



## **WISBECH CASTLE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

**14 JANUARY 2019 – 7.30 pm**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING**

**Present:** Councillor Tierney, Chairman; Councillors Oliver, Miss Oliver and Rackley.

**Apologies:** Councillors Lynn and Tibbs.

**Public participation:** None requested.

The minutes of the meeting of the Wisbech Castle Management Committee held on 15 October 2018 were confirmed and signed.

#### **W15/18 Refurbishment and enhancement of Wisbech Castle**

Further to minute W10/18, the Chairman updated members on progress which had been achieved regarding the refurbishment and enhancement of Wisbech Castle (the main building, the outbuildings and the garden).

The Chairman informed members that most of the major works had now been undertaken and that time since the last meeting of this committee had been spent primarily on cleaning, undertaking minor repair works, a small amount of decorating, gardening and other incidental work; the volunteers had performed most of the tasks needed. He mentioned that works to re-build the viewing platform on top of the vaults is almost complete and that some work had been undertaken in the vaults as a starter to a much larger project planned for this year.

Members were informed by the Chairman that some of the wood of the pump house is rotten and that some necessary repair works had been undertaken in that regard; as members are aware, the aim is to spend no more money than is necessary to keep this building in use for the next few years with a view to considering its replacement in the longer-term. In accordance with the advice of the Local Planning Authority's Conservation Officer, no significant changes have been made to the exterior of this building; an internal temporary door structure has been installed to make the building warmer in the winter; this structure could be removed if necessary in the summer months.

Further to minute W13/18, Wisbech Castle had been the subject of an inspection, on 22 November 2018, by officers of the County Council, to enable that council to confirm that Wisbech Town Council had met its obligations under the lease. The officers who visited had seemed pleased and impressed with the work which had been carried out and commented positively about the quality, speed and low costs that had been achieved. No significant concerns had been raised by those officers.

In response to Councillor Oliver informing members of his concern regarding the level of dampness in the vaults and the impact that this could have upon the displays which are planned for installation, the Chairman mentioned that the Wisbech Castle Working Party is working on identifying a means of "covering" the displays which would not involve attaching any materials to the internal walls of the vaults.

With regard to the use of Wisbech Castle as a wedding venue, Councillor Oliver informed members that, further to minute W10/18, he had developed some ideas in relation to a publicity brochure for such occasions. He expressed the opinion, with which there was concurrence by the other members



of the committee, that the best approach (in order that the information could be kept up-to-date without the need for regular re-printing) would be to produce a high quality “professional” glossy folder/wallet, to be filled with various documents (such as price lists). Councillor Oliver stated that as soon as he had produced a mock-up of possible promotional material, he would send copies to both the Chairman and Councillor Prest.

Councillor Oliver commented that, based upon his experience of the wedding “industry”, it is not likely now that weddings would take place at Wisbech Castle until 2020.

Members decided that the information reported be noted and that they would consider at a future meeting whether Wisbech Town Council should make application for a Premises Licence (under the Licensing Act 2003; to enable the retail sale of alcohol and the provision of regulated entertainment etc) for Wisbech Castle.

### **W16/18 Operational arrangements for the use/rental/ hire of rooms/space at Wisbech Castle**

Members considered matters in relation to operational arrangements for the use/rental/hire of rooms/space at Wisbech Castle.

The Chairman informed members that, until now, the sporadic hire of parts of Wisbech Castle had been handled by the Voluntary Caretaker and him, using the rates agreed for rooms (minute W9/18 refers), with all monies being forwarded to the Town Council; banking of that income and the production of invoices (where necessary) has been undertaken by staff of the council. He made the point that, now that Wisbech Castle is entering its first full year of operation, it is necessary to put in place more formal arrangements.

Members were informed by the Chairman of his proposal that, for the time being, the booking of rooms/space at Wisbech Castle would continue to be handled by the Voluntary Caretaker and him; however, an on-line group calendar be created so that involved parties would be able to check the availability of rooms/space for hire and the bookings which had been made. He suggests that officers of the Town Council produce a hire document (which is simple to use), which would detail the parties involved, the date, time and cost of the booking and any legal expectations; this would enable hirers to be sent an invoice after the hire had taken place.

The council's Operations Manager mentioned that the council had received enquiries regarding the possibility of “Tea and Tour” visits to Wisbech Castle and asked whether/how this could be offered. In response, the Chairman undertook to discuss this matter with the relevant volunteers with the aim of putting in place such an offer.

The Clerk drew members' attention to the reference which had been made by the council's Internal Auditor, as part of her mid-year inspection of the council's governance and accounting arrangements, to Wisbech Castle; in particular, she comments that she wishes to see, at the financial year-end, evidence that the council is undertaking fairly rigorous health and safety procedures for the volunteers and that there are separate income and expenditure year-end accounts for Wisbech Castle. The Clerk mentioned that he would producing financial regulations, which would link to the Financial Regulations of Wisbech Town Council, in relation to the manner in which the trading activities at the Castle café are operated.

Members decided that the current situation be noted and that the council's Operations Manager would produce, in liaison with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Wisbech Castle Management Committee, the necessary booking form/hire agreement etc.



**W17/18 Events and activities at Wisbech Castle**

The Chairman reported on events and activities which had taken place at Wisbech Castle since the last meeting of this committee.

Members were informed by the Chairman that the Halloween event, entitled “the Castle of the Dead”, had taken place as planned and had been extremely successful; all of the tickets had sold and it had generated very positive reviews; it also generated income for the café.

The café had been open, and the toilets at Wisbech Castle had been made available for public use, on the day of the Wisbech Christmas Fayre (9 December 2018). Activity at the café on that day had included carol singers, the Grinch in costume and a snow display. Christmas-related activity had continued at Wisbech Castle with events on 15, 16 and 22 December 2018; there had been good levels of attendance on each day and, once again, there had been positive reviews.

The Chairman informed members that Wisbech Castle and the café would be re-opening, following a break for the volunteers, at the end of this month and that the Wisbech Castle Working Party would be meeting soon to put together a programme of events for 2019.

The Clerk informed members of the suggestion of the Rose Fair Co-ordination Group that a launch event for this year’s Rose Fair be held, utilising Wisbech Castle and Museum Square, on Wednesday 3 July 2019. He made the point that if members are supportive of this suggestion in principle, there would need to be discussion between Wisbech Town Council and the Rose Fair Co-ordination Group as to the exact nature of the event and how it could be delivered at Wisbech Castle.

The Chairman made the comment that the success being achieved at Wisbech Castle would not be possible without the work of a dedicated group of volunteers.

Members decided that the information reported by the Chairman in terms of events and activities which had taken place at Wisbech Castle since the last meeting of this committee be noted and that the suggestion of the Rose Fair Co-ordination Group that a launch event for this year’s Rose Fair be held, utilising Wisbech Castle and Museum Square, on Wednesday 3 July 2019, be supported.

**W18/18 British Black Bee Conservation Project**

Further to minute W14/18, the Chairman informed members that he is still awaiting further details of the associated operational and financial aspects of the potential British Black Bee Conservation Project; he had received some information since minute W14/18 but not sufficient for this committee to decide whether to proceed with its delivery at Wisbech Castle.

Members decided that the current situation be noted and that, subject to receipt of the information required, a decision on whether to proceed with the delivery of a British Black Bee Conservation Project at Wisbech Castle be made at the next meeting of this committee.

**Meeting finished at 7.55 pm.**

Signed.....

Dated.....