



**ACTION POINTS
OF THE SHROPSHIRE TOURISM (UK) LTD BOARD MEETING**

WEDNESDAY 20th JULY 2011 at 10am

LION HOTEL, WYLE COP, SHREWSBURY, SY1 1UY

Directors present:

GL, JC, LD, JM, PM, DC, TH.

Company Officers present:

Rod Hughes – Finance Director, Simon McCloy – Chief Executive,
Jodie Stephen - Business Support Officer

1.0 Apologies
GB

2.0 Minutes of the last meeting held on 11th May 2011 at the Lion Hotel, Shrewsbury

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record

3.0 Matters arising

John and Deborah reported that they had not yet met to discuss HR matters.

Action: John and Deborah to arrange a meeting to discuss HR matters.

Glen reported that the bank mandate change had now taken place for him to become a additional signatory as agreed at the last meeting.

Glen also reported that a meeting had taken place between Simon and Rod to discuss scaling down the role of Finance Director and Rod had agreed to continue with the role.

Simon reported that he had asked the Shropshire Council Tourism Officers what was required of Shropshire Tourism if they were to join the Tourism Strategy Board. He was told that they had not been officially invited to join the board. Glen said he would discuss his meeting with Shropshire Council further down the agenda.

Simon also reported that after Tom's suggestion at the last meeting they had been asked to tender for two contracts for Shropshire Hills AONB and had been awarded the IT one but not the Press & PR one, this had gone to Ian Weightman.

4.0 Company Secretary Update – Deborah Clough

Deborah did not have a report to deliver.

5.0 Bank Mandate Change

Glen reported that the bank mandate change had now taken place for him to become a additional signatory as agreed at the last meeting.

6.0 Finance Directors Report

- i. 2010/2011 End of Year update**
- ii. 2011/12 Monitoring update**
- iii. Directors to approve the final accounts for:
Shropshire Tourism UK Ltd
Shropshire Tourism Ltd
Marketing Shropshire Ltd
Direct Tourism Services Ltd**

Rod reported that the end of year accounts had been adjusted slightly by the accountants on two items leaving the total balance of £13,877. He stated that there needed to be a consistency with how the board and the accountants present the accounts. Overall he said there had been minor changes but the figures had been consistent in the last few months. The loan is still outstanding at £92,000 at the end of year.

Rod stated that the budget looked massively different to this time last year. The cash balance stood at £19,000, which differed to the amount reported in the accountants financial statement as they had not taken into account the £10,000 that stays the liquidity account.

Rod asked Simon to update on the issue they had with the tax on the rental. The accountants had requested that tax be paid on the rental of Grove House as it was not part of the core trading. Simon had stated that if this was the case then tax could be paid on web work, marketing reviews etc. which would then take the property account into a loss. It was therefore put back as trading income and the tax liability was saved.

Glen requested a resolution to adopt the End of Year Accounts for 201/11.

All board members in favour.

Simon asked the board to also adopt the end of year accounts for Marketing Shropshire and Direct Tourism Services as well as Shropshire Tourism Ltd and Shropshire Tourism UK Ltd. He stated that the money earned by these businesses goes into the Shropshire Tourism account, they hold no money in their own accounts. The signatories for these businesses are Pat, Deborah and John. He asked the board to approve the accounts as a formality.

Pat and John approved the accounts for Marketing Shropshire, Direct Tourism Services and Shropshire Tourism Ltd.

With regards to the Monitoring update, Rod reported that the next 3 months were a key time for income. The cash balance stated at the end of June was between £15,000 and £16,000, it was now significantly higher.

7.0 Chief Executive Report

Simon had previously circulated his report to the board, so updated on changes since the end of June.

2011/12 Membership renewals were now coming in, so far 37 businesses had renewed, bringing in an income of £6,000. The renewal date was 1st August, and so far there had been no drop outs.

The Shropshire Brochure had so far taken £29, 420, 80 adverts sold. There was a reserve of £11,255 to come in, totalling a possible £40,675. There had been a loss of £7,785 from 2011 advertisers dropping out, and even with £800 worth of new advertisers it would still be challenging to hit the £58,000 target.

John asked if the costs could be reduced by pulling pages, Simon said this was probably going to cost more to do that as you needed to pull at least 8 pages and then it would only be a slight saving. Lesley asked if it was viable to keep producing the brochure. Simon stated that in his draft Marketing Strategy he had predicted that the brochure had 3 -5 years left at least, then it's viability would need to be reviewed. Glen asked when the strategy would be available to view. Simon said it would be roughly 3 months, he was aiming to make it more readable for the Tourism Associations, the DDP's, and the Shropshire Council in order to get their buy in.

Simon reported that the Assessment Scheme had taken 45 assessments to date, and was so far exceeding the target, and he, Lesley and Jodie had a meeting earlier in the week to discuss developments which Lesley would discuss later in the meeting.

The biggest shortfall was for Englandnet entries, the £5,000 target would not be met.

Simon then reported on the IT department, this was area that was showing the biggest shortfall. He had a lengthy meeting with the IT team and five areas had been identified to target. The first is targeting members with no website (of which there is 86) with a starter website at £125 + VAT, this would begin next week. The target for conversion was predicted at 15% with a possible income of £2,000. Lesley and Tom suggested training members would be a good idea. Simon stated that although it is a good idea this costs money. It was suggested going to Shropshire Council for funding, Simon said he could ask the question but it was likely they would have their own trainers lined up.

Action: Shropshire Tourism to ask Shropshire Council about training budgets.

The second area to target was clients with websites in need of a revamp, of which there were around 327. The conversion rate on this was 5%, with a possible income of £5,500.

Town and Parish Council were also to be targeted, they were working with one or two already. There were 15-20 to target, this would begin mid August, with a predicted conversion of 3%. Pat invited Shropshire Tourism to take a stand at the Parish & Town Councils AGM on 5th November at the Shirehall.

Action: Shropshire Tourism to take a stand at the Parish & Town Councils AGM on 5th November at the Shirehall.

Niche sectors such as photographers were also to be targeted, Shropshire Tourism has already redesigned and hosts a website for Shropshire photographer Mike Hayward. These would be targeted in September and would hopefully convert to at least 3 websites at £2,000 each.

Simon also mentioned the possibility of targeting other destinations with an Englandnet type system. This was less likely to convert though due to local authority involvement. They would also continue to be data stewards for the county even after the demise of Englandnet.

Simon concluded that if the above targets could be reached the targeted IT income could be achieved. He stated he would have a revised budget for the next meeting.

Action: Simon to provide a revised budget for the next meeting.

Rod asked Simon about the situation with the building contractors as they were keeping a reserve of £14,000 for the remains of the payment. Simon said that they had received a solicitors' letter and he had responded asking for a VAT invoice to be sent and it had never arrived.

8.0 DTS Assessments

Lesley reported that they were on track to hit target with the DTS assessments and had actually exceeded the amount for the first quarter. She reported that Simon, Jodie and herself had a meeting on Monday to discuss the scheme and where improvements and additions could be made. With regards to the standards it was suggested that they be reviewed, that the assessors checklists be scaled down for experienced assessors. They had also discussed introducing an inspection for small hotels (up to 20 rooms) as there were quite a few businesses in this category to target. If the board were happy with the idea they should be able to launch in January 2012. Lesley said she would contact Howard Loxley with regards to training. The board agreed they were happy for Lesley to proceed with the idea.

Action: Lesley to contact Howard Loxley with regards to training the assessors to inspect small hotels.

She also stated that overnight stays would probably be needed with hotels and that the assessors would therefore need a larger fee than they were currently receiving. She queried if the assessors were classes as self employed and treated as consultants rather than employees of the company. Simon said that they were and were paid on invoice not by payroll as the employees were.

The issue of Trip Advisor was discussed, and it was suggested members be given the option of having a link to their Trip Advisor reviews on their Shropshire Tourism entry. It was agreed this would be an option rather than a condition.

Action: Shropshire Tourism to look at including a link to members Trip Advisor reviews from their web entries.

Glen mentioned there were a couple of complaints about the scheme in the Members Survey, Lesley explained which business she thought this may have been, but overall Shropshire Tourism received very few complaints, and Jodie stated that they were getting more businesses swapping over from the Visit Britain (Quality in Tourism) scheme.

Lesley also reported that they had discussed starting up Walkers, Cyclists and Dog Friendly awards. This would involve a simple checklist that could be completed by businesses prior to their inspection, and then checked through by the assessor at the visit. Also discussed were Gold awards, as some businesses had said they would go with our scheme if we offered this. This would be quite subjective to assess and would probably need more than one assessor looking at the property.

The board agreed they were happy with both the above additions to the scheme and agreed for Lesley to progress.

Action: Lesley and Shropshire Tourism to progress with the Gold Award and Walkers, Cyclists & Dog Friendly awards.

9.0 Draft Absence Policy

Simon had submitted a draft Absence Policy to the board for their comments. The policy was based on ACAS guidelines, which he felt was the position the company should be adopting. Glen had taken advice from an HR expert and the following additions were recommended.

The employee would need to have worked for the company for at least 6 months before they were eligible to qualify for anything other than SSP. There would be a 5 year limit for the additional week per year of employment and this would run as a 12 month rolling period

(one month per year). It was also important to state this was a discretionary benefit rather than a contracted right.

Deborah also mentioned that if an employee was involved in an accident as a third party the company could claim the money back if employee was paid insurance. It may be worth putting a clause in the policy stating this.

Action: Simon to draft an amended Absence Policy and email it to the board for comments.

10.0 LEP/TSB Update

Glen reported that he had attended a meeting with Louise Cross at the Shropshire Council at her request. She had stated that they wish to work with Shropshire Tourism but need to find a way to do this. She also felt that the amount of money given towards Tourism in the future would lessen. Glen stated that the Council did need Shropshire Tourism however as we are the executive body, and we would hopefully get business from them in the future.

Glen also reported on the Tourism Strategy Board and the list of projects they had put forward for the bid for Regional Development Funding. The list had included such issues as signage, public transport etc and was not put together as an actual project.

He had also had several meeting with Jill Britton, one if the consultants who was putting together a Tourism Strategy for Shrewsbury on behalf of Destination Shrewsbury. As a result of her research she had concluded that there were too many bodies in Shrewsbury trying to do the same thing and they needed to be brought together. Brand values needed to be created and also budgets needed to be looked at and prioritised. He and Simon were to have another meeting with Jill on Thursday 21st July where they would talk about getting a campaign group together including a project owner, the Council and an executive body who were staffed and able to carry out work (Shropshire Tourism).

Action: Glen and Simon to attend meeting with Jill Britton on Thursday 21st July and talk about creating a campaign group.

11.0 Membership Survey

Simon had previously circulated the survey results so briefly ran through the results that arose from it.

86 members had responded to the survey, out of which only 54 had completed it, therefore it could only be seen as indicative, rather than a true representation. From the results however it appeared that members valued the web entry (but not the other member benefits) and the Press & PR service (but were not willing to pay for it). Their key question overall was 'Would you recommend Shropshire Tourism to anyone else?' which the answer was 'Yes.'

12.0 Any Other Business

Tom mentioned the Shropshire Link bus service that was been promoted as a service for guests (walkers in particular) to be picked up from their accommodation and taken to local attractions, pubs etc for £1.70. He suggested this could be promoted to members. Simon said they could mention it in the next newsletter.

Action: Shropshire Tourism to feature Shropshire Link service in the next newsletter.

Lesley mentioned that since the demise of the Regional Awards Scheme, businesses wishing to enter could now go direct to the National Awards Scheme.

Tom also informed the board that the new Ludlow website was due to go live in 6-8 weeks, it would be called the Ludlow Guide.

13.0 Date of next meeting

TBC