Service Review: Tourist Information Centre (TIC)- Carried out in February 2026

Reviewers: Cllr. Alison Davies, Cllr. Morag Bailey on behalf of the Audit Committee

*The 'Tourist Information Centre' name for the service was changed to 'Welshpool Information Centre' at the end of February 2026. The whole building at Vicarage Gardens contains both the Tourist Information Service and Welshpool Town Council offices. This review relates to the Tourist Information Service only. For clarity and due to timescales the term Tourist Information Centre (TIC) when referring to the service will be used in this report. Welshpool Information Centre (WIC) will be used when referring to the whole building. Welshpool Town Council (WTC) will be used when referring to the Council as whole.

1. Introduction

Legal Basis: The Council has a clear statutory basis to operate and support a Tourist Information Centre. Section 145 of the Local Government Act 1972 gives local authorities the power to do anything necessary or expedient for the provision, maintenance and encouragement of tourism.

The Tourist Information Centre also carries out retail activity, and the Council relies on Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003. This allows charging for discretionary services, provided that the activity is operated on a cost-recovery basis and does not generate a profit overall.

History: The building and service were originally provided by Powys County Council until 2009 when they were transferred to Welshpool Town Council. Two of the staff members moved from PCC to WTC and still remain part of the team. One has been working in the TIC for twenty years and the other for nineteen and a half years; the third has been a team member for 8 years.

Part of the building was previously let to a taxi company. In 2024/25, following considerable capital works, office space was created and the Triangle House team moved into the WIC building in 2025. Until then the TIC team felt quite isolated from the day-to-day interaction and activities of the WTC team.

Strategic Plan: One of the themes of the 2025/2028 Strategic Plan includes: - Developing Welshpool as a place to visit. There is a clear link between the Tourist Information Service and the Strategic Plan. One of the actions in the plan is 'To review the TIC'. This review is part of that action.

2. Funding

As noted, this service cannot run at profit; however, it would be desirable, although not essential to work towards reaching a zero-profit balance.

The table below shows the income and expenditure for the TIC over the last 4 years. The increase in 2024/25 includes some areas of maintenance that relate to the Office/Toilet remodelling and not directly attributable to the TIC.

Table A. Overall income and expenditure

TD = 31/1/26	Income	Exp	Balance
2022/23	£57,667	£115,212	**£57,545**
2023/24	£63,290	£124,363	**£61,075**
2024/25	£62,623	£133,595	**£70,972**
2025/TD	£70,879	£123,964	**£53,082**

Table B: Income

TD= 31/1/26	Direct Sales	Bus/other Commission	Train Commission	Total
2022/3	£7,228	£13,186	£5,208	**£25,622**
2023/4	£2,909	£5,803	£5,577	**£14,289**
2024/5	£3,623	£8,480	£8,417	**£20,520**
2025/TD	£4,672	£7,190	£6,979	**£18,841**

The table above shows that income is making a significant contribution to the cost of delivering the service. Direct sales have increased over the last 2/3 years.

Table C. Salaries

Salaries		
2022/3	46,628	
2023/4	50,045	
2024/5	50,143	
2025/6	60,135	expected

Following the staffing review in 2025 salaries increased due to the identification of several anomalies, including an unbalance of a pay grades and the correction of pay for the hours worked by one member of the team. The increase also relating to the back-dated pay grade due to additional responsibilities in also managing the Meals on Wheels service but have been cost coded to the TIC the employee's substantive position. This will change in 2026/27 following the transfer the Meals on Wheels service to the Haven.

3. Current

The Centre benefits considerably from having a team of three very experienced and knowledgeable staff who understand their customer base and clearly enjoy their roles in

providing this service to the public. Each commented that they enjoy meeting people responding to queries and gain satisfaction by providing the best service they can.

The TIC is covered by 2 team members and one manager. There are currently no voluntary roles associated with the centre. Staffing is:-

Team Manager - 35 hours over 4 days; Team Member 1 - 28 hours over 4 days; Team member 2 - 21 hours over 3 days. Saturdays and Mondays are rotated between the two team members. The Centre is open between 9.30am and 4.30pm 6 days each week and is closed between 12.30pm to 1pm for lunch.

Services offered include Rail tickets and information; Coach travel and bookings; Fishing permits, advice and information. A coffee machine and a range of goods are available for sale including maps, handbags, jewellery, a range of gifts and accessories.

The regular tasks include: -

- Daily, mornings: log onto train system, check till float is correct, check post, check trains and National Express are running on time, check voicemail and emails.
- Daily, evenings: cash up, close down train system, complete all paperwork and documents.
- Selling rail tickets
- Complete Transport for Wales weekly data sheets
- All security bags for Securicor and pick up data and cash for TfW
- Advising on travel
- Selling National Express tickets
- Owen's Coach tickets and holidays
- Fishing permits for MAA
- Litter picking around the centre
- Bus timetables
- Sales
- Ordering/ purchasing stock, and brochures, visit trade fairs
- Providing information about the town, locations of certain places
- Providing information on walking and touring in Mid Wales
- Cleaning, stock maintenance and replacement, general housekeeping
- Cleaning inside and outside of WIC windows
- Selling poppies
- Processing payments for Market stalls, Town hall bookings, allotments
- Balance till
- Displaying and removing posters
- Flags on Flag poles outside
- Clean weeds from the pathway

- Fielding moans (not quite complaints) e.g., Councillor behaviour in meetings, lack of courtesy by staff or Councillors.
- Admin: checking invoices are correct, file on computer& folder, put stock on stocklist, transfer to following month's stocklist. Spreadsheets, publisher, posters etc. IT for Hub (and Allotments), previously MoW

General directions and advice

- Canal boat rides advice
- Library and Museum advice
- Help associated with addiction – drink, drugs
- Mental Health advice
- Laundrette advice
- Hospital, Doctors', Dentist
- Taxi numbers
- Direct people to PCC and provide phone numbers
- PCC carpark enquiries and go out and help them work the machine
- Places to eat, places to visit
- Garages, holiday parks
- Sports, clubs and groups, activities
- Churches
- Generally providing a welcoming and friendly environment
  (information provided by Team members)

4. Consultation

Consultation regarding the TIC was included in the Interim Strategic Plan Engagement Exercise undertaken in Autumn 2025. Most respondents did so online. It was not made clear in the question relating to value for money of the service that it cannot be profit making and the financial figures presented included inflated figures relating to the wider WIC building that did not relate to the TIC service.

In that engagement exercise the majority 63% responded positively, 35% felt the service should be maintained, while a further 28% believed that it should be maintained while encouraging volunteer support for the service. 22% supported relocating to a smaller space.

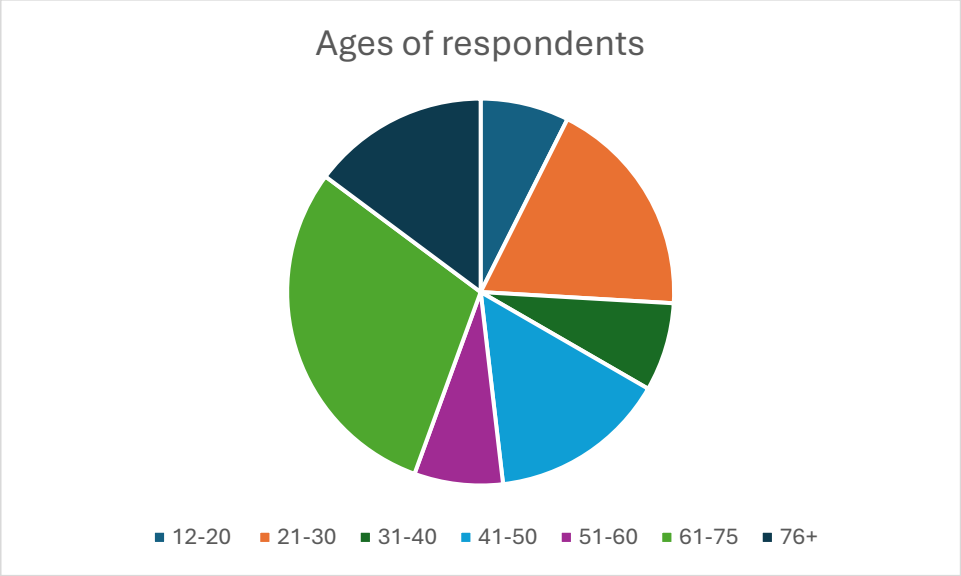
It should be noted that this consultation only went out to people who were resident in Welshpool.

Further details are available of pages 19-21 of ISP2025-2028 Engagement Results

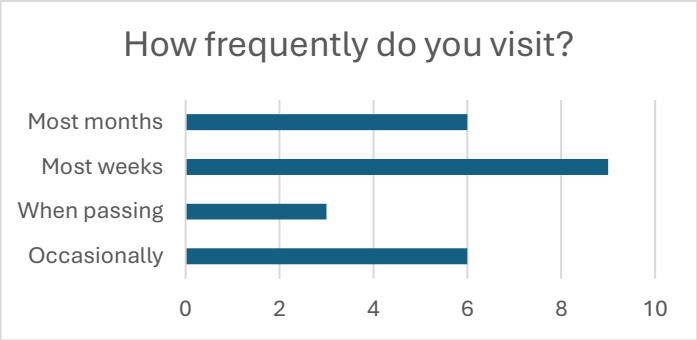
As part of this service review visitors to the TIC were invited to respond to a series of questions and had the opportunity to make any other comments. One person chose not to complete the questionnaire, but wrote comments on most aspects covered in the questions. The consultation was held during two weeks in February 2026; therefore, we would expect

the results to show a much higher response rate from local consultees rather than visitors compared to a consultation exercise in the tourist season. The results are consequently a snapshot in time. The main findings are below:-

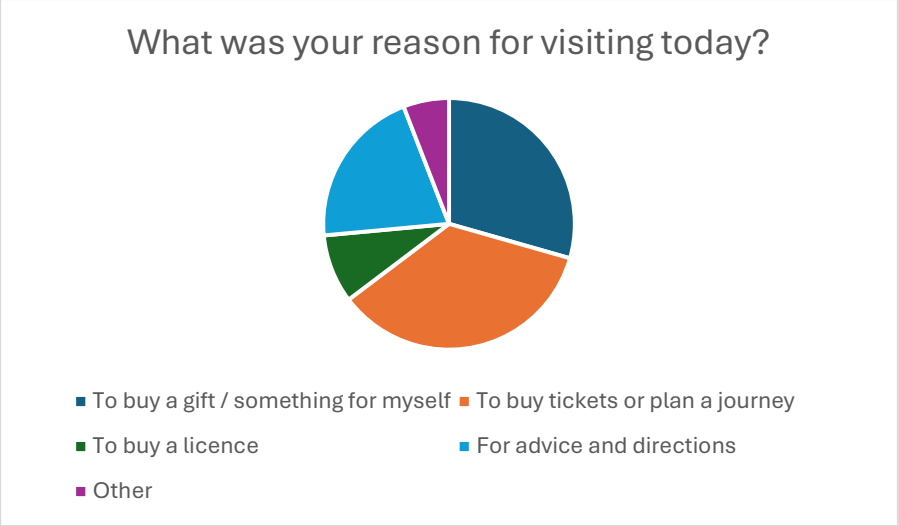
- There was an even balance between male and female respondents.
- There were a majority of respondents living and working in or near Welshpool rather than those from further afield but this was not significant.
- There is a diversity of ages using TIC



- The majority heard about TIC from the sign outside, with some learning from a friend
- A high proportion of respondents call in most weeks



- Almost everyone said that they appreciate the staff and personal service, over 50% found the services offered were useful, and they also like the goods available for sale.
- Reasons for visiting varied, but almost all found what they needed.



- Respondents were invited to score the service 0-5 with 5 being excellent. All respondents scored the visit as excellent
- We asked how they preferred to access the information available in TIC. The vast majority prefer face to face, whist a very few like digital and face to face. Nobody selected phone or just digital.

The Appendix contains the full results of the consultation.

5. Conclusions

The TIC benefits enormously from having courteous, very experienced and knowledgeable staff. The working hours should mean that every shift has a similar level of expertise and capacity; this needs to be confirmed so that any reduction in capacity does not impact on quality of service. Closing on a Sunday and for the lunch period may be a negative factor, particularly during the summer, busier periods, however current staffing levels and rotas will not facilitate extending opening hours.

The TIC should not show a financial surplus; however, the opportunity for reducing outgoings and increasing income generation to achieve nearer to a zero-balanced budget is an important factor which needs serious consideration to ensure that the services can be maintained.

The way the TIC operates subsidises a valuable service to the people of Welshpool either directly or through the Tourism service - which is part of Welshpool Town Council's Strategic Plan.

In the past the TIC team have felt excluded and isolated, but the team is far more positive under the new management and the change to Welshpool Information Centre, and feel that there is improved team working between the TIC team and the WTC office team. The challenge now is to extend that to the WTC operational team.

In general, the WTC team has been strengthened by the move to consolidate its staff under one roof; however, the remaining staff have been unable to benefit from the shared work base and this is impacting on the WTC team's cohesive work ethos.

6. Risks

- Succession planning: The TIC team are all highly knowledgeable and experienced. One of the team has indicated that she will be leaving WTC in a few months time. It will take time to build up the same level of knowledge and experience in any new team members.
- Retention of existing employees. While all employees clearly loved working at the TIC, there were tensions between the TIC team and the support they perceive they get from some of the Ops Team. This needs addressing.
- Reduction in income and increase in costs: As more service delivery goes online this could impact on the service income. The service needs to future proof itself through developing its sales offers, diversification and in other ways.
- Poor Communication: the improvement of communications throughout WTC needs to continue, to enable the TIC to provide the best service offer. Poor communication to smaller or larger extent has a negative impact on the aim to work as one team and damages the Council's reputation. This includes the communication of strategy, policy and training. Team members did not appear to know what was in the Strategic Plan that related to the TIC.
- The location of the TIC. There were responses in the ISP Autumn '25 engagement exercise, that the current location of the service restricts the number of people using the service as it is not centrally located and is difficult to access across a busy road.
- Not being a 7-day service and closed at lunch times during the holiday season. Information not available during these periods.
- Storage space: This was an issue for staff as the amount of storage space they had has been reduced. This has resulted in equipment being disposed of rather than stored.

7. Opportunities

- Volunteering opportunities within the WIC team that could also cover the TIC service. These would also show excellent experience on CVs or UKAS forms.
- As one member of the team is leaving, and it is now Welshpool Information Centre the role should not be filled on a like for like basis, there is the opportunity to review all TIC roles to ensure the best possible for the WIC and service provision for the Council as a whole.
- Create a training plan for all members of the WIC team to ensure that tasks can be undertaken by everyone, regardless of who is on duty.

- Income generation - work with the Team to create an income generation plan and ensure that developing the business is within job descriptions
- Manage costs – continue to reduce costs where possible.

8. Recommendations

a. Carry out a review of TIC staffing roles/hours/rotas prior to replacing/appointing staff, to achieve greater integration into the WIC.
b. Following a. consider extending opening during the summer season to include Sundays and/or not closing at lunch times.
c. Develop a simple competency checklist and training plan for all WIC staff relating to the TIC service and ensure that all staff are competent.
d. Include a feasibility study of relocating WIC in the Regeneration of Welshpool Town Hall development and delivery phases and report back.
e. Clearly define current roles in relation to maintenance, cleaning, health and safety and allocate them to the appropriate team.
f. Consider the creation of volunteering opportunities within the WIC team.
g. Consider succession planning; the roles are complex and it will take time to gather the knowledge and expertise needed.
h. Continue to improve communications within the WIC and the TIC team, ensuring that everyone is kept up to date on strategy/policy/process changes that affect them or the WTC.
i. Address the tensions between the WIC team members and the Opps team.

Appendix: Information Centre Pinboard Responses

Gender

Male	11	They	1
Female	13	Prefer not to say	2

Age

12-20	2	51-60	2
21-30	5	61-75	8
31-40	2	76+	4
41-50	4		

Disability?

Yes	5	No	16

Do you live or work in or near Welshpool?

Live /work in Welshpool	Live /work near Welshpool	Live/ work outside W'pool area
13	3	9

How did you hear about the TIC?

From a friend	Website	Social media	Sign outside	Other
5	0	1	16	0

How often do you come to the TIC?

Occasionally	When passing	Most weeks	Most months	My first visit
6	3	9	6	0

What do you like or find useful here?

Staff, personal service	Services offered	Goods available to buy	Other
26	12	9	0

Why did you visit today?

To buy a gift / something for myself	To buy tickets or plan a journey	To buy a licence	For advice and directions	Other
10	12	3	7	2

Have you found what you needed here today?

Yes	26	No	1

On a score of 0-5 with 5 being excellent, how would you score your visit?

All 29 respondents scored their visit as 5 – excellent

How do you prefer to get information about travel accommodation etc

Face to face	Phone call	Digitally	Digital & face to face
25	0	0	2

Verbatim Comments:

Good Staff

Not answered 1st 2 questions; no disability; local; local knowledge; quite often for train tickets as there is no office at the station; staff personal service – very helpful and efficient; buy tickets, plan journeys; yes all is needed; score 5 excellent prefer face to face – not computer/ digitally