

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2012 IN THE ROBING ROOM, THE CASTLE,
HERTFORD AT 7.30PM**

PRESENT: Councillor Miss I Sigmac in the Chair

Councillors: P Boyle, Mrs S Newton, P Ruffles and A Stevenson.

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms N L Villa, Town Clerk
Mr S Davies, Finance Manager
Mrs S Cousins, Town and Tourist Information Manager
Mr M Caton, Town Centre Coordinator
Ms N Milton, Events Coordinator

272. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Miss C Geall (holiday), Mrs B Haddock (unwell), Poole (unwell) and Miss J Sartin (previous engagement), Dr L Radford (unwell)

273. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr P Ruffles declared a DPI in any items relating to East Herts Council as a Member of that authority and in Hertford Museum should any discussion as to the level of grant funding arise.

274. THE MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2012 were approved as a correct record and the Chairman authorised to sign the same.

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

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The action sheet be received and noted.

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

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

277. TOURISM AND PROMOTION – TOWN AND TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

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

It was queried whether the Cheerful Trader competition attracted a sustainable response and the TIC Manager confirmed that a good and varied number of responses had been received.

The TIC Manager displayed a number of proposed new souvenirs which she sought Member's views on, as she was seeking to refresh the retail offer in the TIC. Members were broadly supportive of the items displayed, believing them to have a contemporary feel. The TIC Manager confirmed that there were no costs associated with the new product lines expect for the purchase price (ie no costs for artwork, design etc) and that the supplier offered viable minimum order number terms for the TIC to trial the range.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the report.
- b) The Committee delegate authority to the TIC Manager, in consultation with the Chairman, to select new items for sale in the TIC on trial.

278. TOURISM AND PROMOTION – HERTFORD TOWN COUNCIL EVENTS

The Committee received a report on the events for 2012 and a draft programme for 2013.

It was noted that Shire Hall had opened for the Heritage Open Day but that a lack of publicity may have affected the number of visitors. The Chairman agreed that as Shire Hall had been specifically requested to open by Hertford Town Council, it could have been included in the press release advertising the event and that this will be considered for next year.

It was also noted that the wedding exhibition clashed with another exhibition locally and the Events Coordinator confirmed that the proposed dates for 2013 have been researched and, currently, there were no known clashes.

The Chairman outlined the proposed calendar of events for 2013, highlighting the new events that have been included to refresh the program. There was a request that the proposed Community Sports Day encourage 'proper/real' sports and the Chairman confirmed that it is proposed to hold a variety of activities.

The Town Clerk requested that Members be aware of the number of events planned which, when combined with weddings and weekend hirings, required some officers to work several weekends in a row throughout the summer. She highlighted the importance of the Member of Friends of Hertford Castle volunteers in delivering the events program.

The Chairman stressed the importance of broader advertising of the events as outlined in the report. The Town Centre Co-ordinator advised that the schools had been very receptive to allowing leaflets to be put in to pupils' book bags, which had proved an effective advertising method.

The Chairman thanked the Events Coordinator for her hard work and assistance on the events during the summer.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the review of the 2012 events.
- b) The Committee **approves** the draft 2013 Events Programme, included the three new proposed events, subject to consultation with the Friends of Hertford Castle
- c) The Committee **approves** the changes to the event advertising strategy.
- d) The Committee **notes** the remainder of the report.

279. TOWN CENTRE UPDATE

Having declared a DPI in this item, Cllr P Ruffles left the room.

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 Chairman thanked the Town Centre Co-ordinator (TCC) for his work on the Food and Drink Festival which has received good feedback. One minor observation was that some attendees had expected the focus to be more on locally sourced, traditional/farmers market type produce rather than more 'interesting' cuisines, but overall the feedback had been very positive and it is planned to repeat the event in 2013.

The Chairman thanked everyone involved in the planning and delivery of the Christmas Gala which was a great success. There was a query about feedback from the traders as to whether they experienced an increase in sales as a result of the event. The Town Centre Coordinator advised that it was too early to have received much feedback this year but in the past traders have not reported significant increase in sales but were nonetheless happy to support the evening as a community event and to help raise awareness of the wide range of shops in the town. The TCC was pleased to confirm that approx 1/3 of the costs of the events had been covered by sponsorship and hire fees and that the GoHertford website had received 323 hits on the day, demonstrating the increasing interest in the site. The TCC informed Members that an article on the website would shortly be featured in Hertfordshire Life Magazine.

The Chairman issued an open invitation to all Members who might be interested in attending the next Hertford Entrepreneurs Network which will explore the use of Social Media.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The Committee **notes** the progress made on delivering the Council's Town Centre Priorities and the planned activities for 2012/13.

Cllr P Ruffles returned to the room.

280 . VENUE HIRE REPORT

The Committee received an update on the hire statistics for the Castle and Mill Bridge rooms. It was queried why there had been a significant reduction in the number of weddings this year and the Town Clerk advised that it was difficult to measure as requests for brochures remained high. Anecdotal feedback included the size of the rooms being an issue as people were looking for larger capacity and the Town Clerk wondered whether the Castle was losing out to Fletchers Lea at Ware Priory which can offer more modern facilities and increased facilities but there was no definitive evidence to support this assumption.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

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

281. REVIEW OF VENUE HIRE FEES

The Committee had received a report with a recommendation to increase the venue hire fees with effect from 1 April 2013 to reflect the current level of inflation.

It was noted that the hire fees were very similar to what is being charged in some venues in London and therefore future increases in fees will need to be considered carefully.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The Committee **approves** the increases in hire tariffs for the Downshire Suite, Mill Bridge Rooms, Castle Grounds and the increase in fees for the Castle as a film location.

282. CCTV STATISTICS

The Committee received a report from the Finance Manager outlining the CCTV statistics to 30 September 2012. The Town Clerk also reminded Members of the standing invitation to visit the CCTV control room in Stevenage.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

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

283. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

Having declared a DPI in this item, Cllr P Ruffles left the room.

The Committee received a report from the Town Clerk which included a request to consider engaging Action for Market Towns to assist the Council in considering whether it wished to pursue Neighbourhood Plans.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Committee **notes** the report.
- b) The Committee **approves** the proposal to engage Action for Market Towns to work with the Development and Leisure Committee and

Planning Sub Committee to consider the Council's aims and suggest appropriate vehicles for delivery of those aims.

Cllr P Ruffles returned to the room.

284. PLANNING TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC - PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee had received copies of the minutes of the Planning Sub Committee meetings held on 3 September, 1 October, 15 October and 29 October 2012.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The minutes of the Planning Sub Committee held on 3 September, 1 October, 15 October and 29 October 2012 be received.

The Town Clerk reminded Members that there was a requirement to fill the vacancy on the Planning Sub Committee as the meeting was sometimes struggling to achieve a quorum, especially due to the new Declaration of Interest rules.

285. FINANCE – FIRST HALF YEAR INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2012/13

The Committee received a report on the first half income and expenditure for 2012/13.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

(a) The Committee **notes** the income and expenditure to 30 September 2012

286. FINANCE – DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2013/14

The Committee received a report providing a draft of the budget for the Development and Leisure Committee for 2013/14. It was noted that if all of the proposed projects were undertaken it would result in a 20.5% increase on the Committee's budget. The Committee discussed an order of priority for items for inclusion in the budget on the understanding that it was likely that not all of the items would be able to be progressed if a zero percent precept increase was to be achieved. The exact overall impact on the budget of including all of the proposed and ongoing items will not be known until the tax base for Hertford is published by East Herts Council in early December.

It was noted that the figure included for 6050 CCTV – provision of ANPR cameras could be further reduced from £30,000 following a recent meeting with the Constabulary but the exact figure requested was yet to be confirmed. However, the recommended amount for consideration by the FP&A Committee is a figure of £5,000 with a low priority. The Chairman requested that the Finance Manager create a new budget line for ANPR to prevent any confusion with CCTV.

It was agreed that 7080 – Christmas Light Displays could be removed from the list as the current contract was due for renewal and it may be possible to include these items in any future contract.

The Chairman provided an update on 6051 - Taxi Marshalling Scheme funding, stating that East Herts Council are still considering if/how it intends to apply the night time levy to local businesses that open late in to the evening. Should EHC decide to apply the levy, it would some time for the structures that facilitate collection and distribution of funds to be put in place and this was unlikely to be achieved before the new financial year. It is also likely that any levy imposed wont become payable until each premises renews its licence, which means the point at which the businesses start paying will vary throughout the year. Therefore the Chairman advised that it would be prudent at this stage to assume that there will be no contribution to Taxi Marshalling in the next financial year other than the ongoing investment from Herts County Council and that the earliest that Hertford Town Council might expect a contribution from the night time levy is 2014/15.

There was some discussion around 6034 – Town Council Noticeboards in relation to where any potential noticeboards would be situated. It was agreed that the Town Clerk would investigate the cost of obtaining four noticeboards, one for each ward.

The Town Clerk reminded Members that whilst the intention of the New Homes Bonus is not to supplement the precept, it is available to assist with the development or improvement of infrastructure, which some of these projects might be considered to achieve.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The Committee **notes** the report.
- (b) The Committee **approve** the following optional projects for recommendation to the Finance, Policy and Administration Committee for consideration on 14 January 2013:

High Priority for inclusion (not in order of preference)

- a) **6037 Town Hanging Baskets** – Continuation of the contract for the supply and planting of hanging baskets and planters in the town centre - £10,000 (HTC Priorities 2011-2015 Number 5ii).
- b) **6036 Town Development Fund** – Ongoing provision for town centre support at the same level set for 2012/13 - £5,000 (HTC Priorities 2011-2015 Number 3).
- b) **6032 Town Council website** – Provision for the redesign of the Town Council website - £10,000 (HTC Priorities 2011-2015 Number 5vi).
- d) **6051 Taxi Marshalling** – Provision for ongoing support of the Taxi Marshal Scheme - £10,000 (HTC Priorities 2011-2015 Number 5).

Low Priority for inclusion (not in order of preference)

- e) **6037 Town Hanging Baskets** – Provision for expansion of the contract to include hanging baskets at the Sele Farm shopping area and the shops in Bengeo, Ware Road and Warren Place - £2,000 (HTC Priorities 2011-2015 Number 5ii).
- f) **6034 Town Council Noticeboards** – Provision for two new noticeboards for areas outside the Town Centre - £2,000 (HTC Priorities 2011-2015 Number 5).
- g) **6050 CCTV** – Provision for a contribution to the funding of the purchase and installation of semi-permanent lamp post mounted ANPR cameras around the town - £5,000 (HTC Priorities 2011-2015 Number 5i).

Cllr P Boyle wished it to be recorded that he voted against the proposal to reduce the amount budgeted for ANPR from £17,500 to £5,000.

The meeting closed at 2130.