



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

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 9th APRIL 2019 AT SESSIONS HOUSE, LYNN ROAD, ELY**

PRESENT:

Cllr Richard Hobbs Cllr Dian Warman Cllr Ian Lindsey
Cllr Alison Arnold Cllr Peter Moakes Cllr M Rouse (part)
Cllr Christine Whelan Cllr Alison Whelan
Tracey Harding (Tourism, Town Centre and Events Manager)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Every.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Public Question Time

There were no members of the public present so there were no questions raised.

4. Minutes of last Tourism and Town Centre Committee Meeting

There being no updates, the minutes of the last meeting held on the 13th February 2019 were agreed and signed as a true record. Pages TTC 11 and 12 refer.

5. Budget Update

Mrs Harding explained that as the Council used cash accountancy methods there were some variation in the way the budget read with how she was used to reporting end of year budgets. For example, the income levels for 2018/19 were looking extremely good however, this included income for trader income for the Eel Festival for both 2018 and 2019's event where as usually the 2019 income would be accrued to 2019/20. Equally expenditure for 2019's Festival would now not be accrued to the actual year and therefore there would appear to be an overspend.

Cllr A Whelan explained that this would always happen whilst working with cash accounts and to demonstrate the true profit and loss of our commercial services, the new administration may wish to consider a review of the accounting process.

5. Budget Update continued

Various other budget codes were considerably over or under but these ironed themselves out and had been addressed in the new budget.

Cllr Moakes asked if there were any other statistics available other than monetary ones that could help ascertain how well the service is doing and Mrs Harding explained that these would be drawn together and presented at the next Committee meeting.

Mrs Harding also commented that she was unsure where the expenditure for the second phase of the Oliver Cromwell's House refurbishment was in the budget and Cllr Hobbs said that he would clarify this.

Action/Recommendation by Committee:

Cllr Hobbs to determine how much of the grant expenditure money in the budget had been spent.

6. Review of Action Plan 2018/19

It had once again been a very busy year, which of course had begun with the transfer of the service. Of particular note had been the completion and subsequent launch of the refurbishment at Oliver Cromwell's House. This had involved an immense amount of work which would hopefully result in an increase in admissions for the forthcoming year.

The Council was delighted with the national coverage that Oliver Cromwell House received for the Ely Borrow Bag scheme and this had been an excellent collaboration with the town centre businesses.

Tourism membership had increased by 20% and this included businesses from outside Ely, demonstrating how Visit Ely is still seen as the professional body for promoting tourism for the district.

Eel Festival 2018 had been very successful and had received some amazing media coverage with a dedicated programme about the event on BBC Radio 4.

Mrs Harding had been appointed a board member, as well as the Eastern Regional Chair for the Association of Town and City Centre Management. This would provide valuable insight for the future of town centres.

Action/Recommendation by Committee:

None

7. Priorities for 2019/20

Mrs Harding detailed the actions for the forthcoming year (these are attached and form part of these minutes).

Mrs Harding requested that a further £2,500 be allowed to be spent on the House refurbishment, which would be the third and final phase. This would allow the interpretation boards in the remaining rooms to be presented in the new style. Otherwise, the House would remain disjointed with different styles of print.

Cllr Arnold asked if this would need to go to Full Council and whether a formal tender process would have to be undertaken. Cllr Hobbs explained that this Committee had the authority to make this decision as the money was already in the budget.

Cllr A Whelan then explained that the current contractors would have to be retained to complete the work, otherwise the branding would not be same and that was the whole purpose of the exercise to provide a consistent appearance.

All councillors agreed that the work should be carried out, subject to it being clear that there was sufficient money left in the specified budget.

Mrs Harding then outlined some options as to how the allocated town centre initiative money could be spent. Many of the schemes involved large upfront costs as well as ongoing monthly fees. There were two initiatives which everyone felt would provide the widest benefit. These were some form of football statistics and city centre dressing.

It was becoming more and more apparent that we lack statistical information on the town centre, in terms of how many people visit, where they go, what are the demographics, how long they spend, impact of events etc. The Council also needs to be able to benchmark against other town centres. Councillors were unanimous in agreeing to sign up to a scheme that would provide us with some useful and relevant information.

Equally, councillors were concerned that there needed to be a focus on effective town centre activities and the idea of having some creative, semi-permanent displays that would draw people in and become a talking point, as other towns had done, would be effective.

Action/Recommendation by Committee:

Subject to there being sufficient funds, permission would be granted for the expenditure of the third and final phase of the refurbishment of Oliver Cromwell's House.

Mrs Harding will sign up to a football counting service and devise a town centre promotional programme.

8. Shopmobility

Due to the pending closure of Ely Museum, who were the current administrators of the City's Shopmobility scheme, a new operator needed to be found. Cllr Hobbs felt that Visit Ely were the natural successors. Mrs Harding agreed that they could administer the service in terms of bookings and promotion. However, they did not currently have the manpower to oversee the actual users. The recruitment of the new City Centre Ranger would however, enable the service to be delivered without disruption. Mrs Harding thus requested that the post should include Saturday hours, which was agreed.

Action/Recommendation by Committee:

Amend City Centre Ranger post to include Saturday hours.

9. Health and Safety Issues

There were no health and safety issues to report.

10. Any Other Business

Cllr Warman had recently walked the footpath running alongside the new bypass. She suggested that some sort of signage should be erected to detail the walk. Mrs Harding had already raised this with CCC to see if they intended to put any up, but they had said they had no plans. The Committee would like Visit Ely to look into the matter further.

Cllr Hobbs enquired as to whether Visit Ely had engaged with Ely Rocks and Mrs Harding confirmed that they had been involved in the process from the beginning and were very supportive of their ideas to create a permanent eel rocks memorial.

Cllr Hobbs explained that Ely had the opportunity to be one of only four cities to have a Fish and Chip Roadshow visit as part of a national campaign. He wanted to offer his support and let it be known that the City of Ely Council were fully supporting of this initiative. Mrs Harding said that it was now with the Markets Team for permission to use the Market Place. Cllr Hobbs asked Mrs Harding to keep him informed if there was any delay on permissions being granted and he would intervene as the Market Team had still not responded to the request to use Market Place for the forthcoming Business Eel Throwing competition.

Mrs Harding raised her concerns that the new coach parking facilities at the Football Club were not adequately sign posted and did not provide much of a welcome. On two recent visits during week days, the gates were found shut. Cllr Hobbs to make enquiries.

Action/Recommendation by Committee:

Mrs Harding to follow up and support Ely being part of the National Fish and Chip event.
Cllr Hobbs to make enquiries about the new coach parking provisions with ECDC.

11. Date of Next Meetings

The next meeting was confirmed as Tuesday, 18th June 2019 at 6.45 pm.