

Minutes of the Meeting of the **GENERAL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall on **Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2008** at **9.30 a.m.**

Chairman: -

Councillor L Gloyn-Cox

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor Mrs C Gainsborough

Swanage Town Council

Councillor S Poultney

Swanage Town Council

Councillor M Pratt

Swanage Town Council

Councillor W Trite

Swanage Town Council (from 9.40 a.m. until 11.35 a.m.)

Also present: -

Dr M Ayres

Assistant Town Clerk

Mr G Brookes

Operations Manager

Mrs C Anstey

Administrative Assistant

Mr R Aplin

Prospect Allotment Association (until 11.15a.m.)

Mr L Fletcher

James Smith Ltd Funeral Directors (until 11.30 a.m.)

Mr A Lander

Swanage Fishermen's Association

Mr R Scott

Prospect Allotment Association (until 11.15 a.m.)

### **Public Participation Time**

In addition to Members and Officers there were nine members of the public present.

**MR CAUSON** expressed concern at the working of the Council's allotment bonfire regulations.

**MRS ALDOUS** and **MRS FRENCH** drew attention to the lengthy allotment waiting list and urged the Council to take action. **MR CAUSON** stated that additional allotment land should be supplied.

#### **1) Apologies**

There were no apologies for inability to attend the Meeting.

#### **2) Fishermen's Huts and Jetty**

##### **a) Transfer from Tourism Committee to General Operations Committee**

Consideration was given to the recommendation of the Tourism Committee, contained within minute 4)b) of the meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008, that issues relating to the fishermen's huts and improvements to the eastern jetty form part of the remit of the General Operations Committee. It was proposed by Councillor Poultney, seconded by Councillor Mrs Gainsborough and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

That the General Operations Committee accepts the recommendation of the Tourism Committee, contained within minute 4)b) of the meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008, that the fishermen's huts and eastern jetty be added to its remit.

**b) Co-option of a representative of Swanage Fishermen's Association**

Further to minute 2)a) above it was RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That Mr Alan Lander be co-opted to the General Operations Committee as representative of Swanage Fishermen's Association.

Councillor W Trite entered the meeting at 9.40 a.m.

**3) Review of Corporate Performance Plan**

Further to minute 3) of the Finance and Performance Management Committee Meeting held on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2008, the Committee considered the relevant pages of the Interim Corporate Performance Plan. The following amendments were proposed for incorporation into a revised document for discussion at a future meeting of the Finance and Performance Management Committee.

**Corporate Objective CO-01** - to read 'To preserve the unique identity of Swanage and promote its heritage for the benefit of future generations whilst encouraging tourism and enterprise for the economic and commercial benefit of the town'.

**Corporate Objective CO-02** - to be modified to acknowledge that the Town Council's ability to maintain, refurbish and replace its assets is constrained by finance.

**Corporate Objective CO-04** - replace 'citizens' with 'residents'.

**Corporate Objective CO-05** - key objective to be amended to read: 'To work in partnership with others to pursue a joint approach in the delivery of best value.

**Public Buildings** - include reference to seeking possible alternatives for future management of the Town Hall.

**Parks and Operations** - Key target to be amended to read 'To support the introduction of enforcement measures to deter irresponsible dog owners and the littering of public places'.

- to include strategic objective to keep footpaths clear of weeds.

**Boat Park** – to refer to the scheme to upgrade the fishermen's jetty as a priority scheme.

**4) Allotment Matters**

Councillor Poultney declared a personal interest in this item under the Model Code of Conduct by reason of being an allotment holder.

**a) Waiting List**

Consideration was given to a number of measures that could be taken to reduce the allotment waiting list, which currently contained 92 names.

**i) Supply of additional land**

The possibility of using land already in the Town Council's ownership was raised and it was noted that the Council was already undergoing an options appraisal in respect of its assets. After lengthy discussion it was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Poultney and RESOLVED:

That the Town Clerk enquire of the County, District and neighbouring parish councils if they had any land which could be used as allotments, and that the compulsory hiring of land by the District Council also be investigated.

During discussion it was noted that land at the rear of Swanage Middle School, off of Washpond Lane, had been used for this purpose in the past.

**ii) Subdivision of existing plots**

The possibility of automatically subdividing larger allotment plots on their surrender by their existing tenants was raised. It was not felt that plots should be automatically subdivided, and it was proposed by Councillor Trite, seconded by the Chairman and RESOLVED:

That the Town Council's officers have the discretion to sub-divide larger allotments, following consultation of the Horticultural Officer.

**iii) Termination of existing agreements**

It was reported that tenancy agreements could be terminated for failure to keep plots 'in a clean, decent and good condition and properly cultivated' and that the Town Council holds regular joint inspections with the Allotment Association to ensure that this is adhered to. It was proposed by Councillor Trite, seconded by Councillor Pratt and RESOLVED:

That the Town Council take every lawful step in respect of those failing to keep their plots in good order.

Consideration was also given to the holding of multiple plots by individual households. It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Mrs Gainsborough and RESOLVED:

That the Town Council contact the holders of multiple plots to enquire if they would consider giving up any or part of their allotment allocation to help cut the allotment waiting list.

Attention was also drawn to a number of tenants who are not resident in Swanage and it was RESOLVED:

That the residents of other parishes be requested to contact the relevant parish council regarding alternative provision.

Concern was expressed that a number of allotments were being sub-let in contravention of the allotment agreement. It was proposed by Councillor Pratt, seconded by Councillor Trite and RESOLVED:

That all allotment holders be written to, drawing their attention to clause 4)e) of their tenancy agreements (which prevents sub-letting) and requesting that they approach the Town Council to discuss the regularisation of arrangements.

Attention was drawn to the provision of legal advice by the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Limited to member authorities. It was noted that the annual membership fee for local authorities was £55 per annum. It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Gainsborough, seconded by Councillor Pratt and RESOLVED:

That the Town Council join the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Limited.

**b) Tenancy Agreements – Proposed amendments**

Consideration was given to the keeping of poultry and livestock on the allotments. It was reported that Section 12 of the Allotments Act 1950 stipulates that ‘a tenant cannot be prevented from keeping hens or rabbits for domestic use’. It was noted that at present no allotment holders had indicated a desire to keep hens or rabbits on site and that if this were to happen in the future then the Council would have to consider the welfare standards required to satisfy current regulations. It was proposed by Councillor Pratt, seconded by Councillor Trite and RESOLVED:

That clause 4)c) of the allotment tenancy agreement be amended to read that ‘No livestock or poultry of any kind shall be kept upon the Allotment Garden except as permitted under Section 12 of the Allotments Act 1950 and following consultation with the Town Council’.

Members also considered representations in respect of clause 4)m) of the tenancy agreement which forbids the use of carpet as a weed suppressant and stipulates that only biodegradable material can be used. After some discussion of the use of biodegradable hessian backed woollen carpet it was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Trite and RESOLVED:

That the existing clause 4)m) remain in force.

**c) Bonfire Regulations – Consideration of petition**

Further to minute 3)ii) of the General Operations Committee meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2008 Members had been circulated with a copy of a petition against the Council’s bonfire regulations, carrying more than 50 signatures. It was noted that the Committee had previously agreed that the working of the regulations be reviewed after the end of September and it was RESOLVED:

That the Council’s existing bonfire regulations be reviewed at the next meeting of the General Operations Committee.

**d) Matters raised by Prospect Allotment Association**

Concern was expressed at the failure to act immediately in removing a dangerous branch on the boundary with Cauldron Barn. It was reported that the Town Council had done everything within its power and that action was anticipated within the next 48 hours.

Mr Scott and Mr Aplin left the meeting at 11.15 a.m.

**5) Cemetery Matters**

**a) Natural Burial Working Party**

It was noted that a meeting of the Natural Burial Working Party remained outstanding and it was agreed that the Assistant Town Clerk liaise between the representatives to arrange a convenient date as soon as possible.

**b) Matters raised by James Smith Funeral Directors**

Mr Fletcher requested a set of keys to the cemetery attendant’s hut so that the cemetery maps could be accessed when required. This was agreed to by the Operations Manager.

The reference to a ‘sharp rise’ in cemetery costs in the Interim Corporate Performance Plan was discussed and it was agreed that Mr Fletcher be

supplied with further details from the Council's accounts to clarify the situation.

Mr Fletcher left the meeting at 11.30 a.m.

**6) Matters arising from Minutes of the Meeting of the General Operations Committee held on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2008**

The Minutes were noted as agreed.

**7) Operations Manager's Report and Tree Maintenance Programme Update**

**a) Seating Update**

20 new seats have been installed in various locations around the town to replace old concrete seating and damaged benches. Seven memorial seats have also been installed. It was reported that the costs of the memorial seats now far exceeded the sums being charged by the Town Council: the 'Lions Head' design now cost £1,000 and the 'Eastgate' £600. It was recommended that the Town Council investigate the purchase of a number of such seats in advance to reduce costs. It was AGREED:

That this matter be investigated and a report made to the Finance and Performance Management Committee.

Councillor Trite left the meeting at 11.35 a.m.

**b) Tree Maintenance Programme**

Attention was drawn to the work required to the poplar trees bordering the railway line and King George V Playing Field. Consideration was given to the commissioning of a second report in addition to that prepared by the Council's Horticultural Officer. It was RESOLVED:

That the owners of properties in the vicinity be informed of the proposed works in writing, prior to the consideration of commissioning a second report.

It was reported that work was due to start on the removal of the poplar trees at North Beach Car Park during the week commencing 26<sup>th</sup> August 2008. The possibility of entering details of all trees in the Town Council's ownership onto a database and mapping programme was raised. It was AGREED:

That a more detailed report on the purchase of a database and mapping programme for council-owned trees be made to the next meeting of the General Operations Committee.

**c) RoSPA Play Ground Inspections**

Members were informed of the likely failure of a number of items of play ground equipment to meet the required standard. A survey report is outstanding but a budget provision of approximately £40,000 is required. It was AGREED:

That the replacement of playground equipment be added to the list of possible uses of De Moulham Trust funds.

**8) Rubbish Collection – Sea Front and Town Square**

This matter was deferred to the monthly meeting of the Town Council to be held on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2008.

**9) Development of Asset Management Plan**

Further to minute 9) of the General Operations Committee meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2008 it was noted that the formation of a Corporate Asset Management Plan had been identified as a priority in the Town Council's Annual Governance Statement. It was RESOLVED:

**TO RECOMMEND:**

That the Town Council's Asset Management Plan incorporate an assessment of the income potential, associated risk and maintenance requirements of all council-owned property and be referred for further consideration to the next meeting of the General Operations Committee.

**10) Items of Information and Matters for Forthcoming Agendas**

There were no items to report.

**11) Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting is scheduled for 9.30 a.m. on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> November 2008.

The Meeting closed at 12.00 noon.