

**CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES**

<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	Town Hall, Assets and Services		
<b>MEETING DATE AND TIME</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> July 2023 7.00 pm	<b>LOCATION</b>	Town Hall
<b>REPORT FROM</b>	Jackie MacArthur, Communities and Marketing Manager / Deputy Chief Officer		
<b>AGENDA ITEM REPORT TITLE</b>	<b>14 Congleton Information Centre</b>		
<b>Background / Update</b>	<p>The Visitor Information Centre, now known as the Congleton Information Centre, was transferred from Cheshire East Council to Congleton Town Council on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 with a three-year funding agreement and SLA. The Cheshire East funding agreement comes to an end in April 2024. Cheshire East currently only has one Visitor Information Centre, based in Macclesfield. Nantwich and Congleton are both devolved to their respective Town Councils.</p> <p>The Congleton Information Centre (CIC) is open 5.5 days a week. From 9- 4.30pm on Mondays- Fridays and from 10.15am – 1.45pm on Saturdays. It provides the front-of-house services for the Town Council and the Town Hall – this includes answering the general phone line, dealing with website contact forms, responding to requests to the Town Council’s general email, dealing with face-to-face enquiries and providing general administration services. The staff also sell tickets, souvenirs and local merchandise, advise residents and visitors about events, attractions and things to do in the locality and collates the What’s on Guide. They sell local produce for commission and are an invaluable asset to many local groups who rely on the service for the promotion and sale of tickets.</p> <p>Included in the Information Team is one full-time member of staff and three part-time members of staff. There are also two casual members of staff that may be called on for cover. The full-time member of staff (currently on maternity leave) and two part-time members of staff are part of the TUPE agreement with CEC.</p>		
<b>Agreements made with CEC to retain service</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The centre will remain open 5 and a half days a week.</li> <li>2. There will be 2 members of staff present when the centre is open based upon Cheshire East ensuring that there are no lone operators providing a service. (The team has integrated well into the Town Council and the Communities team provide cover when needed)</li> <li>3. Through its own network of communications promotes what’s on locally, and where to stay as per Service Level Agreement .</li> <li>4. Continue to generate income through selling tickets for venues such as Chester Zoo, Daneside Theatre, providing photocopying service, sell stamps and local merchandise on a commission basis.</li> <li>5. Acts as a reception for visitors to the Town Council.</li> </ol>		
<b>Ideas of the Town Council when</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Re-brand the VIC to an agreed name – eg <b>Congleton Information Centre – this has been done.</b></li> </ol>		

<p><b>taking on the service</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Incorporate existing CTC staff into this area – <b>the CIC team work closely with CTC staff and provides much of the admin support for the Council but currently no room for more staff to work in the area.</b></li> <li>3. Adjust the layout for additional staff and reception (capital expenditure) <b>This is a project that we would like to commence in 2023 to make the space more welcoming, more obvious as the reception, create work spaces that are DDA compliant and fit for purpose. The ideal time for refurbishment is January/ February 2024 and plans will come to the next meeting.</b></li> <li>4. Become the formal reception of the Town Council taking telephone calls, receiving visitors and handling residents enquiries where possible – <b>this has happened.</b></li> <li>5. Promote the locality, its organisations and services. – <b>this is happening</b></li> <li>6. Support the development, delivery and promotion of commercial and community events and activity at the Town Hall and in the town centre – <b>this is happening.</b></li> <li>7. Incorporating the roles and responsibilities of Office Administration.</li> <li>8. Work alongside the Communications and Marketing Officers with a specific focus on Digital Marketing - <b>the teams are working together and the redevelopment of the website to incorporate and digitalise the information held in the CIC will be a major project for 2023.</b></li> <li>9. Consider additional services within the VIC</li> </ol>
<p><b>Updates</b></p>	<p><b>PERSONAL UPDATES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The Senior Information Officer started her maternity leave on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023 and is expected to be on maternity leave for a year. Paolo Pinto has been recruited to cover work in the Information Centre during the Maternity Cover.</li> <li>b. Celeste Smith, the Bookings and Administration Officer, will be acting up as Team Leader during the maternity Cover.</li> </ol> <p>In this Financial year, in addition to all the everyday good work that the Information Centre continues to do, the focus will be on three main priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. New look website with the CIC information fully digitalised and accessible across more channels</li> <li>2. Researching and installing a new booking system for Town Hall and the paddling pool</li> <li>3. Refurbishing the Information Centre</li> <li>4. Revisit the commissioning rates</li> </ol> <p>The Community Committee is due to discuss setting up a task and finish group to move the website forward at its meeting on the 6 July 2023.</p> <p>An interior architect student is helping to create ideas and graphics for councillors to consider for the internal refurbishment of the centre – with the aim of having a project plan to come to the next meeting.</p>

<p><b>Financial Considerations</b></p>	<p><b>Income</b>  In 2022/23 the income from the Congleton Information Centre was £170,243 this includes direct sales or products income of £132,776, a support grant from Cheshire East Council of £32,467 and £5,000 from CAB Contribution.</p> <p><b>Sales Commissions</b>  Commissions vary from 5% - 20% depending on the product –the vast majority is community tickets at 5% commission.</p> <p><b>Expenditure</b>  The expenditure on the centre was £203,809 – this includes direct sales expenditure of £120,236, revenue expenditure includes: Salaries, rent, rates and central overheads.</p> <p><b>Summary</b>  This gives a cost of £33,566 to run the service in 2022-23.</p>
<p><b>Environmental Considerations</b></p>	<p>The Information promotes localism and as an information centre promotes the Town Council's green agenda.  Changes planned for the service should continue to reduce its carbon footprint.</p>
<p><b>Equality Considerations</b></p>	<p>The Information Centre is open to all. It supports and promotes Congleton events to a wider audience, enables local people who are not online to book tickets, it promotes local events and services, provides opportunities for local artists to sell products, stocks free and paid for information and provides central resource point for the town.</p>
<p><b>Decision Requested</b></p>	<p>To note and receive the update report on the Congleton Information Centre.  To approve officers spending time developing plans for the refurbishment of the Information Centre.</p>