

Minutes of the Meeting of the **GENERAL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY 19th APRIL 2017** at **4.30 p.m.**

Chairman: -

Councillor J Bishop

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor M Bonfield

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Finch

Swanage Town Council

Councillor G Green

Swanage Town Council

Councillor A Harris

Swanage Town Council

Councillor G Marsh

Swanage Town Council

Councillor S Poultney

Swanage Town Council

Also present: -

Councillor T. Morris

Swanage Town Council

Councillor M Whitwam

Swanage Town Council

Dr M Ayres

Town Clerk

Mrs L Burgess

Senior Administration and Finance Officer

Miss C Johnston

Operations Department Administration Officer

Mr A Clothier

Purbeck District Council Enterprise Zone & Regeneration Manager

Mr A Bennett

Prospect Allotment Association
(Until 4.40 p.m.)

Mrs S Powell

Prospect Allotment Association
(Until 4.40 p.m.)

Mr A Lander

Swanage Fishermen's Association
(Until 5.30 p.m.)

Mr R Marsh

Swanage Fishermen's Association
(Until 5.30 p.m.)

Public Participation Time

There were no members of the public present.

1. Apologies

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from Councillor Lejeune, Geoff Brookes (Operations Manager) and Mr M Green (James Smith Funeral Directors).

2. Declarations Of Interest

Members were invited to declare their interests and consider any requests for Grants of Dispensations in accordance with paragraphs 9 – 13 of the Council's Code of Conduct and regulations made under chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

There were no declarations to record on this occasion.

The dispensation granted to Councillor Green in respect of Cemetery Matters was noted.

3. Matters Arising from Minutes of the Meeting of the General Operations Committee held on 23rd November 2016

There were no matters raised.

4. Allotment Matters

a) Matters raised by the Allotment Association

Thanks were given by Mr A Bennett of the Allotment Association for the reinstatement of the pipe that was damaged, although some concern was raised that it had not been buried deeply enough. The Chairman agreed to refer this matter to the Operations Manager for comment.

A discussion was held regarding an uncultivated allotment plot that could possibly be used to create a bigger car parking area. The Allotment Association representative stated that there are regular complaints received from plot holders regarding the limited availability of parking. It was confirmed that the allotments were routinely inspected and the plot holder would be written to as a result of that process. Only then would consideration be given as to whether additional parking space could be created. A further request was made for signage to be placed in the lower car park stating that parking is for allotment holders only.

It was confirmed that the annual allotment summer show will take place on Rabling Road Green at the end August (date to be confirmed in writing by the Allotment Association).

Mr A Bennett & Mrs S Powell left the meeting at 4.40 p.m.

5. Cemetery Matters

a) Control of dog fouling in Northbrook & Godlingston Cemeteries

Concern was once again expressed regarding dog fouling in Swanage, especially in the closed cemetery at Northbrook. It was noted that the Council had established a positive relationship with Dorset Dogs to work together to educate dog owners about best practice, and a second successful dog walking event had taken place earlier this month. However, it was felt that other steps were also required to address the level of dog fouling, especially in sensitive areas such as the cemetery.

Attention was drawn to the fact that Northbrook Cemetery was particularly vulnerable because of its proximity to the Council's car park, toilet block and playing fields. However, it was also noted that there was no need for dog walkers to take a route through the cemetery as there were perfectly adequate paths along the boundary. Therefore, it was proposed by Councillor Green, seconded by the Town Mayor and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That signs be fixed to the entrances to Northbrook Cemetery stating that dogs are not permitted.

It was agreed that similar signage should not be placed at Godlingston Cemetery at the current time, because dog fouling was not so prevalent there and the bereaved often wish to visit a family grave with a pet. However, it was also agreed to keep the situation under review.

It was further proposed by Councillor Green, seconded by Councillor Harris and RESOLVED:

That the Town and District Councils work together to increase the enforcement of anti-dog fouling regulations in the cemetery and other areas badly affected in the town, such as the Council-owned playing fields.

b) To report the waiving of a memorial fee in extraordinary personal circumstances

The Town Clerk reported on a request received to waive the memorial fees relating to a child's burial, and the extraordinary personal circumstances in this case. A decision to waive the fees had been made by the Clerk, in consultation with two members of the Operations Committee (the Chairman and Deputy Mayor), subject to this being reported to the Committee.

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Bonfield and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

To note the Committee's retrospective approval of the decision to waive the memorial fees in this case, due to the extraordinary personal circumstances of the applicant.

Consideration was also given as to how such cases should be dealt with in the future. It was proposed by Councillor Bishop, seconded by Councillor Finch and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That delegated authority be given to the Town Clerk, in conjunction with two members of the General Operations Committee, to determine any requests for waiving of fees in cases of extraordinary personal circumstances, subject to any such decision being reported to the next meeting of this Committee.

Councillors wished to put on record their appreciation of the sterling work by the Council's staff in managing and maintaining Godlingston Cemetery.

c) Matters raised by James Smith Funeral Directors

i) Meadowland burial ground

Further to minute 5.a.i) of the General Operations Committee meeting of 23rd November 2016, the Chairman confirmed that action had been taken to address the lack of wild flowers in the meadowland cemetery, and the success of the measures would be monitored.

6. Fishermen's Huts and Jetties

a) FLAG (Fisheries Local Action Group) – funding opportunities

Purbeck District Council's Regeneration Manager provided a briefing on the FLAG which covers Dorset to East Devon and advised of the two-stage approach to the application process. A total of £600,000 worth of investment is available. FLAG's key priorities are to strengthen the aquaculture sector in Dorset, and to improve

infrastructure and equipment to enable safe, sustainable working ports and harbours. The funding is available for the next 2 – 3 years, and the Town Council, together with the Fishermen’s Association, would be welcome to submit an application.

b) Peveril Point slipways – use in stress of weather

The Committee considered a letter from a representative of the Swanage Fishermen’s Association seeking improvements to the slipways to enable boats to be stored on shore in stress of weather. It was noted that past arrangements were no longer viable in light of the recent RNLI/Angling Club redevelopment.

A number of potential improvements were considered, including marking off a chevroned area for use in bad weather, and installing rings into the slipway, as had been originally agreed with the RNLI’s contractors. Concerns had been expressed regarding the latter in respect of health and safety compliance. Potential reconstruction of the slipway in front of the fishermen’s huts was raised as another alternative, although concerns were expressed that this would be cost prohibitive. Consideration was also given to the installation of a new winch or alternative system of hauling boats.

After lengthy consideration, it was AGREED:

That the Boat Park working party be tasked with developing a proposal to be submitted to the FLAG.

The District Council’s Regeneration Manager agreed to take this forward, and arrange a meeting with local fishermen.

c) Matters raised by Swanage Fishermen’s Association

Mr Lander provided historic information on the size of the Swanage fishing fleet. In 1988 there were 30 fishing boats in Swanage, in 1992 there were 18, by 2004 there were 13 and today there are only 8.

Mr A Lander and Mr R Marsh left the meeting at 5.30 p.m.

7. Footpath matters

a) Coastal footpath

A report was provided regarding Natural England’s proposals for the route of the new England Coast Footpath around Swanage Bay, in furtherance of Part 9 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act, 2009.

Members noted the draft proposals regarding the preferred routes at New Swanage and Peveril Point, but would respond formally during the forthcoming consultation period, currently planned for May and June 2017.

b) Registration matters

Members considered a briefing note which had been circulated outlining a number of long-standing footpath registration issues in the parish, particularly at Bluchers Lane and Peveril Point. It was noted that any right of way not recorded on the definitive footpath map prior to 1st January 2026 would be extinguished.

In respect of Bluchers Lane it was noted that the first steps towards registration had been taken by the Town Council in the late 1990s, but that a formal application had never been lodged with Dorset County Council as the relevant authority.

In relation to Peveril Point, the question related to the alleged existence of a right of way across privately owned land on the seaward side of the residential properties to the east of the Lifeboat Station. This would provide an ‘upper path’

above the current footpath which is affected by the tides. The Town Council had debated the matter in 2008, and passed a resolution to serve the appropriate notices on local property owners to enable the County Council to consider matter. However, this resolution had also not been progressed.

It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by the Chairman, and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

That the Town Council take the necessary steps to enable the County Council to consider the registration of rights of way along Bluchers Lane and the 'upper path' at Peveril Point.

8. Running track on King George's playing field

A request had been received from Purbeck Runners for the marking out of a 400 metre running track on King Georges Field. The importance of supporting initiatives to promote health and fitness was noted, although some concern was expressed at the nature of the ground in King George's Field. It was suggested that Forres Field may prove a better alternative. The potential for the Club to assist in re-marking of the track was noted.

It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Marsh and **RESOLVED:**

That the request for a running track to be marked out be agreed, Forres Field being the preferred location.

It was **FURTHER AGREED:**

That the Operations Manager be granted delegated authority to agree the precise location of the running track, taking into account the above resolution.

9. Operations Manager's report

- **Health & Safety report**

The Operations Manager provided an update on health and safety matters at work, and was pleased to report that during the last quarter there had been no reported incidents of slips and trips causing injury, or for RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences). There had been 620.5 lost working days due to sickness. Fire Risk Assessments have been undertaken for all buildings and all risk assessments were currently being renewed and updated. Tool box talks continued daily and weekly.

- **Continuation of safety training**

The first session of Defibrillator Training for Town Hall and Depot staff had taken place on 19th April. A second session would be held in the near future for those that had been unable to attend the earlier session.

- **Update on works projects:**

External Refurbishment for the Town Hall building & clock – the contract had been completed on time and within budget. Some minor snagging works had been identified and would be carried out.

Tourist Information Centre building works (upgrade) - the contract had been completed and staff were now in occupation of the newly completed offices.

- **Heritage Toilets**
Installation of several new ‘Wallgate’ hand washing/drying machines had been completed, and positive comments were being received from members of the public.
- **Council Public Conveniences**
All Council facilities were open and operational.
- **Wessex Water**
A notice had been served by Wessex Water under section 75 of the Water Industry Act 1991 in respect of upgrading works at Beach Gardens.
- **Beach Works**
The safe bathing zone (craft free zone) had been marked out for the season and the installation of the RNLI lifeguards hut was scheduled to commence on the 20th April.
- **Staffing Levels**
An advert would shortly be placed for the recruitment of staff in the Operations Department.
- **Dog Fouling**
Dog fouling continued to be a problem, particularly in Northbrook Cemetery and King George’s Playing Field, making it unpleasant for staff undertaking grass cutting/strimming work.
- **General Public Areas**
General maintenance work, grass cutting and seasonal planting in Town Council owned areas continued to be carried out. Weed control was being undertaken on behalf of Dorset County Council (subject to available resources).
- **Vandalism**
Concerns were expressed at acts of vandalism that occurred on the shelter on Sandpit Field. These included fires, graffiti attacks and broken bottles. Regrettably, acts of vandalism had occurred in many other areas of the town, and discussion ensued regarding ways of deterring this anti-social behaviour. It was suggested that the Town Council liaise with local schools in this regard, and that the Operations Manager be requested to record the cost of repairs with a view to making the public aware of the problems/expenses faced by the Council.
- **Boat Park**
The Chairman reported that regrettably the opening of the Boat Park had been delayed due to landslip and subsidence affecting the retaining walls. A report would be made to a forthcoming Council meeting.

10. Items of Information and Matters for Forthcoming Agendas

a) SSE street lighting

Information was provided regarding a replacement programme of street lighting that would be undertaken during the next five to six weeks in various areas of the town.

b) Request from Chamber of Trade for additional street litter bins – Institute Road & Library

Concerns had been expressed by shopkeepers regarding the lack of litter bins in the town centre and associated problems that arose when customers could not dispose of their litter before entering the shops. It was acknowledged that some bins had been removed to alleviate obstruction on narrow pavements, but it was felt that additional bins should be provided in other locations.

It was agreed that a letter on this matter from the Chamber of Trade should be referred to a forthcoming Council meeting.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is to be arranged.

The Meeting closed at 6.15 p.m.
