

MOLD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Mold Town Council Tourism Committee held on Monday, 13th May 2013 at Mold Town Hall.

PRESENT: Councillors: Geoff Collett (Mayor) Richard Brookes, Chris Bithell, Carol Heycocks, Anthony Parry, Andrea Mearns, Phil Thomas and the Town Manager.

IN ATTENDANCE: Niall Waller (Flintshire County Council).

1. APOLOGIES: Councillor Robin Guest (Deputy Mayor)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: None declared

3. MINUTES:

Resolved: It was resolved that the Minutes of the meeting held on 7th September 2011 be approved as a correct record.

4. VISITOR CENTRE (FORMER TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE)

Councillor Geoff Collett welcomed Niall Waller to the meeting.

Mr. Waller apologised for the delay in providing members with an up to date report on the development of the Mold Visitor Centre and then proceeded to provide members with a verbal update of a developing role for the facility. The Town Manager introduced the Annual Report on the facility provided by North Wales Tourism. It was noted that the Visitor Centre was run by North Wales Tourism on behalf of Flintshire County Council and Mold Town Council.

It was noted that a significant decline in use had been experienced over the last 12 months and this was accompanied by an associated decline in revenue collected. Part of the decline was attributable to the facility being closed for refurbishment of the building whilst necessary remedial work was carried out for health and safety reasons. Mr Waller commented that visitor information was now being provided in Holywell and Flint within the new Flintshire Connects facilities and that nationally, the traditional Tourist Information Centres were in decline as visitors looked increasingly towards the internet as their primary means of accessing tourist focused information and services.

In the light of the report, a number of Councillors expressed concern about the value for money that the Visitor Centre provided for the town and that especially in current times of significant pressures on the town council budget, whether the town council should continue to financially support the facility. It was noted however, that a Flintshire Connects facility in Mold was at least 2-3 years away.

The Mayor commented that the Visitor Centre provided a service for the whole of Flintshire and enquired whether other towns, perhaps in a stronger financial position than Mold, should be asked to contribute towards its operating costs.

Councillor Mearns commented only recently the enquiry office at Mold Bus Station was regularly closed and this was a further loss of a visitor focused service in the town. She suggested whether a combined service may be a way forward.

The Town Manager suggested that staff within the Visitor Centre had started to take on a more proactive role, for example, ringing coach companies, working with hospitality sector businesses, Flintshire Tourism Association, etc. This also could be a way forward for the Centre but it needed a significant change in traditional working practices for meaningful benefits to ensue.

Resolved: It was resolved that:

a) Mr. Waller and the Town Manager should meet with North Wales Tourism to request them to review the specific benefits accruing to Flintshire and the town of Mold from the Visitor Centre over the summer period. The Town Council would like a report by 1st October 2013 on the identified benefits and value gained from the facility, so that it can be determined whether continued funding was a priority in the ensuing year.

b) At the same time, Mr Waller would bring back to the Committee the position of Flintshire County Council on the benefits to the wider county and indicate the position of other towns in the county, about its continued use and whether any other town would be willing to provide any financial support.

5. TOURIST INFORMATION POINTS (TIP's)

Mr Waller apologised for the lack of progress on this issue to date. He went on to explain that the process of getting relevant information into the hands of visitors was changing at a significant rate, especially with the ever increasing adoption of mobile phone technology. The role of Tourist Information Points was therefore changing and investment needed to reflect this fact.

He then went onto explain that the County Council had obtained costings of approximately £600.00 for three sided boards as TIP's that were fitted to lamp columns, however this then posed another issue of the strength of lamp columns in Mold to take them. He also indicated that any budget for TIP's in the town was only modest.

A discussion ensued and Councillor Mearns developed the concept of the TIP's used in Kendal, images of which she had circulated previously and which it was believed that the County Council were costing up. It was widely supported by members that a number (to be determined) **quality** TIP's were preferred throughout the town which not only reflected the town and its aspirations, but also the specific location where located and also future events.

The Town Manager informed the Committee that whilst budget at this time may be only "modest", other options may appear in the future that could possibly be considered so allowing more desirable TIP's to be introduced then, or even on a phased approach.

Resolved: It was resolved that:

Mr Waller would further research and cost potential quality TIP's suitable for locating in the town, and bring costed options to the next Tourism Committee.

6. MOBILE TELEPHONE APP FOR TOURISM IN FLINTSHIRE

The Town Manager informed members of a new development taking place within Wales for the introduction of an App for mobile “smart” phones that had benefits for trails, festivals and retail promotional activity. Funding had been made available via Visit Wales for the initial development work and Flintshire County Council, through the Destination Management Partnership had now agreed to a phased roll out across Flintshire. The Mold Food and Drink Festival is adopting the App and the Town Manager was exploring the potential benefits for its introduction into Mold, alongside the shop local scheme which was waiting introduction.

Resolved:

To note and welcome the development with interest.

7. COACH OPERATORS

Mr Waller informed members that work is being undertaken to increase the number of coach visitors to the County and Mold was at the heart of this project, as the Town Manager had been instrumental in the development. Members welcomed the project and hoped that it would provide more visitors to the town at the earliest opportunity.

The Town Manager informed members that discussion was taking place on the best location to park coaches coming to the town as the message from Flintshire County Council Highways, that the current coach parking on New Street car park wasn't suitable. Councillor Bithell commented that New Street car park was specifically strengthened in the coach parking area and he could not understand the argument being put forward by the County Council Highways department.

The Town Manager informed members that he and the Clerk were due to meet with representatives of the Highways Department in the near future and would query this conclusion.

Resolved:

To welcome the project and await further details on progress at the next meeting.

8. MOLD GATEWAY SIGNS

The Mayor informed members that designs for new signs at the main gateways to the town had been progressed and agreed by a joint sub-group of Cittaslow and the Town Council. Costs varied from £2000.00 each upwards dependent upon location.

The proposals were now with Kevin Sutton from Flintshire County Council's Highways Department for more accurate costing and to help determine a plan for their introduction.

Resolved:

That the Town Manager and Mr Waller would seek views and a costed proposal from County Highways, which may involve a phased approach.

9. HERITAGE OPEN DAY

A request had been received that Bailey Hill Lodge was included within the Heritage Open Day in September. It was not felt that this was appropriate, however it was agreed to make Mold Town Hall available for the initiative.

Resolved:

For the Clerk to make arrangements for Mold Town Hall to be included in the Heritage Open Day scheme.

10. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

It was noted that up to a potential £5000.00 budget existed following a donation of nearly £3500.00 from Mold 2000 towards new Christmas Lights.

Discussion ensued and it was agreed that LED's were a preferred way forward to reduce the town's carbon footprint in this regard. Whilst £5000.00 was not a large budget it was thought that costed proposals from 2 or 3 suppliers would be beneficial to the town council so that we knew where we are on this issue. It was agreed to seek the expertise and advice of Sean Williams, who installs and maintains the Christmas lights on behalf the Town Council, in helping with the process.

Discussion ensued about the towns approach to the switch-on event, as representation had been received from a number of independent traders that they did not like the current approach of closing the High Street and bringing in a fun fair. The Traders argued that this damaged trade for the period of closure and that a fun fair was inappropriate for that event.

It was strongly felt by members that the current format was appreciated by many young people at whom the event was targeted and that it should (more or less) remain the same. It was suggested that perhaps some space could be found on the High Street or elsewhere in the town, for more traditional activities and this should be explored further.

Resolved:

- a) That the Clerk and Town Manager explore costed options for the towns Christmas lights and that Sean Williams be asked if he wished to be involved in the process.
- b) That the Christmas lights switch on event be more or less the same as in previous years, although more "festive" stalls be invited.

11. LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

12. EVENTS MANAGEMENT

It was discussed that with the increasing number of events and festivals being held in the town and the desire to develop Mold as a Festivals Town, the time implications falling on the Town Manager and Town Clerk was becoming disproportional to their other tasks. Concern was expressed that whilst events and festivals were desirable

to continue, other and perhaps more strategically beneficial priorities may suffer as a result.

Resolved:

For Councillors Mearns and Collett to take the issue for greater debate at the Personnel Sub-Committee and if appropriate, the Budgetary Sub-Committee.

13. PROMOTIONAL LEAFLETS

It was brought to attention that stocks of information leaflets used to promote the markets, Town Trail and Bailey Hill were now extremely low and that a reprint was necessary as they were regularly used and provided good value for the town.

The Town Manager explained that Flintshire County Council had offered to match fund a 5000 reprint of both the Town Trail and Bailey Hill leaflet, if the Town Council were willing to meet the other 50% - a total of £300.00. All supported this proposal.

He explained that unfortunately, Flintshire did not support a reprint of the Marketing Mold Markets leaflet as they had now developed a wider Flintshire Markets leaflet. It was strongly felt that this was disappointing as this new leaflet did not provide sufficient emphasis towards Mold as the premier markets destination in the County and that it was not widely circulated. To reproduce the Mold markets leaflet again and arrange for distribution at key tourism information points within north Wales and the north West of England, an estimated budget of £5000.00 was required.

Resolved:

- a) That £300.00 is made available from Town Council funds for the reprinting the Town Trail and Bailey Hill leaflets, as match funding to Flintshire County Council's commitment.
- b) That sponsorship and other funding opportunities (including the Town Council) are explored to raise funds to undertake the Marketing Mold markets campaign on a regular basis.
- c) That the opportunity is used when reprinting any leaflet to ensure that all material is up to date.
- d) That electronic copies are made available within any websites for download as pdf's etc.

14. DISCOVER FLINTSHIRE WEBSITE

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

**SUMMARY OF DECLARATIONS MADE BY MEMBERS
IN ACCORDANCE WITH MOLD TOWN COUNCIL'S
CODE OF CONDUCT**

TOURISM COMMITTEE	DATE: 13th May 2013
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MEMBER	ITEM	MINUTE NO. REFERS
	None	