularly the Warwick Visitor Information Centre (VIC). Two years ago we approached the VIC and asked them for help to promote the Lord Leycester to tourists and visitors to Warwick. Since then we have been delighted at the increase in numbers of visitors to our site. In 2019 we reached 12,000 visitors.

With a recently successful National Lottery Heritage grant to help improve our Heritage offering we have every expectation that with the continuing help from the VIC we will be able to meet our 35,000 an increase footfall goal. This is a win for us as a Charity, a win for the VIC but it also is a win for the town of Warwick – an increase of 30,000 tourists a year can only have a positive economic impact for the town”.

Heidi Meyer – Master of Lord Leycester Hospital

1.12 Summary & Recommendations

Overall, Warwick Visitor Information Centre is considered to provide a valuable service to visitors to Warwick and Warwick District. Whilst there are challenges facing the tourism sector as a result of online capabilities and developments, in Warwick, there remains a friendly personal approach to assisting tourists and locals alike. Warwick Visitor Information Centre has an established customer base which has seen footfall figures stabilise. However, in order to remain relevant changes and updating is required over the plan period.

Warwick Town Council continues to work with Warwick Visitor Information Centre employees and the Town Clerk to rationalise the existing space and make more effective use of the space as an area which can be multi-use. The intention is to work with Unlocking Warwick partners to develop the tour offering and promote the space to educate local school children during off-peak months. The flexibility of the space also seeks to ensure that the space can be used to exhibit ‘the best of Warwick’ and have topical displays and events which change year-round.

In addition, the development of internal skills in the form of IT and social media is also an intention for the plan period to assist in raising awareness of the WVIC to locals and visitors

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alike. The continuation and development of the Town Ambassador programme to use 'Vlogging' and other social media posts to promote gems within the Town.

Working with local businesses and suppliers, amendments within the shop to sell locally sourced items is intended to achieve a higher gross profit, alongside the expansion of the Box Office and ticket sales it is anticipated that income generation can be increased to improve the sustainability of WVIC so that it can continue to deliver a valuable service.

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2. Appendices – Job Role Profiles for Staff and Volunteers

2.1 Volunteers - Overview and Key Duties

To welcome visitors in a friendly and manner and provide assistance.

- Answer telephone enquiries
- Record visits to the VIC for statistical reporting by the manager
- Respond to requests for information
- Assist with opening and closing the premises if on duty
- Assist with the day to day running of the VIC

2.2 Town Ambassadors – Overview and Key Duties

A temporary summer role promoting the town out and about.

- To be the friendly and reliable representative of the VIC
- Be a visible presence patrolling the streets in Warwick, to include both train stations
- Deal helpfully and knowledgeably with queries or requests from members of the public
- Build positive relationships with local attractions
- Hand out leaflets and give directions
- Drive footfall to the VIC
- Promote the VIC and Box Office
- Participate in promotions and visitor centre/partner events as required

2.3 Visitor Information Centre Assistant – Overview and Key Duties

To work in the Visitor Information Centre (WVIC) for Warwick Town Council, to provide tourist and local information to all visitors in person, e-mail, letter and telephone enquiries at Warwick Visitor Information Centre.

Main Duties

- Liaising with the VIC Manager to ensure the website is kept up to date and amending where necessary
- Keeping up to date the local events list and proof-reading either for WDC or WVIC
- Keep up to date and well stocked all leaflets and posters on display in the VIC and re-order when necessary
- Dealing with customer cash transactions, using the PDQ machine, cashing up the till and putting data on to the till spreadsheet
- Keeping up to date brochures and leaflets produced in house
- Update Facebook, Twitter and Instagram on a regular basis.

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- Stock taking sale items and souvenirs. Liaise with VIC Manager and re-order where necessary.
- Assist in the operation of the VIC postage fund, operating franking machine and taking post to the post office when necessary.
- Taking the VIC out and about to town centre events and further afield
- Leaflet distribution
- General housekeeping
- Any other duties that may arise

Assistance as required by Warwick Town Council – responsible to the Town Clerk:

- Managing allotment waiting list.
- Upkeep of allotment database, tenant list and mailings
- Sending out reminders and collection of allotment rent, to include recording monies received.
Please Note: Warwick Town Council is currently working towards devolved management which will likely relieve these duties.
- Administration work as requested by WTC, WDC and Shakespeare's England, to include databases.
- All administration for the Tree of Lights for Warwick Rotary to include collection of donations, design and display of dedications.
- Issuing Mayor's Vouchers annually.
- Any other duties that may arise.

2.4 Visitor Information Centre Manager – Overview and Key Duties

To oversee the running of Warwick Visitor Information Centre (TIC) for Warwick Town Council. Develop and maintain alternative income for the VIC.

- Publicising services and implementing strategies to raise the profile of the centre.
- Gathering information and working with local businesses and attractions
- Researching and visiting attractions
- Keeping up to date with changes in tourist activities and events
- Ensuring the centre is well presented and easy to use
- Communicating with members of the public and dealing with enquiries.
- Producing guides and other marketing literature
- Liaising with accommodation establishments
- Assisting with developing the commercial and community use of the Court House and encouraging public participation
- Daily management of the Visitor Centre
- Drive high levels of customer service
- Preparing and presenting reports for the Economic and Tourism Committee and attending meetings with a variety of people, including senior managers and tourism businesses
- To undertake other similar activities

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- To oversee all allotment administration to include site visits and preparing reports for committee meetings
- Responsibility for HR related matters in the Visitor Centre
- To act as deputy in the absence of the Town Clerk

3.0 Testimonials

3.1 The Mill Garden Trust

'We would like to thank all the staff for their continuing support for our garden. We usually get several people daily from your recommendation which all goes towards our money we give to thirty charities annually. From what we hear from people, it contributes a great deal to the area (That is to say, the Visitor Centre). **Julia Russell**

3.2 Warwick Rotary

We are happy to provide you with a testimonial attesting to the support which your staff provides to the Rotary Club and by extension to the local community in Warwick.

The Rotary club organises a number of events in the town centre throughout the year, some are for the enjoyment of the community, and others are fundraising.

Your office always displays our posters and leaflets, and sells our tickets, together with the Town Clerks office which ensures that the Mayor is available. Importantly you follow us on social media and "share" our posts and events which give them a wider circulation.

The year starts with our Pancake races in the Market Square, a Thai Festival of food and culture in early June, the school's concert, Chernobyl children's visit, Town Bonfire, and finally the Lights of Love on the Christmas tree. This latter your whole team helps us with sending out flyers to a mailing list, making the cards for the tree and putting them onto it's branches, they also distribute the flyers around local shops, pubs and churches, and collect the completed forms. It would not be possible to run this campaign, which raises around £2,000 for Myton Hospices and the Mayors charities without their support.

All your team give us cheerful support, advice and feedback, we have a good partnership, and I thank you for your leadership. **Jackie Crampton – Secretary**

3.3 Warwick Fusilier Museum

The staff at the Centre are always friendly, helpful and professional. They display our publicity material and sign post visitors to the museum.

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We had a one to one chat with them to see how they could support us further. They have assisted our move within Warwick by talking to the management consultant company preparing our business plan for our future sustainability. When the museum does move to Pageant House, right next to the Centre, it is hoped that the two organisations will forge a stronger alliance and work together more closely.

They engage with the museum and promote our attraction on social media. They offer an inclusive service for smaller attractions rather than just focusing on larger businesses. We are included in the town guide leaflet, which is an important resource for tourists. They make a real difference and benefit local attractions.

3.4 St. Mary's Church

The Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick, is pleased to provide a Testimonial for the Warwick Visitor Centre and all the staff.

The Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick, enjoy an excellent-working relationship with the Warwick Visitor Centre that promotes the lovely town of Warwick and the many sights and attractions that it offers.

Our Visitor Team signpost new and returning visitors to Warwick using the "Warwick Visitor Guide" leaflet, that was developed by the Manager, Liz Healey, of the Visitor Centre which guides tourists around the many historic buildings and attractions that Warwick has to offer.

The visitor Centre displays leaflets promoting various events at St Mary's Church, including the very popular Annual Christmas Tree Festival.

The Warwick Visitor Centre website also advertises and supports our many events, church services and exhibitions. The 'Ambassador' scheme is superb and works very well for people who visit Warwick. We welcome the Ambassadors to tour our beautiful Church, climb the Tower and visit the stunning historic Beauchamp Chapel. The Ambassadors can then give visitors a first-hand insight into how much we have to offer and the other wonderful sights of Warwick. The success of our partnership has been developed further by Liz, offering a range of souvenir items that are stocked in the Visitor Centre gift shop, depicting notable images of places of interest in Warwick, including images of St Mary's Church.

We very much value our excellent working relationship with the Manager and the Team at the Warwick Visitor Centre and look forward to a continuing productive future for St Mary's Church and Warwick town centre. ***Felicity Bostock, Parish Administrator - The Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick.***

3.5 Park Cottage, Warwick

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My husband and I have operated our small Bed & Breakfast business in Warwick now for over 18 years.

During that time we have always found our local Tourist Board to be invaluable to us and a significant support to our business. Liz Healey and her team have always been extremely friendly and helpful towards us. They keep us informed of events taking place in and around the area, so that we can communicate this to our guests. Albeit their role has changed over time from directing accommodation bookings to us, I now find that as my market has moved from more business customers to holiday makers (all year round) I am sending my customers who are staying for a 2-3 night break to the Tourist Information for perhaps, further details on a walk, that I have heard about but know that Liz and her team will have a brochure on or can discuss with the customer in more depth.

I find it difficult to keep up-to-date on all information and for that reason I will direct the visitors to the Tourist Information Office. My customers are very happy to utilise this service (and have always been pleased with the service they have received), it enhances their stay and ensures that they make the most of their visit to the area. This, in turn, leads to them returning or recommending our town to friends and family.

The Tourist Board provide a face to face contact for the customer and are located in a superb central location, just outside the castle grounds, so visitors leaving the castle can pop in and be given plenty of advice and information on Warwick Town. This is exactly what we need for our visitors! ***Janet Baldry - Park Cottage, Warwick***

3.6 Lord Leycester Hospital

“The Lord Leycester Hospital is a Warwick medieval heritage site in the centre of town.

In 2016 this remarkable Heritage site with 700 years of unbroken history was attracting a mere 5000 tourist’s year. For a site that is a unique national treasure this was a low footfall that required attention and improvement. A new business plan looked at the potential and realised that with capital investment in the offering and refurbishment of the fabric, the footfall of the Lord Leycester could be raised over a five year period to 35,000 annually.

Raising footfall exponentially would also require support and help from the Town – particularly the Warwick Visitor Information Centre (VIC). Two years ago we approached the VIC and asked them for help to promote the Lord Leycester to tourists and visitors to Warwick. Since then we have been delighted at the increase in numbers of visitors to our site. In 2019 we reached 12,000 visitors.

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With a recently successful National Lottery Heritage grant to help improve our Heritage offering we have every expectation that with the continuing help from the VIC we will be able to meet our 35,000 an increase footfall goal. This is a win for us as a Charity, a win for the VIC but it also is a win for the town of Warwick – an increase of 30,000 tourists a year can only have a positive economic impact for the town”. **Heidi Meyer – Master of Lord Leycester Hospital**

3.7 Warwick Castle

“We work in partnership with Warwick Visitor Information Centre to promote the castle and wider area, with the objective of drawing more visitors to the region from the rest of the UK and further afield. We’re excited to continue to grow this partnership into the future to ensure Warwickshire is a “must see” region; offering new products and preferential rates to support the Visitor Information Centre and wider community.” **Katy Potten, Trade Manager, Warwick Castle**

3.8 Hill Close Gardens

“Warwick Visitor Information Centre has given much needed support to Hill Close Gardens through good information and understanding of what we / they offer. The new visitor map of Warwick has been updated allowing visitors to Warwick to get good up to date information about a number of attractions.

The last two years has seen Warwick ambassadors busy making sure we have leaflets and have been a real help collecting leaflets and spreading the word locally about us along with many other attractions.

The team are always happy to help and communication has been excellent. The Warwick events guide is well put together and information is collected in a timely and efficient way. Links between the chamber of trade are good and we are always kept in the loop.

The ‘Visit Warwick’ website is clear and informative and the link with Shakespeare’s England I feel is positive, as we are also a member this brings together a wider reach and allows for greater support both through engagement and promotion.

In summery – friendly and efficient – a really useful information service for visitors to Warwick with the perfect positioning in central Warwick. Online presence is good and appreciated”. **Richard Hayward, Centre Manager – Hill Close Gardens**

3.9 Warwickshire Yeomanry Museum

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“The Warwickshire Yeomanry Museum Trustees place on record their grateful thanks to all concerned with the smooth running of the Warwick Visitor Information Centre which provides far more than just an information service as evidenced by your Business Plan.

Our Museum was established in the basement of the Court House, Warwick in April 1981 and over the past 38 years our Museum Team has continued to build a unique friendly relationship with the Centre’s Staff and Volunteers, which maximises opportunities to encourage people to visit Warwick and it’s many varied attractions including our Museum by way of the Centre’s excellent Town Map.

Your Centre also makes best use of the internet and social media and this coupled with our Museum website and our social media activity has seen increased visitor numbers in more recent years.

The Staff and Volunteers within the Centre are to be commended for the highly effective way in which they respond to customer enquiries, undertaking their duties in a most proficient manner. ***Philip Wilson - Warwickshire Yeomanry Museum Trustee and Archivist***





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