



**CITY OF ELY COUNCIL
TOURISM AND TOWN CENTRE COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF TOURISM AND TOWN CENTRE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT
SESSIONS HOUSE, LYNN ROAD, ELY AT
7.00 PM MONDAY 5th February 2024**

THOSE PRESENT:

Cllr D Warman (Chair), Cllr P Gardner, Cllr C Phillips
Cllr R Ward, Cllr C Ni Dhonaill, Cllr R Trent, Cllr M Banyard, Cllr R Denness

Mrs Anna Bennett (Tourism and Town Centre Manager)

1. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of last Tourism and Town Centre Meeting held Monday 11th December 2023

The minutes of the last meeting held on the 11th December 2023 were signed by the Chairman, Cllr D Warman as a true record. Pages TTC 92/93/94 refer.

4. To receive an update on the Service

Mrs Bennett opened the evening meeting with an update regarding the service and local tourism. It was explained to members most attractions had raised their admission prices by at least 20% and this had not had any impact in comparison with visitor numbers for Feb 23 and there was a very slight increase in footfall.

The Visit Ely Guide 2024 was presented to the committee, which was gratefully received, with the members giving praise and admiration to the front cover designed by Sarah Lown. After obtaining three quotes for the Guide, it was agreed to use Cambs Marketing for their layout/design and print. By using Cambs Marketing the project is a much simpler process with sending ads and understanding the project requirements after many years working together on this annual project. Group ticket (Ely Experience) continues to remain popular following Excursions travel show with many enquires, with the first Coach booking being 22nd February, with monthly bookings up until September. House admissions during the 8-week period remain on par with last year, with an increase of family admissions over the festive period. Oliver Cromwell's House gift shop continues to do well with focused activity on sale items/stock count due and spring merchandise. The shop team are interested in developing other merchandise using the front cover of our VG24.

Mrs Bennett to advise costs at next TTC meeting. Cllr Ward pointed out typo which Mrs Bennett explained she would speak to the designer/printer to amend (digital copy).

The TTC Committee were updated with regards to other in-house events such as ghost hunts and escape rooms. It was explained to the members that the ghost hunts are more word of mouth; they are not promoted in any shape or form. Cllr Banyard and Cllr Phillips were curious as to what happens during the events, which was explained. The focus/USP is the Historic Home of the Cromwell Family, however, ghost hunts are very popular and very lucrative. Escape Rooms continue to do well with over 73 bookings since last TTC plus 8 after hours corporate events. The latest game 'The Tomb of the Templars' is now receiving bookings for post April launch. The team behind the games are also developing the 'whole house game' aimed at the corporate market. Cllr Warman expressed an interest in trialling the Murder Mystery game, due to launch early summer.

Cllr C Ni Dhonaill raised a question from the report relating to our social media content and weekly hours. It was explained to Cllr C Ni Dhonaill that the team currently use business suite to schedule posts in advance and planned personnel changes within the team were in discussion. Further updates would be provided at the next PF&G meeting.

The Visit Ely website has undergone some 'data cleansing' and housekeeping to make elements of the app/signage project more accessible. There are now opportunities to contact the office direct to advertise business on the signage boards, utilizing the umbrella term 'Digital Ely' allowing a new level of flexibility for future projects.

Many local businesses are now signed up to the signage project, which is in its infancy, but has made good progress since launch. Planned changes are in hand regarding totem location, which will have an impact on maintenance agreements, but all very positive. The Visit Ely App will gradually be updated regarding audio and various other updates in time for May festivals and summer tourist season.

Updates regarding Eel Festival 2024 were given to the Committee. Applications for all three days are being submitted, with over 60 stall holders wishing to trade for Eel Day alone. Pitch fees have increased by 25% for 2024, but there seems to be no hesitance to apply, which proves the festival, and its long tradition is as popular as ever.

Mrs Bennett concluded her report with updates regarding Armed Forces Day which has Cathedral permissions for June 22nd. Planning is underway, working with the Chair and Vice Chair of the RBL and other stakeholders to plan the day. The team are also working with the RBL for the 80th anniversary of D Day with further updates to be provided at the next TTC meeting in April.

5.To discuss budget updates.

Cllr Gardner raised a question as to why the utility spend was quite low. The question was referred to the RFO, Mrs T Coulson for a response. Cllr Gardner also questioned income for the advertising, Mrs Bennett explained income was still being analysed and reconciled to accounts, with invoicing for the project still in progress.

6.To discuss the use of Volunteers to assist VE in providing their service for events.

Cllr Banyard is to arrange a meeting with the Volunteer Manager of Ely Cathedral for guidance. Marketing material has been created to encourage volunteers, and the process is underway. Mrs Bennett explained that the team would be looking for Marshals, assistance with road closures, litter picking, and general event duties associated with set up and break down. Further updates will be provided at the next TTC meeting in April.

7.To discuss working with Ely Cathedral and their event ‘Green Fair’ to make it a city recognised event.

The proposed event, now in it’s third year, was welcomed by the Committee, in particular, Cllr Denness, Deputy Mayor. Cllr Denness said the Climate and Environment Committee would welcome such collaboration. Other members were in favour. Updates will be provided at the next meeting after the team have met with Ely Cathedral events team. The date for the event is planned for Saturday 27th July 2024.

8.Date of the next meeting

The date of Tuesday 2nd April will be the next meeting.

The meeting closed 8.15pm