

Minutes of the Meeting of the **GENERAL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY 3rd APRIL 2019** at **4.30 p.m.**

Chairman: -

Councillor J Bishop

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor M Bonfield

Swanage Town Council – until 5.25 p.m.

Councillor G Green

Swanage Town Council

Councillor A Harris

Swanage Town Council

Councillor G Marsh

Swanage Town Council

Councillor S Poultney

Swanage Town Council

Also present: -

Councillor M Whitwam

Swanage Town Council

Dr M Ayres

Town Clerk

Miss C Johnston

Operations Department Administration Officer

Mr K Stokes

Operations Manager

Mr M Jones

Prospect Allotment Association
(until 4.55 p.m.)

Mrs S Powell

Prospect Allotment Association
(until 4.55 p.m.)

Mr R Marsh

Swanage Fishermen's Association
(until 4.55 p.m.)

Mr M Green

James Smith Funeral Directors
(from 5.05 p.m.)

Public Participation Time

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

1. Apologies

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from Councillors Lejeune and Finch.

2. Declarations of Interest

Members were invited to declare their interests and consider any requests for Grants of Dispensations in accordance with paragraphs 9 – 13 of the Council's Code of Conduct and regulations made under chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

There were no declarations to record on this occasion.

3. Matters Arising from Minutes of the Meeting of the General Operations Committee held on 14th November 2018

5.a) Fishermen's Huts – request for a litter bin for discarding of waste - it was reported that conversations had taken place with regard to obtaining a lockable bin.

6.a) Allotment Matters – Matters raised by the Allotment Association – the Operations Manager reported that he had recently been trying to make contact

with the Chairman of the Association and that the matter is ongoing. The Chairman agreed that the matter is to be carried forward.

4. Allotment Matters

a) Matters raised by Prospect Allotment Association

Attention was drawn to the ongoing problems caused by overgrown trees on the eastern boundary of the allotment site, overshadowing plots and reducing access. It was noted that this had been a problem for many years and that the owner of the neighbouring property had failed to action when requested by the Council. The Operations Manager agreed to look into the matter further, and the Chairman agreed that this should be carried forward to the next meeting.

The association representative reported that the foliage on the blind corner to the entrance needed cutting back again. The Operations Manager agreed to take appropriate action.

It was reported that car parking had become a problem with non-plot holders parking at the allotments, and it was requested that a “Parking for Allotment Plot Holders Only” sign be installed in the car parking area. A request was also made for the allotment noticeboard to be reinstated. The Operations Manager agreed to look into these matters.

A question was raised as to whether local government reorganisation, and the creation of Dorset Council, would impact on the implementation of the Swanage Local Plan in respect of allotment provision. It was stated that the new authority would be creating a new countywide local plan over coming years, but that this would be unlikely to contain site-specific policies for individual towns. Whilst there was a degree of uncertainty over the future of the Swanage Local Plan, it was not envisaged that significant change in planning policy was imminent.

The association representative enquired with regard to the Council’s policy in respect of offering second plots to existing plot holders who have previously received warning letters regarding the maintenance of their plots. Whilst it was acknowledged that the Town Council did not have a specific policy on this matter, it was noted that the Council would continue to take all reasonable steps to enforce the existing policy to ensure that allotment plots were properly maintained by all allotment holders.

The Chairman reported that a letter had been received from a plot holder but that this had been received after the deadline for the agenda to be issued. The letter highlighted concerns over deer and parking problems. It was agreed that the Operations Manager would liaise with the correspondent and bring any matters arising to a future meeting of the committee.

The allotment representative gave thanks to the Council for the two skips recently placed on the site.

5. Fishermen’s Huts and Jetties

a) Matters raised by Swanage Fishermen’s Association

It was reported that the fishermen were in the process of moving back into their huts and a request was made by the fishermen’s association representative for a skip. The Operations Manager agreed that a skip would be put in situ within coming days.

The representative enquired when the fishermen would be able to start using the fuel store. It was advised that details for the safe operational use of the store were awaited. Electrical remedial works were due to be completed next week and other measures were being put in place to address the concerns of the local fire safety officer.

In respect of the slipway improvement works, it was reported that they were due to be completed during the spring tides later in the month, weather permitting.

A request was made for CCTV to be positioned on the front row of sheds. It was reported that the Fishermen's Association had provided funding for a CCTV camera many years ago. It was agreed that the matter would be looked into prior to the next meeting of the committee.

Mr R Marsh, Mr M Jones and Mrs S Powell all left the meeting at 4.55 p.m.

6. Tree survey and report

The Operations Manager introduced a report on the management of the 869 trees in the Town Council's ownership. The report, which had been prepared by the County Arboricultural Officer, set out actions required, including dead wooding and crown reduction/thinning. Only seven trees were recommended to be felled. It was reported that priority works at Days Park, Prince Albert Gardens, Northbrook Cemetery and Beach Gardens had been undertaken. It was noted that the Council had agreed a budget for tree works as part of the adoption of the Estimates for the current financial year.

The importance of giving advance warning of these works to neighbours and the wider public by an appropriate method of communication (direct correspondence and/or social media), was highlighted.

7. Parade Railings – consideration of future replacements

Further to Minute No. 11 of the meeting of the General Operations Committee held on 1st August 2018, attention was again drawn to the poor condition of the Parade railings, and it was requested that steps should be taken to improve the situation prior to the holiday season. Whilst not acknowledging ownership of the railings, which had not been acknowledged by any of the three tiers of local government, it was reported that the Town Council had commissioned a safety survey.

It was further reported that improvements to the sea wall in this location were being explored as part of the proposed works to improve the town's sea defences, and therefore it would not appear sensible to spend many thousands of pounds on the replacement of railings at this point in time.

After lengthy discussion, consideration was given to the installation of information boards stating that plans for the improvements to the railings were currently under development. It was proposed by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Green, and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That once wording had been agreed with the Town Clerk, the Operations Manager should produce appropriate signage to be affixed in appropriate locations.

Mr M Green entered the meeting at 5.05 p.m.

8. Establishment of capital projects sub-committee

Further to Minute 10 of the Policy, Finance and Performance Management Committee held on 12th March 2019, consideration was given to the formation of a Governance of Capital Projects sub-committee to improve member engagement in the monitoring and delivery of capital works.

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by the Town Mayor, and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That a Governance of Capital Projects sub-committee be formed, comprised of the Town Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Chairman of the General Operations Committee.

The Town Clerk agreed to draft terms of reference prior to the next committee meeting.

9. Capital programme and extraordinary revenue expenditure progress report

The Town Clerk provided an update, including the following:

- Seafront Coastal Defence Project – the grant application to the Coastal Communities Fund had been unsuccessful, but work would be ongoing to take forward those elements identified in the capital programme. Work on the Stone Quay was pending receipt of a report on the sea defences between the Mowlem and the Pier entrance which had been commissioned by the coastal defence authority. Institute Road improvement works – the highway authority had identified a significant shortfall in the scheme budget and urgent discussions were required to ensure that the scheme could progress.
- Capital Contribution to Re-roofing of Purbeck Business Centre – awaiting decision of unitary council.
- Vehicles & Plant – the Operations Manager will be taking this capital programme forward.
- Recreation Ground – there will be a full procurement process soon.
- Panorama Road/Quarry close improvements – this will be carried over to a future meeting with regard to the adoption of a new road.
- Town Hall IT & telephone replacement – a survey would soon be instructed to start the procurement process.
- The Downs – survey work is to be undertaken to understand the scope of works required.

A question was raised regarding cliff stability around Peveril Point and it was noted that a review of signage had been undertaken. The Operations Manager would also be reviewing the Council's risk management arrangements in respect of this area.

a) Equipment purchase

Consideration was given to a briefing note circulated prior to the meeting, setting out the proposed acquisition of an Iseki ride-on-mower, a walk behind Wright Scag and a wood chipper. The efficiency benefits of acquiring this equipment were highlighted, including a significant reduction in green waste and in time required to undertake strimming. In addition to the trade-in value of the Council's existing ride-on mower, the three pieces of equipment would be supplied at a cost of £11,550.

After careful consideration, it was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Poultney, and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

TO RECOMMEND:

That the ride-on-mower, scag and wood chipper be purchased for the sum of £11,550, the sum of £1,550 in excess of the agreed capital budget to be funded from the Council's Vehicle and Plant Replacement Reserve.

b) Vehicle replacement

The Operations Manager presented a briefing note regarding setting out a proposal for vehicle replacement, as set out in the agreed capital programme. It was advised that it is proposed to replace both the current Ford ranger with a like-for-like four wheel drive vehicle and the enforcement vehicle with an electric van.

It was noted that the Operations Manager would research options within a vehicle procurement framework agreement and seek final commitment to spend at a future meeting.

Councillor Bonfield left the meeting at 5.25 p.m.

10. Health & Safety

a) Report since November 2018

It was reported that during the last quarter there had been no reported incidents at work, no reported slips and trips causing injury, nor of RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences). There were no reported incidents at the depot. The Chairman requested that at future meetings Health & Safety statistics should also be presented on a “year to date” basis.

Health and Safety Management (quarterly audit) – the outstanding quarterly health and safety management audit is due in April. The audit is undertaken by the Town Clerk and the Operations Manager. The Operations Manager advised there has been a slight delay with this due to his recent appointment and familiarisation with Swanage Town Council’s policy and protocols.

b) Future management arrangements

The Operations Manager recommended that to assist the management team in their health and safety responsibilities, an external advisor should be engaged to review the Council’s health and safety systems. It was proposed that this would be undertaken for each department on a rolling quarterly basis.

It was noted that a budget was already in place for external advice, and the committee supported the approach set out above.

11. Operations Manager’s Report

The Operations Manager gave thanks to the Town Clerk, Councillors, managers and staff for their welcome and support since his appointment. It was reported that a lot has been achieved since January with a number of training achievements from the Operations Team and preparations for the coming season.

Absence and Sickness

Absence and sickness are within agreed tolerances. One member of the Operations Team is on long term sickness and feedback is awaited from a recent Occupational Health appointment in regards to their imminent return.

Staffing Levels (Operations/Enforcement)

Following the recruitment of three General Operatives (John Mason, Stewart West and Josh Thomas) in February 2019, the operations team is now at full strength. All three staff have settled in well and have undertaken a full induction process, some external training and accreditation.

Seasonal recruitment for enforcement officers was also successful with two new officers, Rachel Williams, who started today and David Green who will join the team in June.

Continuation Safety Training

Mandatory Fire Awareness training was undertaken in March with staff from all departments in attendance. This training included a specific session designed for fire wardens. A fire evacuation procedure has been authorised for the new depot and training and mandatory fire drills have been undertaken.

Other training: specialist/technical

During a busy quarter for the operations team several competency and specialist training courses have been held at the depot.

Competency training for staff in specialist grounds maintenance equipment traditionally has followed the “Lantra” model (Lantra is an awarding body for the

land-based industry) – this provides competency training that is industry recognised but time restricted i.e. a refresher course is required after traditionally 2 to 5 years.

Ride on mower training has recently been undertaken by six operatives to a City & Guilds accreditation. This training and qualification are a lifelong qualification and allows candidates to incrementally build a resume of nationally recognised competencies and qualifications.

In addition, five operatives have completed the operational play inspectors' training course. Following the course two operatives, Lee Deamer and Tim Lambert, went on to undertake a written exam and practical assessment and are now registered professional play inspectors, a first for Swanage Town Council. This is a testament to the knowledge and skill of the operations team.

A number of operatives have undertaken driving lessons and the Operations Manager was pleased to report that Lee Deamer had recently passed his driving test.

Sea Defences – Flood Alerts

This quarter has seen a number of storms and on a number of occasions the operations team have been put on standby, although the deployment of flood defences has not been required.

Toilets and Facilities Maintenance

Toilet redecoration commenced in March and to date Peveril, Heritage, Mermond and Burlington Chine toilets have all been completed. Redecoration to all toilets has been scheduled for completion before the Easter holidays.

Works to improve the Spa beach huts has seen significant efforts in March with huts requiring new floors and panels. Works to make safe the electrics on the spa site have also been completed.

External Contracts/Works

External works have been commissioned in this quarter in regards to:

- Tree surgery (undertaking remedial works as prescribed by the county tree officer).
- Plumbing and heating (repairs to heating system at the Town Hall and complex plumbing works to toilets).
- Electrical works – (spa beach huts).

Vandalism

In this quarter there have been three small-scale acts of vandalism to beach huts, play equipment and graffiti. All damage has been rectified by the operations team.

Green Spaces/Parks

Operations in this quarter have been preparatory for the coming busy season including hedge cutting, shrub bed maintenance and cemetery works.

Grass cutting has commenced alongside further work to improve shrub beds.

The summer bedding scheme is due to commence week commencing 20th May.

Play Areas

Play inspections are undertaken on a daily basis and include a visual inspection of play equipment and a litter pick; on a weekly basis a thorough recorded inspection is undertaken. During the recent play inspection training all three of the play sites were utilised and this led to a detailed inspection of equipment and following this two basket swings at King George's were removed due to failing components. A number of parts are now on order and repairs will be undertaken prior to the Easter holidays.

Other Issues

An opportunity for external funding had arisen for signage, and £1,300 had been received for new beach hut signage.

It was noted that a new handrail would shortly be installed along the steps leading up to Santa Fe from Shore Road.

A request was made for acts of vandalism to continue to be reported on Facebook and the Operations Manager expressed his desire to regularly post about the department's work. It was agreed that an update on social media would be provided regarding the repair to the train on the recreation ground.

12. Cemetery Matters

a) Meadowland Burial Ground

The representative of James Smith Funeral Directors requested an update on progress with wildflower growing at the Meadowland Burial Ground. The Operations Manager advised that he had inspected the area and that there were lots of wildflowers ready to bloom. Measures will also be taken to try to improve the area.

b) Children's section

Further to Minute 6)a) of the meeting of the General Operations Committee held on 15th November 2017, clarification was sought as to whether the turf in the children's area would be replaced by artificial grass. It was reported that upon reflection it had been felt that it would be better not to undertake this exercise, but to seek other ways in which the area can be improved and better maintained. The committee endorsed the decision not to implement the artificial turf proposal, but asked that all known relatives should be informed of this, together with any new proposals to better maintain the area.

c) Matters raised by James Smith Funeral Directors

The representative of James Smith Funeral Directors requested an update on the cemetery extension. The Operations Manager would be working up this project as part of the capital programme scheduled for 2020/21.

d) Gravedigger's Hut

A member of the public had requested that the Town Council should preserve the gravedigger's hut as an example of a 1930's utilitarian building. It was noted that some roof repairs were required.

13. Items of Information and Matters for Forthcoming Agendas

a) A request was made for a map produced by Swanage Community Defibrillator Partnership showing the location of defibrillators in the town to be displayed on the Town Council website and Facebook page.

b) Given that this was the last committee meeting prior to the forthcoming elections, a vote of thanks was given to the Chairman of the committee. A warm welcome was given to Karl Stokes who took over the position of Operations Manager in January.

c) The Town Clerk reported on the Bandstand restoration contract award.

14. Date of Next Meeting

Date to be confirmed at the Annual Council Meeting in May 2019.

The Meeting closed at 6.00 p.m.
