



**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 10TH JUNE 2024**

THOSE PRESENT:

Cllr D Warman (Chair), Cllr M Banyard, Cllr C Whelan, Cllr M Wade, Cllr K Holtzmann
Cllr W Novick

Mrs Anna Bennett (Tourism and Town Centre Manager)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Phillips.

2. Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of last Tourism and Town Centre Meeting held Tuesday 2nd April 2024

The Minutes of the last Tourism and Town meeting held on the 2nd April were agreed by members and signed by the Chairman Cllr D Warman. Pages TTC 98 and 99 refer. Matters Arising:- Page TTC 98, item 3 - Cllr Banyard mentioned that the meeting regarding volunteers with Mr Joseph Aitiki from Ely Cathedral was still happening. Mrs Bennett explained that job descriptions were required for volunteer posts to be able to proceed and that this was in working progress and Mrs S Jay, Deputy Clerk, had provided a template to complete. Page TTC 98, item 4 - Cllr Warman mentioned the upkeep and maintenance of Oliver Cromwell's House, of which Mrs Bennett replied that Mrs Tracey Coulson RFO, was dealing with this and further updates would be provided at Full Council. The Committee also raised that 'Town Centre' should be removed from the committee title, and Mrs Bennett's remit. This again would be raised at Full Council given the City of Ely Council have no power to make changes in Ely High Street and the town centre was now irrelevant given this falls under the District Council's responsibility. Consultations would need to be considered and updates provided in due course.

4. To receive an update on the Service and Town Centre

Cllr Warman welcomed new members and said how positive these meetings usually are with a great deal of enthusiasm, and hoped to see the same from the new members. Mrs Bennett discussed her report that was sent to all members of the Committee. Discussions were had around the stats regarding Q1 which had been quieter than usual, which members agreed was a case of cost of living, bad weather and the election.

Either way, figures were down for entrance to OCH and approx.16% across all attractions, restaurants, shops respectively. Shop sales were briefly discussed, and progress was being made with training commencing with 'on-line' shop next week. Cllr Holtzmann questioned the success of the 'on-line' shop and asked if it was worth it. Mrs Bennett responded that sales have been generated in the past (books),and providing there is social media support to promote it and it is well-advertised it should be. The plan in place would be implemented over the coming weeks with a full report at the next TTC meeting.

A brief update was provided on group travel, and it was reported that unfortunately, cancellation of many tours had taken place. Mrs Bennett expressed her concern regarding depleting coach travel number and the Ely Experience tours. It was felt that all attractions should collaborate with advertising on their websites, and hoped that this would happen as income would be generated for all if everyone worked together. The team would be attending GTL show in October and hoped to improve this for the 2025 season.

Escape Rooms were reported to be selling consistently. Cllr C Whelan asked if there was any conflict with the new room opening in Ely, of which Mrs Bennett said not directly, although they do have very similar games. There was doubt regarding using the synonym WHO with the new game, and Cllr Wade suggested using Global as an alternative.

'Vita-Datum' is the latest game offering. Cllr Novick and Cllr Holtzmann questioned translation of the Latin phrase 'Vita-Datum' being the incorrect name for the game as it makes no sense. Mrs Bennett said she would relay that information to the Escape Room team.

There were many discrepancies raised from Cllr Novick and Cllr Holtzmann regarding the Digital Boards. Cllr Novick questioned the point of them. It was explained this was a specifically funded project to primarily aid wayfaring in Ely, and to coincide with the use of the Visit Ely App, allowing visitors and community easier access to the city with maps, and other useful information.

Cllr Wade asked the question, together with Cllr Novick if the digital boards could be used to connect the community with the work of the City of Ely Council with regards to notifications/ actions. They requested clarification regarding the remit. Mrs Bennett explained that she would discuss with the team. There was a slight debate as to whether this was an appropriate route to take, given the advertising element was primarily to generate income, allowing upkeep, maintenance and to highlight 'what's on' in the region, and of course to boost tourism.

Cllr Banyard, Cllr Novick, and Cllr Holtzmann also mentioned various digital boards were not functioning and asked for these to be investigated. Mrs Bennett will discuss with her team and will report back.

Advertising Sales, Mr M Routledge (Sales and Events Officer) had produced a report to highlight new advertisers and sales targets, which was noted. The set 24/25 budget was also noted as being achievable with current sales and pending leads.

New members were encouraged to download the Visit Ely app from the QR Code provided; no comments were made. Mrs Bennett explained to the Committee that audio was due to be added to various attractions using the guide's knowledge and interpretation. This new element of the app will be live for the next meeting.

Cllr Holtzmann, Cllr Novick and Cllr C Whelan raised the question of DBS checking for OCH staff and requested this be investigated. It was explained that DBS checks had been discussed at previous Committee meetings, and it was felt that there was no requirement as all minor groups were accompanied by teacher/parent and support staff. The members requested clarification from the Clerk, Mrs Coulson.

Other tours available were discussed. Mrs Bennett gave an overview of the latest 'Bishop's Palace Garden and Chapel Tour which should start in August.

Apple and Harvest Day was discussed as the next major city celebration and a tradition now for Ely (working with Ely Cathedral Harvest celebrations). Cllr Holtzmann commented that the festival was not as themed as it had been in the past and would like to see 'Apple ID' and more relative apple themed activities. Mrs Bennett responded that many contributors who provide that facility were booked, as Apple Day is widely celebrated elsewhere. Cllr Warman suggested that if Cllr Holtzmann could supply a contact for the Apple ID, the events team would welcome that.

Town centre was briefly discussed with Cllr Novick suggesting the empty shops be used as art galleries, displaying artwork from Babylon. Cllr Banyard suggested he reached out to ECDC to see if this is viable.

Social media was discussed with the question being raised on harvesting data using Tik-Tok. Both Cllrs Holtzmann and Novick suggested that Tik-Tok be removed. Cllr Novick added that the videos were poor but Cllr Wade disagreed. Cllr Wade also questioned what the security threat would be to Visit Ely. Cllr Novick was not entirely sure. It was explained that Tik-Tok was set up to appeal to a younger audience, and many LVEP's use this media facility.

The advertising of Visit Ely events was discussed with Cllr Holtzmann mentioning that the poster artwork was quite 'drab' and perhaps more vibrant designs could be used. It was explained that the team was very small, artwork is generated in-house, and cost is an implication.

5.To discuss budget updates.

There were no comments aside of Cllr Banyard wanting it to be noted that the team had done well, and Cllr D Warman also added that the budget, since taking on the service was in a much better position. Mrs Bennett said she would relay their comments to the team.

6.Post Eel Festival discussion, AFD and Calendar for 2025

A brief overview of Eel Festival was discussed with Mrs Bennett praising her team for all their hard work and generating substantial income to re-invest into further community events. Events for the remainder of 2024 were also discussed and no comments were made.

Mrs Bennett added that the new guiding team and how well the newly trained guides were doing and enjoying their new roles. It was also mentioned that a new uniform (branded t-shirts) would shortly be available for the team, with the aim to highlight Visit Ely, whilst on outside tours.

Apple and Harvest Day 2025 was mentioned and it was suggested that perhaps this could be extended to a two-day event. Mrs Bennett expressed her interest in celebrating farming and harvest in the fens, and perhaps incorporating 'field to fork' initiatives.

8. Town Crier Competition

Cllrs Holtzmann and Cllr Novick were unaware of the role of the Town Crier and its tradition. It was suggested by both Councillors not to have one. The remaining members of the committee suggested we do have one, and to continue with what was previously agreed which is advertising for a replacement Town Crier, with a competition to be held on Apple Day in October.

9. The date of the next meeting will be 7pm, 12th August.

The meeting closed approximately 8pm