

Area East: Local Information Centre's 2014/15 Report

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Purpose of the Report

To update members on the town council operated Area East Local Information Centres in Bruton, Wincanton & Castle Cary.

Public Interest

The Area East Committee gives funding support to the three town councils to assist with the running costs of local information centres (LICs) in Bruton, Wincanton & Castle Cary. This report gives details of how each LIC is doing from the monitoring information supplied under the service agreement.

Recommendation

To note and comment on the SSDC supported Local Information Centres

Background

A review of SSDC satellite offices was completed in spring 2010. Proposals included a shift to Local Information Centres being placed under Town Council control. This was to enable increased hours of operation supported by local resident volunteers.

In February 2012, as part of efficiency savings, the District Executive ceased staffing small part time community offices. Sole responsibility for running the LIC in Bruton and Castle Cary transferred to the Town Councils. This enabled Area Support staff to concentrate on delivering a comprehensive advice service from the Wincanton office to those who need it. The Area Support staff provided training to LIC volunteers with a referral/sign posting system for District Council enquiries is in place. No negative issues have arisen following the transfer.

The Area East Committee allocates £500 per annum to the 3 Town Councils to assist with the cost of running their LICs.

The SLA gives a framework for achieving consistency & offers some funding stability. Each LIC is overseen/ staffed by volunteers/Town Council employees and local residents can access information locally. Referrals can be made to SSDC at Wincanton as necessary. The SLA sets out:

- the services and activities being provided by the centre
- the support it can expect from the district council.
- A framework for monitoring its success
- funding conditions.

The agreement assumes no significant changes in the level or scope of core activity over the life of the funding. It is subject to regular review

Aims of LICs

- To provide information on local services, amenities and activities to the community and visitors to the town.
- To promote the heritage and culture of the town and the surrounding area.
- To support the local economy by promoting businesses, venues and attractions in the area.
- To provide a reliable, efficient and professional service.

Monitoring and Evaluation

There is an annual meeting between the LIC and a representative from SSDC to monitor the level of service, activities provided and financial position. At this review, the following information is considered:

- Annual accounts.
- Budget for the coming year.
- Development plans.
- Details of any other funding.
- Referrals made to SSDC (new to future monitoring reports for 2015-16).

Report for 2014/15

The Town Councils LICs have been very busy this year developing and operating their individual services. The LICs have seen increased tourism to the area, in turn increasing demand on volunteer time as well as a greater range of information needed from enquiries.

Objectives	Recorded information 2014 – 2015	Bruton	Castle Cary	Wincanton	Total numbers 2014-15
Provide a central point of contact for the community and visitors	Overall number of enquiries to LIC	1858	6481	1684	10,023
	enquiries in person	1858	6239	1277	9374
	by telephone/e- mail/post	0	242	407	649
Encourage & support a team of well-informed volunteers to run LIC	Number of volunteers	6	10	0	16

Please note:

The opening hours for each office are determined locally and vary, which is reflected in the number of visitors. Wincanton LIC is run mainly by the Deputy Town Clerk. Bruton LIC does *not* have a separate phone line/computer from the Town Council

In addition to supplying statistics above the LICs have given the following reports:

Wincanton report:

- Update meetings with SSDC Tourism team
- Numbers on par with last year's accessing the LIC
- New residents to the town are happy with the welcome guide that has been produced.

Castle Cary report:

- Continue to run our Community and Tourist Information Desk entirely by volunteers.
- Open summer 9.30 am to 2pm Monday to Thursday, Friday 9.30am to 4pm, Saturday 9.30am to 12.30 am
- Increase in enquiries from the previous year (685 more)
- Open winter (Nov to March) 9.30 to 12noon weekdays and Saturdays
- We attend leaflet distribution session annually plus other volunteer' training and events set up by SSDC Tourism team where possible
- We organise ordering of leaflets, tourism materials including train and bus timetables, local information, etc.
- We use the internet increasingly for information searching, and now have a laptop solely for our use which is great.
- We manage the Saturday morning coffee morning bookings, banner bookings
- We help advertise and promote local events, including the Big Christmas
- We have regular Volunteers' group meetings

Bruton report:

In addition to the statistical information Bruton LIC has worked with the Town Council and Bruton Community Partnership to establish:

- A refurbished LIC and town office
- New branding for the town (to be implemented within the LIC)
- A new web site and town information signs (signs planned for early 2016)
- Step into Bruton leaflet
- Enhancements to signs in the town highlighting where the LIC is for the increased tourist due to Hauser and Wirth galleries.

Financial Implications

There are no new financial implications arising from this report. A total of £1,500, £500 per LIC, is paid to the Town Councils from Area East Members' Discretionary Budget

Corporate Priority Implications

Focus two: Environment

Focus four: Health & Communities

Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)

None

Equality and Diversity Implications

The SSDC Area East Development Team considers all aspect of equalities in evaluating funding support. Supporting an accessible face to face, locally run LIC, with the ability to refer vulnerable people to the community office for additional support, is complementary to SSDC run customer access services.

Background Papers:

SLA File