



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

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON  
WEDNESDAY 5<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2018 AT SESSIONS HOUSE, LYNN ROAD, ELY**

**PRESENT:**

Cllr Mike Rouse	Cllr Richard Hobbs	Cllr Lis Every
Cllr Alison Whelan	Cllr Dian Warman	Cllr Peter Moakes
Cllr Christine Whelan	Tracey Harding (Tourism, Town Centre and Events Manager)	

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Cllr Alison Whelan

**2. Declarations of Interest**

None

**3. Minutes of last Tourism, Town Centre and Events Committee Meeting**

Minutes of the last meeting held on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2018 were agreed and signed as a true record, subject to the correction of the spelling of Cllr A Whelan and Cllr C Whelan's surname. Pages TCC 1, 2 and 3 refer.

**4. Budget Update**

Members all agreed that the budget should be made available in advance so that there was an opportunity to study the figures. Equally, at this stage and with the current format of the budgets, there was not much that could be concluded.

Tracey H said that she had been working with the Clerk to make some of the narrative more relevant and easier to understand.

Cllr Every requested that the budget is reviewed on a quarterly basis and suitable adjustments made throughout the year. This was seconded by Cllr Hobbs and unanimously agreed by all members.

**Action/Recommendation by Committee:**

Cllr Hobbs to speak to the Clerk to request that budget information is available to go out with the agenda.

Cllr Hobbs to speak to the Clerk and request that budgets are reviewed on a quarterly basis and suitable adjustments made throughout the year.

## **5. Quarterly Review of Service Plan**

Tracey H provided the committee with an update on the first quarter of the year in line with the Action Plan. A summary of the key actions are listed below:

### **Feedback**

Tracey H explained how the service obtained and monitored its feedback. It was pleasing to see that overall, reviews were very positive. The recent assessment by Visit England (VAQAS) was of particular note where once again the Attraction had received the required level to qualify for accreditation to the scheme as well as being recommended to receive an additional enhanced reward, which would be announced in January. The only weak area identified in the report was the cleaning and this has been taken up with ECDC who are our service providers. Cllr Hobbs requested that he be kept updated on the progress of this matter.

### **Action/Recommendation by Committee:**

Tracey H to update committee on cleaning contract negotiations.

### **Refurbishment**

Tracey H outlined the reasons why there was a need for the refurbishment of the Civil War Room and showed the first outlined plans for the project. It was envisaged that the attraction should only be closed for 5 days in early January when admissions would be at their lowest. Members were impressed with the visuals and agreed that investment in such an important building was vital.

As part of the refurbishment the room will require re-decorating and Tracey H suggested that this would be an opportunity for the whole attraction to be painted as it had not been touched for 10 years. Members agreed that this was a sensible proposal and the money should come from the one-off grant that ECDC had gifted to CofEC to cover maintenance and other one-off expenses.

Tracey H proposed that there were other areas within the attraction which would benefit being enhanced and the contractor had already presented some ideas for improvements, in particular, the entrance. A figure of between £5 and 10K would likely cover the additional improvements. Members were unanimous that if we were going to have to close the House to undertake some of this work, that this would be the time to make any other alterations. Equally, if we were going to invest in improvements there would be no point in having weak areas that would distract from the overall visitor experience. Again, the one-off grant money from ECDC was considered and Cllr Hobbs said that he would seek clarification as to what the exact amount of money was and what it could be used for.

### **Action/Recommendation by Committee:**

Subject to confirmation of the available grant, the committee requested Tracey H to obtain the necessary costings for both the decoration and the further refurbishment.

## **Function Room**

Considerable effort had been made to attract more users to the Function Room. Tracey H explained that we are now offering 17<sup>th</sup> century inspired refreshments for all our bookings and have updated our website and marketing material accordingly. This has resulted in a significant increase in bookings and we now have 4 regular companies using us. It has also led to a new section on our Visit Ely website for spaces to hire. Cllr Every asked if the Sessions House could feature and Tracey H advised that this would be possible.

## **Escape Rooms**

A new marketing plan has been put in place to promote the change of the themed room. This has resulted in August 2018 being the best month to date.

## **Social Media**

There has been a dedicated drive on increasing our social media activity which has resulted in some impressive engagement figures. It is now part of the tourism membership package that we engage with our partners as well as creating dedicated posts and features.

However, an analysis of our bookings has shown that whilst we need to maintain a strong social media presence, actual bookings for events come from traditional marketing methods. Therefore, we have to consider the balance of our resources and determine where best to invest our time and budget.

As well as putting our own content out across our four social media channels and that of tourism partners we also engage with key events. Tracey H reminded members that they offer a free events guidance service to a variety of organisations and assist with their marketing, often bringing them on board as partners. The team is often out and about reporting first hand on events.

Tracey H wanted to make members aware that as the Council now had an experienced marketing team within its organisation, that they should utilise this to the maximum. As the Council did not have its own social media network then they should look to Visit Ely to act as their marketing arm. Projects and events such as Ely in Bloom and Switch On Light Night should be promoted under Visit Ely's banner, especially as these are town centre initiatives.

### **Action/Recommendation by Committee:**

Members agreed that this would be a logical partnership and Cllr Hobbs would advise the various working committees of the need to engage with Visit Ely

## **Town Centres**

Tracey H briefly provided a history of the specific town centres projects and initiatives that Visit Ely had been involved in delivering. Work had stalled due to lack of budget and Tracey H highlighted that with budget setting being conducted in November then maybe this was the time to consider whether an allocation of the Council's budget should be attributed to Visit Ely for town centre initiatives. This also led to the discussion on the future of Visit Ely and how best it could be funded and steered.

Action/Recommendation by Committee:

It was agreed that Cllr Every would work with Tracey H to look at alternative models for Visit Ely and present to the next committee.

It was agreed that a member seminar would be held on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October, 10 am at Sessions House to particularly focus on Town Centres in order to create a clear vision and ensure adequate funding would be made available.

**6. Health and Safety Issues**

None were recorded.

**7. Any Other Business**

None

**8. Date of Next Meeting**

It was decided that no new dates would be set until after the Member Seminar in October.