

Minutes of the **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** of the Parish of Swanage, held at The Centre, High Street, Swanage on **THURSDAY 23rd MAY 2024** at 7.00 p.m.

The Town Mayor, Councillor Tina Foster, assumed the Chair, and in addition to members of the Council and officials, approximately 31 persons were present. The Mayor welcomed all attendees and thanked representatives from local organisations for their attendance.

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from Councillors Monkhouse, Coward and Suttle.

2. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Parish Meeting held on 15th May 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed. (Copies of the Minutes were circulated to those present at the Meeting).

3. **SWANAGE TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT PRESENTED BY THE TOWN MAYOR**

The Town Mayor gave thanks to all councillors for their hard work, commitment and sense of humour over the past year. Thanks were also given to all the staff for their support and dedication. The six newly elected councillors were welcomed to the council: Councillors Brookes, Coward, Dorrington, Lejeune, Sutton and Vile, to work alongside the re-elected councillors: Bonfield, Monkhouse, Moreton, Tomes and Trite. The Mayor provided updates and an overview of the activities of the Town Council over the past year which included:-

- Public engagement on the Green Seafront scheme which received an excellent response.
- The council agreed support for a Community Sports Facility at Day's Park. Support for the CLT housing development at Washpond Lane which is awaiting feedback from planners.
- Continuing work on the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan.
- Green Flag award for Beach Gardens and Blue Flag award for the beach.
- Receiving a Gold award in the Southwest Tourism Awards.
- The launch of Visit Swanage website.
- The closure of southern section of Shore Rd was confirmed.
- The second Herston Community Field Open Day.
- The Mayor's Ball, raising money for charity and anticipating holding another ball in 2025 to celebrate the Golden Anniversary of the Council.
- Entered into new concessions for the seafront – Carve Coffee is about to open for half term.
- The opening of the new Focus Centre through Swanage and Purbeck Development Trust.
- Establishing forums to work with others on Tourism, Emergency Plans, Youth Initiatives and the Swanage Railway.

The Mayor thanked the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Moreton, for his constant support and wise words and thanked her husband, Les, for supporting her always.

The full report can be found at the end of the minutes.

4. **PRESENTATIONS FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL ORGANISATIONS**

Ian Schofield – NPT Sergeant, Dorset Police

Dorset Police had recently employed additional officers, though their deployment remained unclear. Officer allocation was demand-led, based on the number of incidents. As Swanage experienced relatively low crime compared to other seaside towns, it currently had one Police Constable (PC) and three Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).

Antisocial behaviour had declined in recent months, and it was anticipated that the Swanage Community Skatepark Project, along with the planned improvements, would further contribute to this reduction. A public engagement event was held at the skatepark on 1st June 2024.

A brief overview of 'Project Evolve' was provided, which brought together a number of areas of work with the common aims of:

- Continuing to improve police service by putting the public first
- Ensuring every penny of public money was spent wisely
- Making it easier for officers and staff to do an even better job

Police had aimed to visit crime reporters in person or, if unavailable, to make telephone contact within 12 hours. The rural crime management team had assisted with this process.

Concerns had been raised about a recent increase in shoplifting. Residents had been reminded that reporting all crimes was crucial, as police response depended on recorded incidents.

Heidi Florence - Swanage Skatepark Community Project

A presentation was provided by Heidi Florence, Swanage Skatepark Community Project, which outlined the following:

- £15k had been received from Swanage Town Council, with a target of £200k.
- A Crowdfunder campaign had been launched with a target of £20k over six weeks, supported by business owners.
- The social benefits of the skatepark had been noted, including its role as a meeting place and a space to encounter nature.
- The vision had extended beyond just skate equipment.
- A big thanks had been given to Lorna Haines for her promotion of the skatepark project and fundraising efforts.
- A fundraising event had been held at The Fonk Lounge, and a community event had taken place on 1st June 2024.

Tom Clarke – National Trust

Tom Clarke provided an update on National Trust projects, which included:

- The work of Alex Brocklesby, National Trust, which had included the Youth Strategy event, chairing the Wellbeing Swanage advisory group, and working with Swanage and Purbeck Development Trust (S&PDT) on future visioning.
- The National Trust had been working on the crossing at Currendon and a footpath onto the heath near the golf course.
- Collaboration with local schools, including a forest school walk and the Herston community event.
- The National Trust had played a larger role in community conveyancing.
- Other projects had included Landscape Recovery, which involved engaging 43 landowners.
- A recent funding bid had been unsuccessful, but it had helped forge

partnerships.

- The National Trust had been working to connect young people with nature and the landscape, with around 30 organisations involved.

Sara Parker – Dorset Coast Forum

A presentation was provided by Sara Parker, Dorset Coast Forum which included:

- An introduction to the work of Dorset Coast Forum.
- On 5th June 2024 a Swanage Beach engagement event would be held.
- Coastal flood prevention scheme – art blocks scheme to ‘Flood Swanage with Art’. The aim of the project was to assist the visually impaired as the grey blocks can be difficult to see.
- DCF has hosted outdoor classroom days for local schools.
- DCF has been involved in Swanage coastal management schemes including beach renourishment, Durlston Cliff management plan, Swanage Landslide Group – resulting in four new safety signs. Additionally, CTAP had held an engagement event in April, with potential funding identified for steps at Sheps Hollow.
- It was advised that due to the current condition of the steps at Sheps Hollow they should not be used and safety signs were in place.
- DCF had continued to maintain successful partnerships with Planet Purbeck, Sustainable Swanage, and the Town Council.

Thanks were provided to DCF for the replacement of several groyne boards.

Dawn Morley – The Mowlem

A presentation was provided by The Mowlem Trustee, Dawn Morley, which included:

- £160k fundraising for 160th anniversary had been achieved.
- The Community room project had cost £100k project. A survey of users had highlighted a need to update the room for optimum usage.
- The room was now named The Studio@ the Mowlem and provided a new 80 seater arts and community space.

A short break for refreshments was taken

Bob Foster – The Focus Centre

An update on the progress of the Focus Centre was provided by Bob Foster, S&PDT:

- S&PDT had taken over the running of the youth clubs in 2016.
- The Children’s Centre – loss of Sure Start and numbers were down.
- The Day Centre services were also in decline.
- The aim of The Focus Centre was to provide an integrated site with a ‘Welcome Lounge’ and an ability to signpost residents to services.
- Central government had provided funding for family hubs via Dorset Council. The hubs provided local help for local families.
- The Welcome Lounge would help identify gaps in services that S&PDT could fill.
- At the recent open day 11 volunteers, with relevant skills, had signed up to assist with the Focus Centre project.
- The next project to be investigated would be a Community Bus service and further information would follow.
- Thanks were given to Swanage Town Council for their support.

Gavin Johns - Swanage Railway

Gavin Johns, Chairman, Swanage Railway, provided an update on the business recovery plan for Swanage Railway, which included:

- After the Covid-19 lockdowns the railway, as with other businesses and organisations, had seen costs rise and the income drop.
- Pressures on household budgets had impacted disposal income for leisure activities.
- The plan aimed to stabilise the business during Year 1 and during Years 2 and 3 the business should see an increase in profit.
- Year 1 – community focus with the hosting of special events and a greater emphasis on family friendly events.
- Enthusiast events would be continuing with the diesel gala attracting the largest attendance to date.
- Fundraising is key with £170k raised so far.
- The railway would be looking into disposal of redundant assets.
- During Year 2 and 3 the Year 1 actions would be sustained.
- Events to mark the 140th anniversary of opening Swanage Railway line.

Thanks were provided to Swanage Town Council for their continued support. A query was raised as to whether a halt would be provided at the Blue Pool. In response it was stated that Swanage Railway were exploring the feasibility of this.

Accessible Swanage

The Visitor Services and Business Development Manager provided an update on behalf of Accessible Swanage, which outlined the wide range of town improvements that the group had been involved in to help inform decisions. It was noted that the Accessible Swanage Facebook page now had over 250 members.

5. MATTERS RAISED BY LOCAL RESIDENTS

There were no matters raised.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was proposed that the next Parish Assembly would be held on Monday 17th March 2025.

In conclusion, the Chairman thanked those present for their attendance, and informative presentations and closed the meeting at 8.45 p.m.

Town Mayor's Report for Annual Parish Assembly 2024

Wow, what a year! My second as Mayor and Chairman of an amazing, hardworking council. Firstly, I must give thanks to all the councillors for their hard work, commitment and sense of humour in what has been a very busy year: As I shall remind you. Also huge thanks to the dedicated staff for their support, dedication and endless patience.

Work such as The Parking Order, Asset review, lease agreements and concessions all sound mundane, but without such plans we cannot work to our commitments. Your councillors spend hours discussing repairs, maintenance, public safety and amenities, but I am proud to lead the meetings to make these decisions and am grateful to those who come to our Chamber to contribute.

This year sees the 50th anniversary of the creation of the Swanage Town Council so I look forward to the continued efforts of this important assembly.

Martin has sent me a list of some of the work we have carried out:

- The public engagement on green seafront scheme with the excellent response
- Council agreed support for Community Sports Facility at Day's Park
- Support for CLT housing development at Washpond Lane - awaiting feedback from planners
- Continuing work on Neighbourhood Plan
- Green and Blue Flag Awards & SW Tourism - Gold
- Launch of Visit Swanage website
- Closure of southern section of Shore Rd confirmed
- Second Herston Community Field Open Day
- Mayor's Ball charity fundraising, hoping to have another one to celebrate the Golden Anniversary of the Council
- Entered into new concessions for the seafront – Carve Coffee about to open for Half Term
- The opening of the new Focus Centre through the Development Trust
- Establishing forums to work with others on Tourism, Emergency Plans, Youth Initiative and the Swanage Railway

And I have added a few of my highlights:

- Opening of the Police office - although limited hours
- Hearing Town Band playing at the Bandstand
- Antiques Roadshow
- Festivals – Folk, Fairy, Pirates, Running, Rowing, Fish and Food, Seafront Art Trail, Jazz, Blues, pop, triathlon and of course, the Carnival
- Christmas – lights, artisans, Polar Express
- The Cancare Garden, wasting good fizz on naming the new Rowing gig
- Welcoming new businesses and shops to our lively town
- So much goes on here and I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of it all.

I must also thank my deputy Mayor, Chris Moreton, who has been a stalwart in keeping me on the straight and narrow. His wise words have often prevented me from panic and re-acting impulsively. And of course my husband Les who supports me always.

Finally I want to welcome our 6 new Councillors who I hope will be as excited as I am to take the work of our Town Council through another successful year: Councillors Brookes, Coward, Dorrington, Lejeune Sutton and Vile or otherwise known as Cliff, John, Jules, Megan, Sarah and Sarah.

And to all the members of our town who make this the best place to live, as I said last year, not the biggest town but one with a huge heart.

Councillor Tina Foster, Town Mayor.