



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

**MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING HELD AT 7.00 pm
ON MONDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER 2020**

PRESENT:

Cllr Dian Warman Cllr Lis Every
Cllr Christine Whelan Cllr Kevin Wilkins
Cllr Ian Lindsay Cllr Chris Phillips

Mrs Anna Bennett (Tourism and Town Centre Manager)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Bellow.

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 and Matters arising

The minutes of the last meeting, held on the 17th August 2020, were approved and signed as a true record. Pages T&TC 29, 30 and 31 refer. There were no matters arising aside of Cllr Wilkins pointing out that he agreed to be lead of OCH, not Tourism and Town Centre, which was noted.

5. To receive an Update on the Service and the Town Centre (see report from T&TC Manager)

Mrs Bennett read through her report and gave a more detailed summary of all the bookings received, the feedback and the income generated. This also incorporated the re-launch of the Escape Rooms and October plans for the Ghost Season/Halloween. Mrs Bennett explained to the Committee that all the ghost tours were nearly sold and she was planning on adding in additional dates for the Ghost Tours on Wednesday evenings, plus an additional night for the Tuesday Witches and Witchcraft. She also explained that November standard walks (architectural and monastic etc) would be added.

Mrs Bennett also reported that the Open Heritage Weekend events had been very successful. Cllr Phillips gave his congratulations to the team. He mentioned that many Heritage sites were closed or cancelled. Mrs Bennett reported that she hoped to run further talks and tours using Sessions

5. To receive an Update on the Serviced and the Town Centre continued

House and Cemetery 'Names beneath the Stones' tours in the future. Mrs Bennett also had plans to tweak OHW next year, as this was her first year and plans were afoot.

Social media was discussed and how the Visit Ely stats are drastically improving and monitored monthly by Eleanor Butcher, who is doing very well in her role. Mrs Bennett explained that she had created a strategic marketing plan for Eleanor to implement, whereby she concentrates on various business sectors, rather than posting out randomly. This seems to be working well and the Ely businesses are very pleased with the support and guidance from the team at OCH.

In addition, Mrs Bennett gave details to the Committee regarding Apple Day, October half-term plan and the new treasure hunt for Ely, which she is hoping to launch mid November.

Cllr Warman asked if anyone had any comments. None were made. Cllr Warman thanked Mrs Bennett for her contribution and expressed how much she was looking forward to joining one of the tours.

6. Budget Update

Mrs Bennett explained that there was an increase in spend with the Guide Salaries due to the increase in tours to generate income. Cllr Warman commented that this was understandable. Mrs Bennett explained that the tours have never made a loss and at worse, have broken even.

Cllr Every commented that as the budget is fairly static in terms of lines, would it be possible that some items be removed or highlighted when presenting, this way the figures would give us a true representation. She used the Town Centre Initiative as an example and was it necessary to see this line. Cllr Every also mentioned that she presumes all the costs of COVID were noted. Mrs Bennett explained that this was under code 4015. Cllr Every requested that Mrs Bennett and Cllr Warman go through budgets in more detail, for example that some expenditure lines should have a plan B against them, so the bottom line did not look too bad. Cllr Bennett said she would discuss whether these suggestions were possible with the Clerk to the Council. Cllr Every again expressed that the Council could claim for PPE. Cllr Whelan asked where and Cllr Every said the Clerk to the Council would know how to claim.

Cllr Warman and Mrs Bennett agreed that they would meet to discuss with the Clerk before the next meeting.

Cllr Whelan said the budgets needed to be separated out, otherwise the figures would not be truly reflected.

7. To discuss proposals for the arrangements of the Eel Weekend and Food and Drink Festival 2021

Mrs Bennett mentioned that she would not be making any plans as yet. However in the back of her mind she would like to run a two day Festival for Eel Festival/and a summer Festival incorporating a Food and Drink.

With new rules and plans to remain as they are for six months, this leaves a very short lead time to arrange. So we are just all reliant on where we are with the pandemic. Councillors agreed it

7. To discuss proposals for the arrangements of the Eel Weekend and Food and Drink Festival 2021 continued

would not be possible to plan ahead for this, or indeed undertake spending. Cllr Warman asked Mrs Bennett when she could make a decision. Mrs Bennett explained she would need a good six months to plan a good festival with notice for land hire/permissions/booking chefs/stalls/ advertising etc.

Cllr Every asked if Mrs Bennett had a critical path analysis planned to be used for the next festival. Cllr Every added that numbers were the issue of course, but a plan would maybe help. Mrs Bennett explained that the QR code check in was crucial and to register attendance on Event Brite. This would give a clearer idea on attendance and crowd management. Cllr Whelan mentioned that this worked well with the Pride Festival.

Cllr Warman suggested there may be a clearer idea of where the Council are, with regards to planning the festivals at the next meeting. Mrs Bennett asked the Committee if they liked the idea of splitting the Festivals for 2021, if this was possible. The Committee all agreed to doing this. Cllr Every wanted to see a clear 'Proft and Loss' on all events and insisted that a process must be put in place to produce this. It was stated that need to be able to identify what makes money and what does not. A clearer picture was required. Mrs Bennett explained that the whole festival needed reviewing and moving forward and when undertaking this, these aspects would be paramount.

Mrs Bennett was asked if potential dates for festivals might clash with other events, such as Aquafest 2021 etc. Mrs Bennett assured the Committee that dates would not clash. The Committee liked the idea of two festival weekends in 2021, if they can proceed with Government Guidelines, in place at the time.

Cllr Lindsay asked about Remembrance Event and Christmas Lights. Mrs Bennett explained that she had been working with David Martin regarding the Remembrance/Armistice Day and speaking to the Deputy Clerk regarding Christmas Lights.

8. Ely City Ranger Role (review)

The Committee felt that the job description had been wrong from the outset. Mrs Bennett explained that the Ely City Ranger had built great relationships with traders. Cllr Every expressed that the stab jacket gave the wrong impression, and that the Job Description and the Ranger interpreting, that led to the uniform decisions. Cllr Every mentioned that from East Cambs District Council's perspective that public enforcement was back on the agenda and the Community Safety Partneship was working with all the agencies (Police and Fire etc). Mrs Bennett also expressed that a Ranger should maybe be under East Cambs District Council and not the City Council. She felt the Town Centre elements could be covered in other ways, under Visit Ely and OCH.

It was agreed that this position would not be replaced at the present time, but would be re-evaluated in the future

9. Health and Safety Issues (Staff Welfare at OCH)

Mrs Bennett explained to the Committee there had been a suspected case of COVID-19 and went through the steps that were taken when alerted to this. This had however, been negative. Mrs Bennett explained what additional measures had been put in place and the process that would be followed, if a case was positive.

10. Personnel Matters (Business Liaison Assistant Post)

Mrs Bennett informed councillors that Ms Annabel Reddick had been appointed to the role of temporary, Business Liaison Assistant. She confirmed that all Council procedures were followed regarding recruitment. Mrs Bennett felt that Ms Reddick was ideal for the post with over 25 years experience as an Ely Trader. Her duties would include being the eyes and ears regarding all our independents, putting up posters, explaining our initiatives and generally promoting OCH/Visit Ely.

The Committee approved this appointment. Mrs Bennett explained that she would report back weekly on her findings and the position would be reviewed at Christmas. Cllr Lindsay asked how many hours she would be doing a week. Mrs Bennett confirmed she would cover 2 hours per day, over 3 days a week. Cllr Every described her as Mrs Ely and ideal for the position.

No other comments were made.

11. Any Other Business

Mrs Bennett advised the Committee that funding had been awarded from the UK Recovery Heritage Lottery Funding. It was explained that our Audio Guide content was poor, as was the brochure and that the money would be used to enhance the visitor experience. The Committee expressed their thanks to Mrs Bennett and Mrs Coulson for their input.

Mrs Bennett also explained that upgrading was required in-house for IT. It was agreed that this was needed and Mrs Bennett should proceed with better systems and the ability to create in-house poster/banners.

Lastly Cllr Every asked Mrs Bennett if she could find out what would be the procedure if there was to be a State death. Cllr Every explained that many other Councils have this in place. Cllr Every requested Mrs Bennett discuss with the Clerk to the Council, as it was felt Mrs Bennett needed to be aware of this protocol, in terms of communications.

Mrs Bennett reminded the Committee that she is still planning to invite Councillors to meet at OCH. It was agreed this would be on the 3rd November. Mrs Bennett will arrange and advise of the timings. Cllr Lindsay, Cllr Wilkins and Cllr Phillips expressed an interest in attending.

12. Date of next meeting

Date of the next meeting was agreed as the 9th November at 7pm.

Due to enforced social distancing caused by the Coronavirus, this meeting took place by video communication, accessed by the Zoom meetings facility.