



**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 MONDAY 26TH JUNE 2023**

THOSE PRESENT:

Cllr D Warman (Chair)	Cllr R Ward (arrived at 7.30 pm)	Cllr P Gardner
Cllr C Ní Dhónaill	Cllr M Banyard	Cllr R Denness
		Cllr C Phillips

Mrs Anna Bennett (Tourism and Town Centre Manager)

1. Apologies for Absence and introduction from Cllr Warman

Apologies were received from Cllr MA Robinson and Cllr L Fox.

Cllr Warman gave a brief introduction to all about the changes in Tourism and Town Centre that have taken place since Mrs Bennett's tenure, thanking her and her team for all the positive changes and increase in activity together with a joined up 'city collaboration' effort, which has made a considerable difference to the service over the last 4 years.

2. Election of Vice Chair for Tourism and Town Centre Committee

Cllr Warman proposed Cllr M Banyard be elected as the Vice-Chairman, to which he agreed and commented it would be an honour and a privilege to undertake. Cllr Gardner seconded the proposal and all members unanimously agreed. Cllr Banyard was elected as the Vice-Chairman for the Committee.

3. To Agree Terms of Reference

Cllr Banyard pointed out a typo on clause 1. Cllr Warman proposed an amendment to clause 8 removing the 'switch on event'. Mrs Bennett explained she would update the Committee regarding live events during her presentation. Cllr Ní Dhónaill pointed out the same event was repeated in clause 9. She also asked if Visit Ely events are reviewed at any point and can that be added. Mrs Bennett noted the changes and will amend for the next TTC Meeting.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Minutes of last TTC Meeting, held 2nd May 2023, and Matters Arising

The minutes of the last meeting, held on the 2nd May 2023 were signed by the Chairman as a true record. Pages T&TC 80, 81 refer. There were no matters arising.

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

Mrs Bennett opened her presentation by updating the Committee regarding OCH footfall, and that figure had doubled since the last TTC meeting. Mrs Bennett also pointed out that the footfall, which is recorded numbers through the door, not the attraction, are reaching pre-covid numbers. There is still a way to go, but with the language schools returning/combo tours, we are steadily increasing numbers, month on month.

School holiday activities were discussed and how we are proceeding over the summer holidays. It has been proposed that OCH will focus more on living history, upselling the family audio tour, and picking out characters in the audio tour to act as living history actors. During the summer holiday months our Visit Ely Deck Chair will go outside the building, and this year, we will have stocks outside on family days, which should engage summer groups.

An update was provided on Coach Tours/Group Touring. Mrs Bennett introduced the Committee to group tours including the Ely Experience, of which we have four bookings in July. Cllr Gardner asked if there were any conjoined School Tours. Mrs Bennett advised Cllr Gardner that there was between Ely Cathedral/Ely Museum, but not OCH/Ely Museum. However, a meeting would be arranged between learning officers, and Mrs Bennett would provide and update to them at the next TTC meeting.

Mrs Bennett gave an update to the Committee regarding the new venture, Ben's Yard and how Visit Ely are part of the promotional and PR team. Mrs Bennett explained that the team would be attending the press launch that week, and supporting all the local shops as they start their new venture. Cllr Denness mentioned that there was concerned about the conjoined effort and how best the town centre would still benefit. Mrs Bennett mentioned that the project had received some negativity from Town Centre, however we must try and see how Ben's Yard compliments the city. Mrs Bennett is planning group tours to visit the destination and combine with an afternoon attraction in the city centre. Further updates will be provided.

Concern was also raised regarding Ben's Yard traffic management and turning right back into Ely city centre. Mrs Bennett explained that this would be addressed by Highways and Ben's Yard.

Cllr Gardner asked Mrs Bennett about the Group Leisure and Travel Show and if Mrs Bennett and team represented all Ely attractions, to which she replied she did. The Committee were updated about the Travel Show, and how the team plan for new products to sell in October for the summer season 2024. The show is always a huge success for Ely, with a recent piece written about our TIC in the magazine, which is circulated nationally.

Mrs Bennett gave an update on summer tours and the re-launch of some older tours (due to popular demand). Ely Highlights tour continue to be a weekly occurrence, however, Wednesday tours have been postponed unless there is a large group interest and when more guides are recruited.

Cllr Ward arrived at approx. 7.30 pm. Mrs Bennett updated Cllr Ward as to what has been discussed and proceeded to update regarding Guide recruitment. There are now 8 signups for the course, which is to commence 7th July 2pm-4pm. The course will be 6 sessions with a final assessment around mid-August. An overview of all course content was provided.

OCH/Attractions – Mrs Bennett explained to the committee what stock the OCH shop held, and how we keep the stock levels low, and better managed. Cllr Ní Dhónaill asked if we ever have temporary pop-up shops. Mrs Bennett replied that we do, and are considering, but the shop is short on space. The emphasis was on locally made products/produce and further books were going on-line, and social media posts clearly indicated an upsell in books having sold Mike Rouse books overseas. Sales/Events update was provided with AFD feedback, and how to improve 2024 and updates. Cllr Phillips mentioned that the PA system was a let down and he was unable to be heard. Mrs Bennett explained that the PA system was borrowed from the Church, and that this event had no budget. Next year the team are hoping to secure funding. Updates were provided on Apple Day, and how the event will be growing across two sites this year. Education outreach is now being considered using a direct-marketing concept and working with Cromwell Museum and other establishments for tours.

Escape Rooms: The Committee members were provided with updates on the current games, and how the new facilitators were progressing. Cllr Ward suggested a ‘TTC Committee’ game, which will be arranged. Mrs Bennett also explained that the October ER was currently being planned, and a whole house game which will be based on the Trial of John Rolfe, more details will be provided in August. Cllr Ward also asked about the Potato Race. Mrs Bennett explained that this event, if it happens, would be 30th September, and that Mr Austen Dack organises this event. Updates would be provided at the next meeting.

Town Centre news was also updated to the Committee mentioning a high performing post regarding Cattywumpus, a new shop in Ely Passageway. A new bridal shop in Three Cups Walk is also now open, of course welcomed by Visit Ely.

7. Budget Updates for OCH and SO

Cllr Warman asked the committee to raise any issues pre-meeting, to which there were none. Mrs Bennett explained that the SO budget had an allocation for the event. This would be discussed further at the next meeting. Cllr Warman also pointed out although Visit Ely make money, the overheads running OCH absorb any profits, OCH costs are extortionate, these issues are looked at regularly by the RFO, Mrs Coulson and costs saving are implemented where we can at OCH.

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

Mrs Bennett gave a brief update and one issue raised was the electricity used. The supply and installation/electric were covered and signed off by ECDC and FAQ’s were being compiled so City are ready to interact when required. Cllr Denness felt that Climate and Environment Committee would be interested in how the kiosks would be sustainable. Mrs Bennett explained that ‘time would tell’ and further updates would be given at the next meeting and hopefully at that point, all the kiosks would be live. The kiosks, when in standby mode, used very little electricity and an overnight screen saver, to darken the screens, would be activated.

The visit Ely app is live, Mrs Bennett gave each member a copy of the leaflet, and encouraged all members to download the app, and feedback any comments to the @app email address for the team to consider.

9. Personnel Issues

Mrs Bennett discussed with the Committee an increase in the Business Liaison Assistant's hours increasing slightly to 13 hours per week. She explained that this would benefit the very small team at Visit Ely, and it would make a difference to productivity during the working week. Although this had not been included within the current budget it was agreed to recommend to the next Full Council meeting that this increase be approved.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held 21st August 2023.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm