

Minutes of the Meeting of the **TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall on **Monday 27th June 2005** at **10.00 a.m.**

Chairman: -

Councillor Mrs C Gainsborough Swanage Town Council

Present: -

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| Councillor C R Bright | Swanage Town Council |
| Councillor Mrs J Farrow | Swanage Town Council |
| Councillor A H Miller | Town Mayor |
| Councillor M Tyrer | Swanage Town Council |
| Mr A Leeson | Town Clerk |
| Miss A Stockley | Tourist Information Centre |
| Miss N Elston | Purbeck Tourism Officer |
| Mr N Brown | Swanage Railway Co. Ltd. |
| Mr R Johnson | Swanage Pier |
| Mr A Marriott | Swanage & Purbeck Holiday Accommodation Association |
| Mr G Willey | Licensed Victuallers Association |
| Rev J Wood | Association of Churches Together in Swanage |

1) **Apologies**

Apologies for their inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillors Mrs Bartlett and Pratt.

2) **Matters arising from Minutes of the Meeting held on 21st March 2005**

The Clerk noted that these minutes had been approved by the Town Council. Councillor Tyrer enquired about progress in respect of the action point on page 3 of the minutes. The Town Clerk reported that the police had been unable to attend the next Council Meeting, but that discussions had progressed.

3) **Tourism Report**

Miss Stockley reported on the following matters:-

a) **Footfall**

Footfall increased at the Tourist Information Centre during May, the first increase for 11 months. Visitor numbers had also been encouraging in June.

b) **Accommodation**

Accommodation had been heavily booked during the recent hot weather.

c) **Military Tattoo**

A small number of tickets remain available for the Military tattoo to be held on Saturday 9th July at the Football Ground, at a price of £15.00.

d) **Community Partnership Consultation Event**

An exhibition and consultation event will be held by the Swanage Town and Community Partnership at the Information Centre between the 8th and 15th July.

e) **Beach Gardens**

Beach Gardens has achieved the Partners in Success business accolade, reflecting high standards in health and safety, staff development and customer service.

Councillor Mrs Gainsborough congratulated the Tourist Information Centre on their success.

Councillor Mrs Farrow enquired about the purpose of the consultation event reported under item 3) d) above. The Clerk stated that this was being organised by the consultants employed by the Town Partnership in order to gauge public opinion on the remaining two options for the Swanage multi-functional centre.

Miss Elston reported on the following matters:-

a) **Holiday Guide 2006**

Work had commenced on the preparation of the 2006 holiday guide, which will contain only inspected accommodation.

b) **Marketing**

The marketing of the 2006 guide is to begin in the national press. There will also be an e-mail campaign, which is extremely cost-effective. The advertising campaign will focus on the spring and autumn, as part of the District Council's strategy to extend the holiday season.

c) **Wareham Tourist Information Centre**

A new Tourist Information supervisor has recently been appointed in Wareham. The centre is performing well, particularly in encouraging use of public transport.

d) **Heritage Centre & Museum**

The Heritage Lottery Committee are at present examining a bid for funding for improvements to the Heritage Centre, that would see the provision of a new site for the Swanage Museum. The result of the application is due to be made known in July.

e) **Maternity Leave**

Miss Elston reported that she would be on maternity leave from September.

4) **Reports from Outside Organisations**

a) **Licensed Victuallers Association**

Mr Willey raised issue with the description of the proposed new bye-law to control alcohol-related violence in the town as a ban, as under paragraph 4) a) of the minutes of the meeting of the Tourism and Environmental Committee held on 21st March 2005. He also drew attention to the heading of a press release issued by Purbeck District Council and newspaper reports. Mr Willey

stated that the proposed new regulation would enable police officers to request a person with alcohol to surrender it, or failing that, to ask for the alcohol to be poured away. An individual who refuses to comply with these requests can then be arrested.

Mr Willey represented the LVA's concerns that requests by the police to surrender alcohol may actually provoke violence, rather than prevent it. The association believes that the proposed bye-law is unnecessary, being informed by the experience of other towns, such as Wimborne, rather than the good conduct typical of Swanage during Carnival Week, New Year celebrations and the town's music festivals. Furthermore, widespread reporting of the proposed bye-law as a ban could lead to innocent people enjoying a quiet drink in public being unnecessarily reported to the police. In conclusion, Mr Willey declared that the LVA strongly oppose the proposed bye-law, believing it to be both superfluous and counter-productive.

The Town Mayor stated that he agreed with many of Mr Willey's remarks. However, as chairman of the Purbeck Crime and Disorder Partnership he had had discussions with representatives from many other town councils who had introduced this bye-law successfully. The Mayor stated that his hope was that the new regulation would help reduce the need for alcohol-related arrests, thereby reducing pressure on the local police's over-stretched resources. He also expressed his confidence that this could be policed sensibly.

Mr Willey re-iterated the views of the LVA, and argued that the problems experienced in other towns were not replicated in Swanage. However, the Town Mayor stated that there were alcohol-related problems in the town, especially in the Lower High Street. Mr N. Brown, speaking in a personal capacity, reported that his own recent experience of the Lower High Street on a Friday night confirmed that there is a problem. The Mayor suggested that the LVA contact other towns in order to understand their position. Mr Willey concluded by stating that the LVA feared that the new bye-law would be a threat to public events in the town.

Following from this debate, Mr A. Marriott stated that he was concerned about the level of policing in the town. The Town Mayor agreed that this was a major concern and stated that the local police force is at present 40 per cent under-manned.

b) Association of Churches Together in Swanage

Revd Wood reported on a programme of music events to be held at the parish church over the summer. The Association would also be holding an outreach event in the field next to the middle school from the 11th to 17th July. He remarked that many visitors attended church events and religious services over the summer months.

c) Swanage & Purbeck Holiday Accommodation Association

Mr Marriott reported that June had been a poor month for the Association's members and that there was the impression that the recession in the retail sector was starting to impact on the holiday trade. His expectation was that 2005 will be a moderately good year at best.

d) **Swanage Railway**

Mr Brown echoed Mr Marriott's impression of the current season and stated that demand for premium priced events was down. He reported that, unfortunately, press reports indicating that a re-establishment of services to Furzebrook were premature as negotiations on this matter had not yet commenced.

The Clerk enquired whether promotion of the market in conjunction with train services was proving a success. Mr Brown reported that the market was being advertised in Bournemouth and it was attracting a number of passengers to the early Tuesday morning train services.

e) **Swanage Pier**

Mr Johnson reported that the beginning of the season had seen a decline in visitors, but that numbers had held up surprisingly well on wet weekends and were now picking up. He also reported that Swanage Museum had re-organised the exhibition in Marine Villas and that was proving a great success. Much of the work had been done by Mr John Page, who had recently been appointed to succeed the late Mr Michael Williamson.

Mr Johnson also stated that grant applications were currently being pursued for new buildings, including a possible marine interpretation centre, and a water sports centre, in conjunction with the diving club. It was also reported that the pier was presently being closed at 10 p.m. on weekends because of theft and anti-social behaviour.

A recent case of damage to the pier, caused by the SS Balmoral, was also reported.

5) **Any Other Matters**

a) **Policing**

The Town Mayor returned to the issue of policing and stated the Town Council's desire for an increase of police officers stationed in the town. He also remarked that Inspector Downer is supportive of this stance. Councillor Mrs Farrow stated that the Drug Reference Action Group was of the same opinion. It was then PROPOSED by Mr Marriott, SECONDED by Mr Brown and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That a strong letter be sent to the police authority expressing grave concern that the police levels in this town are totally inadequate, especially in the evening and at weekends.

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| ACTION: The Clerk should write to the police authority, representing the above resolution. |
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The Town Mayor then briefly outlined changes to the County's Crime and Disorder Partnerships, and stated that he was very pleased that he would be able to present the above resolution at the next meeting.

b) **Swanage In Bloom**

Councillor Mrs Gainsborough announced that judging for the In Bloom competition would take place on Monday 4th July.

c) **World Heritage Site**

The Clerk asked Miss Elston about the progress of the World Heritage Site Lottery Bid. Miss Elston reported that the second stage of the bid was still being worked on. Discussions were ongoing with Lander's Quarries with regard to the site of a visitor centre.

Miss Elston also stated that a new Creative Coast Group had been established and was looking to appoint a consultant to draw up an arts strategy for the Jurassic Coast.

It was also noted that a shuttle bus service to and from Durlston Country Park was being trialled for a month. Councillor Mrs Farrow stated that it had been a great success on the recent dawn to dusk day, and compared very favourably with the existing inadequate bus service.

The meeting closed at 11.20 a.m.
