

**WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE TOURISM AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
HELD AT GROVE HOUSE ON
MONDAY 6th OCTOBER 2014**

Meeting Commenced: 2.30 pm

Meeting Concluded: 4.02 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Sonia Russé (Chairman), Derek Mead (Vice Chairman), Peter Crew, John Crockford-Hawley, Jan Holloway, Cyril King, Ian Porter, Len Purnell, Simon Stokes and Ray Armstrong.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Tania Middlemiss (Assistant Town Clerk), Debbie Matthews (Love Weston Tourism Consultant), Ian Jefferies (Love Weston, Tourism Assistant), Tim Nickolls (Bella Vista Hotel), Bethan Evans (Weston & Somerset Mercury) and Jennifer Lawley (Committee Officer).

The Chairman invited questions from parishioners present.

The Chairman welcomed Mr Tim Nickolls of Bella Vista Hotel who was in attendance as an observer due to his interest in tourism.

202.	To receive Apologies for Absence and Notifications of Substitutions Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mike Bell and Michael Lyall together with the Town Clerk. Councillor Mike Bell was substituted by Councillor Ray Armstrong. The Committee noted that Councillor Ian Porter would be late arriving due to another meeting at North Somerset Council.
203.	To receive Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest received.
204.	Minutes of the previous Tourism & Leisure Committee Meeting held on 11th August 2014 The Minutes had been previously circulated with the agenda. PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew SECONDED BY: Councillor Len Purnell RESOLVED: That the Minutes be signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting. <i>Councillor Cyril King joined the meeting at 2.34 pm and the Chairman advised Councillor King of business already undertaken.</i>
205.	To consider the Notes of the Tourism Consultative Group Meeting on 4th September 2014. The Notes had been previously circulated with the agenda.

	<p>The Chairman reiterated that the notes were draft until approved by the next Tourism Consultative Group Meeting on 13th November 2014. Committee Members were invited to make comment if they so wished. No comments were forthcoming.</p> <p>Accordingly it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the notes of the Tourism Consultative Group Meeting be received and noted.</p>
<p>206.</p>	<p>Budget Considerations</p> <p>The report of the Assistant Town Clerk had been previously circulated with the agenda (<i>the report also encompassed agenda items 6, 7, 8 and 9</i>).</p> <p>The Assistant Town Clerk informed that 'budget considerations' were a standard agenda item on all Committees at this time of year as a pre-cursor to the budget setting process.</p> <p>The Committee noted that agenda items 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 related to the tourism budget, and the financial elements involved were set out under each heading.</p> <p>The Assistant Town Clerk's report informed that Tourism Budget costs were cyclical and, therefore, would need to be replicated and inflationary increases applied if the Town Council were to maintain the same type and level of service as achieved in year one. It was noted that stakeholders via the Tourism Consultative Group had put forward suggestions which had budgetary implications.</p> <p>The Chairman advised that at this stage views were sought on aspirations for Year 2 and whether a standstill or increase was desired by the Committee.</p> <p>The Assistant Town Clerk referred to the report which detailed opportunities for increased bed occupancy in Weston as a knock-on effect of 2015 Rugby World Cup fixtures in Exeter Gloucester and Cardiff. It was noted that opportunities and benefits existed to Weston businesses due to our geographical central location.</p> <p>A debate ensued as to whether the budget increases for tourism were already included within the budget set for Tourism and Leisure. The Leader of the Council advised that the proposals were simply an aspirational 'wish list' to consider for the next financial year.</p> <p>5.1 Service Level Agreement: The annual cost for Year 1 of the three year Service Level Agreement amounted to £30,599 this financial year (May 2014 to March 2015). The financial figure for both Year 2 and Year 3 was £34,500. The report advised that the figure would have to be replicated or increased depending on whether new initiatives were identified for progression that required additional man-hours and/or business support. In response to a Councillor's question, the Assistant Town Clerk informed that details of the exact level of business support were not yet available.</p> <p>5.2 Advertising and Public Relations: Actual spend to date had not been provided for advertising and PR, the budget being £30,000 for 2014/15. However an additional £5,000 was requested for inclusion in the next budget in order to maximise on 2015 Rugby World Cup opportunities for Weston-super-Mare. The Assistant Town Clerk reiterated that this was a suggestion and would have to meet with members' approval.</p> <p>5.3 Love Weston Website: Costs for Love Weston would increase next year as the website was subject to annual set costs in order to remain competitive with other tourist destinations. The annual costs for 2014/15 were £4,565 with an estimated increase of £2000 for the next financial year.</p> <p>5.4 Tourism Bus: The total cost for the Tourism Bus initiative for 2014/15 was £20,000.</p>

Members were informed that no income had been received by the Town Council as the bus was subsidised which raised questions on turnover and income received by the bus company Crosville. The Leader reported that Crosville were happy with this year's arrangement and had agreed to improve branding in 2015 and 2016 with a view to supplying a land train in 2017 for which, proposals were awaited.

The Leader of the Council informed Members that the total Tourism and Leisure budget need not be increased as far as he was concerned. He reiterated that the proposals put forward in the Assistant Town Clerk's report were a 'wish list' for members' consideration and that approval was sought in principle only. The Leader advised that he would meet with Group Leaders and Deputies to debate the available budget and ascertain priorities.

Councillor Ian Porter joined the meeting at 2.40 pm.

The Leader of the Council took time to clarify this year's Tourism & Leisure budget, and the Assistant Town Clerk together with the Tourism Consultant reiterated the goals, purposes and objectives of Love Weston which resulted in the proposed small increase. Some members opposed expansion of the budget without the provision of exact figures at the meeting. The Advertising and PR budget was particularly difficult to quantify. The figure of £30,000 with a proposed addition of £5,000 was presented by the Assistant Town Clerk. However after further debate, the figure of £40,000 was set by the Leader which included publicity and staffing costs listed under separate budget headings. The Committee noted that the spend against the current advertising budget had not exceeded the allocated spend of £30,000 although outstanding and accrued payments for advertising still remained prompting further debate on the worth of advertising and PR. The Leader of the Council informed that if exact in-year spend was required one of the Town Council's finance section would need to attend meetings.

The increase in Love Weston Website costs was challenged and what relevance this had to its success. The Tourism Consultant explained that upsurge in usage (hits) required increased bandwidth, plus increased costs to New Mind who manage the DMS (Destination Management System). The Leader stated that the increase in web traffic was in line with and supported the Love Weston's advertising and marketing campaigns. The Chairman advised that the credibility of the Love Weston website was vital to the success of destination marketing and inducing more visitors to Weston-super-Mare.

It was noted that the Tourist Bus was under a separate budget to that of PR and advertising. The Leader updated on an end of season review with the service provider Crosville Motor Services who were receptive to a suggestion to include an audio tour on the bus, rebrand the vehicle in Love Weston branding and continue the bus service for 2015 and 2016 with a view to operating a land train in 2017 in line ideally with the re-opening of the newly refurbished Weston Museum. North Somerset Highways had been approached regarding the expansion of the bus route to incorporate Uphill, the Railway Station, South Road and Westcliffe.

The Leader indicated that joint marketing could be achieved in 2015 by the production of a seasonal Pocket Guide by the stakeholders concerned. The Leader reminded members that in 2013 it had been agreed to jointly fund a land train with North Somerset Council which had not transpired and therefore Members had resolved to sponsor a tourism bus.

Concern was raised regarding the huge budget implications as the tourism bus was very expensive. However, Members were informed that no additional funding would be required in 2014/15. The original procurement of the tourism bus met with the Town Council's Financial Regulations in considering Crosville together with other bus operators. As the sole sponsor of the tourism bus, the Town Council did not include other destinations beyond the town, although the Grand Pier and other businesses had originally been approached.

	<p>Debate ensued on the tourism bus taking in other destinations and combining the Sand Bay route which was quite different to a land train travelling around the town. The object of the land train was fun which children would enjoy as opposed to a bus tour. Crosville should be able to meet the aspiration of the Town Council and if not another provider would be sought. It was suggested that the committee be given the opportunity to meet with Crosville which prompted debate on the role and involvement of other stakeholders who would want to contribute towards a concession with Crosville. The Leader was mindful of Weston Museum's HLF bid and timing for 2017.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Derek Mead SECONDED BY: Councillor Simon Stokes</p> <p>RESOLVED: Crosville Motor Services be invited to attend the next Tourism & Leisure Committee meeting to enable the opportunity to debate the Tourism Bus and Land Train together with other interested stakeholders.</p> <p>Members were advised that Bristol and North Somerset Council were recognised DMOs (Destination Management Organisations) which entitled these authorities to funding from Visit England. It was questioned as to whether North Somerset Council receives this funding and if so was the funding proportional and included Weston-super-Mare?</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Derek Mead SECONDED BY: Councillor Cyril King</p> <p>RESOLVED: That North Somerset Council is contacted regarding DMO (Destination Management Organisation) Visit England funding in order to ascertain whether they are in receipt of Visit England funding and if so is the provision proportional?</p> <p>The Leader reiterated that the agenda item was an outline debate on how the budgets might be spent and whether the Committee accepted the proposals in principle. In conclusion of the Year 2 proposals for Tourism several Members supported the ideas. However, the aspirations of Love Weston needed to be financially contributed to by other stakeholders than just the Town Council, hence the difficulty to make an informed decision on the proposed budget.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ian Porter SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried with one abstention recorded.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That detailed financial information and exact figures proposed for the Tourism and Leisure budget setting be available at the next meeting prior to any decisions.</p>
207.	<p>Tourism Bus Review</p> <p>The report of the Assistant Town Clerk had been previously circulated with the agenda. The Town Clerk was not in attendance to provide a verbal update.</p> <p>This agenda item had already been covered under agenda item 5.</p>
208.	<p>2015 Brochure Launch and Tourism Summit</p> <p>The report of the Assistant Town Clerk had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>In the light of the unsuccessful Tourism Summit last year the Chairman questioned whether to follow through with a combined event early in 2015. North Somerset Council had proposed an event to be organised jointly at Easter 2015 to coincide with the Tropicana's</p>

re-opening. There was also the question of the 2015 brochure due to be launched in December 2014. Debate and concerns ensued on editorial rights, proof reading and the content overview of the brochure. Members were assured by the Leader that the brochure would be proof read and the content reviewed by the Love Weston Tourism Consultant and that Members would have sight of the brochure before publication. The Chairman suggested that a representative from this Committee together with the Town Clerk undertake the final proof reading.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley

SECONDED BY: Councillor Ian Porter

A vote was taken and carried.

RESOLVED: That the final 2015 brochure editorial be proof read by a representative from the Tourism and Leisure Committee together with the Town Clerk.

209. Love Weston Update

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

The Chairman had previously commented during debate on agenda item 5.3 that it would have been helpful if the Love Weston Update (*agenda item 8*) had been debated initially as the report was insightful of Love Weston's progress and success.

The Chairman was pleased to advise that Debbie Matthews the Tourism Consultant for Love Weston had been presented with an award at the New Mind Digital Tourism Awards Knowledge Exchange at The Crystal in London for the highest growth (700%) of a website since its launch. The Chairman together with the Leader personally congratulated the Tourism Consultant on her award which was well deserved.

Debate ensued on coach marketing, the Coach Monthly Magazine and the benefits of PR through the coaching world which perpetuated into debate regarding advertising at airports.

A Councillor reiterated that he was unconvinced that PR and advertising at airports carried any weight, and it was unrealistic to think people would consider prolonged holidays in Weston-super-Mare when flying off to an international destination. However, it was pointed out that Birmingham International Airport had record high volumes of passengers who often sit and wait at airports reflecting on and reading the advertisements displayed.

The Chairman informed that she was aware that most tourists to Weston-super-Mare were day trippers; one of our objectives was to attract more overnight stays. The Chairman pointed out the continuing high volume of coaches that pass Weston-super-Mare on the M5 on their way to other destinations. More coach operators need to be encouraged to break their journeys over night in Weston-super-Mare. Many first time or returning visitors have been pleasantly surprised on visiting the town's seafront. Alexandra Parade was looking much improved as the canopy of trees was maturing. An alternative view agreed that the seafront was excellent but pointed out the town's potential loss of trees due to North Somerset Council's non replacement policy.

The Leader reiterated that the whole Love Weston objective was about getting more people to visit the town which would encourage business and have a positive impact on the economy.

RESOLVED: That the report be received and noted.

<p>210.</p>	<p>Tropicana – Progress Update</p> <p>The Assistant Town Clerk informed that Members’ views were sought on further tourism opportunities for the Town Council following the decision by North Somerset Council to re-furbish the site of the Tropicana which was due to be completed by May 2015.</p> <p>Debate ensued on Trop (WsM) Ltd (superseded by The Trop Trust), their commitment, the funding sought and the Town Council’s support of their plans. It was pointed out that negotiations for the Tropicana had been ongoing between North Somerset Council and The Trop Trust for 3 years and now North Somerset Council had decided to spend £750,000 on a light refurbishment of the Tropicana site which did not include a swimming pool.</p> <p>The Trop Trust who has plans for the Tropicana site including a swimming pool has applied for a grant from The Regional Growth Fund. To push ahead with its plan the group need North Somerset Council to hand the building over and provide them with a letter of intent which to-date has not been received. The group believe this should be done under changes to the Localism Act, which allows communities to submit the ‘Right To Contest’ applications to buy or request release of a site that was underused or empty.</p> <p>The Vice Chairman reminded the committee that if it had not been for Trop (WsM) Ltd taking North Somerset Council to the High Court, the Tropicana building would not have been saved and would have been demolished.</p> <p><i>Councillor Peter Crew left at 3.55 pm and rejoined the meeting at 4.00 pm.</i></p> <p>The Vice Chairman reiterated that The Trop Trust had sent a letter of intent to Tony Lake, Executive Member of North Somerset Council, for which acknowledgement was awaited, after which The Trop Trust Group could continue with their fundraising.</p> <p>Debate concluded with the question regarding North Somerset Council’s u-turn in respect of the Tropicana’s refurbishment of £750,000 rather than demolish?</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried with one abstention recorded.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That North Somerset Council is contacted by the Town Clerk regarding their reasoning for the u-turn with The Tropicana from demolition to refurbishment at a cost of £750,000.</p>
	<p>There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 4.02 pm.</p> <p>Signed..... Dated</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Councillor Sonia Russé Chairman of the Tourism & Leisure Committee</p>