

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND LEISURE
COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2014 IN THE ROBIN ROOM,
THE CASTLE, HERTFORD AT 7.30PM**

PRESENT: Councillor Miss C Geall, in the Chair

Councillors: P Boyle and Miss J Sartin

NOTE: In the absence of both the Chairman and the Vice Chairman, Cllr Miss C Geall was elected Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

IN ATTENDANCE: Cllr P Ruffles
Ms N L Villa, Town Clerk
Miss M Bolton, Marketing and Events Manager
1 member of the press

184. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs B Haddock, (Previous engagement) Cllr B Mansfield (Previous engagement), Cllr D Poole (Previous engagement), Cllr Miss I Sigmac (Previous engagement) and Cllr A Stevenson (Previous engagement)

185. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

186. THE MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2014 were approved as a correct record and the Chairman authorised to sign the same.

187. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT DEALT WITH ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

The Town Clerk circulated a picture of a proposed new finial for the existing and potential new fingerpost signage. The reaction to the proposal was mixed and the Town Clerk was asked to circulate to other Members. It was also suggested that rather than a full colour logo, a plain gold one might better match the existing provision in the town and be easier to maintain over time. It was agreed that proposals for the full trail and signage would come to the next meeting.

The Committee noted the positive feedback received about the improvements to the basement and expressed its thanks to all involved.

The Town Clerk reported that she had not yet been able to progress the installation of the noticeboard at Sele Farm as the highways contractors (Ringway) had not yet been able to schedule the work. It was agreed that the noticeboard should be installed instead on Kingsmead and another noticeboard ordered for Sele.

The Committee was asked for feedback on the new tree lights in Parliament Sq. and it was agreed that they were poor. The Town Clerk was instructed to follow this up with the contractor.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The action sheet be received and noted.

188. QUESTIONS AND/OR STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

189. TOURISM AND PROMOTION – TOWN AND TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

The Committee received a report summarising activity at the Tourist Information Centre (TTIC). It was requested that the costs of souvenir items be removed from future reports and that statistics for footfall etc. be limited to the last 3 years. It was also noted that the TIC should remain open during business hours (i.e. not closing for stock taking, training etc.). The Committee also discussed the proposal for a TV advertising opportunity and decided that this was not to be progressed at this time as it would not enhance the appearance of the centre or the town.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the report.

190. TOURISM AND PROMOTION – HERTFORD TOWN COUNCIL EVENTS

The Committee received a report on the forthcoming events as well as feedback of the events that had taken place.

The Committee was pleased to note the success of the events to date in terms of the attendances and variation of events. It was felt this was due to partnership arrangements and improved marketing via social media. The Committee requested that future reports contain an assessment of the events so that the Council can continue to improve on the programme in future. It was also hoped that Punch and Judy would make a return next year, that Father Christmas would be in attendance at the Christmas Light Switch on and it was noted that as the events continue to grow, it is increasingly important to have an identified 'go to' person and contact number in case of issues/problems during events. The Committee noted it's thanks to the events team for the successful programme so far this season.

It was noted that the 'Think Christmas Think Hertford' event will now be held on Saturday 5th December to coincide with National Business Saturday.

It was noted that volunteers were lower in number this year than in previous years and it was felt that this was due to poor communication, especially as some volunteers do not have access to email. The Marketing and Events Manager confirmed that this was being addressed. There was also discussion about ensuring an appropriate 'thank you' event was held for all volunteers who had assisted at events, the date and format of which was to be agreed.

The Committee noted the on-going success of the Hertford Entrepreneurs Network and that Cllr Stevenson intended to run the growth awards again this year. As a result, the Committee authorised the Town Clerk to submit a Locality Budget application to fund the prizes for the competition.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the report.
- b) The Committee **approves** the proposal to submit a further Locality Budget application for the HEN awards.

191. DRAFT EVENTS PROGRAMME 2015

The Committee received a report outlining a proposed Event Programme for 2015.

The Marketing and Events Manager advised the Committee that she had received several booking requests for the Valentine's event already and therefore recommended holding two sittings, one at lunchtime and one in the evening. She is confident that the event will be a sell out again.

The Committee considered the current information available to them regarding Hertford Carnival and was supportive of the idea of working in partnership with Hertford Rotary and would be keen to determine a theme etc. in partnership with its volunteers. The Town Clerk was instructed to contact the Rotary to ascertain what their current position is on the event and to express the Council's support.

The Committee considered the proposal from the sponsor of the Open Air Cinema to run additional screenings in 2015 and although appreciative of the offer, felt unable to support an increase in the number of screenings at this time. A repeat of a screening in late August was supported. The Committee felt it was important that the Castle was open in both July and August for open days and requested that these be incorporated in to the programme.

There had been some discussion outside of the meeting with the police concerning the date of Rock at the Castle and its clash with Standon Calling. It was agreed that Cllrs Geall and Sigmac would speak to the local Chief Inspector to confirm that there were no issues with Rock and that the Council would prefer to retain the proposed date due to a busy events and Castle diary.

It was noted that Ware Town Council had produced a poster detailing all of the buildings/events that were participating in the recent Heritage Weekend. It was requested that the TIC produce something similar next year.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee thank the sponsor for his kind offer but do not approve the additional Open Air Cinema screenings in 2015
- b) Subject to the changes above, and consultation with the Friends of Hertford Castle, the events programme be circulated to all Members with a view to achieving approval prior to the next meeting
- c) The Town Clerk contact the Rotary and confirm the Council is prepared to work in partnership with them to support the delivery of Hertford Carnival in 2015

192. TOWN CENTRE UPDATE

The Committee received a report summarising the various projects designed to assist the economic health and development of the town centre.

The Town Clerk sought the views of the Committee on the Christmas Trees that used to be mounted in the brackets around town as part of the old display. The trees are now several years old and do not enhance the new display. It was agreed that these are now obsolete and can be disposed of and the infrastructure removed.

The Committee sought clarification around the new signage scheme which had been agreed between the Town Centre Coordinator and the Chairman. The Town Clerk agreed to follow this up.

The Committee again requested that the social media channels of the Council be used for general Council business as well as just events and that the names of those tweeting be included in the Council's profile information.

The Committee noted it's thanks to the Town Centre Coordinator for the updated occupancy report and were pleased to note that occupancy rates in Hertford remained above the national average with a good range of shops and services.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The Committee **notes** the progress made on delivering the Council's non-event Town Centre activities.
- (b) The Committee approves that the whole of Castle Street be included into the commercial premises occupancy survey area.

193. VENUE HIRE REPORT

The Committee received an update on the hire statistics for the Castle and Mill Bridge rooms.

The Town Clerk reported that a recent inspection of the Mill Bridge Rooms had led to some improvements works being undertaken, including replacement of

toilet facilities, redecoration, repairs to tiling and an improved standard of general cleaning. It is hoped that this will reverse the downward trend in bookings.

The Committee were pleased to note that the work undertaken to improve wedding hire rates appeared to be working with a healthy number of bookings already taken for 2015. The Marketing and Events Manager confirmed that her attention would now be focused on improving Corporate and Private bookings as these were down on last year. It was also noted that the catering income would continue to decline as the Council no longer offered in house catering as part of its packages.

The Marketing and Events Manager advised the Committee that research had shown that the Castle was priced exceptionally competitively for weddings and that a variable pricing structure might be appropriate, with enhance rates for peak times. It was agreed that a report outlining the proposals would be presented to the next meeting.

The Committee were concerned to note that approval had been given for the lawn to be hired by a local business for an event, which had not happened previously. It was agreed that this would be discussed further outside of the meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the report.

194. CCTV STATISTICS

The Committee received a report from the Finance Manager outlining the recent CCTV statistics

It was noted that a recent event in Hertford had highlighted one or two CCTV blind spots. The Town Clerk advised that she will shortly be visiting Sawbridgeworth Town Council which has just installed a new, wireless CCTV system which might be appropriate to augment the existing provision in Hertford.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the report.

195. PLANNING TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC - PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee had received copies of the minutes of the Planning Sub Committee meetings held on 9 June, 23 June, 7 July, 21 July, 18 August, 1 September and 15 September 2014

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The minutes of the Planning Sub Committee held on 9 June, 23 June, 7 July, 21 July, 18 August, 1 September and 15 September 2014 be received

196. MAIDENHEAD STREET REGENERATION PROJECT

The Committee received a report from Cllr Miss J Sartin regarding proposed improvements to Maidenhead Street including new street furniture, lighting, improvements to Evron Place and Honey Lane etc.

The Committee were supportive of the proposals and keen to ensure that progress could be made as soon as possible. As a result, the Town Clerk was authorised to undertake repair work to the paving in Evron Place and the installation of appropriate flower planters, subject to the owner's approval.

It was also suggested that the provision of cigarette bins be considered in order to combat the ongoing problem of cigarette ends littering the town. The issue regarding rubbish bags being left in town was also discussed and Cllr Sartin confirmed that East Herts Council had agreed to undertake leaflet drop to all residents to try and encourage them to leave their rubbish out at the appropriate times only. EHC had also contacted various businesses to remind them of their responsibilities regarding commercial waste and it was noted the Poundstretchers still had pallets in the street but this may have been for a short time during unloading and the situation would be regularly monitored.

The potential relocation of part the market to Bull Plain was also discussed and it was requested that other areas also be considered.

It was noted that it was difficult at this early stage in the project to determine the exact cost of the proposed improvements but it is anticipated that approximately £200,000 of funding will be needed which will be made available from a variety of sources (e.g. potential match funding from EHC, grant funding etc.). The Committee felt it appropriate at this stage to recommend that the Finance, Policy and Administration Committee set aside £100,000 of New Homes Bonus for this project and that the Town Clerk be authorised to proceed with the appointment of a project manager who will be able to drive the project and provide detailed further costings as the scheme progresses.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee recommend to the Finance, Policy and Administration Committee that £100,000 be allocated from the New Homes Bonus to the Maidenhead Street project.

197. FINANCE – FIRST QUARTER INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2014/15

The Committee received a report on the first quarter income and expenditure for 2014/15. It was requested that detailed information on the finances relating to each event be provided in this report in future.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the first quarter income and expenditure for 2014/15

198 DRAFT BUDGET 2015/16

The Committee received a first draft of the proposed budget for Development and Leisure for 2015/16 which included ongoing support for the taxi marshals, additional noticeboards, basement improvements and event equipment. The Committee were also asked to consider any other projects they would wish to undertake in the forthcoming year.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee approve the list of proposed projects for 2014/15 and noted that a request for additional funding from the New Homes Bonus to fund the signage project would be forthcoming as soon as costings were confirmed.

The meeting closed at 21:55