

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND LEISURE
COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 30 SEPTEMBER 2013 IN THE ROBIN ROOM,
THE CASTLE, HERTFORD AT 7.30PM**

PRESENT: Councillor Miss I Sigmatic, in the Chair

Councillors: P Boyle, Miss C Geall, Mrs B Mansfield, Mr P Ruffles, Dr L Radford and Miss J Sartin

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms N L Villa, Town Clerk
Ms P Carpenter, Civic Administration Manager
Ms M Bolton, Marketing and Events Manager

188. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs Haddock (Unwell), Cllr D Poole (Unwell) and Cllr Stevenson (Business Commitment)

189. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

190. THE MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2013 be approved as a correct record and the Chairman authorised to sign the same.

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

Neighbourhood Planning

It was confirmed that an initial meeting had taken place to ascertain feasibility and to identify a couple of areas suitable for a Neighbourhood Plan. A further meeting would take place shortly.

CCTV

The Clerk had received a response which confirmed that there were currently no performance indicators for repairs to the cameras. Cameras were normally repaired quickly, unless there was a fibre optic or cabling issue, but the down time of the cameras was not measured.

It was requested that a letter be sent to East Herts Council to request that a Service Level Agreement be included in its contract, to ensure that downtime of

cameras was monitored. It was also requested that the letter sought information as to whether the CCTV cameras were used for parking enforcement issues.

Fingerposts at Sainsburys

The Committee was advised that a meeting was due to take place between an East Herts Planning Officer and Sainsburys to ascertain whether it would be possible to move the signage to ensure it was more visible.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The action sheet be received and noted.

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

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

193. TOURISM AND PROMOTION – TOWN AND TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

The Committee received a report summarising activity at the Tourist Information Centre (TTIC) and it was noted that the visitor and sales figures continued to be down on the previous year. It was recognised that the lease would be due for renewal in 2015 and that a strategic review would need to take place to ascertain how the TTIC would look going forward. It was also agreed that a discussion regarding lone working would need to take place within the Personnel Sub Committee, but it was also hoped that it would be possible to attract volunteers to work at the Centre during periods of staff shortages.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

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

194. TOURISM AND PROMOTION – HERTFORD TOWN COUNCIL EVENTS

The Committee received a report on the planning progress and events programme for 2013 as well as feedback of the events that had taken place.

It was noted that Wonderland had been a good event, despite it clashing with the Wimbledon Men's Final, but that it had been also relatively expensive to run.

The Community Sports Day was good but had not been particularly well attended and it was felt that there had not been as much promotion through the sports clubs as was necessary. It was thought that a way to better promote events would be through the school e-bulletins and for the new HTC website to have a specific events landing page.

The medieval encampment for Heritage Open Day had been interesting, but the desired impact had not been achieved. It had been expected that the

encampment would occupy the whole lawn, but had in fact just been set up in a small corner, and had therefore been isolated. A band concert was thought to perhaps be a better partner to the Heritage Open Day, as an attraction to an older generation.

The Food and Drink Festival was being promoted on both the Town Council and GoHertford websites and posters and promotional material were being distributed from the TTIC and the traders. Jack FM had also recorded an advert and it was hoped to get editorial coverage on food and family websites.

It was noted that the 2014 programme of events was very much at the planning stage and that the whole programme, including open days would be presented at the next meeting of the Committee. It had been suggested that the Evron Band be invited to play at one of the Open Days, and Cllr Geall agreed to make contact with the band to ascertain a date for their attendance.

The suggestion that the Friends of Hertford Castle be invited to take over the organisation of the Open Days was rejected by the Committee, because members were keen not to over-burden the Friends, who gave up their time free of charge to work at the Open Days. A suitable thank you reception would be organised for the Friends after the last event of the year, on 16 October 2013.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

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

195. 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.

The Committee had been disappointed that it had not been possible to bring a speciality market to Hertford due to restrictions on the market wanting to operate on two days running. It was understood that Hoddesdon held a speciality market on one day, and the next day it moved on to another town, and the Committee wondered if it would be possible to share the market with a neighbouring town, such as Ware or Bishop's Stortford. The Clerk agreed to investigate.

Councillor Geall advised the Committee that she had recently visited Wheathampstead and had noted that the signage in the town was excellent making it easy for visitors to find their way around the town. The Clerk agreed to contact the Clerk of Wheathampstead to obtain some information regarding the provision of the signage.

The Committee also wished to investigate the possibility of providing more maps around the town with 'You Are Here' markers, to assist visitors.

The Committee was pleased to note that shop vacancy levels were reducing, with new businesses regularly opening in the Town.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee notes the progress made on delivering the Council's Town Centre priorities and the planned activities.
- b) The Committee agrees that a report is submitted to the next meeting to cover further priorities for the town centre for 2014/15.

196. VENUE HIRE REPORT

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

The Committee noted that Corporate Hire had increased considerably and this had been largely as a result of the radio advert, but that wedding bookings had not yet shown an increase.

The report outlined proposals for increasing wedding hire at the Castle and it was requested that a full cost analysis of the proposals be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

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

197. THE CASTLE GROSS MARGIN AND PROFITABILITY REPORT

The Committee received a report outlining a simple measurement of the gross margin for venue hire and the revenue required for hirings to break even as a business activity.

The report provided the Committee with a rough analysis of the costs involved in using the Castle as a wedding venue and it was noted that there needed to be a large increase in bookings in order for the Council to reach a break even position.

The Committee recognised that it would be necessary make a strategic decision regarding the future viability of venue hire at the Castle, and in order to assist the decision making process it was requested that a second report be presented to the next meeting which provided a full cost analysis based on a timed appraisal of staff input in venue hire activities.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the report.

198. CCTV STATISTICS

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

It was **RESOLVED** that:

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

199. HERTFORD ENTREPRENEURS' NETWORK AWARD

The Committee received a report from Cllr Andrew Stevenson which outlined his proposal to use a proportion of his County Council locality budget to provide cash awards for a new Entrepreneurs' Growth Award. The award would be an experiment and if successful may be copied by other towns in the future.

The Competition would be open to any registered business with a location, and employee, a director or shareholder in Hertford AS and entry would be via an online application from the Council website. Herts County Council had agreed to provide some promotional help and the Director of LEP Enterprise and Innovation Board has also agreed to support the HEN scheme through its business database using social media etc. The organisation of the competition would require administrative and promotional support from Town Council Officers.

The Committee was supportive of the proposal but recognised that, to be successful, the Competition would need to be well marketed, starting with an early press release.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

That Committee **approves** the proposal.

200. PLANNING TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC - PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee had received copies of the minutes of the Planning Sub Committee meetings held on 20 May, 10 June, 24 June, 8 July, 22 July, 5 August, 19 August, 2 September and 16 September 2013.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The minutes of the Planning Sub Committee held on 20 May, 10 June, 24 June, 8 July, 22 July, 5 August, 19 August, 2 September and 16 September 2013 be received.

201. FINANCE – END OF YEAR INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2013/14

The Committee received a report on the first quarter income and expenditure for 2013/14.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee **notes** the first quarter income and expenditure for 2013/14

202. FINANCE – DRAFT BUDGET 2014/15

The Committee had received a first draft of the proposed budget for 2014/15. The Committee requested that the Hanging Basket and Town Development Fund budgets be moved from optional projects to the core budget given that these items were no longer considered as new projects, but represented an integral part of the Council's expenditure.

New project proposals for future debate included an update of the Council's IT provision, an upgrade of the Castle kitchen facilities, increases to the marketing and events budget and town signage and maps.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the draft budget.
- b) The Hanging Basket and Town Development Fund budgets be presented as standard budget items within the next budget report.

The meeting closed at 2120.