

**WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE TOURISM AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE BLAKEHAY ON TUESDAY 4th October 2022**

Meeting Commenced: 2.32 pm

Meeting Concluded: 4.21 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Peter Crew (Chairman), Ray Armstrong, Dorothy Agassiz, David Dash, Jan Holloway, Roger Bailey, John Crockford-Hawley and Richard Tucker.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Sarah Pearse (Deputy Town Clerk), Fay Powell (Assistant Town Clerk-Operational Services), Caroline Darlington (Tourism Manager), Molly Maher (Senior Development Officer), Zoe Scott (Grounds Coordinator) and Rebecca Saunders (Civic & Committee Officer).

139 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Hitchins who was substituted by Councillor Roger Bailey and Councillor Catherine Gibbons with no substitution.

140 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

141 To approve the accuracy of the minutes of The Tourism and Leisure Committee meeting held on 14th June 2022.

The minutes of the meeting had been previously circulated with the agenda.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Richard Tucker

SECONDED BY: Councillor Ray Armstrong

RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

142 Finance Reports

The report of The Deputy Town Clerk had been circulated ahead of the meeting.

The Deputy Town Clerk thanked the Grounds team for making the waterpark so successful this season.

It was advised that the budget would need to be considered for the replacement of the plant equipment as this year had been a struggle to keep it up and running with such high demand, it was noted this would be picked up in the Grounds Co-ordinators report late on the agenda.

The Chairman advised that he felt bringing services in house instead of paying through special expenses had been financially beneficial which was demonstrable across multiple services areas that sit under the Assistant Town Clerk – Operations Services.

RESOLVED: That the report of The Deputy Town Clerk be noted.

143 Tourism Update

The report of the Tourism Manager had been previously.

.1 Visit Weston Partners

The Tourism Manager reported that since the report had been published, there had been positive engagement with some of the venues from page 1.

There had been no increase in restaurants signing up to the £99 deal, with only Revo & South Sands being the only venues to utilise the deal.

A member warned of further accommodation closures in the coming months due to the cost of living crisis.

2.45 pm Councillor Dot Aggasiz left the meeting.

2.46 pm Councillors Dot Aggasiz and Jan Holloway joined the meeting.

The Tourism Manager suggested producing a directory on the Visit Weston Website for businesses that could not afford to become partners. Instead they would get a simple logo and contact details for free, which may incentive them to upgrade to partner status The following year if they had seen benefits. This would have the additional advance of populating the website to give a more balanced view of restaurants and cafes open in the area as example, noting this area in particular had proved hard to increase customer sign ups in past years.

PROPOSED BY- Councillor Peter Crew

SECONDED BY- Councillor Richard Tucker

A vote was taken and **carried** accordingly.

RESOLVED: To produce a free directory on the Visit Weston website for unsigned venues.

.2 Statistics

The Tourism Manager reported that during the period of mourning in September in line with Council policy, the Home page was directed to a condolence page which had affected the traffic on the website but this rate had bounced straight back since.

There had been an increase in traffic over the summer period and both social media platforms had also seen an increase during this period.

It was reported that Simpleview were changing the way they reported back statistics to make reviewing easier.

The next areas to be expanded would be car park information.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

VIC

.3 Satellite (Waterpark)

The Tourism Manager reported that the venue would be operated by two staff members until the end of October and people now knew where the new site was. A second VIC had been located in The Bay Café below the SEE Monster and had proved very successful. Staff here were directing visitors to other locations in the town to encourage them to spend money in local businesses.

There would need to be some diversities with merchandise once the VIC was located at HQ, as things which had proved popular on the seafront might not sell as well in new location.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

.4 Silica Update

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that North Somerset Council had recently invested some funds to replace the lights at the venue to improve the look and Weston Town Council had received an informal proposal from North Somerset Council to take over the site.

North Somerset Council would allocate funds to the value of £30,000 to be used to renovate the site and a maintenance grant may also be possible for future years – to be confirmed.

Debate ensued with the collective acknowledgment that the Silica would be ideal to turn this into a digital noticeboard site with the possibility of revenue from third parties wanting to advertise there, understanding that the current limitations of what can be done in the space but it was felt it could still provide a great location for a further satellite VIC (Digital). Furthermore, it could provide a prominent central location to have Welcome Hosts in future years adding to the locations already achieved so far. It was noted that the physical structure would not allow for staff to work from it so any provision would be remote and outside.

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that negotiations were moving fast from informal discussions held prior with NSC contractors undertaking the lighting upgrade currently. As such the committee needed to formally consider the council's intention for taking over the site as had been muted informally in the past so NSC could be advised accordingly. and requested that the committee note that they had been formally notified and were happy to proceed in principle.

PROPOSED BY-Councillor Dot Aggassiz

SECONDED BY-Councillor Jan Holloway

A vote was taken and **carried** accordingly.

RESOLVED: It was agreed that Officers should continue with negotiations to take over the Silica from NSC and that subject to final legal agreements they committee were happy to proceed in principle. Noting formal asset transfer would need to go to full town council for final approval. Estimate should be included in next year's budget for operational purposes.

144 Tourism Updates

.1 Team Update

The Tourism Manager reported that the team leaders' contracts had been extended until the end of October in order to support the SEE Monster opening times.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

.2 Mobile VIC

The Assistant Town Clerk - Operational Services reported that both Tuk Tuks were off the road with gearbox and battery problems. There wasn't any local mechanics that were able to maintain them, despite efforts made to find one and the manufactures had sent someone from India to fix the last problem but that had only resolved the problem for a short time.

A member enquired if now was the time to accept that they had failed.

The Tourism Manger reported that the Town Clerk was in discussions to receive a refund for them but not to write off as a failure as they could be stationary noticeboards.

.3 Website Update

The Tourism Manager reported that the website had improved efficiency and customers had embraced the new look and logo.

RESOLVED: That the reports be noted.

.1 Water Park End of Season Update

The Assistant Town Clerk - Operational Services conveyed thanks to the Grounds team who had worked tirelessly to ensure a 7 day a week operation could be kept up for the summer season, which required a member of the team in the pump room all day monitoring and adjusting the chemicals. A lot of other water facilities had been forced to close over the season due to national shortage-of chemical supplies but this had not effected ours due to good forward planning of stock and the team's management.

It was noted that there had been a few minor incidents of anti-social behaviour from some of the park users with some incidents of graffiti but community response had been quick to resolve these issues and the grounds team making good the areas promptly.

The Chairman thanked all involved with the smooth running of the waterpark.

RESOLVED: That the reports be noted.

.2 Splash Pad end of Life

The Grounds Coordinator reported that the splash pad was now over 10 years old and had a mixture of old and new parts. It was felt it was the right time to instruct

outside companies to come re-evaluate which parts were working and what the maximum capacity for the site should be. It was felt that a complete replacement was the best solution to avoid a continued problem with both the equipment and ability to find a maintenance contractor to support the function.

3.37 pm Councillor Ray Armstrong left the meeting.

To ensure another successful season next year, the pump room needing reviewing beforehand and options of foot baths/showers would need to be explored. It was noted that this had been explored in the past when the park was installed and at the time this was not an option due to the flood defences that are underneath the site but Officers should re visit this as equipment may well have progressed since 2009 to now allow this within the constraints (i.e. drainage & water flow for legionella requirements).

A member mentioned that The Town Council had offered to supply showers somewhere on the seafront previously and suggested this should also be explored on the site utilising this budget potentially.

3.40 pm Councillor Ray Armstrong re-joined the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Deputy Town Clerk formally request Policy and Finance committee request that the normal procurement process is suspended and that regulation 11.1.1(2) be evoked in recognition that this is specialist works.

7.3 Tender for Maintenance Contract

The Chairman advised that the tender had gone out, but only one response received and submitted at a cost of £156k, three times the £50k budget and to employ a fulltime member of staff would have been more cost effective. So a rethink would be needed.

RESLOVED: That the submitted tender should be formally declined and that following the appointment of the grounds manager the situation should be reviewed.

7.4 General Update

The Grounds Coordinator reported that GB Sports were still supporting with regular inspections and a member of the grounds team had undergone a course to help with maintenance so in house repairs were now possible. This specialist training was being provided by GB Sports and was instilling more confidence in the team to take on more responsibilities.

Community Rangers were doing maintenance of finger posts around the town.

7.5 Ellenborough Park West

The Senior Development Officer reported that The Well Being Officer was working on a timetable of events for next year to include Yoga Classes and wildlife talks from local experts. A Natural England £8k grant had been secured to be used on signage, a development plan and the event timetable.

The Assistant Town Clerk reported that the funding was well timed as she would've been requesting a Management plan for when the lease was extended. There was currently a problem with rough sleepers in the park but the site could not be cleared

to discourage this until a management plan was in place.

The Senior Development Officer reported there would be a meeting with Natural England the following week.

8.1 Funding Update

Castle Batch SEND Play Area

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the fund had started at £200k but was currently at £320k due to Big Worle funding. Further discussions were being held with NSC to see if there were opportunities to release more money from their play budgets.

The team were confident £400k would be achieved.

It was requested to formally accept £20k funding from North Somerset Council and the £10k Lottery Grant.

PROPOSED BY-Councillor Pete Crew
SECONDED BY-Councillor Richard Tucker

A vote was taken and **carried** accordingly.

RESOLVED- To accept North Somerset Council £20,000 and the Lottery Funding £10,000.

8.2 Procurement Update

Members were shown two plans of layout which included sensory areas, wheelchair trampolines and swings.

The Deputy Town Clerk urged members not to delay a decision due to cost of materials rising, reiterating that the interview panel had been a robust process with a clear conclusion and recommendation for the committee to consider.

This was to be the only free SENCO play area in the south west and would be for children up to 16 years old.

The plans could be slightly downgraded should the £400k not be achieved.

The panel which had included staff from local SENCO schools felt the top scorer would deliver the best product.

A member enquired as to the maintenance plan, the Deputy Town Clerk reported there was £200k in budget for maintenance of play areas.

PROPOSED BY- Councillor Pete Crew
SECONDED BY- Councillor Richard Tucker

A vote was taken and **carried** accordingly.

RESOLVED-To accept Sutcliff Play as the chosen contractor for Castle Batch Play area at £400k.

8.3 Community Engagement.

The Assistant Town Clerk reported that security would be Castle Batch biggest challenge and talks were in place to access the community Centre on site to allow use of toilets and a programme had been started to see if concessions on site could be encouraged, therefore aiding with security.

The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that there would be a focused community engagement evening to start the launch of the project with the aim of building relationships in the community to help with final development (Plants / security / other uses) in coming weeks now the contractor had been appointed.

There was scope to install CCTV at the site also and it was hoped the wider community would get behind the project.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 4.21 pm

Signed: Dated:

Chairman of the Tourism & Leisure Committee