

Minutes of the Tourism Working Group

Wednesday 23rd March 2016 at 2pm in the Guildhall

Present: Councillors Westacott MBE, Cohen, Whitty, R Adams and Piper; Helen Nathanson (Town Clerk), Catherine Marlton (Deputy Town Clerk) and Amanda Richards (TIC Manager)

1. Councillor Westacott MBE was elected as Chair of the WG.
2. The Group discussed the services offered by the TIC; the audience for these services; who else is already supplying them; and who could supply them in future. This discussion is recorded in the attached chart.

The following points were made:

If changes need to be made to the production of the Totnes Guide then a decision is needed by May because that is when the process will start for the 2017 Guide.

There are many services that would benefit from being delivered in locations which are open for longer hours than the TIC, such as RADAR keys and general information.

The river boat tickets may well be taken away from the TIC anyway this year because the Company is looking to sell them online or from Steamer Quay.

Accommodation bookings are now minimal and, whilst previously we considered having our own online booking facility, this would now be outdated.

The TIC is regularly used as a directory service for local phone numbers, complaints and contacts. It is important that people have access to this information but there are other ways to achieve this.

It is clear that services to local people make up a considerable proportion of the overall and that this must be taken into account. The WG agreed that it would like to meet with Caring Town Totnes and Totnes Community Development Society to investigate possibilities of working with them to deliver local services from the Mansion.

Maintaining the tourism website was considered to be an important priority. Websites in the tourism industry have developed considerably and there is an opportunity to modernise ours and enhance the services we provide through it, such as detailed itineraries for visitors and links with other providers.

Wifi throughout the town needs to be improved significantly.

The Tourism Partnership is still at an early stage and we need to establish exactly what it will provide and how it will be funded. The Town Council has a responsibility to contribute funding because it is collecting the income from the Totnes Guide.

3. The Group looked at the visitor services model used in Torbay by the English Riviera and discussed how this could apply to Totnes. In Torbay there is one central TIC and the outlying towns and villages have Tourist Information Points in local businesses: for example, the Brixham TIC is in a local gift shop and Paignton has a TIC in its bookshop. The Town Clerk had spoken to English Riviera and they explained that their current model works well for them and all parties are happy with it.

4. It was agreed that we need to arrange a meeting with the Totnes Trust and Totnes Image Bank to share information about future plans and to discuss how this will impact on all parties. This will be done as soon as possible.

5. The management of this issue in the public arena was discussed and the WG agreed that it was important to ensure that as much information as possible was provided to the town.

The Totnes Times would be running an article about the TIC on Wednesday 30th March and the paper could not guarantee that any statements from the Council could be published in that edition, which would have helped us to present a balanced picture.

The only way to guarantee the space was to submit and pay for a press release at £225. The advantage of doing this was that the Town Council could explain its process and actions so far at the same time as the Totnes Times article, in order to maintain a fair view of proceedings. If the Town Council was not able to make a statement until the following week, there would be no opportunity to present information to the public before the April Council meeting, which may lead to a lot of tension and misinformation at that meeting.

A draft press release had been prepared for the WG and it was agreed that it should be sent, subject to a majority agreement from all councillors by email.

5. The date of the next meeting was agreed as Wednesday 30th March at 2pm in the Guildhall. The subject of the next meeting will be to look at the costs involved in changes to how we deliver the services.