

**WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF THE TOURISM AND LEISURE COMMITTEE  
HELD AT GROVE HOUSE ON  
MONDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2018**

**Meeting Commenced:** 7.00 pm

**Meeting Concluded:** 8.30pm

**PRESENT:** Councillors Peter Crew (Chairman), Ray Armstrong, Roger Bailey (S), James Clayton, James Davis, Peter Fox (S), Jos Holder, Denise Hunt (S), Ian Porter and Clive Webb.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillor Catherine Gibbons, Tania Middlemiss (Assistant Town Clerk), Sarah Pearse (Deputy Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer), Caroline Darlington (Tourism Manager), Ellie Allen-Somers (Tourism Marketing Officer), Rob Thurston (Grounds Manager) Zoe Scott (Community and Grounds Administrator), and Mrs Anne Skinner.

Mrs Ann Skinner addressed the committee in support of a public petition for Castle Batch Play Area refurbishment which had been received at the Town Council meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2018 due to be discussed under item 4 on the agenda.

Further names for the petition were received by the Chairman who apologised that the motion should have appeared as an agenda item in its own right.

<b>163</b>	<p><b>Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutions</b></p> <p>Apologies of absence were received from Councillors, Richard Nightingale, Alan Peak and John Crockford-Hawley.</p> <p>Councillor Martin Williams was substituted by Councillor Peter Fox. Councillor Richard Nightingale was substituted by Councillor Roger Bailey. Councillor Alan Peak was substituted by Councillor Denise Hunt.</p>
<b>164</b>	<p><b>To receive Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest received.</p>
<b>165</b>	<p><b>To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the Tourism and Leisure Committee meeting held on the 6<sup>th</sup> August 2018.</b></p> <p>The minutes of the last meeting had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting.</p>

## **Parks and Play Areas**

The report of the Grounds Manager had been previously circulated with the agenda.

The Chairman referred to recent procurement where discussions had taken place about the re-use of equipment on other sites. Reference was made to the maintenance program which looked at the quality of equipment across all sites.

The Grounds Manager confirmed that the Town Council had 21 play areas which were scheduled for review as part of a bigger program, which included dates that would be fed into the 2019/2020 budget planning process.

### **Canberra Road Play Area**

The Grounds Manager informed the committee that the contract for Canberra Road had been awarded to Proludic as agreed at the last Tourism and Leisure Committee and work would commence following a final pre meeting on site with the contractors scheduled for the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2018.

### **Castle Batch Play Area**

The Grounds Manager clarified that some items from the Canberra Road site were in good order but did not meet BS/EN standards which had been updated since the original equipment was installed. In addition there were costs associated with the re-siting of equipment, excavation, installation and new surfacing which were non viable as a short term measure.

### **Wyvern Close**

The Grounds Manager confirmed that contract documents were distributed to companies who were successful at the expressions of interest stage for the design and build project of Wyvern Close with an agreed budget of £14,000. Four quotations were returned on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> September by Caloo, Sutcliffe Play, Proludic and Wicksteed. The Grounds Manager advised members that technical evaluations had been made, the scores of which were detailed in his report and requested members to consider and appoint a contractor.

A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly it was:

**166.1 RESOLVED:** That Proludic be selected for the Wyvern Close Play Area project.

### **Future Maintenance and Budget Planning**

The Grounds Manager advised members that a robust mechanism for effective financial planning for future refurbishment and ongoing maintenance for the 21 Parks and Play Areas was required.

The Chairman suggested that whilst the process was underway that petition organisers for Castle Batch Play Area consult with residents.

A Member asked for a timeframe and details of the refurbishment budget and programme.

The Deputy Town Clerk clarified that play area refurbishment was a 5 year programme which came back to budget setting each year, the amount for this year was £90,000 with any earmarked reserve proposals needing Town Council approval. There was no revenue budget for Castle Batch Play area in 2018/19 without spending outside of budget.

Discussion ensued on the possibility of other requests coming forward and exceptions being made, the perspective of the residents, contingency and the need for proper maintenance assessments needing to be made before approvals were given.

Officers confirmed that equipment had been inherited from North Somerset Council and

some sites were in better condition than others and that exceptions would be made in the case of surface replacements such as matting for reasons of health and safety.

**166.2 RESOLVED:** That budget implications in the planned maintenance mechanism for play areas are taken forward for consideration in the budget setting process by the Policy and Finance Committee.

#### **General Play Area Management**

Members noted that routine play area inspections were continuing and the annual independent inspection started on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2018 which would include a view by the inspector on the life span for each piece of equipment.

The Grounds Team had undertaken their RPII play inspection training to uplift one team member to “Operational Level” in September. In addition the Grounds Team also received refresher training for “Routine Visual” level inspectors so that their qualifications could be updated as these expired in October.

#### **Parks and Open Spaces**

The flower beds had performed very well due to the lower temperatures in September. The beds had been re-planted for the spring displays. The dot plants in the flower beds had been saved and passed on to Westhaven School to be used reused in the next years displays.

A query on whether the offer of services by Town Council staff to other Councils was possible with play area inspections. The Grounds Manager confirmed this was not possible with the current capacity due to the need to service Town Council assets.

A query was raised on whether the Council had or were planning any wheelchair accessible swings to which the Grounds Manager explained that disability was very wide ranging and a wheelchair swing was a very specific item with a high cost which had to be balanced against the numbers of wheelchair users.

**166.3 RESOLVED:** That the report of the Grounds Manager be received and noted.

167

#### **Waterpark**

The report of the Grounds Manager had been previously circulated with the agenda.

#### **Catering Concession & Entrance Ticket Sales**

Members noted the concession arrangement and that ticket sales had gone well. Challenges the season had had been weather related i.e. The Beast from the East in March causing pump issues and there had been an unforeseen breakdown but opening had been consistent since the recent good weather. The Grounds Manager advised that the wooden play equipment was deteriorating so going forward, the Waterpark would be included in the planned maintenance programme. Winter arrangements would be made for pump storage offsite to preserve the condition and capacity of the pump equipment.

#### **Operational Management Update**

The Grounds Manager noted they were continuing routine independent lab tests of the water quality and there had been very good results. These tests had given assurance that the plant room operations were maintaining water quality within safe levels.

During September, Somerset Wood Recycling completed the work of the rebuild of the sandpit structure and walkway.

	<p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the report of the Grounds Manager be received and noted.</p> <hr/> <p><i>The Grounds Manager and Community Grounds Administrator left the meeting at 7.45pm.</i></p> <p><b>168 Destination Website - Visit Weston-super-Mare</b></p> <p>The report of the Tourism Marketing Officer had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p><b>New website update</b> The Tourism Marketing Officer gave an overview of the Visit Weston website's performance with September online website visitors.</p> <p>Members noted that the Tourism Marketing Officer was currently working on content creation for Halloween and Bonfire Night and traffic growth on the run up to Xmas.</p> <p><b>Website statistics</b> Despite statistics being down in August and September which was in line with footfall and national trends, the overall stats were up 27% year on year.</p> <p>Members noted that Southampton was new in the top five demographics in August and September and that the top page viewed was the Visit Weston-super-Mare home page, followed by 'things to do' and 'monthly highlights calendar'.</p> <p><b>Social Media</b> Visit Weston social media was performing extremely well with a total of 7186 followers. On Facebook, Visit Weston has reached 2307 likes on Facebook due to a popular post about the announcement of Icescape @ the Tropicana returning, which reached 51,000 people.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the report of the Tourism Marketing Officer be received and noted.</p>
<p><b>169</b></p>	<p><b>Destination Marketing</b></p> <p>The report of the Tourism Marketing Officer had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p><b>2018/19 Advertising Campaigns</b> Members noted the summer campaign at Bristol Airport in baggage claim had been very well received with excellent feedback. Details of the upcoming Autumn/Winter campaign with Admedia at Reading, Leigh Delamere and Frankley Service Stations from 26<sup>th</sup> November for six weeks were noted including the sign off of new artwork.</p> <p><b>Media Coverage</b> BBC Bristol had broadcast live outside the Tropicana where Town Council Visitor Managers, the Chairman of Tourism and Leisure, local business and the public had participated in the lunchtime slot.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the report of the Tourism Marketing Officer be received and noted.</p>
<p><b>170</b></p>	<p><b>Visitor Information Centre (VIC)</b></p> <p>The report of the Tourism Manager had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p>

The Chairman thanked the tourism team for their efforts during 2018 which had resulted in the VIC receiving confirmation of a successful nomination at the Bristol and Bath Tourism Awards which were taking place in Bath on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

### **Online Booking Function**

The Tourism Manager advised that in response to comments from several partners regarding the accommodation booking functionality on the new Visit Weston-super-Mare website we wished to adjust the website settings and turn off of the booking facility to enable better display results for all of our accommodation partners.

Members noted the breakdown of the current 82 partners, most of them did not have an online booking system and operated an 'on request' policy, and therefore it was not going to have a huge impact.

The Tourism Manager confirmed that Visit Exeter and Visit South Devon had also made the same move to satisfy customer feedback and turned off their online bookings for the same reasons.

**170.1 RESOLVED:** To turn off the booking system and show all accommodation units on Visit Weston-super-Mare website enabling customers click through to the accommodations own website for direct bookings.

### **Autumn Opening Times 2018**

The Tourism Manger confirmed that careful management of the staff budget for the Visitor Information Centre had enabled it to stay operational and extend the season by several weeks. Currently we were operating at weekends during October and would close for the season on 11th November enabling 11 am to 4 pm cover for the half term holidays and this would also include the busy Carnival and Remembrance weekend where high footfall was likely.

### **Shop, Ticket Sales, Visitor Numbers & Footfall**

Members noted that shop and tickets sales were expected to exceed the expected income target. Footfall had been high in the VIC with 15,738 visitors counted up to 21<sup>st</sup> September. There had been an increase in 'walk ins' for accommodation enquiries, demographics had now changed in the shoulder season, dog-friendly enquires were on the increase and there was good news from larger hotels who were reporting full bed capacity.

The Tourism Manager updated on the position reported at the last meeting that the Town Centre Partnership had queried their visitor number figures for the seafront with their supplier and had concluded their equipment was no longer fit for purpose. They were planning to install new equipment on Big Lamp Corner and the promenade near the Grand Pier and other areas using mobile phone technology.

### **Surveys**

Members noted very relevant and worthwhile economic analysis contained in the Tourism Managers report which had been received from North Somerset Council and the South West Research Company on tourism arrivals and spend in Weston-super-Mare for 2016. These included: staying visits, purpose of visits, overseas visitors, accommodation types, associated expenditure breakdowns and employment impacts.

**170.2 RESOLVED:** Members concluded that the analysis showed good economic and employment related impact for Weston-super-Mare.

The Assistant Town Clerk added that figures would likely have risen in 2017 and 2018 as a result of increased numbers of stays by parents as a result of Weston College's expansion plans and national tourism trends predicting further increases in staycations and UK

	<p>inbound tourism.</p> <p><b>Beach Wheelchair</b> The Tourism Manager informed members that the beach wheelchair had been a success and had gone out on free loan 4 times since the last Tourism and Leisure Committee. The VIC had received photos from carers and the Tourism Marketing Officer was gaining publicity via social media and press releases to spread the word and increase the usage.</p> <p><b>Water Bottles</b> The branded recycled water bottles were proving popular with over 50% sold and covering our costs of purchasing the drinking water.</p> <p><b>Interactive TV Screen</b> North Somerset and Town Council officers will continue discussions regarding the installation of the screen over the autumn period which have been delayed by planning permission approval and insurance queries.</p> <p><b>170.3 RESOLVED:</b> That the report of the Tourism Manager be received and noted.</p>
171	<p><b>Budget Considerations</b></p> <p>The reports of the Tourism Manager and Tourism Marketing Officer had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>The Assistant Town Clerk gave an overview on the budget considerations for the tourism function and advised that in consultation with her team and the Chairman of Tourism and Leisure a slightly different use of budgets was recommended for 2019/20. The main areas included the Visit Weston-super-Mare website, destination and in-resort advertising and VIC with associated costs, many of which were cyclical costs. Should the Town Council wish to grow this successful function by further promoting in bound UK tourism numbers into Weston and taking advantage of the Brexit affect then budget provision increases in advertising and marketing were recommended.</p> <p>Members referred to the economic impact analysis in the previous item which showed increases in both economic and employment related spend for Weston-super-Mare.</p> <p><b>VIC Staffing</b> The Tourism Manager recommended 1 Supervisor x 3 Assistants, totalling 85 contracted hours along with a provision for Casual Workers to enable a 28 week trading period to ensure a more thorough early season induction of staff and longer opening hours (10-5) during the summer holidays.</p> <p><b>VIC Merchandise</b> Increased provision for stock - £7,000</p> <p><b>Visit Weston Website</b> DMS and Website Hosting £7,500 SEO Campaign £3,450 Domain Renewals £300</p> <p><b>Destination Marketing</b> £30,000 budget for destination advertising to enable higher profile advertising campaigns.</p> <p><b>In-resort Marketing/Advertising</b> Budget provision - £2,500</p>

**Equipment and Interactive TV Screening**

The Tourism Mangers report advised that a minimum three year lease would need to be entered into with the provider, the initial costs of which would be contained in the current financial year with a monthly cost of £349.52 per month plus £395 for installation for 2019/2020.

The Committee was urged to consider reducing press and print advertising which was considered costly and out of date and consider promoting Weston-super-Mare as part of a wider regional partnership arrangement with Visit Somerset and Weston College who had recently received a substantial Visit England grant. Partners were sought to promote South West Tourism and to drive visitor to the Somerset area as a result of the Brexit impact on UK Tourism. A suggestion of a £1,800 budget provision was put forward for this provision.

Visit England had been very prominent at the ‘In Bloom Awards’ and this was a good utilisation of funds.

Members agreed that Weston-super-Mare was a gateway to the South West and were supportive of Officers discussing joint promotion of the town with Weston College and Visit Somerset. The Chairman was against this proposal.

**RESOLVED:**

1. To reduce print advertising in favour of advertising in other ways.
2. To approve in principal, subject to overall budget approval by the Council the budget proposals for tourism promotion included in the officer reports and of the Tourism and Leisure Committee (above). To include a 28 week trading season for the VIC with improved resilience in contracted staff; an increase in destination advertising to include higher profile campaigns and joint South West advertising; an increase in the VIC merchandise budget, continuing ‘in-resort’ advertising at the same level as 2018/19; and on-going financial provision to cover monthly lease fees for interactive TV screening.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.30pm.

Signed: ..... Dated: .....  
Councillor Peter Crew  
**Chairman of the Tourism & Leisure Committee**