16 URGENT ITEM – Diss Tourist Information Centre: Summer Opening Hours

The Chairman announced that, as the next meeting of the Growth and Localism Committee would not be held until June 2014, the summer opening times of Diss Tourist Information Centre (TIC) would be discussed as an urgent item.

Cllr Palmer advised the Committee that he had been made aware of an intended reduction to the opening hours of the Diss TIC. During discussion, members agreed that the proposed reduction in hours did not appear to align with the Council’s investment being made into the Market Towns Initiative, and also raised concerns regarding the amount of information, regarding South Norfolk, which was available to visitors using the electronic Tourist Information Points.

The Deputy Chief Executive addressed the Committee, advising members of the reasons for retaining the summer opening hours at winter levels, which included the need to keep within budget and also to ensure that the Council adhered to the EU Working Time Directive. He stated that by operating the TIC on the same opening hours during the summer as currently being done during the winter months, the operation could remain within budget and comply with employment law. He further added that the opening times of the
TIC was not a policy issue, but operational. However, he apologised for not liaising with the Cabinet member on this matter. Following general member support for the longer opening hours (as per previous years), the Deputy Chief Executive agreed that he would implement this as soon as possible.

17 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Localism Committee held on 7 January 2014 were agreed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18 REVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA WORKING

The Communities & Active Life Manager presented his report which outlined the preferred option following the review of neighbourhood working and the proposed Ground Rules to ensure the effective delivery of that option.

Cllr M Wilby thanked officers for their work, adding that he was pleased to note that the option proposed encompassed the thoughts and ideas of local members.

In response to a member’s question regarding the criteria, the Committee was advised that applications under certain circumstances could be made by commercial companies but only if the particular scheme was community based and not for profit. Officers added that local members in adjoining parishes could combine their Member Ward Budget of £1,000 for larger projects or initiatives, if desired, which might benefit a wider area.

A concern was raised that the new arrangements might negate the need for interaction with other services, such as the police, NHS etc. The Communities & Active Life Manager stressed that existing structures would allow the Council to continue to work effectively with partners.

It was suggested that an overall picture of the different types of funding be made available to applicants prevent confusion.

Officers agreed to make minor amendments to the report and, after discussion, were supportive of the proposal.

It was RESOLVED:

TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET

1. that the new way of neighbourhood working be implemented; and
2. the revised Ground Rules be adopted.

15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee acknowledged the dates of the next meetings.

The meeting closed at 3.45 pm

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