



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

**MINUTES OF TOURISM AND TOWN CENTRE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT
THE MALTINGS, ELY
7.00 pm MONDAY 24TH JANUARY 2022**

PRESENT:

Cllr Dian Warman Cllr Arnie Arnold
Cllr Christine Whelan
Cllr Sarah Bellow

Mrs Anna Bennett (Tourism and Town Centre Manager)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Wilkins and Cllr Every.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of last Tourism and Town Centre Committee and matters arising.

The minutes of the last meeting, held on the 29th November 2021 required an amendment regarding the potential guides trip, this should have read to Ely not to Ribe. Following this amendment the minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record. Pages T&TC 60, 61 and 62 refer. There were no other matters arising.

4. To Receive an Update on the Service and the Town Centre (ref report)

Mrs Bennett gave a full, comprehensive presentation of the service and plans for 2022. Admissions to the attraction were discussed and Mrs Bennett explained that numbers were average and expected for this time of the year. Focus had been on the shop, stock count whilst quieter, ordering new stock for what she anticipates will be a busy year and she remains very positive. The focus remains on 'shop local' with locally sourced products, Ely postcards and souvenirs. Cllr Whelan asked if the team would be attending the Spring Fair, but Mrs Bennett explained there would not be a need as they can source locally now they know what actually sells.

The High Street has a few changes afoot with new traders welcomed on board with Visit Ely which we are pleased to announce. Mrs Bennett gave a full post event evaluation of the 'Christmas community event' and how successful it was with nearly 2000 people in attendance. It was explained that due to it's success, the event will be built on in conjunction with the Christmas lights switch on for November 2022.

The 2022 Visitor Guide is nearing completion with an anticipated delivery date of mid February. Mrs Bennett showed the Committee the commissioned artwork from 'Tales of the Fen' and that a 48 page quality book, packed full of things to see and do in Ely and the area was just about ready. The process had taken slightly longer with a change of supplier for artwork and layout, but overall the project has been a success, with a profitable result.

Ely's unique Escape Room continues to be a success with more booking in January than ever recorded. The Junior version has received bookings together with Corporates. The current puzzle challenge will remain with OCH until the Autumn of 2022, with a 'special version' launching over the Jubilee weekend.

Mrs Bennett referred to the report provided by Ms Reddick regarding the town centre shops and updates and social media report provided by Mr Routledge. All were very positive. Cllr Whelan's photography project proved to a very successful regarding social media reach, as was the Christmas window 'people vote'

Events and plans were discussed and dates (where applicable) discussed for all 2022 events with the focus being on the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations in June.

5. Budget update.

There were no discussions regarding budgets, Cllr Warman gave her thanks and said how well the Visit Ely team were doing and the figures were very positive considering the last 18 months had been so challenging.

6.To discuss website development and digital signage.

The VE and OCH websites are still undergoing refurbishment and Mrs Bennett explained that the Studio Nova team have suggested that they will go live in March/April.

The Digital Signage project has been put back until the last quarter of 2022 due to procurement issues. Mr Nick Lancaster and Mr Martin Smith presented the project to the last Full Council. Cllr Warman, chair of Tourism and Town Centre Committee suggested as the project would be handed over to Visit Ely she would like to be consulted regarding locations of the podiums. Progress will be updated in due course.

7. HM Queen's Platinum Jubilee Events.

The events team are very busy planning the 4 day event starting 2nd June with the beacon lighting and civic commemorations, followed by a series of events through until Sunday 5th June. All details have been released on Visit Ely Social media channels and the local press will be notified in due course. The City's other stakeholders have their fringe events over the period of celebration, these will all be promoted via the Visit Ely Hub.

8. Staff Updates

The committee discussed the current vacancy of full-time TIC assistant, the job description will be released via Spotted in Ely Jobs by the end of February, with a person in post for the summer season. The current team at OCH is working extremely well and very collaboratively.

9.Future of the Switch on Event

The 'Switch On' event was discussed with Councillors and those present made a collective decision that the Council would be withdrawing financial support with immediate effect. The decision taken meant it was not cancelled, there would be an event, but the event would be Council led and the budget was the responsibility of the Tourist & Town Centre Manger and the events team at Visit Ely.

The smaller, more community and trader led event that took part over the weekend of the switch on proved to be a success, and one to build on. It was discussed that this update would be be presented by the Chairman of the Christmas Lights Sub-Committee at the next meeting, and a press release to that effect would be supplied.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business to report.

11. Date of next meeting

Date of the next meeting has yet to be confirmed but is likely to take place 16-18th March

The meeting closed at 8pm.