

Minutes of a Meeting of the **TOURISM COMMITTEE**
held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY,**
23rd NOVEMBER 2016 at **10.00 a.m.**

Chairman: -

Councillor C Finch

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor M Bonfield
Councillor G Green
Councillor G Marsh
Councillor T Morris
Councillor W Trite
Councillor M Whitwam

Swanage Town Council
Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives:-

Mrs K Delahay
Mr G Hunt
Mr R Johnson
Mr M Norris
Mr D Rawsthorn
Mr P Sykes

Swanage & Purbeck Hospitality Association
Swanage & District Chamber of Trade
Swanage Pier Trust
Swanage Museum
Swanage Railway
Swanage Railway

Also Present: -

Dr M Ayres
Miss N Clark
Miss H Lagden
Mr C Milmer

Town Clerk
Management Support Officer
Tourism Manager, Purbeck District Council
Visitor Services Manager & Business
Development Officer

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

Public Participation Time

There were no matters raised.

1) Apologies

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from Mr B Adeney (Swanage Pier Trust), Mr I Brown (MCA), and Mr M Green (Swanage Railway).

2) Declarations Of Interest

Members were invited to declare their interests and 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.

3) Matters arising from Minutes of the Tourism Committee Meeting held on 22nd June 2016

There were no matters raised.

4) Matters arising from Minutes of the Beach Management Advisory Committee Meeting held on 19th October 2016

a) Lifeguards and sea safety

i) Consideration of RNLI Lifeguard Service Options 2017

It was reported that the RNLI Lifeguard Manager had attended the Beach Management Advisory Committee (BMAC) Meeting to give an update/review of lifeguarding operations for the first season on Main Beach, and also to present three potential options for the lifeguard service in 2017. A briefing note had been provided detailing the options, two of which included the possible relocation of the lifeguards' hut/flagged area. A summary of the advantages and disadvantages for each option had been presented and, after a lengthy discussion, Option 2 had gained the broadest support among Committee Members.

A discussion ensued, during which it was explained that Option 2, which would see the hut/flagged area relocated to the north side of Banjo Pier, provided improved coverage of the beach as the patrolled area would include an additional 200 metres of beach either side of the flagged area, and would therefore still incorporate the pedestrianised area south of Banjo Pier. Comments were made that this should also 'draw' beach users to the northern side of the beach, and spread beach population coverage. It was noted that the cost of the providing the service in 2016 had been less than the approved budget for Beach Wardens.

Committee Members agreed that Option 2 would be the preferred option, and that consideration should also be given to extending the craft free zone so that it would be in line with the flagged area. It was further felt that the arrangements/service should be reviewed annually.

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

That Option 2 of the RNLI Lifeguard Service Options be implemented in 2017, subject to satisfactory costings being presented to the Policy, Finance and Performance Management Committee meeting to be held on 14th December 2016, and confirmation that it will be possible to amend the craft free zone, such arrangements to be reviewed annually.

ii) Consideration of 'on the water' enforcement

As previously reported, there had been no patrol in the bay during 2016. The Lifeguard Service Options for 2017 included the possibility of a lifeguard watercraft to assist the Town Council with a waterborne presence that would be able to inform water users of local byelaws and speed restrictions, acting as a deterrent to any rule breaking (not to enforce byelaws). A minimum of three lifeguards would be required, and the only extra cost would be for the additional lifeguard. It was explained that the Town Council had been looking at ways in which it could 'plug the gap' in services, and had so far been unable to find a local solution.

A discussion ensued, during which comments were made that similar RNLI services were in place on other beaches, and had been successful. CCTV equipment was used on lifeguards' watercraft, and was reported to be the biggest deterrent. Committee Members were in agreement that this option should be explored further, and it was felt that the watercraft would enhance the lifeguard services patrol and rescue capabilities. The enforcement of byelaws was the responsibility of Purbeck District Council (PDC), and a question was raised as to whether PDC's budget could be obtained towards the cost of the proposed service.

It was therefore proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Green and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That further research be undertaken into the

the proposals for a RNLI lifeguard watercraft, to include costings, and to ascertain whether the District Council's budget would be available towards the cost of the service, to be considered further by the Policy, Finance and Performance Management Committee on the 14th December 2016.

iii) Consideration of future production of Swanage Bay Water Safety Leaflet

Following the recommendation made by the BMAC, consideration was given to the continued production of the Swanage Bay Water Safety Leaflet. Committee Members were in agreement that the leaflet was worthwhile, but that the content/design of the leaflet was in need of updating.

A copy of Poole's safety leaflet for kayakers had been provided by the RNLI Community Sea Safety Officer for information purposes, and a discussion ensued.

Members agreed that the existing leaflet/map was basic, and a number of suggestions for improvements were made. It was therefore proposed by Councillor Morris, seconded by Councillor Marsh and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That approval be given to the production of an updated and improved Swanage Bay Water Safety Leaflet, subject to satisfactory costings being obtained.

b) Enforcement of Seafront Regulations Summer 2017

A copy of the Town Council's existing Beach Regulations had been provided for information purposes. As owner of Main Beach, the Council's regulations were in place to provide beach users with advice and guidance. The regulations regarding dogs were covered by PDC's byelaws.

This had been the first season without Town Council Beach Wardens on patrol on the beach/along the seafront, although support had been provided by the Council's Enforcement Officers, ably assisted by the lifeguards. However, concerns had been raised at the BMAC Meeting regarding pedestrian safety due to the number of cyclists who cycled along the closed section of Shore Road, and an increase in incidents of dogs and barbecues on the beach.

A discussion ensued and Committee Members were in agreement that the wording of the Beach Regulations and beach/Shore Road signage could be improved, and more effective enforcement action taken. However, it was felt that some of the messages needed to be more 'welcoming' to visitors, and officers would be requested to review/explore options in this respect. It was noted that an increased budget had been proposed for 2017/18 to provide additional beach signage.

It was reported that the Council's Enforcement Officers' job description had been amended to include providing guidance on seafront regulations, and a request was made for the Officers to undertake additional patrols along the seafront as it was felt that a 'walking presence' (in high-visibility clothing) would be more effective.

It was therefore AGREED:

That delegated authority be given to the Visitor Services Manager and Business Development Officer, and Operations Manager, to undertake a review of existing signage, and wording of Beach Regulations/messages, and provide an update on actions taken to the Tourism Committee at its next meeting.

c) #2 minute beach clean – consideration of beach clean station boards

#2 minute beach clean station boards had been considered at the BMAC Meeting. Committee Members had felt that the Town Council's beach cleaners, who patrolled the beach between 6.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. each day, did an excellent job of keeping the beach clean and clear of litter, and therefore considered that the stations would be surplus to requirements on Town Council-owned beaches. However, the Visitor Services Manager reported that he had recently attended a Dorset Coastal Change Forum (DCCF) Meeting and they had been keen for the Town Council to be involved in this initiative. A request was therefore made for the Tourism Committee to consider installing boards on a trial basis.

A brief discussion ensued, during which comments were made that boards could be useful in the Stone Quay area, and that this initiative may possibly become part of the Blue Flag regulations in the future. Queries were raised as to whether the boards could be adapted/fixed to railings, who would be responsible for the boards once in situ, and whether the private beach owners had also been approached by DCCF.

It was therefore proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Morris and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That agreement in principle be given to the trial of two #2 minute beach clean station boards for the 2017 season, subject to satisfactory costings being obtained, and that delegated authority be given to the Visitor Services Manager and Business Development Officer to research suitable locations for the boards, and report his findings to the next Tourism Committee Meeting for further consideration.

It was further agreed that consideration should be given to the exploration of a possible annual award system for local business owners, for their efforts in litter control, at an appropriate future meeting.

5) New leaflet to promote Swanage and the surrounding areas and attractions – update

A draft copy of the new leaflet was provided to Committee Members by the Tourism Manager for their information/review. It was explained that the leaflet had been created as a 'bridging' guide to assist with marketing activities during the shoulder months, with the majority of distribution planned for October each year. The leaflet would be sent out by the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) with accommodation enquiries, and would also be on display in hotels and public transport stations in the Bournemouth and Poole areas.

Members were requested to submit any suggestions for amendments to the Tourism Manager before the end of November 2016, as it was hoped that the leaflet would be printed in early 2017 in time for a pre-season marketing 'drive'.

Members congratulated all who had been involved in the production of the leaflet, and thanks were given to the Tourism Manager for her efforts. Thanks were also given by the Tourism Manager to the local businesses who had contributed to the leaflet, and for their invaluable support.

6) Visit Dorset Tourism Partnership

The Tourism Manager had provided Committee Members with a summary of Visit Dorset activity during 2015/16, and an update on Visit Dorset Tourism Partnership activities as at November 2016, and plans for the future.

It was reported that the Visit Dorset Tourism Partnership had awarded a new five year

contract to NewMind|tellUS to provide a Destination Management System, and major redesign of www.visit-dorset.com, the official tourism website for Dorset. The new website was being launched on 30th November 2016, and the Tourism Manager was excited about the improvements made to the site. Links to the new pages would be provided as soon as they were available, and the Tourism Manager welcomed any questions and/or feedback on the above reports/new site.

7) Swanage & Purbeck Value of Tourism Summaries 2015

The 2015 Value of Tourism statistics for Swanage and Purbeck had been received which reported that there had been over 4.108 million visits to Purbeck during the year (1.031m to Swanage), with a total related visitor spend of over £229.983m (£75.7m for Swanage). Tourism represented 19% of all employment in Purbeck (1,400 jobs in Swanage had been supported by visitor related spend). The full Dorset reports could be found at: <http://ch.visit-dorset.com/trade/research/dorset-tourism-data>

It was reported that the data for Purbeck was based on actual figures, however, the data for Swanage was ‘modelled’. The Tourism Manager would be analysing the summaries and would report her findings back to a future Committee Meeting. It was felt that this type of data may attract businesses to the area in the future, and could be included in Business Plans.

A discussion ensued during which comments were made regarding a perceived change in the coach tour market, and that coach companies were now looking for new attractions to visit, e.g. the Etches Collection in Kimmeridge. It was reported that in recent times an increase had been seen in groups on activity breaks, and a question was raised as to whether Members felt that Swanage was seen as a coach friendly town.

The Tourism Manager gave brief details of an accreditation process, to enable towns to achieve ‘Coach Friendly’ Town Status, which was specifically designed to provide coaches with greater ease of access to key visitor attractions and facilities, whilst actively promoting coach tourism. The question was raised as to whether Swanage could offer improved facilities for drivers and coaches, e.g. better drop off and pick up points during the shoulder months, and driver incentives, to attract more coach parties in the future. The Tourism Manager therefore agreed to research the accreditation process, and report her findings back to a future Committee Meeting.

8) Budget Setting 2017/18

a) Review of Tourism Budgets

A brief summary was given on the current year’s budgets, relating to the TIC, beach huts, Boat Park and Beach Gardens, and what the probable out-turn for the year would be.

Consideration was then given to a request for an increase in the budget for advertising/marketing purposes, and IT, at £1,000 and £1,500 respectively. It was explained that the funds would be used to better promote TIC and Boat Park facilities, and that the Town Council was keen for beach hut bookings to be made available online/via the Council’s website by March 2017. This would streamline the booking process, and enable members of the public to book huts in advance, thereby reducing administration at the start of each season. It was hoped that this would also lead to an increase in occupancy rates.

Committee Members agreed with the proposals in principle, and requested that further information regarding the cost of such measures be brought forward during the budget setting process for 2017/18.

b) Scale of Charges 2017/18 – Recommendation to Estimates Meeting

Consideration was given to the scale of charges for 2017/18. It was reported that the fees and charges had remained unchanged in 2016/17, excluding the Shore Road

beach hut charges, where a significant reduction had been approved for the upper level huts to encourage increased uptake.

It was reported that a 2% increase was now proposed for 2017/18, except for the Shore Road beach hut charges, and some of the Beach Gardens (BG) fees, which were to remain the same. A discussion ensued during which comments were made that it was felt that BG was currently under-used and, in view of the small increases proposed, that the fees should not be increased in 2017/18. A question was raised as to whether the BG fees could be rounded up/down so that the facilities were easier to ‘market’, and a suggestion made that BG usage could be reviewed after the 2017 season to see if usage had increased. A further question was raised as to whether BG could be used for other community purposes e.g. as an ‘exhibition space’.

It was therefore proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Green and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Visitor Services Manager be asked to review the draft scale of charges for 2017/18 prior to further discussion at the Policy, Finance & Performance Management Committee meeting due to be held on 14th December 2016.

9) **Tourism Reports**

There were no further updates to be given at this time.

10) **Updates from Outside Representatives**

Swanage Pier

An update was given on the current status of the Pier’s applications for grants from the Heritage Lottery and Coastal Communities Funds. If successful, other donations would follow. A further update would be given at the next Committee Meeting.

Swanage Railway

An overview of the 2016 season was given. Passenger figures were reported slightly down at 208,000, however, the station had not been operational for two of the ‘peak season’ days whilst filming was being undertaken for a major film production, and there had also been a technical change implemented in passenger statistic reporting.

It was reported that the Railway had won a Gold Award at the 2016 Dorset Tourism Awards in the ‘Large Attraction of the Year’ category. Congratulations were given to Swanage Railway, and also to PDC’s Discover Purbeck Information Centre, and Swanage TIC, for winning Gold and Bronze Awards respectively in the Tourist Information Service of the Year category.

Swanage & District Chamber of Trade (COT)

It was reported that the new PurbeXperience magazine for visitors to/residents of Purbeck had now been launched, and would be delivered to circa 20,000 homes in the area. The booklet would be published once every six months, and would be used to promote Purbeck. Members were impressed with the quality and content of the first edition.

Jazz Festival

It was noted that the 2017 festival would most likely be the last to be operated by the current team of volunteers, although the future of the festival appeared to be assured.

Swanage Museum and Heritage Centre

It was reported that income figures had been 18% up this year, with approximately 50,000 visitors. The sterling work of the Museum’s volunteers was noted.

Swanage & Purbeck Hospitality Association (S&PHA)

It was reported that discussions regarding the proposed ‘merger’ between S&PHA and Swanage COT were ongoing, and it was possible that this could be in place by April 2017. The aim being to rejuvenate both parties, as membership numbers had fallen in

recent times, and to ‘join forces’ to better promote the town in the future.

Purbeck Arts Weeks

A very successful event was reported this year, with good attendance numbers, and a financial surplus which would feed into next year’s event, for which the theme would be ‘time’.

11) Items of Information and Matters for Forthcoming Agendas

- a) Tourist Information Centre (TIC) building refurbishment – update** – it was noted that TIC had been temporarily relocated to the basement offices in the Town Hall for autumn/winter 2016/17. The move had gone well and the temporary office was well presented. The refurbishment of the TIC building on Shore Road had commenced and was due to complete in late March so that the building could be re-occupied prior to Easter. The Visitor Services Manager was developing proposals for a TIC open day soon after its move to raise awareness of the services offered.
- b) Proposals for a combined TIC and Museum & Heritage Centre – update** – it was reported that discussions were ongoing, and that a meeting between the Town Council’s Seafront Enhancement Working Party, and representatives from the Swanage Museum and Heritage Centre, and Swanage and Purbeck Development Trust, was being held on 24th November 2016.
- c) European Maritime Festival to be held in Poole from 17th to 21st May 2017** – it was noted that the Tourism Manager would be liaising with colleagues in Poole regarding opportunities to promote Swanage and Purbeck as part of the above.
- d) Swanage TIC Brown Tourist Signage – update** – enquiries were ongoing with Dorset County Council, as Highways Authority, regarding this item.

12) Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting had been scheduled for Wednesday 8th March 2017 at 10.00 a.m.

The meeting closed at 12.00 p.m.