



**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 16th OCTOBER 2023**

THOSE PRESENT:

Cllr M Banyard (Vice Chair)

Cllr R Ward Cllr R Denness Cllr C Ni Dhonaill Cllr R Trent

Mrs Anna Bennett (Tourism and Town Centre Manager)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr P Gardner and Cllr D Warman. Cllr M Banyard welcomed Cllr R Trent to the TTC Meeting.

2. Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of last Tourism and Town Centre Meeting held Monday 21st August 2023

The minutes of the last meeting held August 21st were signed by the Vice Chairman, Cllr M Banyard as a true record TTC 86/87/88 refer.

4.To receive an update on the Service

Mrs Bennett opened the presentation with an update on local tourism. It was explained to Councillors that overall footfall to the building had dropped, but that was to be expected with end of summer holiday.

A report was received via national press regarding a study undertaken to ascertain the most accessible city in the UK. Ely came out as top. Mrs Bennett was asked to provide a copy of the study/report to Cllr Dennes for her accessibility group. A copy of the report was also sent to ECDC comms team. It was reported to the committee members that although Ely is one of the smallest cities on list with a population of just 20256 it comes out top for both the number of attractions within a 50-mile radius, and for the number of public disabled parking spaces. Ely also ranked well across the board for accessible hotels, restaurants, and attractions, therefore the city achieved the status overall for best accessible UK city.

Mrs Bennett also updated the Cllr's with more good news. Visit Ely (Oliver Cromwell's House) received one of 91 accolades from Visit England as a Hidden Gem, which is something to be proud of. Mrs Bennett gave thanks to her team at OCH, and the office team at Visit Ely. It was reported that the accolades are a testament to the outstanding experiences, and customer service that attractions and experiences give to visitors. All the attending members congratulated Mrs Bennett and team.

It was also relayed to the committee members in attendance that OCH received 2352 adults visitors over the 8 week period, 28 families, 85 under 16's and 14 joint tickets (Ely Museum) were sold by TIC staff.

Shop sales at OCH were also very good. Mrs Bennett explained to the members that the shop spend average has increased, and sales targets would be achieved despite cost prices increasing by approx. 5% - the focus remains on locally sourced craft and produce. A social media campaign has also been launched to encourage visitors to download the app and win one of our A2 Travel by Train Ely posters, which are selling well in the shop.

Guide recruitment has been successful, with six new city guides and contracts being issued shortly. Escape rooms are also very successful, with over 60 sessions sold, and the Halloween offering sold out completely. Social media stats were discussed with members, with no additional comments or feedback.

Mrs Bennett explained that the tours for the rest of 2023 have overall sold well, with sell out Halloween season, Sessions House tour 'Trials of Terror'. Also Saturday tours of Sessions House have sold well together with a festive feast and fashion tour planned. Praise and thanks were passed to Mrs Bennett from the members regarding Apple and Harvest Fayre where over 6000 people attended and well supported by the press with front page news. Cllr R Ward expressed an interest in 2024 events, particularly the Potato Race, which hasn't taken place for a few years (pre-covid). Mrs Bennett said she would investigate.

5.To discuss volunteers for OCH/SH

Cllr Banyard explained to the committee that the volunteers project was still on-going with meetings yet to be planned. Due to holidays and other commitments, the volunteers project is yet to be delivered.

6.To discuss budget updates and setting of budgets 2024/25

Cllr Banyard noted that the set budget was exceedingly high for one expenditure code, Mrs Bennett said she would discuss with the RFO, Mrs Coulson. There were no further comments made, with the draft budget for 2024/25 being approved.

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

Mrs Bennett updated the committee regarding advertising space opportunities with several local businesses expressing interest and signing up. The response to the signage project and the Visit Ely app has been tremendous with local business emailing quotes of praise saying that the project has bought "Ely into the 21st Century!"

8.To discuss Christmas Lights SO event

Mrs Bennett explained to members that she was waiting for a press release from Ely Markets. Cllr R Trent advised Mrs Bennett that he is on the SO sub-committee and that a full update would be provided in the next SO meeting on the 14th November.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held 11th December 2023

The meeting closed at 8pm