

WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE TOURISM AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
HELD AT GROVE HOUSE ON
MONDAY 7th APRIL 2014

Meeting Commenced: 7.00 p.m.

Meeting Concluded: 8.45 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor David Hitchins (Chairman), Roger Bailey (S), Mike Bell, Cyril King, Mike Lyall, Derek Mead and Sonia Russé.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Malcolm Nicholson (Town Clerk), Tania Middlemiss (Assistant Town Clerk) and Samantha Middlemiss (Committee Officer)

PART ATTENDANCE: Rob Thurston (Grounds Manager), Debbie Matthews (Love Weston Website Consultant) and Beth Evans (Weston & Somerset Mercury).

1.	To receive Apologies for Absence and Notifications of Substitutions Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Peter Crew, John Crockford-Hawley, Jan Holloway, Ian Porter, Tony Probert and Roz Willis Councillor Roz Willis was substituted by Councillor Roger Bailey.
2.	To receive Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest received.
3.	Minutes of the previous Tourism & Leisure Committee Meeting held on 10th February 2014 PROPOSED BY: Councillor Mike Lyall SECONDED BY: Councillor Cyril King RESOLVED: That the Minutes be signed as a true record of the meeting by the Chairman.
4.	To consider the Notes of the Tourism Consultative Group Meeting on 20th March 2014 The notes had been previously circulated and were in draft format pending approval by the Tourism Consultative Group in May 2014. <i>Councillor Derek Mead joined the meeting at 7.05 p.m.</i> The Chairman of the Tourism Consultative Group reported that it had been a positive meeting where it was identified that ensuring the reputation of the town was protected by its home media and not tarnished as this had a big impact on visitors. The Tourism Consultative Group met alternately between the months of the Tourism & Leisure Committee and would be meeting again on a date in May (date tba) and again in September to achieve maximum attendance by business owners and avoiding the busy summer season. RESOLVED: That the notes be received.

	<p>The Chairman advised that agenda items 5 & 7 would be discussed at the end of the meeting.</p>
5.	<p>Tourism Bus</p> <p>The Town Clerk informed that the bus route had been previously agreed and authorised by the Traffic Commissioner. The bus would operate for a promotional weekend on 24-26 May and would officially run from 16th June – 31st August 7days a week and from 31st August - 13th September 6 days a week from the hours of 11am-5pm on an hourly basis.</p> <p>Discussion ensued on the bus route and whether the round trip would be value for money as it did not include Sand Bay. The Town Clerk confirmed the contract price for the operation and advised that the cost would not enable a route extension in the current year but that the scheme would be trialled for a year to gauge whether the route would be successful. At the end of the season the price structure could be reviewed in order to ensure the best value for money.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the report be noted.</p>
6.	<p>To consider renewal of SLA Somerset Wood Recycling Agreement</p> <p>A copy of the current SLA Agreement with Somerset Wood Recycling had been previously circulated with the agenda and the report of the Grounds Manager was circulated at the meeting.</p> <p>The Grounds Manager’s report explained that Somerset Wood Recycling had expressed a desire to review some aspects of the agreement and indicated the key issues for review. The Town Council had acquired more play areas and grass areas to maintain and the current SLA enabled the grounds team to take on projects and tasks that were not in the periphery of what they did. The SLA had added value to what the grounds team can do and the report recommended a way of moving forward and liaising with Somerset Wood Recycling in order for them to reduce their costs.</p> <p>The Town Clerk advised that the SLA circulated with the agenda would need signing and that the Grounds Manager’s report indicated recommendations for consideration.</p> <p>Debate ensued and it was a unanimous agreement that the SLA with Somerset Wood Recycling should be continued.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Mike Bell SECONDED BY: Councillor Sonia Russè</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>a) For the period April 1st 2014 to March 31st 2015 agree an extension based on a reduction of hours during the winter months of November to February.</p> <p>b) To note the request by SWR to consider a sustainable uplift if a further extension is sought for the year 2015/16.</p>
7.	<p>To consider renewal of Skate Park Lease</p> <p>The Town Clerk’s report and a location map of the site had been previously circulated with the agenda. The Town Clerk reported that the Council’s ten year lease over the Hutton Moor Skate Park terminated on the 23rd November 2013, the Town Council should be</p>

considering its renewal. The existing lease did not cover the entire site, there was correspondence where the Town Council had agreed to an increase in the area of the site of the skate park.

North Somerset Council's valuer had suggested the terms and conditions of the new lease as follows:

- Leased premises shall be both the original and extended areas
- Term shall be for a period of ten years
- Rent to continue at a peppercorn
- Otherwise on similar terms and conditions as the lease dated 24th November 2003
- Each party to meet its own reasonable surveyors and legal costs.
- Town Council to meet the cost of registering the lease at the Land Registry

The skate park was generally a well-used facility and was significantly the larger of the two skateboard / wheeled facilities that the Town Council provided (the other being Broadway Skate Park – one of the facilities taken on in 2013)

The Committee needed to be aware that the Skate Park, now 10 years old, was not in good condition. The site was nearing the end of its useful life – the 'skate lite' surfacing to the ramps was constantly being repaired and / or replaced and the general condition of the ramps was deteriorating. It was estimated that a major overhaul of the existing ramps could cost perhaps as much as £10 - £15k to give a further extension to the life of the facility. This would give the Park a useful life of up to 4 years. A re-designed new facility could cost somewhere between £50k - £70k for a similar type of facility or £90k - £120k for a longer term facility constructed from concrete (concrete was far quieter and has significantly fewer maintenance issues). It may be that we could encourage the skateboarders to form a group that could take on day to day operational and fundraising responsibilities. However the Town Council would need to continue with its overall inspection and management responsibilities.

Debate ensued. Councillors wanted to retain the facility as it was well used and respected by the users and because of the lack of youth facilities in the town.

In answer to a question the Grounds Manager advised that the site was visited weekly unless called out for a specific reason and an annual inspection took place. Various repair works had been undertaken on the site over the recent years.

The idea of encouraging the skateboarders to form a group that could take on day to day operational and fundraising responsibilities was met with enthusiasm and it was also suggested to contact business and organisations asking for their support or partner up with the Town Council to secure the future of the skate park.

In answer to a question it was confirmed that there had not been any records of complaints for the skatepark over the years.

The Town Clerk informed that the Town Council has been slow to promote itself and that this was being addressed by investing in signage and the construction of the Love Weston website.

User numbers were queried and the Town Clerk advised that as the site was free access there were no records of user numbers however a user survey could be undertaken.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Mike Bell

SECONDED BY: Councillor Sonia Russè

	<p>RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To renew the lease of the Skate Park at Hutton Moor for a further period on the terms reported. b) That Councillor Mike Bell would investigate funding and partnership options and report back at the next meeting of the Tourism & Leisure Committee. c) The Grounds Manager provide a cost estimation to the Committee of refurbishing the site in 1) concrete 2) wood.
<p>8.</p>	<p>Water Park Update</p> <p>The Grounds Manager reported that three Water Park attendants had been recruited and appointed and would be starting work on 8th & 9th April. Both First Aid and Child Protection training had been organised.</p> <p>The splash pad had been visited for commissioning and a faulty valve was identified which had been rectified and therefore, the splash pad should be functioning for 8th April and a legionella test would be undertaken. The ticket hut would also be on site for 8th April. Various ground works had been undertaken such as re-gravelling and levelling of paths.</p> <p>The discount scheme linking in with the tourism bus and an update on the possibility of the BID key fob scheme was requested. The Grounds Manager confirmed that the arrangement for this year was that tourism bus users would receive free entry by producing their bus tickets to Water Park Attendants, there was also a special offer deal that enabled the sixth visit free which particularly benefitted residents. The BID key fob scheme had been investigated and concluded by the Responsible Financial Officer that it would not be possible to pursue with the current ticket machine used and that it was too close to the beginning of the season to investigate any further.</p> <p>The Town Clerk advised that alternative ticket machines could be investigated for the following year.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the report be noted.</p>
<p>8.1</p>	<p>At this point in the meeting the Town Clerk advised the Chairman that the following items needed to be discussed in a private and confidential session for reasons of commercial confidentiality of Weston Hotel and Restaurants Association and sensitivity of the ongoing negotiations with the Tourism Consultant and which had not yet been concluded.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey SECONDED BY: Councillor Sonia Russè</p> <p>RESOLVED: <i>Under the Public Bodies (Admissions of Meeting) Act 1960 to exclude the public and press for the following item by reasons of the confidential nature of the business.</i></p> <p><i>Rob Thurston (Grounds Manager), Debbie Matthews (Love Weston Tourism Consultant) and Beth Evans (Weston & Somerset Mercury) left the meeting at 8.00pm</i></p>

9.

Tourist Information Centre – Accommodation and Staffing

The Town Clerk's report was circulated on red paper.

The Town Clerk informed that there was room at the Museum to accommodate tourism staff, however it had been an ambition of the Town Council's Leader to improve the service offered at the current Tourist Information Centre in the Winter Gardens. Meetings had been held with various management staff at Parkwood Leisure to discuss the running of Love Weston from the Winter Gardens and situate staff there. The new manager appeared to be interested in taking this idea forward and a meeting was scheduled on the 15th April.

The more confidential issue was that Debbie Matthews who was contracted by the Town Council on a consultancy basis to run the Love Weston's website had expressed a wish to remain a Consultant, after having been interviewed and offered the post of Tourism Officer in an employed capacity. A subsequent offer had been received offering to encompass the role of the Tourism Assistant into the existing consultancy arrangement.

There were now two options the Town Council could pursue which were:-

1. To confirm the decision to employ staff direct and respond accordingly.
2. To explore the advantages and disadvantages of retaining Debbie Matthews on a consultancy arrangement as opposed to direct employment and present options to the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Committee for final decision. .

The Assistant Town Clerk advised that if the employment route was chosen that the allocated budget provided was for 48 hrs of staffing time. But if staff were based in a public facing facility such as the Winter Gardens then this would reduce their ability to fulfil their job descriptions and meet the set income targets. The pay scales and hours of both advertised posts were confirmed.

Employment Rights in relation to the status were raised and the Town Clerk advised that statutory employment rights came into action after 2 years of employment and the advertised posts were for a one year contract periods.

The current consultancy hours were questioned and the Town Clerk confirmed that the current consultancy hours were capped at 30hrs and that Love Weston was being run on a shoestring. The consultant had advised that a full time and a part time sales role would be the preferred solution for tourism destination the size of Weston-super-Mare.

It was confirmed that any Accreditation work would be undertaken outside of the 30 hrs per week budgeted for the Tourism Officer role. This would be paid on a fixed double pay rate of 1-2 hrs per Accreditation, dependant on accommodation size.

It was highlighted that there was no mention of dealing with public enquires or being based in the TIC in the job description of either role. It was also pointed out that however valuable this service may be to the public it was not in the Town Council's budget to provide it. Concerns were raised as to the management control over the remit of a consultant especially when they offered services to other organisations which would be a likely conflict of interest.

Other associated risks including HMRC issues, creating a recognised employment relationship whilst acting as a consultant, risks associated with prescribing a place of work and the high potential for grey areas were discussed.

Debate ensued regarding the management of the post and it was agreed that the

	<p>management of the Tourism Officer or the Tourism Consultant whichever was selected needed to be set out clearly from the outset in a written agreement that included the Council's expectations of the service to be provided.</p> <p>It was reported that the current consultant was appointed under a letter of appointment with the Council and had in the last nine months worked hard to build good relationships with the WHRA and BID who had specified that they would like her to continue the role on an independent basis.</p> <p>Discussion ensued on the merits of the current Consultant.</p> <p>A Member strongly opposed a reversion to a consultancy arrangement and urged continuation of the previous policy to employ tourism staff directly.</p> <p>The Town Clerk advised that there was a need for urgency in making a decision as the recruitment process had commenced and we also needed to avoid a lapse in service provision on the Love Weston website. It would not be helpful to wait two months until the next Committee meeting.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey SECONDED BY: Councillor Cyril King</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried as follows:</p> <p>3 FOR 1 AGAINST 2 ABSTENSIONS</p> <p>RESOLVED: To authorise that the Chairman and Vice Chairman in conjunction with the Town Clerk to arrange for a meeting to take place with the selected candidate to discuss the issues and make a decision, to be reported back to the Committee, on the possibility of continuing the consultancy arrangement instead of direct employment of the tourism service.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>Accreditation Scheme</p> <p>The Town Clerk referred to previous discussions at Committee meetings in October and December 2013 which had resulted in a decision to pursue an Accreditation Scheme for Love Weston. In the last few days an approach had been made by the WHRA to meet and discuss the two organisations joining forces in the delivery of this venture and a meeting had been set up on 16th April.</p> <p>A Member hoped that this could be progressed but pointed out that this illustrated the conflict of interest that existed with the Town Council's Tourism Consultant.</p> <p>The Town Clerk advised that a decision not to proceed with its own Accreditation Scheme by the Town Council could have an adverse impact on the income aspirations for Love Weston. The financial year had already commenced and a decision needed to be made sooner rather than later.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To authorise that the Chairman and Vice Chairman in conjunction with the Town Clerk to make a decision, to be reported back to the Committee, on the possibility of authorising a merger arrangement with the WHRA for Accreditations.</p>

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.45 p.m.

Signed.....Dated

Councillor David Hitchens

Chairman of the Tourism & Leisure Committee