

**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