



**CITY OF ELY COUNCIL
TOURISM AND TOWN CENTRE COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING HELD AT 7.00 pm
ON MONDAY 9TH NOVEMBER 2020**

PRESENT:

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Cllr Dian Warman | Cllr Lis Every |
| Cllr Christine Whelan | Cllr Kevin Wilkins |
| Cllr Ian Lindsay | Cllr Sarah Bellow |

Mrs Anna Bennett (Tourism and Town Centre Manager)

1. Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Public Question Time

There were no members of the public present, so there were no questions raised.

4. Minutes of last Tourism and Town Centre Committee Meeting and Matters arising

The minutes of the last meeting, held on the 28th September 2020, were approved and signed as a true record. Pages T&TC 32, 33, 34 and 35 refer. There were no matters arising.

5. To receive an Update on the Service and the Town Centre (see report from T&TC Manager)

Mrs Bennett read through her report and gave a more detailed summary of all the bookings received, the feedback and the income generated from October tours. October events were successful and fully booked. Additional dates were added, with waiting lists for November for the new tours should they be released. Mrs Bennett expressed that she was thankful that they were able to deliver all the events, just before Lockdown 2 was announced October 31st. Mrs Bennett explained that all November bookings were postponed and that during Lockdown she would be contacting those who had booked, with new dates for December and January 2021. Income for attraction admissions and sales overall were up due to Half Term. Escape Room bookings were discussed and figures compared.

Mrs Bennett commented on the appointment of Ms Reddick, Business Liaison Assistant who has been welcomed by the Town Centre Traders. The decision to employ Ms Reddick was based on continuing the work the City Centre Ranger initiated and that has so far, proved very successful.

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Mrs Bennett also explained that seconded staff had returned to their original place of work and that the Visit Ely team were all working very well as a team, supporting each other whilst we continue to operate in very challenging times.

Plans for collaborating more with the Maltings were mentioned and Mrs Bennett's intentions to incorporate the venue with Riverside Walks, and talks about Ribe Tapestry.

Visitor Guide 2021 was discussed with regards to budget and how Mrs Bennett is taking the project into the new year with a reduced pagination, and a much reduced quote for design/layout print and distribution. The 2020 guides will be used until January 2021, if the production can stick to the schedule. Sadly, some of Ely's Independent businesses have dropped the partnership, however there will still be a smaller version for our Visitors.

Mrs Bennett briefly discussed the Christmas Town Centre initiative where shoppers are encouraged to 'shop local' and with a minimum spend of £10, this is entered into a draw with the opportunity to win an 'Ely Independents Hamper'. Over 10 shops have participated, and the project has been well received. Also running from Switch On date (27th November) is 'Ely's Best Dressed Window'. Mrs Bennett explained that a pre-recorded speech from Cllr Sue Austen will go out via Visit Ely channels on the evening of the 27th November to mark the occasion.

Cllr Wilkins mentioned the meeting held at Oliver Cromwell's House with the Curator of The Cromwell Museum, Stuart Orme, Cllr Phillis and Cllr Rouse. Mrs Bennett gave her thanks to all those who attended and plans were briefly discussed following a tour of OCH to change and highlight areas that needed attention, and have been discarded over the years. It was explained that the project, with support from the Heritage Lottery Funding award Mrs Bennett had received, was in working progress, and there would be more news to follow in the new year. Cllr Wilkins expressed his interest in being part of this, and pointed out that we discussed crossing over with Ely Museum and the Cromwell Museum, and that the right story was told about the House giving our Visitor the best experience possible. Cllr Lindsay asked if there was a current working relationship with Ely Museum, Mrs Bennett explained that due to Lockdown, meetings had not been able to happen, but were in working progress.

Cllr C Whelan replied with feedback on Mrs Bennett's report regarding October tour required staff/other costs deducted to give a clear profit for the tours delivered. Mrs Bennett agreed that this would be delivered in future Toursim and Town Centre reports.

6. To receive an Update on the Budget and Setting of Budget for 21/22

Cllr Warman opened up discussions for the budget and the proposed budget for 21/22 by saying there were no pre-questions raised as all Councillors were asked in advance, to raise these, if they had any. Cllr C Whelan had questions and concerns. Cllr Warman re-iterated that these questions must be raised beforehand to give Mrs Bennett, and Mrs T Coulson the RFO time to prepare. Cllr Warman also explained that she, with Mrs Bennett and Mrs Coulson had met to discuss the budget in detail and allowed appropriate time for questions to be raised.

Cllr C Whelan expressed her concern regarding projections for next year. Cllr C Whelan asked if the figures were realistic and asked questions regarding staff pensions and NI. Cllr Warman expressed that there is no current solution and that Mrs Bennett has done the best she possibly can in these circumstances. Cllr Every gave her thanks and appreciation that there had been a previous meeting to discuss, and stressed that in future, all questions must be raised beforehand.

It was agreed that further discussions needed to be had. Cllr Warman and Mrs Bennett agreed they would take the matter further with Mrs Coulson, Clerk to the City of Ely Council and Responsible Financial Officer. A further draft budget for 21/22 will be considered at the next meeting.

7. Health and Safety Issues

There were no health and safety matters to discuss.

8. Personnel Matters

There were no personnel matters to discuss .

9. Any Other Business

There was nothing to report.

10. Date of next meeting

Date of the next meeting was agreed to take place on the 15th December at 7pm.

The meeting closed at 8.10 pm.

Due to enforced social distancing caused by the Coronavirus, this meeting took place by video communication, accessed by the Zoom meetings facility.