

Minutes of the Meeting of the **GENERAL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall on **WEDNESDAY 15th JULY 2015** at **4.30 p.m.**

Chairman: -

Councillor J Bishop

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor M Bonfield

Swanage Town Council

Councillor Mrs C Finch

Swanage Town Council

Councillor Mrs G Green

Swanage Town Council

Councillor Avril Harris

Swanage Town Council

Councillor Mrs A Lejeune

Swanage Town Council - from 4.45pm

Councillor Mrs G Marsh

Swanage Town Council

Councillor S Poultney

Swanage Town Council - from 4.35pm

Also present: -

Councillor M Whitwam

Swanage Town Council

Dr M Ayres

Town Clerk

Mr G Brookes

Operations Manager

Miss N Clark

Management Support Officer

Mr A Bennett

Prospect Allotment Association
(Until 4.50 p.m.)

Mrs S Powell

Prospect Allotment Association
(Until 4.50 p.m.)

There was one member of the public present at the meeting.

Public Participation Time

There were no matters raised.

1. Apologies

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from Mr M Green (James Smith Funeral Directors) and Mr A Lander (Swanage Fishermen's Association).

2. Declarations Of Interest

Members were invited to declare their interest under the Code of Conduct as defined by regulations made under section 30 (3) of the Localism Act 2011.

a) Request for dispensation from Councillor Mrs Gail Green regarding discussion of cemetery matters

Consideration was given to a request made by Councillor Mrs Green for dispensation regarding discussion of cemetery matters. The Town Clerk gave an explanation of why dispensation was being sought. Councillor Mrs Green was married to the Manager of James Smith Funeral Directors, and also worked on an 'as and when required' basis at the Funeral Directors, and had done so for the past four years. Councillor Mrs Green wished to partake in the discussion of cemetery matters and felt that the knowledge and experience gained through this work would be beneficial to the Committee's deliberations. Committee Members agreed and felt that the grant of the dispensation would

also be in the interests of Swanage residents, but that it should exclude discussions regarding the setting of cemetery fees and charges. It was therefore proposed by Councillor Bishop, seconded by Councillor Bonfield and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That dispensation be granted to Councillor Mrs Gail Green to enable her to take part in discussions regarding cemetery matters, excluding the setting of cemetery fees and charges, until May 2019.

There were no other declarations to record on this occasion.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting of the General Operations Committee held on 1st April 2015

3. Cemetery Matters – request to amend the current terms of the ‘Out of Parish’ fees – an enquiry was raised as to whether this matter had been addressed. It was confirmed that this matter was still outstanding but that the new Cemeteries Working Party would be meeting to discuss/review the Town Council’s current policy on these fees.

4. Allotment Matters

a) Matters raised by Prospect Allotment Association

i) Bee-keeping at the allotments – update requested

An update was requested regarding the possibility of bee keeping at the allotments. A local bee-keeper had previously advised the Town Council that he would be willing to undertake a trial with his own hives at the allotments if a suitable area could be provided. Concerns were raised at that time, however, allotment holders had been canvassed by Prospect Allotment Association and had been in favour of such a trial. A site meeting had been undertaken and the most suitable site for the bees would have been on Prospect Smallholding, however, the tenant had refused permission. It had therefore been agreed at the last meeting of the Committee on 1st April 2015, Minute 4 c), that Prospect Allotment Association would meet to consider an alternative location/options.

A discussion ensued and Committee Members felt that the trial should go ahead if a suitable site could be found, on the understanding that if any complaints were received then the hives would be removed immediately. It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Avril Harris and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That permission be granted for a trial period at the allotments, subject to the Prospect Allotment Association finding a suitable location to site the hives which was acceptable to the Town Council, with the condition that if any complaints were received the hives would be removed immediately.

Councillor Poultney joined the meeting at 4.35 p.m.

b) Untended Plots

Concerns were again raised regarding untended and vacant plots, it was felt that these plots were affecting other plot holders in respect of overgrown weeds, weed seeds and vermin. Comments had been received by Prospect

Allotment Association concerning the process/timescale of chasing the holders of untended plots.

A brief discussion followed regarding the Town Council's plot condition enforcement procedures and the general consensus was that these were satisfactory. It was therefore agreed that Prospect Allotment Association should continue to liaise with the Town Council regarding the chasing of holders of untended plots.

c) Prospect Allotment Association Membership

It was reported that only one quarter of allotment holders belonged to the Prospect Allotment Association. To increase membership numbers the Association had discussed the possibility of dropping the existing membership fee and automatically 'joining' existing and new plot holders, unless they elected not to become a member. The question was therefore raised as to whether a clause could be added to the Town Council's Allotment Tenancy Agreement to include details of automatic membership and an 'opt out' option.

A discussion ensued and it was noted that under the Data Protection Act the Town Council would be unable to provide the names and addresses of existing plot holders to Prospect Allotment Association. It was therefore AGREED:

That the Town Council would look into the legalities and practicalities of such an arrangement and would report back at a future meeting.

Councillor Mrs Lejeune joined the meeting at 4.45 p.m.

d) Event – Allotment vegetable/flower show on Rabling Green

It was confirmed that the show would be going ahead on Rabling Green on Sunday 23rd August 2015. Plans were going well and a marquee had now been sourced. The Chairman confirmed that the show would be advertised on the Town Council website to assist in increasing awareness of the show.

Mr A Bennett and Mrs S Powell left the meeting at 4.50 p.m.

5. Cemetery Matters

a) Matters raised by James Smith Funeral Directors

There were no matters raised.

6. Fishermen's Huts and Jetties

a) Matters raised by Swanage Fishermen's Association

There were no matters raised.

b) Proposals for removal of eastern jetty and extension of western jetty

It was reported that an outline plan of the proposed jetty extension had been drawn up but had yet to be costed. It was noted however that the matter was progressing and moving forward.

7. Grass Cutting and Verge Maintenance – potential for joint authority working

It was reported that Purbeck District Council (PDC) and Dorset County Council (DCC) had approached the Town Council regarding grass cutting contracts in the town and whether the Town Council would be prepared to take

these on. A map was provided at the meeting showing the areas of grass currently covered by the PDC contract.

The PDC contract expired in early 2016 and the question was raised as to whether the Committee thought it would be prudent to discuss this matter now. A discussion ensued and comments were made that it would make sense to have one provider for all public open spaces to ensure that standards were maintained.

Concerns were raised including existing workforce capability and, in respect of DCC's verge maintenance, the fact that it would appear that the number of 'cuts' per annum were not currently being undertaken at the contracted level, lengthman experience and suitability of existing equipment. It was confirmed by the Operations Manager that Town Council Depot staff had actually been maintaining a large proportion of the High Street verge and school entrance areas at Herston.

The Operations Manager advised that he had reviewed the PDC areas, had prepared costings and was satisfied that the Town Council had the in-house capability to take on that work. He would not, however, be comfortable considering taking over the DCC contract at this time. It was therefore proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Poultney and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That the Town Council commence discussions with Purbeck District Council only at this stage regarding possible joint working arrangements for grass cutting and verge maintenance.

8. Shore Road Public Conveniences – consideration of potential improvements

It was reported that concerns had been raised regarding the fact that there were no hand drying facilities available in the male baby changing room, and that there was no hot water supply in the disabled toilet. The Operations Manager explained that the Town Council was still in the 'handover' phase of the seafront stabilisation scheme development and that he would not be able to effect any 'material' changes at the present time. However, the Operations Manager confirmed that he would be able to install a paper towel dispenser in the male baby changing room. He further confirmed that a list of any comments, concerns or possible enhancements identified would be drawn up over the summer season and all possibilities would be looked into at the end of the season/after handover had taken place.

Further comments were made regarding signage in the town detailing where the nearest toilet facilities were, as it was felt that this was inadequate, and that additional signs could be installed at the blue shelter on the seafront/near the Mowlem. It was confirmed that the Town Council would approach the District Council to discuss this matter. The Operations Manager confirmed that signage was in place at the station and in the Town Council Car Parks but that he would review finger-post signage accordingly.

9. Swanage Green Infrastructure Strategy – opportunity to provide feedback to Purbeck District Council regarding draft report

A copy of the draft Swanage Green Infrastructure Strategy document had been circulated to Committee Members with the agenda. It was reported that the document had been prepared by Purbeck District Council as part of the Swanage Local Plan planning process and had been included on the agenda to give Committee Members the opportunity to provide feedback to the District Council.

A discussion ensued and comments were made about errors noted in the report,

and the fact that the document was so extensive and comprehensive, and more time was required to assess the information contained therein. It was therefore AGREED:

That Committee Members would review the document and submit any comments to the Town Clerk by the end of July 2015. The Town Clerk would collate all responses and, if appropriate, refer them to the next available Council or Committee Meeting.

10. Review and Monitoring

a) Capital Programme 2015/16

A copy of the Capital Programme 2015/16 Q1 Monitoring Report had been circulated with the agenda for information purposes. The Operations Manager gave a brief update on the progress of all schemes to date, details of budgets for 2015/16 and actual expenditure during Q1. An update was also given on total project expenditure to date. The following points were noted:

- **Beach Gardens** – court refurbishment had been deferred, awaiting tender report for new Astro Turf
- **Stone Quay Phase III** – a structural survey had been undertaken and the Quay would require work in future years
- **Forres Field** – the Planning Application for the new changing facilities had been lodged this week
- **Recreation Ground Phase II** – the new pathways around the War Memorial had been deferred pending a Working Party Meeting
- **Seafront Stabilisation Scheme** – final account figure to follow, estimated at £2.9m

b) One-off items of repairs and maintenance included in revenue budget 2015/16

A copy of the Extraordinary/One Off Expenditure Monitoring Report for 2015/16 was circulated with the agenda for information purposes. The Operations Manager gave a brief update of all one-off works completed so far. It was reported that actual expenditure to date had been in line with original budgeted expenditure/estimated costs.

11. Operations Manager's Report

The Operations Manager gave a brief report on the following:-

- Jazz Festival** – the event had gone well. Toilet containers had been established using new water supply points. Electricity and water had been supplied for the duration of the event, with meter readings taken prior to and after the event. A discussion followed regarding the possibility of recharging event organisers for utility usage. It was agreed that the situation be monitored over the summer and considered during budget setting for 2016/17.
- Sandpit Field** – a new water meter had been installed and systems upgraded. Confirmation had been received from Wessex Water that the new system was in compliance with Water Supply Regulations 1999.
- Forthcoming events** – Liberty Parade 25th July 2015, Swanage Carnival 26th July 2015 and RNLI week 7th – 16th August 2015.
- Plant gardens/areas** – all summer bedding had been completed however, disappointingly, as seen in previous years, gaps were appearing in some flower beds due to instances of theft, there were no plant stocks left at the Depot to replace these.

- e) **Reports of vandalism/graffiti** – encouragingly these were on the decrease. However, skateboarders had recently caused damage to the new steps and seating area behind the Shore Road kiosk and the Town Council Enforcement Officers and Beach Wardens would be undertaking additional patrols in that area. There had been reports of people climbing onto the new toilet block roof and danger warning signage had been erected. Hand dryers had been damaged at King Georges and Peveril Point toilets, and graffiti and damage had also been seen at the shelters in Shore Road and Sandpit Field.
- f) **Forres/Queen Elizabeth Playing Fields** – disposal of human excrement had been seen along the verge of Queen Elizabeth Playing Field, a camper van had been seen leaving the site but unfortunately no vehicle identification had been recorded.
- g) **Panorama Road** – a second survey report had been commissioned to test road surface slip resistance and surface asphalt foundations by core sampling. A full assessment report would follow in due course. New DCC signage, as recommended in a previous report, was due to be installed by the end of July 2015.
- h) **Town Hall gates** – it was reported that only one of the gates was working at the present time, replacement parts had been ordered for the faulty gate.
- i) **Equipment replacement** – works to install new items of play equipment and surface repairs on the recreation ground and at King Georges had been completed.
- j) **Mobile Breast Screening Unit** – the mobile unit had been installed and would be operational at North Beach Car Park, anticipated departure date 23rd October 2015.
- k) **War Memorial** – a revised specification and plans had been drawn up for the reinstatement of the walled enclosure around the War Memorial and would be submitted for consideration at a later date.

12. Items of Information and Matters for Forthcoming Agendas

- a) **Liberty Parade on Saturday 25th July 2015** – a reminder was given that the 11th Signal Regiment would be parading from Swanage Town & Herston Football Club to the seafront and then around the town on Saturday 25th July 2015. There would be an inspection at 11.00 a.m. at the old shelter site on the seafront. Town Councillors would be meeting at the station at 9.45 a.m. before proceeding to the seafront.
- b) **Consideration of a public address system for the Council Chamber** – a request was made to include this as an agenda item at a future Monthly Council Meeting.

13. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 25th November 2015 at 4.30 p.m.

The Meeting closed at 5.45 p.m.
