

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2013 IN THE ROBING ROOM, THE CASTLE,
HERTFORD AT 7.30PM**

PRESENT: Councillor Miss I Sigmac in the Chair

Councillors: P Boyle, Miss C Geall, Mrs S Newton, Dr L Radford, P Ruffles, Miss J Sartin and A Stevenson.

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms N L Villa, Town Clerk
Ms P Carpenter, Civic Administration Manager
Mrs S Cousins, Town and Tourist Information Manager
Mr M Caton, Town Centre Coordinator
Ms N Milton, Events Coordinator
Ms K Walford, (New Marketing and Events Manager)

374. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs B Haddock (family commitment) and Cllr D Poole (family commitment)

375. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

376. THE MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2012 were approved as a correct record and the Chairman authorised to sign the same.

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

Changes to Basement displays

Whilst it was noted that a data logger was to be installed in the basement to check the humidity and temperature to allow for museum exhibits to be placed in the basement. Nevertheless, it was requested that plans and ideas should be brought forward to Committee for future displays in the basement prior to the results of the data logging being available. The Chairman agreed to raise this at the next Friends of Hertford Castle meeting.

Neighbourhood Planning

It was noted that 19th April had been booked as a Neighbourhood Planning 'MOT' day, with the time yet to be confirmed. An officer from the East Herts Council Planning Policy Team would be present, along with Cllrs Miss Sigmac, Ruffles, Stevenson and members of the Planning Sub Committee.

Nomination of Additional Member to the Planning Sub Committee

Cllr Mrs Mansfield had indicated a willingness to sit on the Sub Committee and this would be confirmed at a later date.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The action sheet be received and noted.

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

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

379. TOURISM AND PROMOTION – TOWN AND TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

The Committee received a report summarising activity at the Tourist Information Centre (TTIC).

The Committee was disappointed to note the downward trend in the visitor statistics to the TTIC and requested a report to the next meeting detailing 'A Day in the Life of the TTIC' which would provide information to Committee of the typical visitor and questions asked of the staff, in order that a better understanding could be gained of the current service the TTIC provided. It was recognised that more needed to be done to maximise visitors to the TTIC, which included consideration given to improvements to the shop front and signage and the re-installation of the projecting sign.

The current website did not market the TTIC to its full extent and it was agreed that when the new website was designed, the TTIC should have its own landing page.

Whilst noting that the hire of the shop windows provided a small income, nevertheless it was felt that often the displays, especially those with particularly high display boards, completely restricted the view into the shop, which again it was felt could be a deterrent to visitors. It was therefore requested that in future the use of high display boards be refused.

The success of the Cheerful Trader competition was noted, but it was felt that this competition needed to be marketed as a Town Council initiative rather than a Mercury initiative which appeared to be the case at present.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

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

380. TOURISM AND PROMOTION – HERTFORD TOWN COUNCIL EVENTS

The Committee received a report on the planning progress and events programme for 2013. The proposed application form for the Rock at the Castle Charity nominees was also provided for review.

It was requested that future reports consolidate the events for the Town Centre within the report, to provide a comprehensive programme for Committee's consideration.

Following the loss of the Scottish Country Dancing, concern was expressed that the events programme had become unbalanced in favour of younger people. To this end it was requested that consideration be given to including an additional band concert possibly during the Open Day on 12 May 13.

It was requested that the date of the Carols at the Castle Event be moved from Saturday 14th December to Friday 13th December in order to attract a larger audience and to ensure the availability of local school choirs to take part.

A discussion ensued regarding the Rock at the Castle Charity nomination and it was requested that an additional line be added to the criteria to indicate that preference would be given to Charities that had not benefited from previous grant support from the Council in the last two years.

Concern was expressed that some worthy charitable organisations would feel put off by the amount of detail requested in the application guidelines and criteria, and it was therefore requested that a note be added to offer the assistance of the Town Clerk in completing applications.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the report.
- b) The Committee **approves** the application form for the Rock at the Castle Charity for 2013 with the changes indicated above.

Note: Cllr Mrs S Newton left the meeting.

381. TOWN CENTRE UPDATE

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

It was confirmed that the new notice board at Sainsbury's would be installed before the end of the financial year. Unfortunately the grant that had been provided by East Herts District Council had only covered the cost for this board and the cost of a new town centre map for all the notice boards. It was however confirmed that £10,000 of funding which had been set aside to provide brown tourist signs on the A414 remained unspent and it was therefore felt that this

funding would be better spent being diverted to funding the provision on new notice boards in the Town Centre.

It was noted that the finger posts installed in the vicinity of the new Sainsbury's store did not adequately direct visitors to the Town Centre and it was requested that this matter be addressed.

The Committee sought further information regarding the progress of the primary school competition to design the Hertford Food and Drink Festival logo. It was confirmed that the competition had been launched by the Mercury in January with a closing date of the end of February. It was not known how many applications had been received.

It was requested that all future Town Centre newsletters be circulated to all members for information and that it be tweeted and posted on the website to enable a maximum number of people to view the information therein.

It was noted that additional volunteers were required to cover not only the Christmas Gala, but also all Town Council events. It was requested that the Town Centre Coordinator and Events Coordinator work together on a plan to attract volunteers to help during events

The Committee again expressed concern at the appearance of the empty shops and it was requested that further investigations take place with landlords/letting agents and partner organisations to assess the possibility installing murals in the empty units to make the Town Centre more attractive.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the three year Christmas lights contract had come to end and authority was sought to tender for a new contract. Whilst there was an opportunity to extend the contract for a further two years, the performance of the current contractor had proved disappointing and as a result the Town Clerk had obtained a 20% reduction in the cost of the display, a transfer of ownership of the tree lights in Parliament Square and the 50+ mini Christmas trees to the Council. In light of the poor performance the Committee approved the competitive re-tendering process and that Cllrs Miss Sartin, Boyle and Stevenson sit on the tendering panel to choose the new contractor.

The Committee noted that the tree lights in Parliament Square and St Andrew's Street remained constantly on and it was recognised that this was something the public generally appreciated. Whilst it was noted that the electricity costs were minimal, nevertheless, it was requested that the cost be quantified and that the matter be reviewed at the next meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The Committee **notes** the progress made on delivering the Council's Town Centre Priorities and the planned activities for 2013/14.
- (b) The Committee **approves** the recommendation to re-tender the Christmas Lighting contract for 2013/14 with Cllrs Miss Sartin, Boyle and Stevenson forming the Tendering Panel.

382 . VENUE HIRE REPORT

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

The Committee expressed concern at the reduction of wedding bookings of the Castle, however it was hoped that following the appointment of the Marketing and Events Manager and the designation of one member of staff to deal with bookings, the situation would improve. It was also anticipated that a number of cosmetic improvements would be made to the Downshire Suite and toilet facilities, which it was felt would make the interior more attractive as a wedding and/or corporate meeting venue.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that two film location agencies were also due to visit the Castle to ascertain its viability to be marketed as a film location.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

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

383. FRIENDS OF HERTFORD CASTLE

The Committee had received a copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Friends of Hertford Castle held on 17 October 2012.

The Committee was advised that there remained a considerable amount of clearing in the basement to be achieved prior to space becoming available for Mrs Jean Riddell to store the exhibition screens. However it was agreed that this matter would be expedited as a matter of urgency.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The Committee **notes** the minutes of the meeting of the Friends of Hertford Castle held on 17 October 2012.

384. CCTV STATISTICS

The Committee received a report from the Finance Manager outlining the CCTV statistics for 2012.

The Town Clerk advised that she would seek feedback from the local Safer Neighbourhood Team regarding examples of how the CCTV images helped the Police in effecting arrests.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

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

385. PLANNING TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC - PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee had received copies of the minutes of the Planning Sub Committee meetings held on 12 November, 26 November and 10 December 2012 and 21 January and 28 January 2013.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The minutes of the Planning Sub Committee held on 12 November, 26 November and 10 December 2012 and 21 January and 28 January 2013 be received.

387. FINANCE – THIRD QUARTER INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2012/13

The Committee received a report on the third quarter income and expenditure for 2012/13.

The Committee was pleased to note the surplus on the Committee's budget, which it was hoped at year end would contribute to meeting the deficit on the budget for 2013/14 brought about by changes to the Council Tax base.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

(a) The Committee **notes** the income and expenditure to 31 December 2012.

The meeting closed at 9.05