

Minutes of the Meeting of the **TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall on **Monday 25th September 2006** at **10.00 a.m.**

Chairman: -

Councillor Mrs C Gainsborough Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor Mrs C A Bartlett Swanage Town Council

Councillor C R Bright Swanage Town Council

Councillor Mrs J Farrow Swanage Town Council

Councillor M Hadley Swanage Town Council

Councillor M W Pratt Swanage Town Council

Mr A Leeson Town Clerk

Mrs A Holmes Tourist Information Centre

Dr M Ayres Manager

Assistant Town Clerk

Ms N Elston Purbeck Tourism Officer

Mr N Brown Swanage Railway

Mr A Power Swanage & Purbeck Holiday Accommodation Association

Mr T Williams Purbeck Tourism

Rev J Wood Association of Churches Together in Swanage

In addition to Committee Members and officers, one member of the public attended the Meeting.

Public Participation Time

- i) A question was asked concerning the reinstatement of the former quarry site, south of Swanage Bay View Holiday Park. The Town Clerk reported that the site had been reinstated to the standard required by Dorset County Council, the minerals and waste planning authority. Attention was also drawn to the poor condition of the buildings on the site. It was explained that it was hoped that these buildings would be utilised as part of the Town Council's Jurassic Coast Project.

1) Appointment of Chairman

It was proposed by Councillor Pratt, seconded by Councillor Mrs Farrow and RESOLVED:

That Councillor Mrs Gainsborough be appointed Chairman of the Tourism and Environmental Committee until May 2007.

2) Apologies

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from Councillors Mrs Marsh and Mrs Turner, Mr R. Johnson of Swanage Pier and Mr H. Murray of Durlston Country Park.

3) Matters arising from Minutes of the Meeting held on 26th June 2006

Further to Minute 5)e) it was reported that Purbeck District Council was considering options to extend the safe bathing area. There will be a further report to the Beach Management Committee on Tuesday 17th October 2006.

It was reported that a new Swanage Bay Users Association had been formed to act on behalf of local fishermen, boat operators and other users.

An enquiry was made as to whether Committee members had been surveyed regarding the future start time of Tourism and Environmental Committee meetings, further to Minute 6)iv) of the above minutes. It was agreed that Committee members should be consulted as soon as possible.

In reference to Minute 6)i) the representative of the Swanage and Purbeck Holiday Accommodation Association drew attention to continued concerns over the level of car parking charges in the town. It was noted that this issue had been raised at the Car Parking Best Value Review Working Group, held on 20th September 2006 and would be reviewed at the annual estimates meeting in December.

Further to Minute 6)ii), the representative of the Swanage and Purbeck Holiday Accommodation Association stated that he had contacted Purbeck District Council with reference to illegal tipping of rubbish. It was reported that there had been a 170 per cent increase in illegal tipping since the introduction of the new waste management system and that the District Council had now employed an enforcement officer. Any increase in recycling therefore appeared to have been at a considerable cost. It was explained that all the options in respect of recycling had been fully costed by the District Council. However, there had been hidden costs due to the increased workload resulting from reports of non-collection and illegal tipping. In wider terms, the Town Clerk stated that the Town Council had regular meetings with representatives of the District Council and SITA to discuss refuse matters.

4) Tourism Reports

Ms Elston reported on the following matters:-

a) Holiday Guide

The 2007 holiday guide is being proof read and advertising has surpassed set targets.

b) Marketing for 2007

The 2007 marketing campaign will include a number of direct mail opportunities and internet advertising, together with adverts in the *Radio Times* and *Daily Mail*.

c) Training

It was noted that the Dorset and New Forest Tourism Partnership is providing a range of training days, conferences and workshops in forthcoming months. A Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme and Green Tourism Business Scheme Quality Awareness Day is to be held at Farmer Palmer's Farm Park on 2nd November 2006.

d) Overseas Marketing

The Dorset and New Forest Tourism Partnership has extended the contract of their Overseas Marketing Officer who was secured one million euros worth of press coverage for the region overseas.

e) Jurassic Coast Tourism Working Group Report

At its most recent meeting, held on Tuesday 5th September, updates had been received from the World Heritage Coast Hospitality Association and the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site team on a number of matters, including:

- the new Jurassic Coast website, due to go live in October 2006;
- train station signage, now in place in Wareham and Weymouth;
- a collaborative marketing initiative, working with other World Heritage sites in the south west, including Bath and Stonehenge;
- the development of pan-European generic World Heritage Site monitoring indicators;
- the Dorset County Council brown signs review.

f) Destination Management Organisation

This organisation is intended to streamline existing local authority tourism provision across Dorset, and draw in partners from the private sector to develop and market local tourism. A steering group was appointed at the initial meeting in June. A management plan is to be drawn up in the coming months, followed by a working business plan. Consultation of local businesses will be carried out, including a questionnaire and mini-conference in January 2007.

g) Destination Management System

Local authorities in Dorset, excluding Bournemouth and Poole are working together to provide a county-wide Destination Management System (DMS). A proposal to purchase the relevant licenses for the Tourist Information Centres in Purbeck will be discussed by the District Council at its next Policy Meeting. It is hoped that a unified system for Dorset will make information more comprehensive, up to date and more widely available for visitors. Vacancy information can be published and online bookings can be taken. All accommodation providers can input vacancy, price and other information. It is hoped that the system will be operational from February/March 2007.

Mrs Holmes reported on the following matters:-

a) Visitor Numbers

Overall, visitor numbers to the Tourist Information Centre have been lower over the summer, probably due to increased use of the internet. However, it appears that those coming into the Centre require more detailed information. The decline in numbers has contributed to a fall in income from sale items, although it is hoped that online sales may be introduced following the introduction of the DMS.

b) Folk Festival

The Folk Festival had been extremely busy, and footfall at the Tourist Information Centre had been higher over that weekend than that of the Carnival. This was attributed to increased visits to the Carnival's website.

c) Waverley Ticket Sales

Sales of Waverley tickets in Swanage were badly affected by the inability of the steamer to visit Swanage Pier, and were down 60% on last year.

d) Purbeck Film Festival

Purbeck Film Festival will take place between the 13th and 28th October.

e) Cards for Good Causes

The cards for good causes charity Christmas cards will be on sale from the Tourist Information Centre from October.

The representative of the Swanage and Purbeck Holiday Accommodation Association questioned the speed of the Town Council's response in removing seaweed from the beach. The Town Clerk explained that the contractor acted at the earliest opportunity to remove the seaweed, given the logistical difficulties sometimes experienced in getting equipment onto the beach. This issue was monitored as part of the blue flag award criteria.

5) Reports from Outside Organisations

a) Association of Churches Together in Swanage

Revd Wood reported that two Folk Festival concerts had been held at the parish church, together with a successful church service. Art exhibitions had also attracted visitors to the church over the summer. A new guide to the parish church was also being prepared.

b) Swanage Railway

Mr Brown reported that visitor numbers were up year on year. The South West Trains franchise had been awarded to the existing operator, Stagecoach. Prior to any reconnection of the rail link with Wareham Network Rail will have to schedule signalling work.

The trend of decreasing traffic from Swanage, and increased traffic from Norden is becoming more pronounced. It was noted that negotiations were under way with Purbeck District Council regarding the introduction of parking charges at Norden park and ride car park.

c) Swanage & Purbeck Holiday Accommodation Association

Mr Power explained that a new accreditation system was being introduced for holiday accommodation. Many hoteliers have concerns over the need for accreditation, given that most booking now occurs online.

The Association is holding a meeting to consider the new fire risk assessments.

Mr Power had recently attended a meeting of the Fair Trade Committee and he hoped that the Association would encourage the use of Fair Trade products.

The lack of information available regarding Swanage's links with Enid Blyton was highlighted, although it was noted that a leaflet on an Enid Blyton tour was in production.

d) Swanage in Bloom

The Chairman reported on the town's success in this year's In Bloom competitions. Swanage had won a silver award in both the Regional South and

South East in Bloom competition and the national Britain in Bloom contest. Durlston Country Park had also been awarded a judge's special award for conservation and the environment. It was noted that the Town Council's Operations Manager had attended the awards ceremony in Perth, Scotland and that this award would generate considerable publicity for Swanage. The Town's status as an In Bloom winner could now be advertised in the Town Council's newsletter, the Holiday Guide and on the Town's Gateway signs.

6) Items of Information and Matters for Forthcoming Agendas

- i) Given this summer's water shortage in many areas, it was agreed that a future meeting of this Committee should discuss the introduction of flower displays that were more economical with water usage.
- ii) The issue of the Condor wash was raised, and it was noted that related incidents were being recorded by the Town Council's Beach Wardens. It was agreed that this matter should be placed on the agenda of the forthcoming Beach Management Committee Meeting.
- iii) The meeting was updated regarding a number of recent Town Council decisions. A review of the provision of public conveniences was now underway and a Working Group had been established. A bench and seat survey had also been partially completed, with the aim of improving the provision of public seating.
- iv) It was noted that the Jurassic Coast Gateway Town signs had not been erected, in line with Town Council policy and that this matter should be investigated further.
- v) Attention was drawn to a recent request from a local artist to erect information panels relating to the influence that Swanage had had on major artists, such as Paul Nash. It was agreed that this matter should be placed on the agenda of a future meeting.

The meeting closed at 11.40 a.m.
