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|  <b>Employment Committee 15<sup>th</sup><br/>February 2017</b>   |   | <b>Agenda Item No. 6</b> |
| <b>Title</b>  | Leamington Visitor Information Centre Staff Transfer  |                          |
| <b>For further information about this report please contact</b>   | David Guilding<br><a href="mailto:david.guilding@warwickdc.gov.uk">david.guilding@warwickdc.gov.uk</a><br>Arts Manager, Cultural Services<br>01926 737155 |                          |
| <b>Wards of the District directly affected</b>  | None  |                          |
| <b>Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?</b> | No  |                          |
| <b>Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number</b>   | NA  |                          |
| <b>Background Papers</b>  | NA  |                          |

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| <b>Contrary to the policy framework:</b>                                   | No  |
| <b>Contrary to the budgetary framework:</b>                                | No  |
| <b>Key Decision?</b>   | Yes |
| <b>Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)</b> | No  |
| <b>Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken</b>                               | No  |
| Not relevant to this report.   |     |

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| <b>Officer/Councillor Approval</b>   |             |                                      |
| <b>Officer Approval</b>  | <b>Date</b> | <b>Name</b>                          |
| Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive   | 01.02.17    | Bill Hunt                            |
| Head of Service  | 01.02.17    | Rose Winship                         |
| CMT  | 01.02.17    | Chris Elliott, Bill Hunt, Andy Jones |
| Section 151 Officer  | 01.02.17    | Mike Snow                            |
| Monitoring Officer   | 01.02.17    | Andy Jones                           |
| Finance  | 01.02.17    | Mike Snow                            |
| Portfolio Holder(s)  | 01.02.17    | Cllr Coker                           |
| <b>Consultation &amp; Community Engagement</b>   |             |                                      |
|  |             |                                      |
| <b>Final Decision?</b>   |             | No                                   |
| <b>Suggested next steps</b>  |             |                                      |
| Following the completion of the TUPE process, the Council will begin its established service redesign procedure, the scope of which will include the role of Visitor Information Assistant along with the Box Office Supervisor and the Senior Gallery Assistant. All staff potentially affected by the review shall be consulted with throughout. |             |                                      |

## 1. **Summary**

- 1.1 The Royal Leamington Spa Visitor Information Centre (VIC), located in the main concourse of the Royal Pump Rooms, is currently provided as part of an agreement between Warwick Town Council and Warwick District Council. The Town Council manage the service on behalf of the District Council in return for an annual grant. In addition to this grant, the direct costs of providing the service (such as staffing and stock) are also charged back to Warwick District Council.
- 1.2 The primary purpose of the VIC is to offer visitors to the area a comprehensive, face-to-face information service which effectively promotes the District's offering - including attractions, events, accommodation and transport links- as well as providing promotional material, guides, maps, souvenirs and other items relevant to tourism. Its prominent location at the front of the Royal Pump Rooms is highly advantageous, as the historic building attracts an annual footfall of over 500,000. The VIC also serves residents seeking out information about local events and services.
- 1.3 A report which reviewed the VIC arrangement was considered at a meeting of the Executive on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2017. The Executive approved the report's recommendations which, in summary, were:
- a) To conclude the current agreement with Warwick Town Council to manage the Royal Leamington Spa VIC from 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017.
  - b) For the operation of the Royal Leamington Spa VIC to be brought in-house as soon as is practicable and for that service to be placed under the management of the Arts section of Cultural Services.
  - c) That, following full consultation with staff, the roles of Visitor Information Assistant, Senior Art Gallery Assistant and Box Office Supervisor be combined into a single team with the aim of providing an enhanced service and extending the opening hours of both the Box Office and the VIC.
- 1.4 In order for the service to be brought in-house, it is necessary for the employment of the current Visitor Information Assistants to be transferred from Warwick Town Council to the District Council under the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment Regulations (TUPE). Therefore, it is required that the post of Visitor Information Assistant be added to the Council's staffing establishment.

## 2. **Recommendation**

- 2.1 That Members agree that the following post be added to the Council's staffing establishment:
- a. Visitor Information Assistant x4 posts
- 2.2 That the four current 'zero hours' workers are transferred from the employ of Warwick Town Council to Warwick District Council under their existing terms with effect from 1st March 2017.

### 3. **Reasons for the Recommendation**

- 3.1 Under TUPE legislation it is required for there to be an 'economic, technical or organisational' (ETO) reason to alter existing terms and conditions. Any changes directly as a result of the transfer, regardless of whether they are considered to be better or worse, are not legal. Therefore, officers have been advised that the Visitor Information Assistants must be transferred to Warwick District Council under their existing terms and conditions.
- 3.2 A service review encompassing the operation of the Royal Leamington Spa VIC, the Royal Spa Centre daytime Box Office and the 'front desk' at the Museum & Art Gallery is scheduled to commence in early March. A further report will be bought to the June Employment Committee with the conclusions of that review. Full consultation will take place prior to any changes being implemented and the Council's established service review processes and timeline will be followed.
- 3.3 Until the redesign is completed the Visitor Information Assistants shall continue to work to their existing job description, under their current terms and conditions. The role will be included in the Programming & Marketing team of the Arts section of Cultural Services and temporarily report to the Programming & Marketing Supervisor.

### 4. **Policy Framework**

- 4.1 The principles of Fit for the Future (FFF) have been considered in the formation of the proposal. The recommendations relate to the key strands of the FFF programme as follows:

#### **Service**

To Maintain or Improve Services: the eventual aim of the wider proposal is to offer an improved, comprehensive experience for residents and visitors to the District over a broader range of opening times.

#### **People**

To Engage and Empower Staff: during the consultation with staff as part of the recent Arts review the Art Gallery & Museum team highlighted the detrimental impact that the shortened VIC opening times have had upon attendance to the Royal Pump Rooms. The aim of the proposal is to directly address that issue.

The Box Office team are openly positive about the increase in ticket sales that the relocation will potentially generate.

While the VIC staff have a good working relationship with their manager they are currently managed under a 'hub and spoke' model, whereby their line manager is located primarily at the main, Warwick VIC. It is hoped that the proposed changes would offer increased supervision and support by including that role within the wider team who are based within the building.

#### **Money**

To Achieve and Maintain a Sustainable Balanced Budget: the proposal would deliver an improved service at the current budget.

- 4.2 One of the five key themes of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) is Prosperity. The Tourism sector has a vital role to play in the prosperity of the District as it directly maintains over 4,300 jobs and generates an estimated £260m per year. The priority for tourism is to ensure that, through collaboration with private and public sector partners, we maximise the appeal of the Council's assets to attract and retain visitors to the District.

## 5. **Budgetary Framework**

- 5.1 The recommendations already approved by the Executive will mean that a portion of the £15,000 grant covering the management of the VIC will be repositioned for 2017/18 in order to enable the transfer of the Box Office and associated upgrade of any communication infrastructure.
- 5.2 The ongoing costs of the Leamington VIC, and associated grants, are within the Council's current budgetary framework. Currently Warwick Town Council employs the staff to run the VIC, for which the District Council is invoiced directly. The current year District Council budget for these staff is £27,900. Members should also note that the running costs of the VIC, including the staffing budget, are in addition to the grant allocated for the management of the VIC and are therefore unaffected by the proposed reallocation of the £15,000 grant.
- 5.4 There are potential budgetary implications within the TUPE process that can only be detailed at the conclusion of the process. However, it is expected that these additional costs would be offset by savings delivered by co-locating and increased revenue generation.
- 5.5 Any additional one-off costs arising as a result of the review would be funded from the £15,000 grant which should then be made available for appropriate tourism activities in future years.

## 6. **Risks**

- 6.1 There is a risk, during both the transfer of staff and the following service redesign, that the changes might lead to the loss of existing staff members. However, there will be opportunities throughout the consultation process to ensure that all staff can engage with the process and they will have opportunity to inform any final proposals. Through this process officers aim to reduce the potential loss of staff whilst ensuring plans are in place to recruit and/or cover any gaps that may appear so the service can continue to be delivered. Once the redesign is completed the integration of the teams will provide greater resilience over the longer term.
- 6.2 If the service redesign concludes that roles should be combined there are likely to be knowledge and experience gaps amongst members of the team. To remedy this, a detailed training plan will be put in place to ensure that excellent customer service continues to be delivered whilst any changes are implemented.

## **7. Alternative Option(s) considered**

- 7.1 The Council has already agreed to cease the current agreement with Warwick Town Council to manage the Royal Leamington Spa VIC and has provided notice to the Town Council that it shall conclude on 31st March 2017.
- 7.2 In taking on the responsibility for the operation of the VIC, Warwick District Council is now legally obliged to begin the transfer of the employment of the existing Visitor Information Assistants under their current terms and conditions.

## **8. Background**

- 8.1 In June 2016 Members agreed to a review of the provision of the Visitor Information Centre in Royal Leamington Spa, located in the Royal Pump Rooms. The underpinning principles for the review were that the Council should retain its commitment to face-to-face services as they are valued, that members would like to see the service extended and improved, but that budgets were constrained and that no additional funding was available.
- 8.2 A report regarding the VIC was presented to a meeting of the Executive on 5 January 2017 (Agenda Item 9). Two alternative models were proposed; one involving merging with other similar WDC functions and another involving extended opening hours through increased use of volunteers managed through the existing 'hub and spoke model'.
- 8.3 Both models potentially provided an improved service to visitors by extending the current opening hours. This would be of benefit to those wishing to access the VIC service in the Royal Pump Rooms as well as those visiting the Art Gallery & Museum who may be deterred by the metal shutters that are used to segregate the closed VIC when the Royal Pump Rooms remains open.
- 8.4 The model proposed by Warwick District Council officers brings the VIC delivery in-house and, following a redesign consultation, integrates the staff with those providing a similar function in the Art Gallery & Museum and with the Box Office, currently located in the Town Hall. By integrating the teams and co-locating the functions, synergies will be produced that would provide the customer with an improved, more comprehensive service at first point of contact and over the desired longer opening hours. Given the much higher footfall in the Royal Pump Rooms compared to the Town Hall, there is reasonable expectation of opportunities to generate additional income above the current level.
- 8.5 Given the requirement to bring the VIC staff in-house prior to consultation and the creation of an integrated team, the extended opening hours sought for the VIC are unlikely to be able to be delivered until after the 15 June 2017 Employment Committee. However, if approved the physical relocation of the box office and the amalgamation of the teams could take place immediately. This should be easily achievable as the teams involved are relatively small, although there will be the need to put training plans in place in order to ensure that the transition of the service is implemented as smoothly as possible.

- 8.6 To relocate the Box Office and reception function the communication infrastructure to both the customer facing and back office areas would require investment. Given that it would be inappropriate to award the VIC element of the Tourism Grant outside of the Council when the service is now being provided in-house, it is proposed to instead utilise this element of the grant to deliver the required one-off improvements in 2017/18.
- 8.7 The Executive approved the recommendations in that report which were:
- a) To endorse the future model of service delivery, as proposed by officers of the Arts Section of Cultural Services.
  - b) To approve the principle of Warwick District Council taking over responsibility for the Leamington Visitor Information Centre as soon as practicably possible, with the VIC staff transferring employment from Warwick Town Council to Warwick District Council.
  - a) To end the current grant arrangement with Warwick Town Council, for payment of £15,000 per annum, in respect of the Leamington VIC on expiry of the current grant period on 31 March 2017.
  - b) That the Royal Spa Centre Box Office be relocated from the Town Hall and, together with the Art Gallery & Museum reception, be co-located with the Leamington VIC in the Royal Pump Rooms.
  - c) That authority be delegated to the Head of Development Services and the Head of Cultural Services, in consultation with the Business Portfolio Holder and the Culture Portfolio Holder, to utilise the £15,000 allocated for 2017/18 as grant to Warwick Town Council, to instead deliver ICT infrastructure upgrades to enable the Royal Spa Centre Box Office and Art Gallery & Museum reception to be collocated to the VIC area within the Royal Pump Rooms.
  - d) To delegate authority to the Head of Development Services, in consultation with the Business Portfolio Holder, to re-negotiate and agree the payment of the Tourism Grant (additional to the £15,000 grant referred to above) to Warwick Town Council, up to a maximum value of £25,000.
  - e) That the Executive note that an additional phase of the Review will be undertaken to examine the provision of Visitor Information services in Kenilworth, involving engagement with stakeholders on the recent Kenilworth Visitor Audit, with the intention of delivering improvements to the range and accessibility of information within existing budgets.
- 8.8 The timetable for the service redesign has already been drafted by Warwick District Council's HR department in preparation. The Arts Manager will lead the consultation and present the conclusion of the review to the Employment Committee in June.