

Minutes of the Meeting of the **TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **FRIDAY, 22nd MARCH, 2002** at **10.00 a.m.**

PRESENT:-

Councillor Mrs C Gainsborough JP - Chairman

Councillor Mrs J Farrow

Councillor A H Miller

Councillor Mrs H O' Donovan

Mrs. L. Fegan

Swanage & Purbeck Holiday Accommodation Association.

Mrs. J. Scadden

Swanage Caravan Parks

Mr. G. Willey

Swanage & District L. V. A.

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from the Town Mayor, Councillors Roscoe and Sutton, Mrs R Nicholson, Mrs H Tainsh and Mr. C. Ferguson.

In the absence of the Chairman Cllr Sutton, Cllr Mrs Gainsborough assumed the Chair.

2. **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD - 14<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2001**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2001 were noted and approved as a correct record.

Arising from Minute No. 3b) the Chairman noted that both the Nethway and Gainsborough Hotels had announced their impending closures. Mrs Fegan announced that two additional bed and breakfast establishments were due to be opened in 2002.

3. **ACCREDITATION SCHEME**

The Clerk provided details of the two Road Shows held on 26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> February 2002 for the serviced and non-serviced accommodation providers and conducted by Mr Vernon Cornell on behalf of the Southern Tourist Board.

Participation and the overall feedback from both events had been very positive. Cllr Miller noted that two individuals had had a disruptive influence upon the meeting for the non-serviced accommodation sector, and that the main concerns over the cost of inspection had been dismissed with the announcement of the introductory offers to waive membership fees and to give percentage discounts. Details were also given of free advisory visits for those committing to accreditation within the twelve week deadline.

A general concern was recorded at the delay in the distribution of the formal letters offering details of the scheme to accommodation providers.

After a brief discussion, it was RESOLVED that:

The Clerk write to the Corporate Planning and Design Manager at Purbeck District Council, recording the

Committee's views.

4. **TOURISM REPORT**

A written report prepared by the Tourism & Countryside Officer was presented to the meeting, detailing the following matters:-

- (a) A new Countryside Guide to Purbeck had been produced through the Purbeck Heritage Committee containing information on countryside based sites around the district, including some in Swanage. It aims to encourage visitors to enjoy the countryside, understand more about its sensitive nature and provide information for educational groups visiting the area. It will be on sale at 50p per copy.
- (b) The Purbeck Aware Festival is to be held between 25<sup>th</sup> May and 16<sup>th</sup> June, with over 80 events, including wildlif safaris across heathland, a number of boat trips to view the World Heritage Coast, and a good mix of walks and talks on various aspects of Purbeck. The theme this year is "what makes Purbeck special", thereby allowing a wider range of events that will suit all people. 10,000 event programmes are being printed.
- (c) The District Council's website, although recently launched, is still being developed and it is hoped that the Town Council can work together to make the most of this medium. Any community groups or businesses wishing to add their details on the site, including events and news, would be very welcomed.
- (d) Over 1000 Purbeck Welcome Folders have been produced. These include attractions, facilities and information on how to enjoy Purbeck's sustainability. These are being distributed to all accommodation providers.
- (e) The Tourist Information Centre in Wareham is the subject of a feasibility study to establish if the present Purbeck TIC can be relocated and amalgamated with the Library, Citizens Advice Bureau and Wareham online centre. This would be situated at the present library site on the Quay. Architects have been appointed to produce a report to be available by September, and it will culminate in an application for planning permission. If successful, the document will provide a basis for raising funds for the project. A public consultation meeting is to be held in Wareham on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2002.
- A new supervisor and two temporary seasonal staff are to be recruited shortly for the Wareham Tourist Information Centre.
- (f) The Swanage Heritage Centre is due to open on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2002 and will be open seven days a week until the end of October. A new staff member has been appointed. The Centre is achieving its goals of supporting local businesses by displaying and selling a wider range of local products and crafts, and is also succeeding in encouraging a large number of school groups.

Mrs Fegan referred to the Countryside Guide and commented upon its excellent quality. Cllr Mills suggested that the Committee record its appreciation to Mrs Chris Day at Purbeck District Council, the officer directly responsible for the production of the publication.

It was RESOLVED:-

That the Clerk write to Mrs Day at Purbeck District Council, expressing the views of the Committee.

It was FURTHER RESOLVED:-

That the Tourism & Countryside Officer be invited to submit a verbal report to the next appropriate meeting of the Committee.

The Clerk provided details of the Town Council's position, reporting that:

- (a) The staffing arrangements of the Tourist Information Centre.
- (b) Efforts were being taken to take a more strategic role in raising the profile for Swanage, with the advent of the granting of World Heritage status.
- (c) The award of the Tidy Britain Flag had been announced on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2002. The Clerk reported that all of the water quality samples taken during the 2001 season were recorded as being 'excellent' and gave details of the additional measures undertaken in achieving the award.
- (d) Distribution and enquiries for the Swanage & Purbeck guide had continued to be high during March.
- (e) The Town Council's new website was scheduled to be released in time for Easter 2002. Details of its features were provided, including online access for accommodation providers, the ability to print the Swanage & Purbeck guide directly, a text only version for the visually impaired, and the facility to download information to personal desk assistant (PDA).

During a general discussion, the opportunity potential for Swanage with the advent of World Heritage status, was identified. Mrs Fegan referred to the expectations of foreign visitors and the potential to expand business into the shoulder months.

With reference to Minute 3c) 14/12/01, Cllr. Miller noted how the Town Council had influenced the general rise in cleanliness within the Town during the last two years, leading to the restoration of pride.

The views of Mr Malcolm Turnbull, Lead Officer for the Dorset County Council's partnership with Devon County Council in the attainment and promotion of the World Heritage Site, were reconsidered. Given the importance attached to this issue, it was proposed by Cllr. Mrs O'Donovan and RESOLVED that:

- i) Mr Turnbull, Dorset County Council, be invited to present his views to a special meeting of the Committee;
- ii) A provisional date for the meeting is 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2002.

Mrs. Fegan enquired if the Town Council had considered the issue of revised opening hours at the Tourist Information Centre. The Clerk reported on preliminary discussions held with the staff as part of the impending best value review of the service.

## 5. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

- (a) Mr G. Willey reported on the role of Licensees in assisting a new police initiative to reduce the under age purchase of alcohol and tobacco and the consumption of

alcohol in public places.

The Clerk was asked to provide an update regarding the proposed introduction of an alcohol ban. Concerns regarding displacement and the need to provide satisfactory evidence in support of an application were noted.

Mr Willey highlighted the success of the recent Blues Weekend.

- (b) Mrs J. Scadden reported that bookings were up for the forthcoming season giving the continued demand from off-peak visitors and a reduction in the number of self-catering units available.

Details of a recent spate of thefts were highlighted. Cllr O'Donovan stressed the importance of reporting all incidents to the Police. Cllr Miller echoed this view, emphasising the use of crime statistics in allocating grants and distribution of police funding.

On behalf of Purbeck Tourism, Mrs Scadden reported discussions held at a recent meeting concerning changes in policy for the use of 'brown' tourist signs. Particular regards were given to the promotion of the World Heritage Site.

- (c) Mrs L. Fegan reported that the winter months had been very busy for those members that had chosen to remain open. The trading forecast for the summer was anticipated to be good.

Mrs Fegan asked for an update in respect of proposals for a market. Cllr Miller and Cllr Mrs. O'Donovan, as members of the Council's sub-committee investigating the matter, confirmed that the Main Beach car park had been identified as being the only potentially suitable Council owned site and that the matter was now at a stage of being pursued.

6. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Mrs Fegan enquired as to events being organised for the Queen's Jubilee Celebrations in June. The Chairman reported on plans to hold a major event on Swanage Pier and of a Civic Service to be held on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2002 which would be followed by a tea party in the grounds of the St Mary's Church, at which the Town Band would be playing.

7. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

As schedule of meeting dates for 2002/03 was presented for approval.

It was RESOLVED that the following be noted:-

Monday	1 <sup>st</sup> July 2002
Monday	23 <sup>rd</sup> September 2002
Monday	9 <sup>th</sup> December 2002
Monday	24 <sup>th</sup> March 2003