

Minutes of a Meeting of the **TOURISM AND LOCAL ECONOMY COMMITTEE** held at The Grand Hotel, Burlington Road, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY 20th MARCH 2024** at **2.15 p.m.**

Chairman: -

Councillor C Tomes

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor T Foster

Swanage Town Council

Councillor M Bonfield

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Finch

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Moreton

Swanage Town Council

Councillor M Whitwam

Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives: -

Ms L Egan

Swanage Chamber of Trade

Mr E Olinet

Swanage Chamber of Trade

Mr A Knill

Swanage Chamber of Trade

Ms A Leigh

Swanage Museum

Mr M Norris

Swanage Museum

Mr P Sykes

Swanage Railway

Also Present: -

Dr M Ayres

Town Clerk

Mrs E Evans

Democratic Services Officer

Mr C Milmer

Visitor Services and Business Development Manager

There was one member of the public and one member of the local press present at the meeting.

Public Participation Time

The following matters were raised during Public Participation Time:-

- A query was raised regarding whether the Town Council would consider permitting campervans to park, and be occupied, in their carparks overnight. It was stated that this would provide an additional revenue for the council in utilising unoccupied spaces between dusk and dawn. It was reported that various towns across the U.K. were in the process of trialling this provision e.g. Blackpool, and therefore data could be sourced to ascertain the potential challenges.
In response, it was noted that the Town Council's (Off-Street) Parking Places Order 2024 had been available for public consultation between 7th February 2024 and 28th February 2024, and only two comments received referred to campervans. One comment was in favour of allowing campervans to stay in car parks overnight and one against. It was reported that the Order would be presented to the Council meeting, being held on 25th March 2024. It was noted that prior to any consideration of an amendment to the Order, regarding campervans, appropriate infrastructure would need to be considered, alongside any financial implications to the council, such as works for the provision of the appropriate disposal of chemical toilet waste, additional refuse collection etc.

- A brief demonstration was provided showing the potential for an app to be utilised to provide descriptive audio recordings linked to images rather than QR codes. The demonstration showed audio information for artists work and on leaflets for organisations across the town. It was acknowledged that this technology could encourage more people, particularly the younger generation, to engage with exhibitions and events. It was noted that this item would be discussed at a future meeting of the committee.
- In respect of agenda item 9 d) the Visitor services team were congratulated on winning the Gold award in the Southwest Tourism awards for excellence in the Visitor Information Service of the year category for 2023/24. Congratulations were also provided to other local award-winning attractions.

The meeting opened at 2.30 p.m. and the Chairman welcomed all attendees.

1) **Apologies**

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from Ms L Bish (Chamber of Trade), Mr R. Marsh (Swanage Fisherman's Association) and Mr R Patterson (Swanage Railway).

2) **Declarations of Interest**

Members were invited to declare their interests and consider any requests for Grants of Dispensations in accordance with Section 9 and Appendix B of the Council's Code of Conduct.

There were no declarations to record on this occasion.

3) **Matters arising from the Minutes of the Meeting of the Tourism & Local Economy Committee held on 22nd November 2023**

The following matters were raised:

- Item 9) D-day commemorative weekend 2024 – Update
A query was raised regarding the plans to celebrate the 80th anniversary of D-day. In response it was noted that Studland had organised events and residents were encouraged to support their celebrations.
- Item 14) Updates from outside representatives
A question was asked regarding progress in delivering improved pedestrian signage in the town. In response it was reported that the Chamber of Trade were in the process of reviewing their research of other towns and a report would be provided to a future meeting.
- Swanage Town Council (Off-Street) Parking Places Order
A query was raised regarding the publicising of the Parking Places Order. In response it was stated that the draft Order had been publicised in the local press, the Town Council's website and Facebook page and paper copies of the documentation had been available to view at the Town Hall and library.

4) **Matters arising from the Meeting of the Coastal Change and Beach Management Advisory Committee held on 7th February 2024**

a) **Seaweed removal and beach raking - update**

It was reported, at the meeting of the Coastal Change and Beach Management Advisory Committee meeting, held on 7th February 2024, that the current seaweed contractor had now retired. It had been considered unlikely that an alternative contractor would be found to remove seaweed from the beach for 2024. However, it was noted that a subsequent 'expression of interest' exercise had been undertaken to see if contractors were interested in working with the Council to provide potential solutions. It was reported that respondents had been invited to tender for a 12-month trial with the

final result of the procurement being determined in April. An update would be provided to the next meeting of the committee.

5) **Tourism Marketing**

a) **Visit Swanage website – Update**

Further to Minute No. 5 a) of the meeting of the Tourism & Local Economy Committee held on 22nd November 2023, the Visitor Services and Business Development Manager (VSBDM) reported that the event held at the Mowlem Showbar on the 5th February 2024, to showcase the new Visit Swanage website, had been well attended. It was reported that 23 businesses had advertised on the website to date and would therefore benefit from a free listing for the first year. It was reported that the number of views on the site to date were 7,611 views during January and 9,140 during February. It was suggested that some assistance with uploading information could be provided to businesses, and it was agreed that a day be allocated for business owners needing some help to attend the Tourist Information Centre for guidance. It was anticipated that a date would be scheduled towards the end of April and circulated in due course.

A discussion ensued around the availability of the ‘tear off’ maps which contained a street map of the town with areas of interest noted. These were printed by the Tourist Information Centre and provided to visitors. Representatives from the Swanage Chamber of Trade stated that hotels, guest houses and B and Bs would benefit from a supply of the maps to help guide visitors to attractions and shops around the town.

It was suggested that a meeting of the Tourism Marketing working party be arranged to discuss the distribution and cost of the maps with an update provided to a future meeting of the committee.

It was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Councillor Foster:-

That authority be provided to the Visitor Services and Business Development Manager to provide the Swanage Chamber of Trade with a number of map-pads to be distributed to its members, provided at no cost for this year only.

Upon being put to the Meeting FIVE Members voted IN FAVOUR of the Proposition and there was ONE ABSTENTION, whereupon the Proposition was declared CARRIED.

6) **Beach Huts – To consider charity beach huts allocation**

Further to Minute No. 7) of the Tourism and Local Economy Committee meeting held on 22nd November 2023, consideration was given to a briefing paper prepared by the VSBDM which set out the applications received for the use of beach huts by charities and community groups. The recommendations of the Beach Hut working party for allocation is attached as an appendix to these minutes.

It was proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by the Councillor Finch and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That the charity beach hut bookings, as recommended by the Beach Hut working party, as set out in appendix 1, are approved.

7) **Swanage Museum – To consider report in connection with application for an Arts Council England MEND grant to improve the Heritage Centre building, Town Square**

Consideration was given to a briefing paper, prepared by the Assets and Compliance Manager, which set out the Town Council and Swanage Museum’s proposal to work together to make an application to the Museum Estate and Development Fund (MEND), accompanied by a letter of support from the County Museums Advisor. It was noted that the terms and

conditions of the grant process required the Museum to demonstrate security of tenure for a period of at least ten years from the date of the grant award. It was noted that consent for anything more than a seven-year term would be required from Dorset Council under the terms of the 2019 asset transfer.

Members were supportive of the application to the MEND grant and, therefore, it was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Moreton and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

TO RECOMMEND:

That the Town Council confirms support for the submission of an expression of interest and, if successful, a full application to Round 4 of the Museum Estate and Development Fund and that the Council seeks legal advice and, at its next meeting, gives consideration to how best to provide Swanage Museum with the security of tenure required to meet the grant requirements.

8) Visitor Services & Business Development Manager Report

The following update was provided by the VSBDM and included:

- **Electric Vehicle Charging Points** – It was reported that the Town Council are working with Dorset Council to deliver a significant investment in EVCP, potentially including fast chargers and rapid chargers in the car parks. The procurement issues around this are challenging due to the high value of the contract, however the costs are actually funded by third parties. It is hoped that this will be resolved soon and machines might be in place for the 2024 summer season.
- **Concessions** - Two concessions are being developed at the Hardstanding, now known as ‘Shore Place’, subject to legal agreement and planning permission. These are a sauna and a coffee kiosk. The site will still include space for two charity/community gazebos. Both concessions will be open all year, including the winter. It was noted that the previous concession operated at north beach ice cream kiosk which was by the Spa beach huts has not been replaced.
- **Shore Road Permanent Closure** - It has now been confirmed that Shore Road, between the gates will be closed all year on a permanent basis. The VSM is liaising with Dorset Highways to investigate removal of the old parking sign poles, the yellow lines and parking bay lines to help make this look less like a road.
- **Beach Gardens Open Day** - Reminder that on Good Friday Beach Gardens are holding an Open Day, with free putting and a free drink with the advert from the Gazette. The Swanage Tennis Club are also running a series of free events.
- **Festive Lights** - The Council are to commence a procurement process to implement a three-year contract for the Christmas festive lights. The Swanage Chamber of Trade have been invited to be part of the selection panel.

9) Items of information and matters for forthcoming agendas including updates from outside representatives

Outside representatives provided the following updates:

- **Swanage Railway** – It was noted that a Victorian weekend would be held between 22nd and 24th March 2024. Four tours were planned for the season, which included a link to Bristol. It was reported that the rail service from Swanage to Wareham would not proceed this year due to the costs, however, funding options were being explored for future years.
- **Swanage Museum** – The Museum is planning to re-open at Easter. It was noted that the prototype model of the Durlston globe would be situated in the grounds of the Purbeck House Hotel as an exhibit on loan.

- **Chamber of Trade** – It was reported that following the Chamber of Trade AGM a change to the Chair, Vice-chair, lead of hospitality and treasurer had been made. The outgoing chairman and other chamber of trade representatives were thanked for their input to the success of tourism and retail in the town.
- a) **Visit Dorset - Dorset Group Travel Trade Networking Event – 18th April 2024 at the Marsham Court Hotel**
The details of the event were noted.
- b) **Parish and Town Council Tourism Workshop being held 24th April 2024**
It was noted that representatives from National Trust, Durlston Country Park and RSPB would be in attendance at the meeting with representatives from local Town and Parish councils and an update would be provided to a future committee meeting.
- c) **Beach hut fees and charges**
It was noted that the fees and charges for 2025/26 would be discussed at the next meeting being held on 3rd July 2024.
- d) **Southwest Tourism Awards – Gold award for Swanage Information Centre**
Congratulations were given to all staff involved in the success of the Tourist Information Centre.

10) Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 3rd July 2024 at 2.15p.m. with the venue to be confirmed.

The Chairman thanked everyone present for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 3.35 p.m.
