

WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES OF THE TOURISM AND LEISURE WORKING PARTY HELD VIA ZOOM ON TUESDAY 10TH AUGUST 2021

Meeting Commenced: 2.30 pm

Meeting Concluded: 3.25 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Peter Crew (Chairman), John Crockford-Hawley, David Dash, David Hitchins, Jan Holloway, Pete McAleer (S) and Alan Peak.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Malcolm Nicholson (Town Clerk), Sarah Pearse (Deputy Town Clerk), Fay Powell (Assistant Town Clerk and Grounds Manager), Caroline Darlington (Tourism Manager), Matthew Hardy (Acting Destination Marketing Officer) Zoe Scott (Grounds Co-ordinator) (part attendance) and Samantha Bishop (Committee Officer) (part attendance).

96	<p>Apologies of Absence and Notifications of Substitutions</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ray Armstrong and Marcia Pepperall, with no substitutions.</p> <p>Councillor Catherine Gibbons was substituted by Councillor Pete McAleer.</p>
97	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest received.</p>
98	<p>To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the Tourism and Leisure Committee meeting held on the 8th June 2021</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.</p>
99	<p>At the request of the Chairman item 6. Was brought forward for discussion.</p> <p>Parks and Play Areas</p> <p>.1 Water Park</p> <p>The Grounds Coordinator verbally updated the Committee regarding the Water Park. The Water Park had been recommissioned after the end of the remaining government Covid restrictions on 19th July and was operating through the school holidays. It was being staffed from and jointly with the Visitor Information Centre, with the satellite centre in the new Cabin now operative.</p> <p><i>Councillor John Crockford-Hawley joined the meeting at 2.34 pm.</i></p> <p>The Committee noted that things were mostly going well although there had been some limited down time due to inclement weather or technical issues which were now largely resolved.</p>

	<p>The park was very popular and it was evident that it had been greatly missed by members of the public both local and visitors. This was also demonstrated by its very active social media.</p> <p>The Acting Destination Marketing Officer reported that he had done some work on new pictures for the Water park and would provide members to the link for this.</p> <p>.2 Dartmouth Close The Town Clerk reported that the snagging issues regarding the Dartmouth Close Play area had now been resolved and the Town Council was in a position to take on the site. As a brand new play area it should be relatively easy to maintain, and officers of Alliance Homes had previously indicated that they would be willing to transfer the area freehold rather than on along lease.</p> <p>Councillors welcomed the news and agreed that a freehold transfer would be ideal.</p> <p>.3 Parks and Play Areas The Grounds Coordinator updated on Parks and Play Areas.</p> <p>A report on the EMRP schedule would be submitted at the next meeting.</p> <p>Councillors were pleased to note that there had been less vandalism in recent months and hoped this would continue.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the verbal reports be noted.</p>
<p>100</p>	<p>Tourism Function Update</p> <p>The report of the Tourism Manager had been circulated prior to the meeting and was shared on screen as a Powerpoint presentation.</p> <p>.1 Tourism Statistics Introducing the Tourism Statistics, the Tourism Manager was pleased to report that the situation for town businesses was very healthy. There was a boom in 'staycations' and all the seafront hotels were pretty much full until the end of August.</p> <p>Also the average length of stay had increased to 3 to 7 nights and it was clear from the VIC, where visitors were asked where they came from, that the demographic of visitors had changed. People were coming from further afield, from places such as Manchester and Morcambe, and the main interests being recorded was in fresh air and walks.</p> <p>.2 Love Weston Members Input Love Weston Members were reporting good business in accordance with the increase in visitor stays in Weston. In particular Duets Restaurant who had been added this year were thrilled by the number of references they were getting from Visit Weston and Rowans Café in Uphill were similarly reporting good results.</p> <p>.3 Social Media In terms of Social Media, it was noted that Twitter had been downgraded as not particularly producing good results for destination marketing and less time would</p>

be used to post on Twitter. More success was being reported from posts on Tik Tok, the use of which was growing rapidly.

.4 Procurement of a New Website

The Deputy Town Clerk's report on the procurement of a new website had previously been circulated with the agenda.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the council had been in contract with New Mind/ Simpleview since 2016. The initial contract had been for 3 years but had been extended for a further year to 2020, and then again for 2 more years due to the Covid pandemic. The current extension would therefore expire on 31st March 2022, and 3 months' notice was needed to terminate the contract.

In accordance with good procurement practice in the public sector it was therefore necessary for the council to re-procure a website on the open market this year. There were two options for the Committee to consider and decide between: - to prepare a full specification for the website, which would require expert technical assistance to put together, or alternatively to produce a 'Design and Build' tender focussing on outputs and objectives for destination marketing.

As reported to ensure a robust and transparent process, tenders would be put through a scoring matrix. The second decision for the Committee to make was to decide on a tender scoring split between price and presentation. Giving a good percentage mark to the presentation would help to ensure a good quality provider as well as meeting the council's social value objectives.

In addition to save time and avoid a delay, the Committee was asked to approve delegation to the Chairman, Vice Chairman and the Town Clerk to approve the final specification. Finally, the Committee was asked to appoint three councillors to form a panel to score presentations. While officers would be present to ask questions and make comments the final scoring of tenders would be left to councillors.

Debate ensued. In general, it was agreed that although Simpleview were regarded as the market leader, a fresh procurement process was now required to ensure the best deal.

It was felt that if a three-member panel was going to do the final scoring, it would be sensible for the same three-member panel to be delegated to approve the tender specification. Councillor Peter Crew, Alan Peak and John Crockford-Hawley volunteered to make up the panel to consider the specification and score presentations (the council's substitution scheme would apply if any of these were unavailable).

Members supported a price/presentation scoring of 70%/30%.

A vote was taken and **carried**.

RESOLVED:

1. That the timeline for procurement of the Visit Weston website, as reported, be approved.

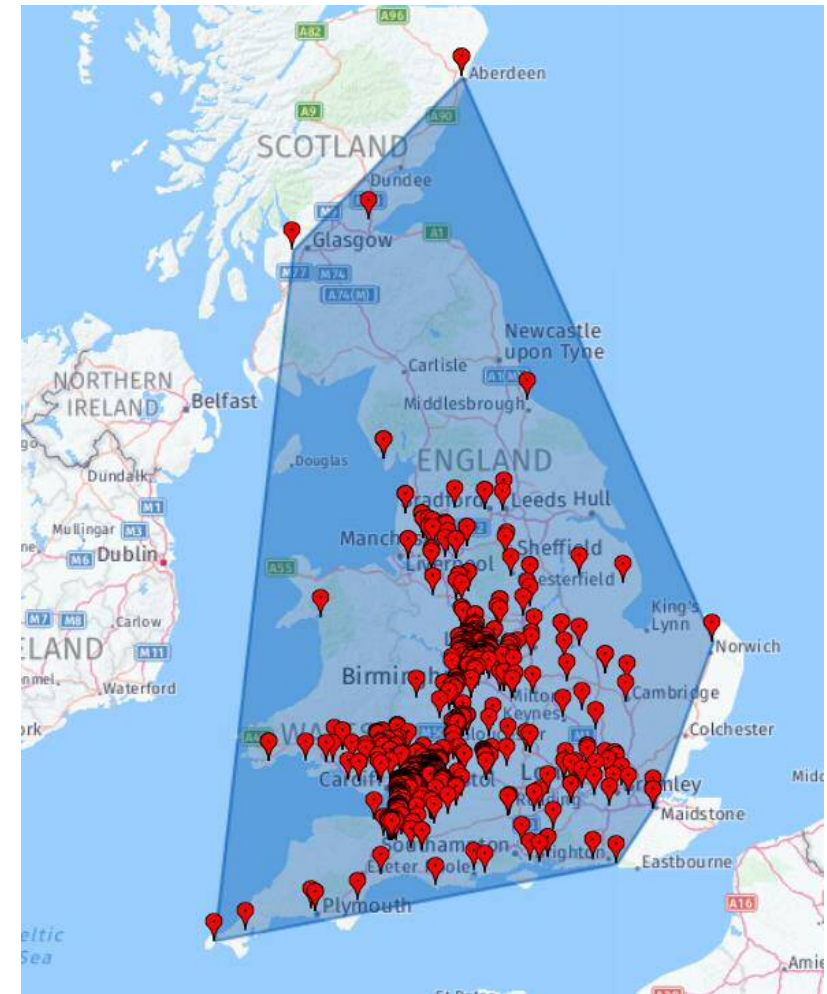
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. That the tender be advertised under option 2 as reported, IE to produce a 'Design and Build' tender focussing on outputs and objectives for destination marketing. 3. To approve delegation of approval of the tender specification to a panel of Cllrs Peter Crew, Alan Peak and John Crockford-Hawley in consultation with the Town Clerk. 4. To set a price/presentation scoring ratio of 70%/30% 5. To appoint Cllrs Crew, Peak and Crockford-Hawley to receive the presentations from tenderers, anticipated to be during the week commencing 15th November 2021 and via Zoom if Covid restrictions so required.
<p>101</p>	<p>VIC Update</p> <p>The report of the Tourism Manager had been circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <p>The Tourism Manager reported that the Visitor Information Centre in the Tropicana had been very busy with over 7000 visitors since it reopened post lockdown. The customers were being asked to wear masks and the majority did.</p> <p>By contrast the satellite VIC at the Waterpark was relatively quiet, and was still a learning experience. Perhaps people were unaware it was a VIC and needed publicity that the council was operating in both the north and south parts of the seafront.</p> <p>The Tuk Tuks were being used to connect the two sites and North Somerset Council were now allowing to park them by the Grand Pier, except when the pitch was occupied by the National Trust.</p> <p>Debate ensued. It was noted that the tuk tuks were also being used by Weston in Bloom and by the Museum.</p> <p>A member commented that the VIC team were short staffed due to an inability to recruit sufficient team leaders. This was a reflection of the wider jobs market and the fact that the posts were only seasonal. It was hoped that this would not be a problem next year when recruitment could start sooner.</p> <p>The Chairman invited members to visit the VIC which was open from 10.30am to 3.30pm daily.</p> <p>The Grand Atlantic Hotel was kindly allowing the tuk tuks to be parked in their grounds, however it was noted that garaging would need to be sourced for the winter months.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the report be noted.</p>
	<p>There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 3.25 pm.</p> <p>Signed: Dated:</p> <p>Chairman of the Tourism & Leisure Working Party</p>

4.1 Tourism Statistics

Through capturing postcodes at the waterpark and from records kept at the VIC, we are able to demonstrate that over the summer season of 2021 and the enforced staycation economy, visitors to Weston-super-Mare have emanated from all four corners of the UK.

South Wales, the Midlands and Somerset continue to produce high numbers, but it is encouraging to view that as reported previously, London, Yorkshire and Manchester have grown considerably as new markets.

We shall use this information when planning destination marketing campaigns and during future discussions with the Weston Placemaking Agency.



4.2 Visit Weston Partners

Hotels are reporting that they are running very high occupancy. This is a combination of September long stay holidays and a resurgence in the coach touring market which is filling larger hotels such as the Royal Grosvenor.

Prices have risen, for example the Commodore Hotel in Sand Bay, now relaunched as South Sands, rooms start at £170 a night.

There have been some mixed comments from some of the larger hotels regarding the BID ballot. The hotels have had a lean time financially and are looking at every penny. For example, The Royal Grosvenor's weekly electricity bill is £600. The BID levy is viewed with scepticism, but the hotel does rely on the street wardens on a regular basis.

- For the month of July only, hotel/guest house accommodation were searched 14,833 times and self catering 15,053 times. In the period 1st July – 31st August, the combination rose to 65,213 searches.

4.3. Website & Social Media

- This slide shows the top 15 locations of visitors to the website as shown on our Google Analytics.
- It is useful to note that Manchester, already identified from visitors to the VIC, now appears in the top 12.

City ?	Acquisition
	Users ? ↓
	105,247 <small>% of Total: 100.00% (105,247)</small>
1. London	22,847 (20.50%)
2. Bristol	13,962 (12.53%)
3. (not set)	10,881 (9.76%)
4. Birmingham	5,445 (4.88%)
5. Weston-super-Mare	4,730 (4.24%)
6. Cardiff	1,894 (1.70%)
7. Chicago	1,635 (1.47%)
8. Taunton	1,541 (1.38%)

Total website views 1st Aug – 23rd Sept.
286,590

9. Southampton	1,450 (1.30%)
10. Bridgwater	1,421 (1.27%)
11. Clevedon	1,151 (1.03%)
12. Manchester	1,137 (1.02%)
13. Coventry	1,136 (1.02%)
14. Cheltenham	974 (0.87%)
15. Bath	794 (0.71%)

4.4 Procurement of Website

Simpleview remain the market leaders in the field of destination marketing. We have traditionally signed a 3 year contract as this attracts an annual discount. The contract has gone to tender and several companies have registered interest.

5.1 Update on VIC at the Tropicana

- As of 24th September, the footfall counter reports 40,954 visitors. We have had a very busy short season and continue to note that visitors are coming from further afield and are also staying longer, between 3 and 7 nights.
- FAQ's regarding outdoor activities and walking have increased significantly. Unfortunately so have complaints regarding the distance from town to the VIC, especially now that there is no land train.
- The VIC has received many awards and compliments on its presentation, officers feel that this can be easily replicated in a new location and are researching alternatives. **The Committee is requested to confirm if we should give notice to the landlords of intention to quit .**

5.2. Waterpark Satellite VIC

- The facility was opened on Thursday 22nd July. Hot weather on 23rd July saw takings of over £1,000.
- Between 10 and 11am a minimum of 2 staff are needed to cope with queues when the weather is fine.
- We shall do some in-resort advertising to bring the VIC to people's attention, currently we are not receiving tourist inquiries though this will come with time.
- The 2 Team Leaders are supervising the facility along with casual staff
- Total revenue £8,930.95 (confirmed income)
- Total visitor number 4272 (figure taken from till records)

5.3. Tuk Tuks

- We are searching for under-cover garaging for the vehicles during winter, the town hall was approached by the town clerk and have declined our request for spaces in their underground car park. If any Members know of lock-ups we would be very grateful!
- It is not possible to obtain pedlars certificates for motorised vehicles and whereas other unitary authorities offer flexible arrangements for street trading licences, NSC insist on an annual licence at £3,000 which is prohibitive. It was never a plan to trade from them, however, they could a useful addition to our income stream.
- The vehicles are being used across the council services and have been positioned across town for example at the railway station and the big Tesco, images follow. We have not been able to use them on the Prom by the pier even though permission was sought and granted by NSC in advance of their purchase. This is due to NSC insisting that no vehicles may drive on the Prom between 10am and 4pm

