

**WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE TOURISM AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
HELD AT GROVE HOUSE ON
MONDAY 10TH FEBRUARY 2014**

Meeting Commenced: 7.00 p.m.

Meeting Concluded: 8.24 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor David Hitchins (Chairman), Mike Bell, Peter Crew, John Crockford-Hawley, Jan Holloway, Cyril King, Mike Lyall, Derek Mead, Len Purnell (S) and Sonia Russé.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Malcolm Nicholson (Town Clerk), Tania Middlemiss (Assistant Town Clerk), Sarah Pearse (Responsible Financial Officer), Samantha Middlemiss (Committee Officer), Rob Thurston (Grounds Manager), Debbie Matthews (Love Weston Website Consultant) Members of the Hotels and Restaurants Association (WHRA) and Beth Evans (Weston & Somerset Mercury).

376.	<p>To receive Apologies for Absence and Notifications of Substitutions</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ian Porter, Tony Probert and Roz Willis.</p> <p>Councillor Ian Porter was substituted by Councillor Len Purnell.</p> <p><i>Councillor Derek Mead joined the meeting at 7.03 p.m.</i></p>
377.	<p>To receive Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest received.</p>
378.	<p>Minutes of the previous Tourism & Leisure Committee Meeting held on 9th December 2013</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Jan Holloway SECONDED BY: Councillor Sonia Russé</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Minutes be signed as a true record of the meeting by the Chairman.</p>
379.	<p>To consider the Notes of the Tourism Consultative Group Meeting on 9th January 2014</p> <p>The notes had previously been circulated with the agenda and were in draft format pending approval by the Tourism Consultative Group on 13th March 2014.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Sonia Russé SECONDED BY: Councillor Mike Bell</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the notes be received.</p> <p><i>Councillor Cyril King joined the meeting at 7.10 pm</i></p>
380.	<p>Budget 2014/2015</p>

	<p>The Responsible Financial Officer informed that the tourism budget extract circulated with the agenda had been approved in principle at Town Council meeting on January 20th 2014. The Love Weston Marketing Plan for 2014/15 as set out in 9.1 took into account recommendations from the sub-group of Tourism experts as instigated by the Tourism Consultative Group and was recommended for approval. It was advised that budget be spent on a quarterly phasing system and approval at this stage would enable officers to proceed and set up key seasonal advertising campaigns within the designated budget.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That subject to the removal of the Trailer heading the budget be noted.</p>
<p>381.</p>	<p>Play Area Inspection Reports</p> <p>The report of the Grounds Manager had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p><i>Councillor Cyril King joined the meeting at 7.10 p.m.</i></p> <p>The Grounds Manager provided a general update and overview of efficiencies enabled since the new PSS software had been operational and partnering with Somerset Wood Recycling. Clarification was provided on queries relating damage by dogs to play equipment at Ellenborough Park. The ownership of the park located at the bottom of Milton Road was queried and it was advised to contact North Somerset Council.</p> <p>RESOLVED: 1) That preventative action needed to be put in place to stop dogs from entering all play areas. 2) That the Grounds Manager's report be noted.</p>
<p>382.</p>	<p>Water Park Management Report</p> <p>The report of the Grounds Manager had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>The Grounds Manager informed that he had written the attached report at the request of the Committee.</p> <p>The staffing costs were queried and it was requested what the forecast would be for the coming year based on the proposals outlined in the report. The Grounds Manager explained that it was very much a weather dependent scenario and for example, reported that 2013 was a very good year and that 2012 was a bad year. There would be a degree of benefit from charging longer at peak times.</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer informed that the figures were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. 2014/2015 £25k ii. 2013 £17,500k exceeded this by £5k iii. 2013/2014 £17,500k iv. 2011/2012 £20k <p>The staffing costs needed clarity and the benefits for charging and charging for a longer period needed to be clearly indicated. It was requested that figures for minimum staffing at the Water Park, if there were no admission fee, be sought.</p> <p>The decision to not sign up to the bid key fob scheme was questioned and it was understood why this could not be done with the current ticket machine used. However, it was requested that alternative equipment be researched to enable other discount schemes to be considered.</p> <p>The Grounds Manager advised that the exact staffing costs could be supplied but explained</p>

that staff would be required on site even if there were no admission fee for Health & Safety reasons, maintenance and treatment of the water.

In response to the key fob query the Grounds Manager informed that there was a loyalty card discount scheme in place which enabled the 6th visit to be free.

Concerns were raised regarding the possibility of reducing the staffing on site and that the Town Council as a responsible body, needed to ensure that it provided sufficient supervision.

Other revenue sources were queried and the Responsible Financial Officer informed that the kiosk concession brought in an additional income of £9k.

The Assistant Town Clerk advised that the recruitment process for Water Park Attendants would need to commence immediately in order to be selected in time for the charging season at the Water Park.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Mike Bell

SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

RESOLVED: That the following recommendations be approved in ‘principle’ subject to the Chairman and Vice Chairman viewing the staffing costs, to be supplied by the Responsible Financial Officer and Grounds Manager:

- 382.1. That staffing / income costings for operating the facility be noted with acknowledgement that seasonal weather factors can significantly influence the income budget achieved.
- 382.2. That the Key Fob Scheme run by BID be not introduced because of the additional complexity that a discount scheme would cause.
- 382.3. That the current loyalty card scheme be continued, providing an alternative discount mechanism.
- 382.4. That charges apply from 9.30am until 5.00pm (FOC 5.00pm until closure).
- 382.5. That the site be staffed from 8.30am until 6.00pm – noting that the concession holder continues to staff the site until later when the weather is good.
- 382.6. That the Water Park is opened through the season as below:-
 - a) Commissioned and opened for use (FOC) from 28th March 2014.
 - b) Charges operate from 18th April until 5th September.
 - c) Open for use (FOC) from 6th September until closedown for decommissioning on 31 October 2014 .

The Grounds Manager left the meeting at 7.29 p.m.

383. To note SEO Activity on Love Weston Website

The report of the Love Weston Tourism Consultant had been previously circulated with the agenda.

The Town Clerk informed that the report supplied the information to support item 9.1 and

	<p>had been specifically requested by the Committee, including website hits figures, geographical areas and device usage.</p> <p>The results for the most popular search areas in Google were noted along with the top searching topics (golfing and nightlife). The Tourism Consultant advised that the figures listed for Weston which was the third highest area indicated visitors accessing the site via mobile devices.</p> <p>It was noted that positive feedback on advertising to date including a marked increase in Twitter activity following the Xmas and New Year Premiership football advertising campaigns.</p> <p>The website figures and statistics were helpful and the Tourism Consultant was thanked for supplying them and was asked whether this could be done on a monthly basis, together with an overview or reason for spikes.</p> <p>The Tourism Consultant advised that there was a way of finding out what pages were visited and how long people visited, known as 'bounce rates' and worked closely with New Mind's SEO expert on a weekly basis. The latest advice was that Love Weston did not have Weston-super-Mare as a money keyword in the domain name which was affecting the website's success.</p> <p>Debate ensued on website content and whether 'Weston-super-Mare' was needed in full as a brand and URL name to increase website hits and whether the brand name needed revisiting.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the matter of the brand name be discussed with the BID Company.</p>
<p>384.</p>	<p>Love Weston Marketing Plan 2014/15 and Feedback on Advertising to date</p> <p>384.1 To approve the Marketing Plan 2014/15</p> <p>The Love Weston Marketing Plan 2014/15 had been previously circulated with the agenda and considered at the previous meeting in December 2013.</p> <p>The Town Clerk recommended that the attached marketing plan be approved by the Committee but with some flexibility to enable events to be attended and new marketing opportunities as identified by SEO results to be progressed by officers without the delay of requiring Committee approval.</p> <p>Debate ensued about the rationale behind the options put forward</p> <p>The Chairman of the Tourism Consultative Group confirmed that collaborative working on a three year plan was taking place, but more funding was needed from other stakeholders, together with BID commitment on coach marketing if Love Weston was to progress to bigger advertising campaigns than was affordable at present.</p> <p>Debate ensued regarding the available budget and how far it would stretch.</p> <p>It was raised that Sedgmoor District Council was a proactive Council in terms of Tourism, recognising it as part of its economic development. North Somerset Council lacked recognition for Tourism and the town needed a uniformed business led Tourism Strategy.</p> <p>The Leader stated that there was no exact science to advertising, especially with the Town Council's limited budget and therefore we must go on the basis of tourism expertise in</p>

	<p>destination marketing as set out in the three year plan and 2014/15 marketing plan that had been presented for approval.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor David Hitchins SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew</p> <p>The Committee voted (5) in favour with (2) against.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Love Weston Marketing Plan 2014/15 be approved and that officers be authorised to spend on further advertising opportunities as and when they arise within budget.</p> <p>384.2. To receive the Feedback on Advertising to date</p> <p>The report of the Tourism Consultant had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>Concern was expressed about whether quantity or quality was considered the strategy for advertising.</p> <p>The Leader confirmed that all efforts were made to assess the effectiveness of advertising including website surveying, hotel surveys, monitoring SEO activity and advertising where possible with QR codes to capture data on where our advertising is being seen.</p>
<p>385.</p>	<p>Tourism Strategy (Draft) 2014-2017</p> <p>The consultation draft had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>The Tourism Consultant presented the longer term document and confirmed that tourism experts including herself, BID Members and North Somerset Council staff had been involved in the creating of a draft Tourism Strategy for Weston-super-Mare as requested by the Tourism Consultative Group in November 2013. However this was still in draft format and endorsement was needed.</p> <p>The Chairman of the Tourism Consultative Group added that financial engagement and commitment of others was crucial to this endeavour and reiterated the need for more business engagement to enable more ‘product’ on the website.</p> <p>The Leader said that it was hoped that the BID would commit £10,000 this year and viewed the strategy as a good way forward, however Weston Town Council’s resources alone could not finance it alone.</p> <p>The Assistant Town Clerk advised that it was intended as a strategic document but that some costs had been included for the benefit of the Committee which would not appear in the finally agreed strategy.</p> <p>Debate ensued regarding the lack of feedback and input from key people who were selected to create the Strategy and that it was a good start but more work was needed before approval of the document could be given.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the draft Tourism Strategy 2014-2017 be subject to further consultation and the Tourism Consultative Group’s approval be sought in March.</p>
<p>386.</p>	<p>To approve Tourism Grant Form</p> <p>The Tourism Grant Form and criteria, deferred from a previous meeting, had been</p>

	<p>previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>It was raised that criteria 3, 7, 20 and 21 whilst relevant to grants requested of the Council's Community Services Committee were not relevant to Tourism grants. The Leader informed that the intention was for organisations to apply for small amounts and requested all criteria be removed as it would make it too difficult and rigorous for organisations to obtain funding for small events which the Council wanted to help with.</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer advised that some sort of criteria was needed to ensure Council funds were allocated transparently and fairly.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That four to five criteria be agreed by the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee and that the form be approved for use.</p>
<p>387.</p>	<p>Tourism Bus</p> <p>The report of the Town Clerk had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>The Town Clerk advised that the quotation process had been started and that it would be presented to the Policy & Finance Committee meeting on 24th February 2014, which would give time for an application to be submitted and in place for May.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the report be noted.</p>
	<p>There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.24 p.m.</p> <p>Signed.....Dated</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Councillor David Hitchins Chairman of the Tourism & Leisure Committee</p>