



## WISBECH TOWN COUNCIL

### WISBECH CASTLE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

15 OCTOBER 2018 – 7.30 pm

#### MINUTES OF MEETING

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

**Apologies:** Councillors Balsevics and Rackley.

**Public participation:** None requested.

The minutes of the meeting of the Wisbech Castle Management Committee held on 2 July 2018 were confirmed and signed.

#### **W10/18 Refurbishment and enhancement of Wisbech Castle**

Further to minute W4/18, 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 provided each member of the committee with a comprehensive list of the works which had been undertaken to date and those which are still to be undertaken. The list was broken-down into the following elements:

- the Castle building in general
- top floor of the main building
- ground floor of the main building
- basement floor of the main building
- the gardens (including the Enchanted Walk which had been created)
- the vaults (which are expected to be “open” early next year)
- the pump house
- the bothy.

The Chairman detailed the works which had been undertaken in respect of each element; a brief summary of the works undertaken to date is:

- ensuring that all electrical, fire safety and security systems are working safely and effectively
- all drains cleaned and repaired as necessary
- removal of all rubbish from the main building and outbuildings
- wooden floors in the main building repaired and polished
- all rooms on the top floor of the main building re-decorated and fitted with new carpeting
- new kitchen fitted in the main building
- all of the repair works (including plastering, repairing internal doors, internal and external decoration) to the ground floor of Wisbech Castle completed
- additional toilet facilities installed on the ground floor of the main building
- a significant amount of the repair works (including internal and external decoration) to the basement floor of Wisbech Castle completed
- a significant amount of work undertaken (both maintenance and new planting) to the garden
- works to ensure that public access to the vaults would be safe



- pump house decorated internally and externally and kitchen equipment installed (it began use as a café on 4 October 2018); consideration needs to be given to devising an situation whereby customers are able access the café during the colder months without having the main doors open
- additional, appropriate security measures installed.

The Chairman estimates that approximately 95% of the works planned to the main building, the outbuildings and the garden had been completed. In respect of the planned works which are still to be undertaken, the Chairman informed the committee of what he thinks the likely cost of each piece of work would be.

The Chairman invited Councillor Miss Oliver, who is leading on that element of the overall Wisbech Castle project, to outline proposals for the vaults. She informed members that each of the tunnels within the vaults would have a specific theme and she mentioned how each of the themes would be created.

The Chairman mentioned a number of potential projects for Wisbech Castle, which had generally come about through discussions at meetings of the Wisbech Castle Working Party. He outlined to members each these potential projects (for which he had provided an estimated cost of each). He asked members to give each of the projects thought between this meeting of the committee and the next; with the aim of agreeing a list of projects at the next meeting. The hope is that the council would be able to provide at Wisbech Castle “something for everyone”.

The potential projects are:

- miniature railway
- British Black Bee Conservation Project (see minute W14/18)
- develop a Wisbech Castle computer game
- produce a wedding brochure
- establish a Wisbech Castle gift shop
- produce Wisbech Castle Fairy books
- produce a new History of Wisbech Castle book.

The Chairman reported that there had already been some general enquiries as to the availability of Wisbech Castle as a wedding venue; this had highlighted the need to produce such promotional material in terms of the council’s “offer” in relation to weddings at Wisbech Castle. In this regard, Councillors Oliver and Prest indicated that they would be happy to work jointly on this project, including ascertaining the likely cost of producing and printing a brochure.

Members decided that the information reported be noted.

### **W11/18 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 once it is “open for business” (e.g. bookings administration, setting-up rooms, cleaning etc).

The Chairman informed members that, in general, all of the day-to-day matters relating to operation of Wisbech Castle would be undertaken by volunteers. He mentioned that some bookings of Wisbech Castle had taken place (see minute W12/18) and the café, set up within the pump room, is now open (and run by volunteers) on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday each week. Members were informed by the Chairman of the manner in which the café is operating financially, i.e. that the difference between income and expenditure is forwarded to the Clerk’s office (together with supporting accounting statements), to be banked and recorded as Castle income in the council’s accounts.



In addition to the café being open for four days each week, the main building is open on Friday, Saturday and Sunday each week for guided tours. The Chairman commented that, although “early days”, the café is busy and the guided tours are popular.

The Clerk made the point that, although the day-to-day running of Wisbech Castle is being led by the Wisbech Castle Working Party, all of the governance and accounting procedures applicable to Wisbech Town Council apply to the operation of Wisbech Castle. Also, there can be no deviation from the booking fees agreed by this committee at minute W9/18.

The Chairman reported that all necessary risk assessments in terms of public use of Wisbech Castle, the pump room and the Castle’s grounds had been produced and any actions required to mitigate any risks identified had been undertaken. The Chairman is of the opinion that all of the systems and practices operated at Wisbech Castle are safe. He undertook to provide copies of all of this documentation to the Clerk’s office; he invited Councillor Oliver, as Wisbech Town Council’s Safety Officer (for events), to “quality assure” the documents.

Members decided that the current situation be noted.

### **W12/18 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 by the Chairman that

- the main building had been used to host a Victorian Tea Party, as part of the Rose Fair
- the garden had been used by children, teachers, parents and volunteers (as a venue for lunchtimes) on each of the three days of this year’s Wisbech Reads Festival
- the grounds of Wisbech Castle had been used by UNBOSI (United Nations Board of Significant Inspiration) to run an arts-related event (as part of the Creative People and Places project)
- rooms within the main building had been hired by a couple of local community groups
- one of the rooms in Wisbech Castle had been used for a family to hold a remembrance service
- a McMillan Coffee Morning had been held in the pump room café last Thursday.

The Chairman expressed the opinion that all of the activities and events had operated successfully and he commented that this success would be built upon over the forthcoming months.

In terms of events and activities for the remainder of the calendar year, the Chairman explained what had already been organised so far and what would be organised over the next few weeks, as follows:

- a Halloween-themed event (to be run on three occasions/days) entitled “Castle of the Dead”; 26 volunteers would acting various “scary” roles; 264 tickets had been sold to date and it is anticipated that further tickets would be sold during the next week or so. The Chairman commented that the income from this event would fund all of the costs and generate a small profit (to feature as Castle income in Wisbech Town Council’s accounts) this year; if it were to be run in future years and a similar level of ticket sales were achieved, a larger profit would be generated (as the purchase of “equipment” for the event would have been purchased this year)
- throughout December 2018 there would be the Christmas Castle Walk, led by “elves”
- Wisbech Castle would be open on 25 November 2018, in association with the Christmas Lights Extravaganza, and on 9 December 2018, in association with the Wisbech Christmas Fayre. Discussions are underway regarding the possibility/feasibility of hosting, within the grounds of Wisbech Castle, a craft fair (as part of the Wisbech Christmas Fayre).



Members decided that the information reported by the Chairman be noted and that they pleased with both what had been achieved to date and is planned for the remainder of the calendar year.

**W13/18 Schedule of repairs for Wisbech Castle**

Members considered a proposed Schedule of Repairs for Wisbech Castle (including the main building and its outbuildings), for submission to Cambridgeshire County Council.

The Clerk had circulated to members, in advance of the meeting, a proposed schedule of repairs.

The Clerk reminded members that paragraph 19.1 of the lease (for a period of 30 years) between Cambridgeshire County Council (as Landlord) and Wisbech Town Council (as Tenant) states (under the heading of Repairs) “The tenant shall prepare the Schedule of Repairs within nine months of the date of this lease and obtain the Landlord’s written approval to the proposed works”. Given that the date of the lease is 2 February 2018, the date by which the schedule of repairs needs to be received by the County Council is 1 November 2018.

Members decided that the Schedule of Repairs for Wisbech Castle be approved for submission to Cambridgeshire County Council.

**W14/18 British Black Bee Conservation Project**

The Chairman explained to members a potential British Black Bee Conservation Project, which could, he suggested, be accommodated in the grounds of Wisbech Castle.

Members were informed by the Chairman that he had been approached by a local bee keeper, who is seeking to conserve the British Black Bee (which is an endangered species) and would like to install two or three bee hives within the grounds of Wisbech Castle, with the aim of operating a bee conservation club for children. The children would be loaned the necessary protective clothing. The Chairman is confident, from his discussions with the bee keeper, that such a project could be operated in a safe manner with no risk to the public.

The bee hives would be purchased by Wisbech Town Council and remain in its ownership; the honey produced by the bees would be owned by the council and could be sold via the café.

The Chairman sought members’ views as to whether delivery of this potential project - which he feels has community-facing, conservation and educational benefits - should be investigated further.

Members share the view of the Chairman regarding the potential benefits of operating such a project in the grounds of Wisbech Castle. Councillor Oliver expressed the opinion that such a project may be eligible for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Members decided, unanimously, on the proposal of Councillor Tibbs, seconded by Councillor Oliver, that the project be supported in principle and that the Chairman would obtain further details of the associated operational and financial aspects of the project; sufficient to enable this committee to make an informed decision at its next meeting.

**Meeting finished at 8.05 pm.**

Signed.....

Dated.....