

**WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE TOURISM AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE BLAKEHAY ON TUESDAY 15TH AUGUST 2023**

Meeting Commenced: 2.32 pm

Meeting Concluded: 4.19 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Peter Crew (Chairman), John Crockford-Hawley, Mike Bell, Roger Bailey, Robert Skeen (S), Annabelle Chard, Owen James (S), Caroline Reynolds, John Standfield, Joe Bambridge and Richard Tucker.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Sarah Pearse (Deputy Town Clerk /Responsible Financial Officer), Jane Murch (Visitor and Information Services Manager) and Rebecca Saunders (Civic & Committee Officer).

119	<p>Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillors Catherine Gibbons who was substituted by Owen James and Simon Harrison-Morse who was substituted by Robert Skeen.</p>
120	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest received.</p>
121	<p>To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the Tourism and Leisure Committee meeting held on the 13th June 2023</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>An error was noted on page 4 regarding the £99 joining fee, which needed approval. The resolution was misworded and therefore, did not go to Town Council for approval, but was approved at the Policy & Finance, meeting on the 14th August.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor John Stanfield SECONDED BY: Councillor Richard Tucker</p> <p>A vote was taken and accordingly it was carried.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.</p>
122	<p>Finance Reports</p> <p>The Deputy Town Clerk tabled an additional report giving a financial overview of the Waterpark.</p> <p>It was reported that the financial position was as expected at this point in the year with minimal spend in Tourism apart from some advertising spend and the cost of hire for the satellite VIC at The Sovereign.</p> <p>A member queried why the admission income for The Waterpark was down from previous years.</p>

The Deputy Town Clerk reminded members that The Waterpark had been closed at the start of the season due to the replacement of the plant room which had affected income from admissions but, was hoped that the current amount could be doubled by the end of the season.

It was noted the concession at the Waterpark which provided some rental income was due to expire in March 2024 and as such options for this area would now need to be explored ahead of next year's season (2024).

2.38 pm Councillor Owen James joined the meeting.

RESOLVED That the reports of the Deputy Town Clerk be noted.

123 Tourism Update

.1 Special Offer for new business -retail and food & beverage

The Visitor and Information Services Manager tabled some leaflets with special offers to be rolled out in the run up to Christmas . The £99 offer would be available to food and beverage and retail businesses and would provide a £69 saving from the usual bronze rate, Weston BID were keen to promote the offer as it would support a lot of smaller , independent businesses in the town . It was hoped that the offer would create a lot of interest.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Mike Bell

SECONDED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey

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

RESOLVED: That the £99 Food & Beverage offer run from August-December 2023.

.2 To receive the Tourism Manager Halloween and Christmas plans 2023

The Visitor and Information Services Manager reported that a lot of partners had raised in past years there had been a lack of activity in the town centre in the autumn half term , so requested permission from the committee to explore a Halloween project to deliver entertainment such as Halloween trails for October 2023 without an overspend in the budget.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Mike Bell

SECONDED BY: Councillor Owen James

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

RESOLVED: That the Visitor and Information Services Manager put together a Halloween offering with Visit Weston partners for October Half Term , working within existing budget provisions only.

.3 Update Partners Report

5.3.1 New partners and changes to partnership levels

The report of the Visitor and Information Services Manger had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was noted that two new platinum signings from Revo and Laserquest had been made which had peaked interest with establishments offering similar services. The Visitor and Information Services Manager reported that the website growth had continued with an overall increase of 29.3% in June, compared to the same month in 2022. Users were up 26% resulting in 99.8K overall hits of which 42k were new users. It was hoped that this trend would continue to build month on month.

RESOLVED: That the verbal report of the Visitor and Information Services Manager be noted.

5.3.2 Business Closures

The Visitor and Information Services Manager noted that smaller businesses offering accommodation were still feeling the effects of the pandemic and some partners had been lost due to closures. It was felt that there was a need to offer some support to such operations so a plan would be brought to a future committee. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that some income had to be written off as a result of the above as there was inability to chase the debt.

RESOLVED: That the Visitor and Information Services Manager would bring an offer to support small accommodation partners to a future meeting.

5.3.3 Airbnb in North Somerset

The Visitor and Information Services Manager informed that there were currently 400 Airbnb lets in the town now and it was felt it would not be appropriate to advertise on the accommodation page of the website, now that The English Tourism Board were regulating standards in these properties with the clean, safe and healthy campaign. It would be sensible to explore promoting on a separate page on the website and there was general agreement to look into this.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Owen James

SECONDED BY: Councillor Mike Bell

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

RESOLVED: That the Visitor and Information Services Manager explore d options to promoting Airbnb properties through the Visit Weston website.

5.4 Silca Update – Asset transfer update from the Deputy Town Clerk

The Deputy Town Clerk reported last since the last meeting a further site meeting had been carried out by Weston Town Council and North Somerset Council Officers where it was decided that the metal cladding would not be suitable on a south facing building due to the risk of heat transfer to members of the public and so wooden cladding had been selected instead. A screen would be located where the current hatch is sited with scope to have a second screen for community use where the bus shelter currently was. It had been requested to take the bench out and fit a static notice board to reduce the risk of anti-social behavior but had been advised that this was not possible. Once the wooden cladding had been fitted North Somerset Council Officers would reported back what funds remained to purchase screens. There was no new completion date since the June 2023 target had been missed.

The Chairman reported there was a revolving screen in place and it would be prudent to reuse this and installation of a curved Perspex screen could also reduce the risk of antisocial behavior. It was also suggested it would be a good addition to have a local artist install some paintings also.

RESOLVED: The Deputy Town Clerk to request that North Somerset Council explore installing curved Perspex screens at the entrance copying in Councillor Mike Bell.

5.5 Summer 2023 @ The Sovereign

The Visitor and Information Services Manager reported that the temporary satellite VIC site located in The Sovereign had been a brilliant success measured by the number of flyers being delivered to members of the public. It had proven to be a high footfall site helped by a great holiday campaign at the site including dinosaurs and live music.

It was further reported that there had been lots of positive feedback from businesses and members of the public.

RESOLVED: That the verbal report of The Visitor and Information Services Manger be noted.

124 Castle Batch SEN Play Park

.1 Launch Event – PowerPoint presentation produced by the Communications and Marketing Officer

The report provided by the Communications Officer was not available at the meeting, however a copy of the PowerPoint presentation was previously circulated to members and could also be viewed on The Town Council Website.

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the launch had been a great success.

RESOLVED: That this item be deferred until the next meeting.

.2 Future Steps-Community engagement & safety

The Chairman reported that Community Police Team were using the community hall on site as a base to provide a presence at the park and deter anti-social behavior. It was hoped a café area situated by the children's center would be achieved in the future.

There were some car parking issues reported which had been reported to North Somerset Council who were working with the ward Councillor for the area to resolve.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

.3 Future Area for development from The Development Team

3.00 pm Councillor John Crockford-Hawley left The Meeting.

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that feedback from the public consultation had raised a need for equipment for older children and adults at The Castle Batch site to deter misuse of the SEN equipment.

An area alongside the Children's Centre had been identified as suitable for this project and partners have indicated there could be some funding available, if a plan was to be

put together. It was estimated the cost would be in the region of £10k and materials such as wooden logs would be used to keep a holistic look, in keeping with the environment and to provide longevity.

Members commented that whilst it would be great to provide exercise equipment for teenagers and adults there were other areas in the town which would greatly benefit from the project, especially less affluent areas such as The Bourneville where residents might not have access to fitness equipment.

The Chairman reported that it was hoped that The Castle Batch outside gym would be a forerunner model to be rolled out to other areas within the Town if successful.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey

SECONDED BY: Councillor Joe Bambridge.

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

RESOLVED: To agree in principle, to support the installation of an adult gym at Castle Batch in order to enable further conversations with North Somerset Council and the exploration of grant funding and any associated community engagement.

.4 Contract update from Deputy Town Clerk

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the signing off process with Sutcliffe play was being undertaken. There had been some issues with the quality of some areas that had been sub contracted out, (wet pour flooring) and it was felt that although all work met health and safety standards to protect the asset, there was a need to extend the warranty from 5 years to 7.5 years as a minimum as closing the park and renewing the work was not viable.

Final payment would not be paid until this issue had been resolved and The Deputy Town Clerk would report back to a future meeting with the outcome.

It was felt overall, the project had run smoothly and the contractor had delivered well.

RESOLVED: The Deputy Town Clerk report to a future meeting once the warranty had been agreed.

125 Waterpark

.1 2023 summer season update from Assistant Town Clerk-Operational Services

It was noted that some of the bricks on the Waterpark boundary looked to have been replaced. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that these works would need to be investigated and that this had not been reported into the finance office who oversee Asset maintenance across all council sites.

The Visitor and Information Services Manager reported that season had proven busy once open and with the forecast for good weather in September, there could be an opportunity to make up for lost income by extending the season.

The Deputy Town Clerk reminded members that staffing budgets would need to be considered as there was no scope for an overspend and it had previously been agreed by members, that September would be free of charge entry for locals, to allow them to take advantage, once the resort was less busy with tourists. There was also a need to ascertain if the grounds team had resources to extend opening in order to maintain the

plant.

The need to communicate extended opening his well to residents was advised my members

3.28 pm Councillor Mike Bell left meeting

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Richard Skeen

SECONDED BY: Councillor Caroline Reynolds.

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

RESOLVED: That, s ubject to the review of resources and being able to work with in budgets, the council would aspire to keep the splash open and charging should continue over weekend's only (Friday-Monday) ; from 1st September 2024 until mid-October:

.2 Future Opportunities from the Assistant Town Clerk-Operational Services

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the current concession on the site was due to expire in March 2024, so there was a need for the committee to consider whether to renew the concession or explore bringing the café in house and operate alongside Clara's café. The chairman advised that the Museum had a satellite kitchen to provide this. However, it was noted that this would lose £9k in rental income but it was felt profits from the site could easily outstrip this, a robust business plan would need to be put in place before members could make a final decision.

The Chairman suggested that if a site manager was to be appointed they could control the whole site and resolve minor problems quickly.

A member suggested that it would be beneficial to local residents to provide a concession so they could enter The Waterpark for free, as locals already paid for the service via their council tax.

The Chairman reported that a recent audit had shown that 1/3 of visitors in the park were locals, so if income from the café increased by bringing in house projects to enable residents to enter for free, could be explored.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised the committee that all options for running the site would need to be considered carefully, to ensure all resources required to meet such a change could be fully understood by the council. She reiterated to members that the proposal requested by the Assistant Town Clerk would allow this to take place. Further noting it was not for the committee to decide on options at this point in time as feasibility, viability, current resources /contracts alongside costs would all need to be considered which at this meeting were not fully understood as they had not been made available to the committee or members yet, so informed decision could not be made.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey

SECONDED BY: Councillor Caroline Reynolds

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

RESOLVED: Allow staff to produce a business plan to be able to take over the whole Waterpark operation and approval to explore this with the catering supervisor at the Museum.

Parks & Play Areas

.1 To receive the report of The Grounds Manager

In the absence of The Grounds Manager, The Deputy Town Clerk reported that The Grounds Manager was now qualified to carry out park inspections and was actively undertaking these inspections to save outsourcing at large financial gain to Weston Town Council.

It was noted that the Waterpark had proven resource heavy on the ground's teams time with all the teething problems of the new plant room.

It was reported that the streaming and planting programme had gone well.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

.2 To receive List of All Play Areas & Identify priority areas for future investment 2023/24

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that the previously circulated report of The Grounds Manager, that was now under review.

There would be a need for members to decide whether to make all sites the same quality or have a few flagship parks. There could also be options to use materials that require less maintenance once a review had been undertaken.

The 5-year planned maintenance programme action in 2019 had not been met due to staff shortages and there was now a need to completely review and re-evaluate the condition of all play areas so a new plan could be put into place.

All parks were up to safety standards but a lot of sites did now require attention on equipment and surfaces. The reviews needed to be carried out correctly therefore, taking time but once the Grounds Manager had completed these investigations a report would be brought back to a future committee.

It was further reported that the review was needed as some parks had deteriorated quicker than others. There was budget in the professional services budget to outsource an outside company to access and provide a traffic light system report, to make it easier to identify which parks would need to take priority. A programme would then be put together committing to a plan for all works to be carried out. The report would be brought back to a future meeting in time for budget setting. The Deputy Town Clerk recommended that the committee should consider adopting a play strategy once it had the condition reports to provide direction and guidance on how play equipment and areas should be maintained / replaced in the future. This was the opportune time to do it with such an extensive review now being underway.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

SECONDED BY: Councillor Joe Bambridge

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

RESOLVED: To fund an outside company to review all 23-play areas and produce a revised programme of works, ahead of developing a play strategy for presentation at a future Tourism and Leisure meeting for approval.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 4.19 pm

Signed: Dated:

Chairman of the Tourism and Leisure Committee