

Minutes of the meeting of the **CARAVAN PARK**
BEST VALUE WORKING GROUP held at the
Town Hall on **Wednesday, 30th July 2003** at 9.30 a.m.

Present:-

Councillor A.H. Miller – Chairman
Councillor H. Agelink
Councillor C. Bright
Councillor Mrs J. Farrow

Also in attendance:-

Mr A.J. Leeson Town Clerk
Mr N.J. Pearce General Manager
Mrs P. Battrick Administration Supervisor
Mr A. Romsey Park Supervisor

1. **APOLOGIES**

An apology for his inability to attend was received from Councillor Tritie.

2. **MONITORING – REVIEW OF BEST VALUE REVIEW ACTION POINTS**

The Clerk reported that the Best Value Review had been finalised and that the monitoring of the action points is now to take place. The Action Plan as laid out in the 2003-04 Best Value Performance Plan pages 15 & 16 were discussed.

The Immediate to Short Term Action Points were discussed individually.

a) **Planning Consent - Extension of Operating Season**

The Clerk reported that the planning consent meant that the 2003/04 season had been extended. It was noted that a planting scheme was required to be submitted.

It was AGREED:-

That the advice of the Council's recently appointed Horticulturalist be sought before submitting a planting scheme.

b) **Dispose of a tipper truck and purchase more appropriate vehicles**

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the purchase of new vehicles, plant and towing attachments. It was noted that the tractor purchased for the Operations Department had been delayed resulting in the transfer of the existing plant not having taken place.

It was also noted that the special attachment for the carrying of large gas bottles had been trialled but had been deemed to be unsuitable by Park staff. An alternative attachment had been considered and had been purchased.

c) **Outsource CORGI gas services**

The General Manager identified the current arrangements and these were discussed at length. Consideration had been given to the Council appointing a LPG qualified Gas Engineer within the Operations Department. The benefits of continuing with the existing arrangements were noted in the short-term.

It was AGREED:-

That the recruitment of a suitably qualified employee be pursued.

d) **Installation of new Electricity system**

The General Manager reported that the new electrical system had been very successful in providing a reliable electrical supply.

e) Installation of new Water supply system

The Park Supervisor identified potential problems arising from the decision to extend the seasonal opening to include Christmas & New Year. The anticipated problems were centred on concerns that exposed pipework and some covered pipes, laid close to the surface, would be susceptible to freezing-up during a severe weather conditions.

It was AGREED:-

That the Park Supervisor conduct a survey to document the positioning of all exposed pipework and to take remedial action in the form of either lagging or additional soil covering.

The Short to Medium Term (1-5 years) Action Points were discussed

a) Refurbishment Programme – Phases 1 & 2

Phase 1 work completed by April 2003 was noted as being very well received by local residents, caravan owners and visiting customers alike.

Phase 2, including work to the Vista Club, reception, new offices, kitchen refurbishment and pool changing facilities were noted as being of major priority during autumn 2003 through to spring 2004. It was noted that approval had been granted to appoint a design consultant (Minute 5a) - Caravan Park Committee 21/7/2003) but that an attempt to identify any adequate structural survey drawings had failed.

It was AGREED:-

That a recommendation be made to the next meeting of Policy & Resources to seek approval for a structural survey to be conducted as a matter of urgency.

b) Site Pitch Re-development

The General Manager reported on plans to undertake pitch development on a non-going basis. It was noted that any costs incurred would be within the existing annual budgets.

The issue of removal of a controllable plant species was highlighted as having been treated. The General Manager referred to the need to carry out a programme of tree maintenance and management.

It was AGREED:-

That the General Manager liaise with the Operations Manager and carry out any remedial action arising from a general conditions survey.

c) New Signage

The erection of new signage was noted as being complete other than the directional sign leading to the Holiday Park. The General Manager reported on proposals to install brown tourism signage from the main road approaches. The Clerk stated that he had received confirmation that the Highways Authority would not sanction the erection of tourism signs naming the holiday park but would approve signs giving directions to the public swimming pool, forming part of the complex.

It was AGREED:-

That the Clerk pursue the issue of directional signage with Dorset County Council.

d) New Entrance Sign

The Clerk confirmed that planning consent had been received in respect of the new entrance sign.

It was AGREED:-

That the General Manager liaise with the Operations Manager in respect of utilising Staff resources in preference to appointing an external contractor.

3. **POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

The Council's policy as laid out in the Best Value Performance Plan was reviewed.

a) Number of Caravan Sales

It was noted that caravan sales had already exceeded the annual target set for 2003/04. The General Manager was congratulated on his performance.

b) English Tourism Council Rating

The General Manager reported that the 2003 assessment had been carried out on 29th July 2003 with the result that the Holiday Park had retained its 3 Star rating.

Disappointment was expressed, particularly given the amount of work carried out since the last assessment. A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the factors that had most influenced the overall rating, given that so much of the infrastructure had been refurbished and efforts made to address the issues raised in the previous year's assessment. It was noted that the Park was required to address the areas of i) obsolete toilet block/stores ii) caravan base construction iii) laundrette facilities and iv) shop before the attainment of 4 star status could be achieved.

It was noted that the assessor had offered to address the Council if it were considered to be of benefit.

It was AGREED:-

That the areas requiring attention were required to be given priority within the next programme of works.

c) Satisfaction Surveys

The General Manager reported that due to changes in management during 2002/03 no site satisfaction surveys had been conducted.

It was AGREED:-

That user surveys be conducted in respect of both Customers and Owners in accordance with the target for 2003/04.

d) Site Occupancy

The General Manager reported that the actual in 2002/03 was incorrectly stated in the Best Value Performance Plan. It was noted that this would be investigated to establish the correct data.

e) Total Number of Caravan Bookings

It was noted that the total number of bookings recorded was considerably lower than target. It was believed that the reason was attributable to the Council's change in policy of non-participation in The Sun bookings scheme that had resulted in a large number of short-term lets.

It was AGREED:-
That the targets in future years be set to a more realistic level.

- f) Percentage Complaints
The General Manager stated that the level of 0% was unrealistic and that there was an industry standard that is adopted.

It was AGREED:-
That the industry standard be adopted in future years.

- g) Percentage Occupancy
The General Manager reported that due to the change in use of the Vista Hall from its primary function as a community room to a restaurant/entertainment facility, the previous performance indicator had become obsolete.

It was AGREED:-
To discontinue using the previous performance indicator and to introduce new performance measures in respect of both the bar and catering functions.

- h) Total Number of Swims
It was noted that there had been an increase in the total number of children's swim usage and that the adult usage was consistent with the results in previous years.

- i) Private Hires
The General Manager stated that, as the level of bookings for private pool hires had dropped significantly, he would investigate and report any findings to the next performance monitoring meeting.

- j) AquaFit Users
The General Manager stated that the recorded level of usage had increased dramatically and offered the reason as being due to the increase in popularity of this activity.

- k) Facility Pass Users
It was noted that the number of usage of facility passes had reduced. This was in line with the reduction recorded in respect of caravan bookings.

Mrs P Batrick & Mr A Romsey left the meeting at 11.20am.

4. FUTURE BUSINESS STRATEGY

The General Manager outlined a variety of options in respect of caravan sales, pitch development and proposals for future business expansion in the number of privately owned caravans.

A detailed review of the general policies agreed and adopted through the recently concluded best value review, were discussed at length. Members were not keen to change any long-term business strategies without having first carried out a full assessment of the costs and benefits

It was AGREED:-
That the General Manager cost benefit analysis regarding potential business expansion and report to a future Best Value review monitoring meeting.
