

**WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE TOURISM AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
HELD VIA ZOOM
ON MONDAY 5TH OCTOBER 2020**

Meeting Commenced: 7.03 pm

Meeting Concluded: 8.07 pm

PRESENT: Peter Crew (Chairman), Marc Aplin, John Crockford-Hawley, David Dash, Catherine Gibbons, Peter McAleer, Ella Sayce and Helen Thornton (S).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Tania Middlemiss (Assistant Town Clerk), Caroline Darlington (Tourism Manager), Emma Williams (Tourism and Marketing Officer), Fay Powell (Grounds Manager), Samantha Bishop (Committee Officer and Office Manager) and Sarah Pearse (Deputy Town Clerk).

50	<p>Apologies of Absence and Notifications of Substitutions</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alan Peak who was substituted by Helen Thornton and Sonia Russe with no substitution.</p> <p>Councillors James Clayton, David Hitchins and Marcia Pepperall were absent from the meeting.</p>
51	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest received.</p>
52	<p>To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the Tourism and Leisure Committee meeting held on the 27th July 2020</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.</p>
53	<p>Tourism Function Update</p> <p>The reports of the Tourism Manager and Tourism Marketing Officer July-September 2020 had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>.1 Events – Placemaking</p> <p>The Tourism Manager informed that there was a meeting of the Placemaking Advisory Group on 5/10/2020 to discuss events progression where the intention was to create a collaborative calendar of events by communicating with other stakeholders in the town.</p> <p>The Chairman referred to history where there had be reluctance by event organisers to add events to the ‘events calendar’ on Visit Weston website in order that events can be more widely promoted.</p> <p><i>The Deputy Town Clerk joined the meeting at 7.06 pm reporting technical difficulties.</i></p>

Visit Weston's input so far was the distribution of news and events as their SEO reach and Social Media was greater than that of North Somerset Council or other stakeholders.

Input from Alex Hearn, NSC Placemaking Lead Officer was awaited and a meeting with Town Council Officers regarding Visit Weston website was scheduled for this week.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

.2 Visitor Information Calls

The Tourism Manager reported that the calls were predominantly direct questions relating to COVID restrictions. A log of all calls was being taken in 2020 and would be reported back to committee. There had been a significant increase in enquiries in relation to outdoor pursuits and especially trail walks. This interest could be attributed to a desire to enjoy the area with easier social distancing in mind, which was made mention of in the poster content of in the autumn/winter Destination Marketing Campaign with Pear Communications.

In response to a question raised, the Tourism Manager reported that good comments had been received about Princess Royal Square, however the disabled access has been affected by the social distancing measures.

Councillor John Crockford-Hawley joined the meeting at 7.15 pm and explained that he had experienced technical difficulties joining the meeting.

A member referred to the report where it indicated that calls were received out of office hours and felt that staff should not be answering calls outside of VIC working hours.

It was confirmed by the Tourism Manager and the Assistant Town Clerk that staff had been instructed not to answer calls outside of working hours and that health and wellbeing of staff remained a Council priority.

RESOLVED: Noted.

.3 Support for VW members

The Tourism Manager reported that the team had been working very hard to support members through the pandemic and has received some very positive feedback. Businesses seemed to be more amenable to supporting each other and have been very appreciative of the support by Visit Weston staff including advice and information on changes in government guidelines, Eat Out to Help Out information, newsletters and QR codes assistance

Unfortunately, there had been some partners that have been unable to open due to Covid-19 restrictions and loss of business so had sadly remained closed and lost. There had also been some new businesses initiatives with local businesses who were offering delivery services which Visit Weston had supported with membership and marketing in the hope that they will be retained and that other members could re-open in the Spring and renew.

RESOLVED: Noted.

.4 Visit Weston Partnership Working and Initiatives

The Tourism Manager reported that VW always worked very hard to work with all agencies to promote the town and keep each other up to date and would continue to do so.

Members conveyed their congratulations to the team for their impressive media coverage, particularly the “Don’t Visit Weston” campaign in April May but throughout the pandemic which had really put Weston-super-Mare on the international stage and promoted the town very positively.

In response to a member, the Tourism Manager advised that the team was in frequent communication with Weston PRIDE and would be working closely with them going forward supporting events that are good for the town.

The Chairman queried the NNDR costs mentioned within the report. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the costs had not yet been charged to the council and if they were, they would be challenged as staff had not occupied the premises.

RESOLVED: Noted.

.5 Destination Advertising

The Tourism Marketing Officer reported that at the time of writing the report VW had over 5,000 followers on Facebook which was largely linked to the ‘Help out to Eat out’ scheme whereby a comprehensive list had been compiled of registered establishments within the North Somerset area and was one of the top website pages for August.

There had been lots of work carried out supporting local businesses with promotion and free banner advertising and could be a good income stream to pursue in the future.

Visit Weston had been the first website to host the ‘Welcome to Weston Video’ commissioned by the Sovereign Centre and very well produced by Weston College. Additionally we had tested through various checking models and the website was and A & AA standard accessible.

The Destination Marketing campaign with Pear Communications was in place for another 10 weeks and would be reviewed in January 2021.

As referred to earlier in the Tourism Manager’s report that there had been a significant increase in enquiries in relation to outdoor pursuits and trail walks which was made mention of in the poster content of the Pear Communication campaign. The concept of a ‘Healthy Tourism’ was a campaign worth exploring.

In response to a member’s question regarding the future location of a VIC, the Chairman informed that an alternative location had been considered but was not DDA compliant. The Town Clerk had been in communication with Weston College about the possibility of moving to the Winter Gardens but this had gone cold and needed investigating further with the Town Clerk.

The Tourism Manager reported that the map was very important to people and was produced in conjunction with the Weston & Somerset Mercury. If

	<p>there was no VIC in 2021 then a map would be in distributable. There was limited demand for a brochure as the website had taken over, but maps remained popular and were more sustainable as could be uploaded to PDF on the website and were beneficial to local walking groups.</p> <p>A member explained that people would no longer want to pick up leaflets/brochures due to COVID.</p> <p>The Tourism Manager confirmed that officers would not recommend a printed brochure publication as it was opposed to Council green strategy and there was a preference for digital marketing.</p> <p>A member suggested if an APP could be created as this would be seen as moving with the times and a great engagement tool which was accessible to people.</p> <p>The Tourism Marketing Officer explained that an APP had not been considered up until this point as the website was so well optimized and seamless, however she would look at VW's competitors and investigate the possibility.</p> <p>The Assistant Town Clerk confirmed that there had been discussions held previously at the initial development stages of the website on the production of an APP but it had not necessary due to the excellent responsiveness of the website and inhibitive costs at that stage. However this could be factored into renewal discussions with the host and budget submissions for 2021/2022.</p> <p>The Deputy Town Clerk informed that the SimpleView contact was up for review soon and so it could be considered as part of the review.</p> <p>The Tourism Manager informed that there were companies developing APPs for the tourist industry but that the costs were beyond the reach of Council's budget.</p> <p>It was suggested that the Weston College could be an option to help with this and launch a competition of some sort.</p> <p>The Chairman highlighted the £32,000 saving as a result of not opening the VIC in 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions.</p> <p>The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that there had been a £32,000 saving as a result of the VIC closure, however the council's budget needed to be balanced against the loss of income overall and budgets could not be rolled over unless a recommendation was put to Town Council and that next year's budget (2021/2022) would be a greater challenge to balance.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the report be noted.</p>
<p>54</p>	<p>Parks and Play Areas</p> <p>The report of the Grounds Manager had been previously circulated.</p> <p>5.1 Water Park</p>

The Grounds Manager highlighted that the Water park splash pad had not been open and admission to the park was free. There had been various tree work and play equipment repairs undertaken. The park had remained busy and there were problems with litter and the bins of which had been rectified. There had been no income taken year to date and a review undertaken the next financial year. The café roof had been repaired and the container unit cladded which looked appealing.

5.2 Parks and Play Areas

With regards to Dartmouth Close play area, the Grounds Manager informed that there was a meeting with Big Worle to be had the following day of which she would broach the subject. The Town Clerk had not received any communication on the matter.

There had been no communication received regarding West Wick play area either. The Chairman informed that this was worrying as it was on lease. It was a mixed use play area and nobody knew who was responsible for it and required a maintenance contact.

The Grounds Manager suggested that this could be escalated to Richard Kent, the councils Liaison Officer to pursue further.

The Grounds team had been looking at the refurbishment and maintenance of equipment, concentrating on what was in place.

There were unfortunate delays on obtaining the materials for the Uphill play area fencing, which was been chased.

The Chairman highlighted that there was only one DDA compliant play area in the whole of the district and that the council should look to install one at Castle Batch with the funding from Big Worle.

A member urged involving the Parent Carers Forum in the procurement process of the Castle Batch play area.

A member advised that she was a member of a parent group who were working on achieving a SEN friendly play area and events as there was no play in Weston for children with special needs to play safe. The nearest play area was Bleadon because of the high fencing and could the council look into alterative fencing for their play areas and bear this in mind for future procurement.

The Grounds Manager was happy to look into this further and would appreciate linking up with the member on the subject.

The Deputy Town Clerk informed that she had attended a meeting with Big Worle before Christmas where the idea of a DDA compliant play area for Castle Batch was suggested and well received. If the grant funding for this was not forthcoming, then the council could access funding from other sources such as 'Sports England'.

In response to the request regarding higher fencing, the Deputy Town Clerk advised that this could be recommended for repair/ replacement within the planned maintenance schedule.

	RESOLVED: That the report of the Grounds Manager be noted.
	There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.07 pm. Signed: Dated: Chairman of the Tourism & Leisure Committee

TOURISM AND LEISURE COMMITTEE MEETING: 7TH DECEMBER 2020

4. TOURISM FUNCTION UPDATE REPORT, December 2020 by Caroline Darlington, Tourism Manager

4. TOURISM FUNCTION UPDATE

The Tourism Team Plan for 2021 has been completed and updated to include details of our collaboration with the Weston Place Agency along with taking the town council's Five Pillars into consideration.

The VIC continues to operate as a "virtual" VIC with phones being answered via a divert during office hours 6 days a week.

The team stands prepared and ready to assist with disaster recovery for the tourism & hospitality businesses in Weston-super-Mare and feels this will be vital to the future prosperity of the town, especially when all resorts in the UK will be advertising to the same population, when fewer overseas holidays will be taken.

4.1 Placemaking

Visit Weston has attended four **Place Agency advisory team** meetings during the reporting period. This is a collaborative effort to produce an events calendar which is currently being populated. Visit Weston has made it clear that the challenge with this remains, as it always has been, that events are not published with sufficient advance notice to market them effectively. This included programmes such as shop window dressings for Christmas, the Christmas market which was originally at the Town Square, then the Tropicana, then moved back to the Town Square, Eat: Christmas festival and a variety of other winter programmes. Unfortunately, all were cancelled when central government announced the second phase of national restrictions. Place Agency Meetings have continued and are enthusiastic about possible future plans.

It was announced at their most recent meeting that NSC have appointed Visit Somerset on a one year trial basis and the meeting was addressed by John Turner, CEO of Visit Somerset. He explained that they are looking for rich and creative content for the expansion of their current web pages on the NSC territory and towns within it and the development of micro-sites within their main site.

It should be noted that their website has only introduced 260 referrals to Visit Weston in the 18 months that we have been members at £1500 per annum.

It should also be noted that Visit Somerset has offered 40 free membership packages to businesses in Weston-super-Mare and surrounds in a drive to recruit new members, some of which are existing Visit Weston Partners.

4.2 Support for Visit Weston Partners

The Council's decision to refund the entire year of Visit Weston partnership fees has been extremely well received and has gained much support and goodwill from businesses in Weston and surrounds.

We continue to call and stay in touch with many partners and other local businesses in with the intent to support them through the latest developments with coronavirus and with disaster recovery ideas.

Going forward, once their free membership expires at the end of March, we feel there may be some resistance to renewals. This might, in part, be due to Visit Somerset and in part due to financial difficulties due to lack of trade, made worse by the recent elevation of North Somerset to Tier 3.

We suggest that we try to lighten the financial burden by resurrecting our previous campaigns to approach businesses street by street and to offer those streets group partnership so that they can spread the costs between them.

4.3 Visit Weston Partnership Working and Initiatives

In line with our philosophy of cross-agency working, the Tourism Team has continued to embrace opportunities to solidify and increase our relationships with other stakeholders, associations and North Somerset Council to mutual advantage.

- **Communications**

We have remained in constant contact with NSC's Communications Team with regard to jointly issuing messages to announce news relevant to the visitor economy such as the postponement of the Beach Race until 2021.

The Tourism Manager met with NSC's **Economic Development Team** to discuss forward plans for events and it was indicated that they will rely on Visit Weston to broadcast any such information as our reach is far greater than theirs. Other stakeholders such as the Weston Collective and Creative Weston will also share posts as will NSC's place making social media.

- **The BID and Town Centre Partnership**

The BID Steering Group met and an online initiative to allow local businesses to set up online shopping has been offered on the BID website. There are a few technical issues with the registration process which we have offered to assist with.

- **UKTIC Forum**

Visit Weston takes the lead with the Southern UKTIC Forum and we have been in touch with all members to survey what is happening in other destinations. It is clear that there are several TICs in the same position as Visit Weston, being unable to open to the public. Others are opening short hours with only two staff at a time. All are working along the same lines as Visit Weston which is to appeal to the nearby areas rather than nationwide marketing at present.

4.4 Visitor Information Centre

With much news about the possibility of vaccines becoming available against COVID-19 it is suggested that we should plan for a re-opening of the VIC in readiness for the expected boom in visitors to UK coastal resorts. The location for the VIC should be an integral part of future planning. Whether this means re-occupation of the unit at The Tropicana, or preferably a move to a more central location, requires consideration. It has been difficult for the team to present budget recommendations with no indicators of where the VIC will be situated.

We are exploring several options in readiness for moving forward to re-opening in 2021:

1. Retaining the status quo and re-occupying the current VIC premises in the Tropicana.
2. Renting commercial premises in The Sovereign Centre
3. Renegotiating with the college for free premises in The Winter Gardens
4. Renting commercial premises in the town centre
5. Purchasing a property in the town centre
6. Purchasing a log cabin/pre-fab building for placement in the Water & Adventure Play Park
7. Taking premises on the Grand Pier at the Promenade end before the entrance gates

We are open to any openings or ideas that might come up but believe that a well located VIC will be an essential service to residents, the business and hospitality industry once lockdown is eased.

TOURISM AND LEISURE COMMITTEE MEETING: 7TH DECEMBER 2020

4.5 DESTINATION WEBSITE AND MARKETING REPORT – written by Emma Williams, Tourism Marketing Officer

Website KPIs and Analysis

The Visit Weston-super-Mare website has seen a predictable downturn in traffic during the reporting period, 1st September 2020 – 31st October 2020. Details of which are tabulated below:

Reporting Period	Total Page Views	Unique Visitors	New Visitors
01/09/2020 to 31/10/2020	101,428	46,344	86%
01/09/2019 to 31/10/2019	140,015	69,578	84%

This data shows an approximate reduction to website traffic of 25%, versus the same period in 2019. This can be attributed to a number of mitigating factors, chiefly the public's lessened appetite for tourism - owing to the global pandemic, and the subsequent cancellation of many high-profile events in Weston during the autumn.

Throughout September and October 2019, 26% of the total site traffic was associated with events including: Weston Carnival, the Beach Race, Icescape at the Tropicana and Fireworks at the Pier. Without these events taking place, a good proportion of visitor appeal for the low season, has been removed.

The top ten pages for the reporting period and the top ten visitor IP address locations are below:

Top 10 Performing Pages	Top 10 Visitor Locations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. (Home) 2. Things to Do 3. Attractions 4. Car Parking 5. What's On 6. Dog Friendly 7. Shopping 8. Events in WsM 9. Sand Bay Beach 10. Covid-19 Blog 11. Walking 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. London 2. Bristol 3. (Not Set) 4. Birmingham 5. Weston-super-Mare 6. Taunton 7. Cardiff 8. Bridgwater 9. Clevedon 10. Coventry 11. Manchester 12. Cheltenham

This data confirms our understanding of the most recent trends in our visitor market; namely the concepts of the 'staycation' and 'nearcation' customer bases, as well as the increasing interest in outdoor pursuits in Weston, suitable for visitors with dogs. Item 11 included in top ten, as the Home Page is consistently the top performing page and offers little insight into visitor behaviour on the site.

Visitors' locations flagged as 'London', are less likely to be actually situated in the capital themselves, rather that their Internet Service Providers' (ISP) central servers, are housed in London, giving Google Analytics inaccurate geographical data. Likewise, 'Not Set' data is amalgamated by Google for the site visitors whose location is unavailable. Locations 11 and 12 included, in lieu of reliable data for 'London' and 'Not Set'

Website Updates and Contract Renewal

2020/2021 is the third and final year of the existing contract with our website provider Simpleview, thus the department have recently met with our account manager Matt Bassett, to discuss retention and/or renewal options for the Visit Weston website.

Simpleview are understandably keen to retain the contract with Visit Weston and have provided three renewal cost options for our consideration; a one, two and three-year deal, complete with the necessary add-on services including accessibility compliance measures, Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) support and the security of our domain names.

These costs are detailed for Members' considerations on contract renewal length in the table below:

Contract Period	Projected Cost
1 Year	£10,465
2 Year	£18,530
3 Year	£26,595

Members are asked to please note that these are projected costs only, as they include an estimated annual rebate from Simpleview, associated with the hosting of 3rd party advertising, shown on the Visit Weston website. This rebate is calculated based on traffic and thus is not fixed in value.

The virtual meeting with Matt proved very informative and useful, as he was also able to provide great insight into the impact Coronavirus has taken on both national and international Destination Marketing Organisations' (DMOs') websites. As the market leaders in destination websites, Simpleview are best positioned to scrutinise and analyse the wider trends in tourism appetite for urban, rural and coastal DMOs, demonstrating how Weston-super-Mare might perform against competitors once the visitor economy is able to begin a robust 'recovery' strategy and bounce back in 2021/2022.

Throughout our collaboration with Simpleview, Visit Weston have benefited greatly from the value added services they offer; most recently an option to capture all necessary 'Alt Text' data on images displayed on the website. In order for a public sector website to ensure its accessibility compliance - currently the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 matrix, all images must be accurately described and labelled to assist site users with visual impairments. For a site as vast and strongly image-led as Visit Weston's, guaranteeing the labelling of all graphics and pictures, is an enormous undertaking. Simpleview and their expertise were able to devise a 'quick-fix' solution whereby any images flagged without labels, would be automatically populated with a generic description of the picture, based on its context within the site, i.e. 'Image of Marine Lake' or 'Image of Grove House'. This saved a huge amount of time for the Tourism Marketing Officer and provided assurances that this most onerous facet of WCAG compliance, was in place.

The site has been assessed by a number of online WCAG compliance checkers and performs well, achieving AA standard or equivalent. Simpleview's AudioEye solution that we are using as a retrofit application for accessibility controls, empowers the site users that require additional features to enhance their experience with the site; being able to tailor the visuals to exactly their needs.

Visit Weston have also taken advantage of an option to enhance the site's overall design, with a contemporary and more aesthetic layout. This improvement has been taken up by many of our competitors with whom Simpleview also work, including Visit Dorset. Images of the current Visit Weston homepage and Visit Dorset's are shown below to illustrate the difference in the header images and menu overlays:



The new design will display high resolution photographs across the full width of the page, minimising white space, with the menu items (Accommodation, Things to Do etc.) overlaid across the top of the image. The look is cleaner and more in-keeping with a dynamic, modern feel adopted by competitive DMOs the world over.

A request for suitable new photographs was posted across the Visit Weston social media accounts resulting in an encouraging response, with hundreds of images being submitted for our consideration. The images have been voluntarily provided to us, in exchange for photograph credits on the site and the exposure of their work to around one million annual 'hits' to our site. This also garners a sense of collaboration and 'ownership' from residents and visitors that have helped to create this fresh new style for the site.

Visit Weston Social Media KPIs and Updates

The total 'reach' for Visit Weston's three main social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) was 120,057 impressions for the September and October 2020. This means our content has been seen by 120,057 different social media accounts during the reporting period.

The Visit Weston Facebook page currently (as of 23/11/20) has 5,073 page likes; after achieving the 5,000 likes 'milestone' in mid-September. The Twitter and Instagram accounts currently have 5,029 and 1,459 followers, respectively. This means that throughout 2020 to date, we have added a further 2,026 subscribers to these three channels alone.

The launch of the Visit Weston page on the LinkedIn website, is also accumulating more followers; strengthening our messages to a new audience, as well as enabling increased opportunities for business-to-business communications.

There are plans to create and share engaging and entertaining content over social media during the festive period, in collaboration with Weston Museum, the Blakehay, the Water Park and the central Weston Town Council social media accounts. It is hoped that this will boost follower numbers and impressions for all five online presences.

Agenda Item 4.5 Destination Marketing 2021/2022 Aspirations

Following a difficult time for destination marketing, the planning and execution of campaigns for 2021/22 has begun in earnest, subject to the finalisation of budgets.

Members are requested to consider two options for Visit Weston's strategy for destination marketing; these being a so-called 'Covid' Budget' of £33k or a 'Normal' Budget of £59k.

Both the Tourism Manager and Tourism Marketing Officer have undertaken far-reaching research into the industry's intentions for the upcoming year, including attending a Visit England webinar entitled 'Destination Marketing in the New Normal'. This provided the team with valuable information gathered through Visit England's recent surveys, and their increased scope for communicating with

the tourism and hospitality industry at a national scale. This further-reaching field of research from Visit England allows us to better understand the mood of the whole of the country and its organisations, rather than the more localised information gathered by Visit Somerset, for example.

They suggested six key principles to consider when designing destination marketing campaigns for the ever-changing landscape we are currently navigating, be it during a 'Crisis Period', 'Early Recovery', 'Recovery Phase 1' and 'Recovery Phase 2', dependent on Covid-related limitations and their restrictions on travel and leisure.

Many of the ideas and trends put forward by Visit England were encouraging, and resonated with Visit Weston, as we have also found a significant number of their findings from national enquiries, reflected in Weston and within our own visitor economy. Examples of these include: an increase in interest in outdoor pursuits – as demonstrated in the enquiries Visit Weston are receiving from the public; an appetite to 'buy local' and support smaller businesses; an increased desire for video content and virtual tours; and a preference for nostalgia, 'retro' or bygone aesthetics i.e. A return to 'The Good Old Days'.

Fundamentally, however we choose to approach destination marketing in 2021/2022, it will need to be highly effective and imaginative, to assist us in standing out from our competitors. Many of our local businesses – including Visit Weston partners, will be unable to afford their own advertising, following financial difficulties during this year, so a schedule of robust destination marketing campaigns that support the whole visitor economy of Weston-super-Mare, will be vital.

Agenda Item 4.5.1 – Campaigns with Pear Communications

Our Visit Weston team recently met with Pear Communications via Zoom, to discuss strategies for the forthcoming year; tapping into their knowledge of the leisure and hospitality industry represented by their existing clients.

Capitalising on their market dominance in print materials, it was suggested that in place of an 'Explore' magazine-style visitor guide, Visit Weston could compile and brand 'Welcome Packs'. These would comprise selected leaflets, a map and small brochures in a sealed pack made from a natural, biodegradable rice starch 'cellophane' substitute. Our branding and logos would be added to the outer packaging and these would be available in many locations in areas of our choosing - as well in a VIC, should we open a facility in 2021. This also alleviates the problem of 'touch points' for pamphlets and brochures out on display in businesses open to the public, as the packs are sealed and only handled by those wishing to take away the documents and read at a later date, rather than browse and then replace into racking or leaflet shelving. The creation and printing of a town map would form part of this campaign, as previous maps have been produced by Archant, who do not intend to do this going forward.

Pear also offered Visit Weston the opportunity to acquire two large digital screens, similar to those used in the Motorway Service Areas (MSAs) that form the basis of our current campaign with them. These screens would be available to position in a VIC, and/or other high footfall locations, such as The Sovereign Centre. We would then be able to design and upload marketing content to the screens, whenever we chose to. A license for controlling the content ourselves would cost £10 per month, alternatively, we can send our designs to Pear and they will upload them on our behalf, without purchasing a license.

These new ideas put forward by Pear, would supplement the continuation of our existing MSA campaign with them, as this has proven to be successful in 2020.

Agenda Item 4.5.2 - Other Destination Marketing Campaigns

Visit Weston have chosen not to continue our campaign with Kingfisher Publications, who produce the hardback 'Welcome To...' guide books supplied in hotel rooms across the country. Previously we have purchased a quarter page advertisement in eight of their guides for hotels located in Birmingham, Worcestershire, London and Bath amongst others. Given the uncertainty surrounding the availability of - and appetite for high-end hotel stays in 2021/2022, we feel that this limits the efficacy of a campaign wholly reliant on hotel trade. We too feel, that in order to counter the environmental impact of an expanded print campaign with Pear Communications, that to cease our collaboration with Kingfisher, makes both economic and ecological sense.

The withdrawal of stadium crowds for sporting events in 2020, has meant that television audiences for sport have increased dramatically, with new and established media platforms now jostling to air sports coverage. The pandemic also saw the postponement of a number of high-profile sporting events that are now more eagerly anticipated by fans in 2021.

The potential for impressions by advertising at televised sporting fixtures is massive, and would promote Weston-super-Mare to a new audience. Particularly, the style and pace of televised cricket coverage, lends itself well to multiple opportunities to be seen, as often fans will watch the whole day's play in cricket matches, again providing extended opportunities for impressions. There are a number of options available to explore for cricket advertising next year.

In order to support a local event, much missed in 2020, Visit Weston would also like to explore sponsoring the 2021 Bridgwater Carnival. This would capture a very large in-person audience within the 'staycation' and 'nearcation' markets, as well as the online live feed of the parades to a global audience. The sponsorship package would cover significant brand exposure for Visit Weston at all the carnivals on the touring circuit, including each programme guide sold on the night. By publically supporting a beloved local custom, it is hoped this would bolster our commitment to the local economy, our high profile events and quintessentially south western traditions. This would also allow scope to include marketing Weston Museum and the Blakehay within the campaign materials.

Traditional 'Out Of Home' (OOH) advertising will also feature in the strategy for Visit Weston in 2021/2022, with plans to collaborate with Clear Channel and/or JC Decaux on outdoor advertising in town centres, transport hubs and retail areas. These would likely be themed campaigns in the summer and approaching Christmas to nearby visitor markets aimed at promoting day trips and short stays.

Reliant on the approval of the larger 'Normal Budget': as well as via televised sports fixtures, Visit Weston are also researching the viability of television advertising in the traditional sense, i.e. the creation and airing of a 30-second commercial. Enquiries have been made at marketing agencies that specialise in purchasing airtime from broadcasters, more on this will follow as discussions continue. A campaign strategy of this magnitude would be an excellent opportunity for reaching new audiences and visitor markets nationally.

And finally, a full or half-page print advertisement in the national Camping & Caravanning Club magazine is currently under consideration as campaign strategy for 2021/2022. Weston – like the UK at large, saw a huge increase in take-up of camping and caravanning holidays in 2020, owing to the ease of self-isolation and social distancing in holidays of this nature. The readership of the C&CC Magazine is extremely widespread as well as effective, and would enable us to synergise this campaign with Visit Weston partners and other local camping and caravanning sites in return for a financial contribution.

TOURISM AND LEISURE COMMITTEE MEETING: 7TH DECEMBER 2020

5. PARKS AND PLAY AREAS REPORT, Fay Powell Grounds Manager

5.1 Play Area Update

Orders have been raised to repair or replace pieces of equipment across the following sites:

- Ashcombe Park Upper
- Grove Park
- Clarence Park
- Ashcombe Park Lower

Further quotes are being reviewed for the following sites:

- Worle Rec
- Maltlands
- Further works at Grove Park

At the time of writing this report, Ellenborough Park West is due to open Wednesday 2nd December. Residents who surround the park will be letter dropped, letting them know that we have taken over the park and encourage them to make use of it. Included with the letter is a fact sheet regarding the two rare species of plant. The grounds team have got the park in tip top shape and all signage, bins and bollards have now been installed. The last thing to install is the Noticeboard which is due to hopefully arrive Monday 30th November.

On Tuesday 1st December the park is likely to be used by Channel 4 for a George Clark programme about homes and architecture in Weston, the production crew will be using the East park and have the Crescent as its back drop.

We have chosen to open mid-week so we have a few days to address any teething issues we might have.

5.2 Waterpark Update

The Waterpark was recently the target of some severe graffiti covering much of the equipment and new cladding. This was reported to the police and the anti-social behaviour team at NSC. In order to effectively remove the graffiti, we had to pay for a company to come and ice blast it from the equipment.

On the 25th November Somerset Wood Recycling met the team at the Waterpark to discuss ways of improving the current equipment and overall look of the park.

Some key arrangements agreed were:

- Jet washing all equipment where possible
- Fixing the xylophone
- Repainting the 4x elephants on the rocker see saw
- Replacing panelling on the toilets/changing huts. Potentially painting a beach hut theme.

- Replacing some wooden panelling missing on one of the walkways
- Producing a new castle emblem sign
- Replacing or fixing backless benches and painting a nice colour
- Installing wooden cross windows in the tower (removing the broken net windows which are there now)
- Cutting all the holly shrubs to a level height
- Installing a temporary fence at an access point by the back wall and re planting some holly shrubs

The Grounds Team will also be carrying out some repairs and their normal inspections. A meeting has been arranged for the 2nd December with the local artist Martin D'Arcy to discuss the possibility of having a mural painted at the Waterpark on our larger areas of cladding around the plant room.

TOURISM AND LEISURE COMMITTEE – 7th DECEMBER 2020**WATER PARK KIOSK AND ENTRANCE CABIN
REPORT OF THE TOWN CLERK**

Request to review licence of Café Kiosk

In 2017 the council provided an improved refreshment kiosk with indoor as well as outdoor seating areas. This has been popular with customers and received good reviews on social media. A new licence covering the three summer seasons 2019, 2020 and 2021 was granted commencing in 2019-20 and is due to run until 2021-22, ending in March 2022. In the past the council has agreed to extend 3 year contracts by another 2 years to 5 years. The concession licence holder is welcome to open outside the summer season, the park remains open as an adventure play area and the sea front can get quite busy on sunny weekends.

The business has however been badly affected by the Covid 19 pandemic in 2020 and the concession licence holder has requested a change to the terms of his licence. As well as emphasising the lack of trade for much of this year, argues that the ability to be able to trade throughout the year is a misnomer. He says that he tried opening last year during October and November, again this October, only to find that even on a sunny day he earns less than the hourly minimum wage.

Moving forward, there is one summer season remaining on his current agreement and the loss of this year's trading has completely undermined his five year business projections for the investment made in the Water Park. The loss of trading coupled with further improvements made during February and early March consumed what little profit derived from this summer. Moreover the kiosk roof has been leaky since day one and continues to do so, and the security shutters need improving. In return for a 10 year lease, with the usual 5 year review, he would assume responsibility for the repair and maintenance of the kiosk, including completion of current repairs and all future maintenance. He suggests a starting point for rent of the already agreed amount for 2021 £7,000, followed by an increase up to £8,900 for years 2022-25 inclusive, this represents an annual increase of 10% up to 2025. However this would depend on operation of the Water Pad and admissions similar to 2019.

Assessment

We have carefully considered this in discussion with the Chairman and colleague officers. The concessionaire's request to be completely rent free in 2020 is perhaps a little ambitious, given many landlords and others have been offering 3 month's rent free and North Somerset have not even done that with their concessionaires. Moreover there was significant Government help available for small and self employed businesses.

It is true that 2020 will have been a very difficult year for him as a business. Apart from the initial lockdown in late March to June when we were legally unable to operate the Water Park or the café, the water has had to be kept switched off for the summer. In addition there has been the roof leak. On the other hand we did open the Park as a 'dry' adventure play area, and although the splash pad was switched off, balancing that fact we did open the Park free of charge, and advertised the fact that it was open free of charge. We have also accommodated his request to open the side gate to the Park meaning that he had the opportunity to open to custom from the sea front, where many people would walk during a summer of generally good weather.

Looking towards 2021. There is now hope for a vaccine sooner than anyone had anticipated, plus mass testing, which together gives realistic hope of a full season's operation being possible from April 2021. There is a remaining degree of uncertainty about next year but Covid permitting it is our intention to both open the park and operate the splash pad if legally allowed to do so, and by using our own staff to ensure the toilets are open for reasonable times throughout the season.

Taking all these considerations together, I recommend the committee to offer an agreement for a 50% reduction in the rent for 2020 plus a 50% reduction in rent for 2021. The reduction for 2021 to be whatever the outcome re coronavirus, so will apply even if he has a full year's operation, and overall he will have had a reduction of 1 whole year's rent during the term of his concession licence for the water park café.

As regards the request for a 10 year extension of his current 3 year licence. It would be premature to agree any extension at this time, as we do not know what future trading conditions for the café or the water park will be in 2021 or beyond and a 10 year extension would tie the town council's hands long into the future.

Replacement of Entrance Hut with a new Cabin

In 2021 it is proposed not to renew the previous contract with North Somerset to operate the Water Park making a saving of £35,000. Instead by combining the budgets for seasonal staffing of the Water Park and VIC, an efficiency saving can be made with a joint group of staff providing visitor information, managing admission to the water park and if capacity allows, possibly acting as 'Weston Welcomers' along the seafront directing people to the water park and other attractions.

Currently NSC provide a temporary hut for their staff so in order to operate the park directly, the town council will need to provide its own cabin (this will require the consent of NSC under the lease). The Tourism Manager has been consulted and supports the proposition that, whether or not the VIC remains in the Tropicana or a different more central location, visitor information can be made available at the water park which gets very busy on sunny days. Budget provision of up to £25,000 is proposed in 2021/22 for a larger cabin with double doors that will have space for VIC leaflets and materials and be more accessible in the event of lingering Covid restrictions.

Recommendation

1. That the café concessionaire be offered a 50% reduction in rent for each of the years 2020/21 and 2021/22.
2. That no agreement be given at the present time to extend the café licence from 2021.
3. That the Water Park be directly operated by the council in 2021 and a new cabin be installed for combined park admissions and visitor information.

Malcolm L Nicholson LL.B, DMS, PSLCC
Town Clerk
7th December 2020