

HELP POINT

In readiness for the Help Point's 25 year anniversary on the 1st November 2021, it is proposed that various projects are undertaken to modernise the Help Point and increase footfall.

It is suggested that these projects are undertaken in stages leading up to the anniversary, starting in August with the launch of the live website chat support and chatbot functions, for a three month pilot study. Following this, the remaining projects would be implemented in preparation for the anniversary date and Help Point relaunch; suggested date of Saturday 13th November 2021, tying the launch in with a Saturday Burgess Hill market, to ensure footfall numbers are sufficiently high (therefore not directly on the anniversary date).

Full publicising of the different projects and main relaunch to be undertaken in advance to ensure the maximum audience is reached and to gain attention.

Live website chat support recommendation

- a) Live website chat support launched to increase the Town Council's use of technology and offer customers an additional communication stream.
- b) Allocated members of the Help Point Team to staff the live website chat, however during holiday and absence, cover may be needed from other staff members. It is proposed to undertake a 3 month pilot study to review impact on staff.
- c) Offered throughout office hours with 30 minute windows either side for opening and closing the Help Point and undertaking any associated actions.
- d) The cost of adding this function to the website is £125 approx.

Website chatbot recommendation

- a) Chatbot initiated to accompany live website chat support and pick up any shortfall from when the Town Council offices are closed.
- b) Programmed with pre-determined responses to common customer enquires which will supplement the Help Point's signposting abilities.
- c) For programming purposes, the Help Point Team will compile a list of common FAQ's for these enquiries.
- d) Any in-depth enquiries or topics that the chatbot cannot provide assistance with, will be redirected to the Town Council's main email address or telephone number, for when the offices reopen.
- e) Additional software will be required to enable this as an extension to our existing website package.
- f) The cost of purchasing the additional software required is £125 approx.

Help Point shop recommendation

- a) To act as an extension of the Burgess Hill market and provide local, artisan, small businesses an affordable selling platform and the opportunity for further growth.
- b) Remove tourist information leaflets, wall mounted displays and current shop display units; relocating and keeping various local tourist information guides and walking leaflets.
- c) Shelving to be commissioned and installed in place of the current wall mounted displays; using reclaimed or recycled woods. There are two options for the shelving; option (a) shelving running solely alongside the wall and option (b) 'L' shaped shelving running along the wall and behind the extension Help Point desk (replacing the glass cabinet). The extension Help Point desk would be removed. Shelving manufactured and installed by contractor.
- d) A freestanding wooden display table to be commissioned and placed in the open front area of the Help Point; using reclaimed or recycled woods.
- e) Monthly rental fee of £20 - £30 charged dependent upon the allocated shelf space; after a free 6 month period, to enable business owners to become established.
- f) Previous quote for re-decorating the Help Point has already been approved, however a new quote has been sourced to reflect the proposed changes.
- e) The cost of re-decorating the Help Point is £480 and the cost for the paint required is £150 approx.
- g) The cost for the manufacture of the freestanding wooden display table is £295.
- h) The cost for the manufacture of the shelving units is option (a) £1,133, option (b) £1,347.

Public terminal computer recommendation

- a) One or two public terminal computers provided for customers to operate a self-help system; accessing government and council related websites, online reporting systems, allotment applications, benefit applications, ticket booking systems, Pressreader etc.
- b) Computers to be housed in commissioned reclaimed or recycled wood cubicles, placed near to the currently installed Council leaflet wall mounted displays.
- c) Staffing would need to be considered if one-to-one assistance is required by the customer.
- d) The cost for the manufacture of the wooden cubicle is £430.
- e) The cost of one PC, keyboard, mouse, 21-22" screen, switch gear and accompanying wiring is £650.

Wall mounted screens recommendation

- a) Council leaflets and wall mounted display units to be removed and replaced with one, possibly 2 x 50" wall mounted screens.
- b) One screen to promote Burgess Hill Town Council events and initiatives.

- c) One screen to provide fairly priced advertising for local small businesses; pricing for adverts to be agreed upon with Management Team. This could be introduced later.
- d) A PC would be needed to run the software for the advertising program; additional research required to source correct software and there may be an additional cost for this software, cost to be confirmed.
- e) The cost of two 50" screens and one PC is £1,450*.

**There is the potential to save circa £300 on the purchase of a PC by reusing an older one once refurbished.*

Help Point opening hours recommendation

- a) It may be necessary to close the Help Point on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons in order to provide sufficient time for the Help Point Team's project work. This will be carefully monitored before a decision is made. An additional quantity of project work is due to be created with the proposed merging of elements of the previous Operational Services Coordinator role, together with the Help Point Team's current and proposed development of the Help Point, including Council Chamber bookings.
- b) The Help Point Team is adequately positioned to take on the following elements from the Operational Services Coordinator role, totalling to an additional 16 hrs work load and split between them (2 members of Help Point staff at any one time). This may change depending on the planned increase in footfall for the Help Point and the knock on effect this will have on the Help Point Team's immediate workload.
 - Maintenance equipment logs/mileage logs
 - Maintenance job sheets
 - Partnership spreadsheets
 - Graffiti reconciliation spreadsheets
 - Filing and archiving documents
 - Ordering of maintenance uniform
 - Graffiti partnership spreadsheets and quarterly reports
 - Street nameplate reconciliation spreadsheet
 - Hassocks bus shelter cleans - associated paperwork
 - Stat requests
 - Orders for Operation/Maintenance works
 - Ordering MMT/BHTC PPE
 - Reactive works and associated actions
 - Service contracts - public liability insurances
 - Project work (bin audits and orders, research projects etc.)
 - Maintenance stock inventory
 - SNOW plan
- c) The option should be kept open to appoint a part time 14 hr post to be responsible for the management of the allotments and accompanying duties, as there would potentially be insufficient time and staffing for the Help Point Team to take on the allotment workload and the other work of the Operational Services Coordinator role.

- d) A new member of Help Point staff is due to start mid-August and will need to learn the Help Point role first before taking on additional projects. On average it can take around 6 months to learn the Help Point role confidently and with another member of the Help Point Team being relatively new and only in their role for 4 months, this will need to be factored in with regards to any merging of departments and subsequent increased workload, where again full training will be required.
- e) If the Help Point was to close for these two afternoons, the customer services presence would remain via telephone, email and live website chat support during these times.

Financial Assessment

IT/Computer – The above purchases of IT equipment amount to an estimated value of £2,350 and the IT budget currently has an unallocated balance of £2,656. **There are sufficient funds available within existing budgets.**

Shelving/Decoration/Table/Self-Service booth – The above work is estimated to cost in the region of £2,702 and there is an unallocated budget of some £6k in the Repairs and Renewals Fund. **There are sufficient funds available within existing budgets.**

RECOMMENDED:

1. That it be noted that the Help Point will celebrate its 25th anniversary in November and that the services set out in the report be launched officially on Saturday 13 November 2021
2. That live website chat support and Chatbot be introduced as described in the report at a cost of approximately £250,
3. That with the exception of local brochures, all brochures be removed,
4. That the shelving currently used for brochures on the south wall be replaced with shelving and a table to display the goods of local small businesses at a cost of £2,272 including redecorating,
5. That the shelving currently used for brochures on the north wall be removed and replaced by one and possibly two 50" LED screens to publicise Burgess Hill and its services with the second being introduced for advertising if feasible at a maximum cost of £1,450 for the IT equipment,
6. To approve the manufacture of self-service booth at £430 and the purchase of associated IT equipment at a cost of £650,
7. That it be noted that depending on the additional workload being introduced into the Help Point as a result of freezing the position of Operational Services Coordinator, it may be necessary to close the Help Point on a Tuesday and/or Thursday afternoon, and
8. That a 14 hour post be approved for the management of allotments but only be filled if it is clear that the Help Point staff are unable to cope with this work.