



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

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD AT 7.00 pm
ON MONDAY, 19TH JULY 2021
HELD AT THE MALTINGS, SHIP LANE, ELY

PRESENT:

Cllr Lis Every - Chairperson, in the absence of Cllr Warman

Cllr Kevin Wilkins Cllr Christine Whelan Cllr Sarah Bellow
Cllr Ian Lindsay Cllr Arnie Arnold Cllr Chris Phillips

Mrs Anna Bennett (Tourism and Town Centre Manager)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Dian Warman.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

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

The minutes of the last meeting, held in person, on the 1st June, at the Maltings, Ely were approved and signed as a true record. Pages T&TC 49 and 50 and 51 refer. There were no matters arising.

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

Mrs Bennett gave her account on the service and how things are starting to improve, very much in the right direction. She explained as school holidays were approaching, family days have been introduced weekly at OCH and that the centre has seen a steady increase in day trippers and those taking UK breaks. The entrance to the building is only 15% short of figures achieved in 2019, pre pandemic. This is a direct result of good marketing and collaborative events with partners in the City. Coach companies are now booking with full capacity, and tours inside and outside OCH are being booked filling up the diary nicely. Mrs Bennett provided a breakdown report on income generated over a weekly period, which again is rising week on week.

New stock continues to sell well within the TIC shop with a more focused approach on special offers, local art and producers have also been welcomed with our customers. Focus is very much

4.To Receive an Update on the Service and the Town Centre (see report from T&TC Manager) continued

on the average spend and budget analysis ensuring spend is only focused on what sells well. Weekly stock meetings are held with Ms Reddick to discuss progress and new product.

Escape Rooms continue to do well, and the introduction of the new junior version. The focus is to target schools and other learning establishments, teaching those aged between 10-13 to see if we can increase sales. Mrs Bennett proceeded to give a breakdown of new tours and their performance, with a focus on the Pubs and Ely Inns Tour, which has performed extraordinarily well with the partner collaboration. The team are intending to deliver evening tours during the autumn months.

The new audio tour of OCH is nearing completion with final edits in place. The project is planned to go live in one week.

Town centre again welcomes us as a team, with all our events, and plans. The recent 'Independent shop' campaign exposure was gratefully received and many businesses would like to now continue promotion with Visit Ely.

There are plans to re-evaluate staffing and opening hours in due course and compare them with costs. This will enable us to make changes where necessary. This project will be undertaken by Mrs Bennett and Mrs Coulson (Clerk and RFO) to the City of Ely Council. The current rota system is working well with the addition of new casuals.

The Website was discussed. Mrs Bennett explained the costs of one quote already obtained and the necessary requirements to fulfil the signage project. Two further quotes for the website are being obtained. Further details discussed in point 6 of the agenda.

Event dates remain the same and at the time of this meeting, Mrs Bennett gave thanks to all volunteers and staff who assisted in the delivering of the scaled down 'Eel Fayre'. The event was a resounding success with pleased traders, community and visitors alike. Over 2000 people attended and felt safe and secure within the new venue of the East Lawn, and praised the team for their organisation withing step 3 of guidelines at the time. Press coverage was excellent and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the day. The team are now planning for Open Heritage Week and October's Apple and Harvest Festival, where they will be working with Ely Cathedral. Meetings regarding Open Heritage programme including tours of Ely Cemetery, Sessions House and other partners will be arranged shortly.

Mrs Bennett proceeded to confirm the calendar of events for the remainder of 2021. Lastly, new tours and plans were discussed for the summer period and plans afoot for further collaboration with local businesses.

5. Budget Updates

Cllr Every explained to the committee that the management accounts project would still proceed, but with the assistance of Mrs Tracey Coulson, RFO. There would be further updates at the next meeting.

6. Digital Signage Project

A printed report of proposals was given to all Councillors, and the project agreed in principle, subject to discussion at Full Council. Cllr Every gave other committee members a brief synopsis of exactly where the project stands, and how Visit Ely will be part of this. Cllr Wilkins expressed an interest into providing a full breakdown of maintenance costs, to which Cllr Every said she would liaise with the District Council. Details would be discussed at the next Full Council.

Background information

The funding for these has already been secured from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and will be paid to ECDC.

A meeting was held with Martin Smith from ECDC, with Cllrs Austen, Lindsay, Every, Morgan, (Cllr Warman was not able to attend), Tracey Coulson and Anna Bennett to discuss the proposals and the implications for the City Council, ie to take on ownership and control the messages through the signage. Not taking this on would likely result in the messages being controlled through the District Council largely advertising wider District tourism with no signposting of the Ely brand VisitEly.

This proposal was agreed in principle and the following process agreed:

Take to the Tourism and Town Centre Committee

Take recommendations to the Full Council from the above

Discussed at the Tourism and Town Centre Committee with unanimous agreement to put to FC but requesting further costing information.

Future costs

No upfront costs for the City Council for at least 3 years.

The procurement process from ECDC for the digital signage requires the successful contractor to maintain the units for at least 3 years. ECDC are trying to extend that to 5 years.

After the initial free period, there will be an annual fee of £7,000 for the software (funds include the first 3 years of software costs). Discussion on the projected revenue streams indicate that this fee could be covered by advertising taken up by local businesses, hospitality and tourism venues and events.

Maintenance is indicated as cleaning generally and then a regular deep clean. The equipment is essentially a television screen on a base. However, we have no figures on the cost of this but appears to be modest. It is suggested that this work might be carried out by our own Estates Team.

7. Queens Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

Mrs Bennett proposed the idea of forming a Working Group to organise the four day event taking place in early June 2022. All Councillors welcomed the idea. Cllr Bellow and Cllr Every also agreed to be part of the planning team. Dates were discussed and it was agreed the first meeting would take place towards the end of August 2021.

8. Personnel Matters

There were no personnel matters arising

9. Any Other Business

Update from the Christmas Lights Sub-Committee Meeting held on the 14th July 2021.

Mrs Bennett and Cllr Bellow gave a brief explanation regarding the current situation with the Ely Switch On event, which is due to take place in November. It was proposed that the event be scaled down, in accordance with COVID risks and the reduced budget for this year. The Committee agreed this was the way forward and organisers would be notified to that effect.

10. Date for next meeting.

Date for the next meeting was agreed for 6th September at 7pm at the Maltings, Ship Lane, Ely.

The meeting concluded at 8.15pm.