

COUNCIL – 7 SEPTEMBER 2021

QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR D BIGBY TO COUNCILLOR T GILLARD

“Ashby Tourist Information Centre (TIC) has been closed during the Covid restrictions and staff deployed to other duties to assist with Covid recovery. I have been told by officers and the portfolio holder that:

- It will NOT be re-opened this year
- NWLDC is currently reviewing the future of Ashby TIC and a report to Cabinet is being prepared
- it will not be re-opened unless the report recommends this.

The walk-in TIC at Ashby Library has made, and can continue to make, a valuable contribution to the local economy through providing the following important local services,

- promoting Ashby as a developing tourist destination
- furnishing visitors to Ashby with up-to-date information on local facilities, events and tourist attractions across the District
- providing a warm and friendly welcome to visitors
- providing local businesses and community groups with a means of publicising events and selling tickets to the public and visitors
- promoting the National Forest.

Does the portfolio holder agree with me that:

The permanent closure of Ashby TIC would represent a loss of the important local services listed above, would be highly detrimental to the local economy and replacement by an improved website would not constitute an adequate substitute?”

RESPONSE FROM COUNCILLOR T GILLARD TO COUNCILLOR D BIGBY

“The council should be proud of the way that it responded to the Covid 19 Pandemic. We have had to make difficult decisions to cease or change the way we offered our services and redeploy staff to critical areas to make sure we continued to deliver priority services to the public, such as the Community Hub, waste services and distributing government grants to businesses. The TIC was closed and, as Cllr Bigby says, staff were redeployed. They were providing vital support to businesses to help them reopen and begin to grow again.

Cabinet continues to recognise the importance of the Visitor Economy to our district and after a horrendous 2020 and a bumpy 2021 we hope our tourism businesses will bounce back in 2022. We are working closely with businesses in the sector to help them “build back better”.

What we must ensure is that our investment remains relevant, delivering both value for money and positive impacts on the performance of the district as a tourist destination. Officers have been tasked with evaluating the impact of our cultural services, including through engagement with sector stakeholders. The outcome of the Service Review exercise will be reported later this year.

In summary, I thank Cllr Bigby for his question but would suggest that he waits until the Service Review has concluded and we have an opportunity to debate the findings”