



WISBECH TOWN COUNCIL

WISBECH CASTLE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

1 JULY 2019 – 7.30 pm

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present: Councillor Tierney, Chairman; Councillors Ketteringham, Lynn, Maul and Rackley.

Apologies: Councillors Oliver and Tibbs.

The minutes of the meeting of the Wisbech Castle Management Committee held on 14 January 2019 were confirmed and signed.

W1/19 Election of Chairman

On the proposal of Councillor Rackley, seconded by Councillor Lynn, it was decided that Councillor Tierney be elected as Chairman of the Wisbech Castle Management Committee for the municipal year 2019/20.

W2/19 Election of Vice-Chairman

On the proposal of Councillor Tierney, seconded by Councillor Lynn, it was decided that Councillor Rackley be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Wisbech Castle Management Committee for the municipal year 2019/20.

W3/19 Refurbishment and enhancement of Wisbech Castle

Further to minute W15/18, the Chairman updated members on progress which had been made regarding the refurbishment and enhancement of Wisbech Castle (the main building, the outbuildings and the garden).

The Chairman reported the Castle had been closed for a few weeks at the beginning of the year, to give volunteers a chance to “re-charge their batteries” but there had been a considerable amount of activity since then. He mentioned that the necessary renovation and decoration works to the entrance and hallway had been undertaken and expressed the opinion that they look fantastic. As well as the major works to the building, most of had been completed, routine maintenance works are ongoing. The majority of works had been undertaken by volunteers.

Members were informed by the Chairman that repairs had been undertaken to the roof of the pump house. It is acknowledged that the building, which is of timber construction, has a limited life and, consequently, the council would need to consider replacement of the building in the not too distant future.

The Chairman mentioned that a significant amount of work had been undertaken to the garden, including additional planting, and the volunteers are formulating ideas for developing/enhancing the garden further. The Chairman expressed the opinion that the Castle garden would be appreciated by the visitors to the Castle during this year’s Rose Fair.

Councillor Rackley informed members of an offer from a construction contractor to undertake paving works, to provide and lay slabs on some of the existing pathways (which are currently surfaced with gravel), to the rear of the Castle to improve access for wheelchair users; the work would be in



keeping with the character of the building. Members expressed their support for such an arrangement.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

W4/19 Public toilet provision at Wisbech Castle

The Chairman informed members that, although members of the public are able, when visiting Wisbech Castle, to use the toilets in the main building, it would be beneficial to provide a disabled toilet adjacent to the Castle café (which operates from the pump house). He mentioned that such a proposal would require planning permission and that, consequently, contact had been made with a local architect regarding the preparation of plans to accompany a planning application.

Members were informed by the Chairman that access to the toilets in the main building would be made available to members of the public for the period of the Rose Fair.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

W5/19 Toilet/washing facilities for volunteers at Wisbech Castle

The Chairman explained to members the toilet/washing facilities which are available currently for those who volunteer at Wisbech Castle and informed them that volunteers had requested improvements. Having heard the situation described by the Chairman, members share his opinion that improvements are necessary.

Members decided that the situation described by the Chairman be noted and that improvements to the toilet/washing facilities for volunteers at Wisbech Castle be pursued.

W6/19 Security in and around Wisbech Castle

The Chairman informed members of recent issues regarding security in and around Wisbech Castle and its gardens and he sought their views in relation to the introduction of possible measures to try to address the situation. He mentioned that some of the incidents had involved a group of youths (thought to be aged between 11 and 15 years) throwing rocks over the Castle wall onto the roof of the pump house and climbing over the wall to access the garden.

Members were informed by the Chairman that the police had been very supportive and had reacted positively and quickly when incidents of anti-social had been reported. There is, however, a need to try to prevent such incidents in the future.

A number of suggestions were made by members in terms of a possible solution to address the types of anti-social behaviour which had been described by the Chairman; members were mindful of the fact that certain measures may not be feasible/possible because of the listed status of Wisbech Castle and its boundary walls.

Members decided that the Chairman would explore the possible of planting specific types of “prickly” bushes along particular sections of garden wall as a means of deterring individuals from climbing over the wall.

W7/19 Events and activities at Wisbech Castle

The Chairman reported on events and activities which had taken place at Wisbech Castle to date and those which are planned for the remainder of the calendar year.



Members were informed that

- the Castle had supported (through opening the café and toilets) the council's WisBEACH Day
- an Easter Fun Day had taken place at Wisbech Castle; this had been a major success and had generated positive feedback from attendees
- a bouncy castle had been purchased for use at Wisbech Castle; this purchase is being appreciated by children who attend the building with their parents
- the Castle and its café are currently open on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday each week
- an Edwardian Tea Party would be held at Wisbech Castle on the Saturday of Rose Fair.

Members decided that the information reported by the Chairman be noted.

W8/19 British Black Bee Conservation Project

Further to minute W18/18, the Chairman reported on progress with regard to the delivery of this project.

The Chairman informed members that the bee hives had been delivered; the bees would be introduced to the hives at the appropriate time; there are still a few more pieces of equipment to be purchased for the project; completion of the on-site works would not take place prior to Rose Fair.

Members were reminded by the Chairman of the manner in which this project would operate, as set out at minute W14/18. He expressed his hope that (subject to the resolution of any food hygiene issues) it would be possible to sell the honey produced by the bees at the Castle café.

Members decided that the current situation be noted.

W9/19 Wisbech Castle café

The Chairman informed members of an approach that he had received from an individual enquiring as to the possibility of taking-on (as a tenant/franchisee) the operation of the café at Wisbech Castle, for which he would pay a weekly rental, in the sum reported by the Chairman, to Wisbech Town Council. Under such an arrangement, Wisbech Town Council would continue to meet the utilities costs of operating the building and remain responsible for its repair and maintenance.

Members were informed that the current operation of the café at Wisbech Castle, which is open three days per week, relies upon the availability and willingness of volunteers; that volunteering time, if freed-up, could be used for other work/activities at Wisbech Castle. The café generates a modest income for the Town Council.

The Chairman explained that the enquirer would, if becoming a tenant/franchisee, add to the range of food items to be sold at the Castle café. This person, who possesses experience and qualifications relating to the food industry, would open the café seven days per week. He would continue the current practice of providing hot drinks on a free-of-charge basis to the Castle volunteers, service veterans, local police officers etc.

The potential tenant/franchisee of the Castle café would provide portable toilet facilities adjacent to the building.

Some members, albeit supportive of the individual's proposal, had concerns as to whether the utilities costs associated with the Castle café would increase considerably if it were to operate for 7, as opposed to 3, days per week. The Chairman undertook to investigate that situation.



Members decided that the principle of renting Wisbech Castle café to the interested party, at the level of rent offered, be supported.

(Members resolved to exclude the public for this item of business on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972)

Meeting finished at 8.15 pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....