



**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 13TH JUNE 2022**

PRESENT:

Cllr Dian Warman	Cllr Richard Morgan
Cllr Lis Every	Cllr Peter Harris
Cllr Virginne Ganivet	Cllr Sarah Bellow
Cllr Ian Lindsay	

Mrs Anna Bennett (Tourism and Town Centre Manager)

1.Apologies for Absence

No apologies were given. Cllr Wilkins was not present.

2.Election of Vice Chairman

Cllr Warman proposed that Cllr Sarah Bellow be elected as the Vice Chairman. This was seconded by Cllr Every and unanimously approved. Cllr Bellow was duly elected as the Vice Chairman.

3.Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4.Minutes of the last Tourism and Town Centre Committee Meeting held on 24th January 2022, and Matters Arising

The minutes of the last meeting, held on Monday, 24th January 2022 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record. Pages T&TC 63, 64 and 65 refer. There were no matters arising.

5.Review of Terms of Reference for the Tourism and Town Centre Committee

The committee discussed the points on the reports and requested that item 8 be amended as discussed. Mrs Bennett agreed to make the amendments.

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

Mrs Bennett welcomed the new committee and opened her presentation by reporting on OCH admissions, the Tourism Centre and the Git Shop. It was explained to the councillors that admission to the attraction had been increased, to reflect the raise of VAT back to 20%, and to increase the profit margins. Since this has occurred, there has been no decrease in footfall and

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admissions continue to raise steadily as we head into the summer season. Prices have increased for Adult/Child/Family/Groups/Schools and private one to one (up to a group of 4) tours, of both OCH and outside.

The Escape Room challenge again remains successful, with a few months of 'shelf life' remaining. There are plans to launch a new puzzle Autumn 2022. 14 sessions were booked, with 10 over the Jubilee weekend, the one off 'Platinum Puzzle' fringe event. Again successful with all our visitors thoroughly enjoying the challenge. Corporate enquiries for the larger puzzle 'The Celestial Meddler' has also been consistent, with enquiries pending and bookings already made. Groups are busy, collaboration with other attractions is the best it has ever been as we now offer an 'Ely Experience' a one-stop shop, for your day out – targeted at Group Travel initially. Schools are now booking in to cover topics from 'Why was Cromwell so significant', to 'Homes Long Ago', and bespoke tours we are able to create to meet demand. Overall, Mrs Bennett reported busy times are finally upon us, overseas travel is back, tours are required in languages we can provide and improvement is continually being tweaked to provide the best experience possible. A further fringe event, 'A Right Royal Tour' was successful, and suggestions are being made to roll out this tour again later in the year. Great feedback from all our participants was received.

Mrs Bennett discussed her focus on sourcing local producers for the Gift Shop, and this remains successful. New product lines from traders at the recent Jubilee events have been introduced, together with some best selling items which are still the faithful fridge magnet/postcards! Average basket spend still remains at £8-10 and when e-commerce (on-line shop) is launched shortly, the focus will be all of the Mike Rouse books as the launch products, with publicity to support.

Tithe Room events were discussed and the utilisation of the room as an events venue. Mrs Bennett explained that there had been some evening events recently, with plans afoot for summer holiday activity. Mrs Bennett also mentioned that the room could be considered as a 'civil wedding venue' and the Committee agreed this should be explored. Cllr Every mentioned that Sessions House and OCH should be venues for hire in addition to the Maltings. Cllr Lindsay queried the spelling of Tithe, and should be Tythe. It's been revealed that the correct spelling is Tithe.

The first Murder Mystery was received well with plans to launch two more towards the end of the summer and heading towards winter. Mrs Bennett explained cost savings were made with using local company 'Ely Grazing' and BYO policy for drinks (applying corkage). This enabled the team to make a good profit and encouraged (with great feedback) further events.

Mrs Bennett addressed the Committee with a full update from Ms Reddick regarding the 'High Street' with an update as to whom had won the 'Jubilee Window'. It was also mentioned how, with support and encouragement, the High Street traders made a wonderful effort to decorate their windows, and gave thanks to the Estates Team, Grovemere Property, Warren Access and Mrs Bennett's media report regarding the Jubilee bunting.

A full update regarding Social Media statistics was provided to the Committee, and it was explained that notable success in reach/engagement/likes and reactions were very apparent due to the Platinum Jubilee Events and Fringe Events. It was also mentioned that more effort is required on other Platforms (twitter) but Facebook works more in Visit Ely's favour being a B to C.

Other events were discussed with the Tourism & Town Centre Manager and plans to increase the events remit was apparent. Adopting the Armed Forces Covenant and Christmas Switch on has

increased the diary and planning to ensure smooth running, and successful event planning would be delivered. Mrs Bennett went through the events pending throughout the year and mentioned the October visit from the Ribe Guides. Cllr Lindsay suggested that on looking at the proposed itinerary, this was purely a meeting of guides only. Cllr Every responded by adding that it is about linking the Civic and tourism together, therefore it is expected that during the welcome, Councillors would attend and welcome as part of tourism and how we continue to work with Ribe.

7.Budget update for OCH and Switch On Working Group

Councillors noted the budget update, up to the 30th April 2022. There were no significant variances. Cllr Warman also stated that she wanted to pass on her congratulations to Mrs Bennett and team, that the end of year accounts closed in profit. This led to the discussion of the ECDC annual grant, noting that originally the grant was for redundancy purposes and how best the final subsidy grant would be spent.

Cllr Every mentioned that she is now chair of the Sub-Committee for Christmas Lights and Switch on Event, and that some discussions had already taken place with Mrs Jay.

8.To discuss website development and digital signage project

Mrs Bennett explained that there was still a delay with procurement, and that meetings were planned with the facilitators based at ECDC. Website updates were provided to the Committee to monitor progress and Mrs Bennett mentioned that she is chasing up Infinity Graphics and hoped that by the next meeting, both websites will be live.

9. To review the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Events

Jubilee updates were then presented by Mrs Bennett. Cllr Every and the rest of the Committee congratulated Mrs Bennett on the success and holding her nerve with the weather changes on Sunday 5th June, and making the decision to proceed regardless. Cllr Every also noted the excellent collaboration with the press and other media channel which not only raises the profile of Visit Ely but the City of Ely Council.

10.Staff Updates

Staff updates were discussed and the plans to interview for a number of posts within Visit Ely. Cllr Warman said that Full Council agreed to move forward. Interviews will take place early July with updates presented at the next Meeting.

11.To consider report regarding work on Oliver Cromwell's House.

Cllr Warman mentioned that if Committee were satisfied with the report, Mrs Coulson would then proceed to go out to tender, and works can begin. Cllr Every raised concerns over the application for an extension in the lease, and asked if that could be investigated. Cllr Warman explained that the money for the works would come from the ECDC Grant.

12.To agree the pledges that the Council wishes to sign up to for the Armed Forces Covenant.

Cllr Every stated that this had all been agreed in principal. Mrs Bennett then mentioned that it been agreed to take over the Armed Forces Day (every June) as a Visit Ely event, supported by the RBL. Cllr Every also stated that the Freedoms of the City need to be addressed as soon as possible, as it was a legacy to Cllr Mike Rouse, who recently passed away.

13. Date of the next meeting.

The next meeting would take place on the 25th July 2022.

The Meeting closed at 8.15pm