



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

**MINUTES OF TOURISM AND TOWN CENTRE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT
SESSIONS HOUSE, LYNN ROAD, ELY AT
7.00 PM TUESDAY 2ND MAY 2023**

THOSE PRESENT:

Cllr Dian Warman
Cllr Peter Harris

Cllr Virginie Ganivet

Cllr Ian Lindsay

Mrs Anna Bennett (Tourism and Town Centre Manager)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Every and Cllr Wade.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of last Tourism and Town Centre Meeting held on 25th January and matters arising

The minutes of the last meeting, held on the 25th of January 2023 were signed by the Chairman as a true record. Pages T&TC 78 and 79 refer. There were no matters arising.

4. To Receive an Update on the Service and the Town Centre from Mrs Bennett

Mrs Bennett updated committee numbers with visitor numbers. It was explained to members that the season is notably underway with a steady increase in footfall. Figures were compared to pre-pandemic (May 2019) and show that we are exceeding numbers with over 5000 people alone entering OCH (not all sales of tours), from mid-April to date of meeting. It was explained that Ely is experiencing massive growth, therefore we would naturally expect to hit higher numbers as we move through the tourism season, and into 2024. Members all agreed that visitors are now looking for more of an immersive experience when visiting a place, and the High Street is no longer such a pull, but memorable experiences are. Sales conversion from footfall figure noted above is 2020 tickets (adults and family) with 106 tickets for under 16's and over 35 joint museum/OCH tickets which is newly launched.

Mrs Bennett explained to the Cllr's that the Ely Experience was now in full swing, with the full day pass to all four attractions selling very well. Mrs Bennett quoted positive feedback from one of the U3A groups, which was very positive. Sales from other venues (including the joint Museum/OCH) are slow, and Mrs Bennett explained that we could do with all other stakeholders selling the attractions as this was the aim.

Mrs Bennett updated the committee regarding shop sales. It was reported that all the 'Coronation' memorabilia sold out (mugs/mats/bookmarks etc), with overall sales being very steady across the board. Mrs Bennett explained on-line sales are slow, but that is just due to lack of time to add more stock and promote. This is an on-going project and further updates would be given at the next meeting.

The committee moved on to discuss the guides for the city, and the recruitment process. It was explained that the open day went well, with 5 potential recruits. Mrs Bennett is to plan the training sessions with Mrs Gardener (who will provide the lectures). Further updates to be provided at the next meeting. Cllr Ganivet offered her guiding services in the future and that she would be happy to deliver some of our tours in French, which on occasion is a requirement of the service.

Mrs Bennett fed back information provided from Ms Reddick (Business Liaison Assistant). Feedback was positive, in that during the recent festival weekend (Eel/Food Drink Etc), many shops opened later and saw a notable raise in footfall. High Street windows were also entered into a people's vote for Jubilee, which was very well received. Social media stats were reported to the committee and that all posts/reactions and comments had seen a sizable increase with overall post frequency up 141.7% and one post alone regarding Eel Day had a reach of 11k, one of our highest ever reach posts to the public. Press and PR coverage was excellent over the weekend with radio interviews/TV pre-recorded interview and first-class newspaper reporting. Eel day itself was reported by many visitors as the best one yet!

Mrs Bennett also explained to the committee that a new format has been used regarding weekly newsletters and the option to sign up when logging on to Visit Ely website, already generating (over 2 weeks) a further 150 subscribers.

5. Budget Updates for OCH and SO

There were no current budget issues aside of the overhead concerns, particularly utilities for OCH and staffing as the season gets underway and busy. It was agreed that such costs were inevitable, and that Mrs Bennett and the team were working hard to raise income as best they could.

6. To receive an update regarding the digital signage project progress and the Visit Ely App.

Digital Signage/Fixing the Link and Visit Ely App progress was then discussed with over 220 businesses listed on the app testing phase underway (shops/attractions and restaurants). The signage project is still due to launch mid/end June and sales enquiries are now underway with Mr Routledge heading Sales. The media pack, available to all customers wishing to advertise is very close to completion offering excellent packages and many reasons why businesses should use the opportunity to be visible on the 14 sites throughout the city.

Mrs Bennett concluded the meeting by updating the committee members with forthcoming events, the next being Armed Forces Day, to be held on Cross Green on June 24th.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on the 26th June at 7pm.

The meeting closed at 8 pm.