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## SCARBOROUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Various Signatories  
c/o Town Clerk  
Whitby Town Council

Our Ref: DJB/TW/SFR

3 March 2016

Via e-mail:

[town.clerk@whitbytowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:town.clerk@whitbytowncouncil.gov.uk)

Dear Signatories

### **Cabinet Decision on Whitby TIC/Customer First Centre – 16 February 2016**

Thank you for your letter dated 23 February regarding the above decision. I do not intend this reply to address each of the points in your letter individually but to provide an overarching response. In so doing I will cover your concerns either generally or specifically.

Firstly I think it is important to provide a little bit of context. The financial challenge facing Scarborough Borough Council is massive and cannot be overstated. We have achieved a balanced budget for 2016–2017 having identified approximately £2million savings, but we are faced with similar saving targets for each of the following three years. To date we have achieved balanced budgets whilst protecting the front line services which the Borough Council finance, operate and provide for the residents, businesses and visitors to our Borough, this includes the operation of Tourist Information Centres (TICs). I have very much taken on board the views of Whitby Town Council and interested parties but difficult decisions need to be taken by Scarborough Borough Council, the body which operate the TIC service and own the assets from which it operates – these are not decisions that I am prepared to shy away from.

Although I won't pretend that it is not necessary for the Borough wide review of the TIC operations to provide a financial return, retaining a manned TIC and Customer First presence in Whitby has also been a fundamental principle of that review. In maintaining that provision, the changing purpose of the TICs and customer demand must also be recognised, the emergence of the internet has massively changed the demand on the service and this is reflected in the report to Cabinet and the decisions that it made on 16 February 2016.

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I have been fully briefed by my Cabinet colleagues and senior officers who attended the meeting with the representatives of Whitby Town Council whom the Town Council identified as its chosen representatives for the meeting. Representatives from Whitby and District Tourism Association and Welcome to Yorkshire Tourism Advisory Board were also in attendance. I accept that I am summarising but I think it is worth making specific reference to a few key points that Whitby Town Council members and other representatives agreed and raised at the meeting:

- There was a general acknowledgement of the financial pressures faced by Scarborough Borough Council and therefore the need to achieve efficiencies.
- It was acknowledged that the area given over to the TIC in the existing building is excessive and disproportionately focused on retail.
- It was felt overwhelmingly that a manned TIC facility must be retained within, or within close proximity of, the existing facility (SBC representatives outlined their commitment to retaining a manned facility at the start of the meeting).
- It was requested that should the existing building be marketed for disposal then this should permit the opportunity for a TIC to be incorporated within the proposed use/uses.

I refer now to the recommendation and subsequent decision of Cabinet. This makes provision for those expressing an interest in the future use of the building to incorporate a TIC (and other ancillary uses) within their proposal. In the event that the eventual occupant does not incorporate a TIC then the decision makes provision for a manned facility to be provided within the adapted mobility scooter garage, a direct adjunct to the building, or within the harbour office, a public building directly adjacent to the main bus stop and public (tourist) parking area, very close to the railway station and within 150 metres of the existing facility. I contend therefore that all the general principles referred to above which were either acknowledged and accepted, or requested by the Town Council and other representatives at the meeting of 16 January 2016, have been very adequately satisfied.

It was made clear by my officers in attendance at the meeting that recommendations would be formulated taking into account the views expressed at the meeting and by others who had provided comment, but that there would be no further formal consultation prior to consideration by Cabinet. Furthermore, I fail to see what benefit further consultation would serve. I am sure you will agree that the Town Council should be representative of the residents and businesses of the town. Furthermore the tourism sector was very much represented at the meeting. I am repeating myself by saying that the recommendation to, and ultimately the decision by Cabinet, absolutely take into account the concerns expressed by those present at the meeting. I am sure opinion would emerge from further consultation that a manned TIC facility in the existing building should be guaranteed – I emphasise that this is not an option. I am satisfied that the consultation undertaken is proportionate and adequate.

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I think I should also re-iterate that the review which culminated in the recommendation to Cabinet on 16<sup>th</sup> February was Borough wide and not purely based on Whitby. What is unique to Whitby however is the commitment of Scarborough Borough Council to retain a manned facility in the town, unlike the approach approved for Scarborough, Filey and beyond. This is reflective of the importance the Borough Council places on tourism to the town and the emphasis it has attributed to the views which have been heard loud and clear from the Town Council and other key organisations. I also emphasise the commitment the Council has given to the provision of a tourism service Borough-wide which is again testimony to the recognition of the importance of tourism to the economy of the Borough. Through the review of TIC provision we have identified £65k to be directed towards mainstreaming of the Tourism Destination Marketing and Events team to focus on the development of destination marketing using digital technologies and event development in order to support the delivery of the Borough's Visitor Economy Strategy to increase visitor volume and value across the Borough. This refocusing of resources from the traditional and declining methods of accessing tourist information into a sustainable core tourism destination marketing service and supporting event development and delivery, is essential if our destination is to compete with other UK resorts.

Wherever and whenever practicably possible the Borough Council is committed to retaining key front line services, whilst striving to achieve the increasingly challenging financial demands that it faces. Similarly we are always open to constructive dialogue and ideas as to how these objectives can be achieved. If the Town Council or other organisations are of the view that the Tourist Information service currently provided and delivered by the Borough Council can be better delivered by them in a way that helps ensure further efficiencies for the Borough Council, then I am open to entering that dialogue, but I cannot allow such dialogue to delay the implementation of the Cabinet resolution of 16 February.

Yours faithfully



**Cllr Derek J Bastiman**  
Leader of the Council

cc Lisa Dixon, Director  
Borough Ward Members for the Northern Area

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