

Minutes of a Meeting of the **TOURISM COMMITTEE**
held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **TUESDAY,**
16th JULY 2019 at **10.00 a.m.**

Chair: -

Councillor C Finch

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor M Bonfield

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Moreton

Swanage Town Council

Councillor J Page

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Tomes

Swanage Town Council

Councillor M Whitwam

Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives:-

Ms K Black

Durlston Country Park

Ms S Libicka

Swanage Chamber of Trade – Until 10.10 a.m.

Mr M Norris

Swanage Museum & Heritage Centre

Mr D Rawsthorn

Swanage Railway

Mr P Sykes

Swanage Railway

Also Present: -

Dr M Ayres

Town Clerk

Miss N Clark

Administration & Communications Manager

Miss H Lagden

Tourism Manager, Purbeck District Council

Mr C Milmer

Visitor Services Manager and Business

Development Officer

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

Public Participation Time

The following matter was raised:-

- Concerns regarding the suspension of the Sandbanks Ferry service for repairs and the potential impact that this may have on the local economy/businesses. Further concerns were raised regarding potential increased congestion on the A351, and the fact that roadworks were being undertaken at the same time.

Ms S Libicka raised similar concerns, and left the Meeting at 10.10 a.m.

1) Apologies

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from Councillor Foster, Mr I Brown (Swanage Coastguards), and Mr M Smith (RNLI Face to Face Manager).

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 Tourism Committee Meeting held on 13th March 2019

11 a) Sandbanks Ferry - update

It was reported that the Ferry Company had advised that it was unlikely that the Sandbanks Ferry would be back in service until at least 12th August 2019, and the concerns raised during Public Participation Time were reiterated. Further concerns were raised regarding the potential impact on emergency services, and it was also noted that Camp Bestival and Swanage Carnival were being held at the same time.

A lengthy debate ensued during which Members agreed that a proactive approach needed to be undertaken to encourage visitors to still come to the area, and that Swanage was 'open for business'.

Suggestions made included the following:

- Whether additional trains could be scheduled from Norden to Swanage.
- Whether a farmer's field could be made available as an 'overflow' car park near Norden Parking.
- Whether additional bus/coach services could be arranged.
- Whether the timings of the traffic lights in Corfe Castle could be amended to assist with traffic flow.
- Consideration of a reduced car parking fee for North Beach car park on Carnival day to promote greater use of the car park.
- That a working party should be formed to consider all options in greater detail, and that invitations to the meeting should be sent to interested parties, including Dorset Highways and the emergency services.

It was therefore proposed by Councillor Finch, seconded by Councillor Bonfield, and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That a meeting be organised with interested parties as soon as possible to discuss measures that can be taken to mitigate the impact of the suspension of the ferry service.

Members stressed that it would be important to keep members of the public informed of any action being taken, and the VSM, Tourism Manager, and Swanage Railway representative agreed to create some marketing material to promote the best ways to travel to Swanage/the area whilst the ferry was not operational, which would be widely publicised on the Town Council's Facebook page and website.

4) Matters arising from Minutes of the Beach Management Advisory Committee Meeting held on 11th June 2019

5) Litter-Free Purbeck (LFP) – request for permission to site a temporary storage facility on land adjoining Swanage Information Centre

A query was raised regarding insurance cover for the new beach hut/storage facility once it was in situ. It was explained that it was likely that LFP would be 'gifting' the hut to the Town Council, in which case it would then be covered by the Council's own insurance.

7) RNLI lifejacket lockers – to consider the installation of additional lockers at Main Beach

It was reported that the twelve RNLI lifejacket lockers had now been installed adjacent to the railings near the Stone Quay and were being used. The VSM and the RNLI Community Safety Officer would now be undertaking research to identify suitable locations for additional lifejacket lockers at Main Beach.

11) Updates from representatives/organisations - Swanage Pier

It was reported that the launch of the new radio station, Purbeck Coast FM (101.2 FM) would be held on 12th August 2019.

5) Condition of Beach between Mowlem and Victoria Avenue Jetty – consideration of options

Further to Minute No. 54 (c) of the Monthly Council Meeting held on 24th June 2019, consideration was given to the condition of Main Beach between the Mowlem and Victoria Avenue Jetty. Concerns had been raised about the stones/debris scattered along this section of beach, and that it could potentially put visitors off visiting the beach. A question was raised as to whether the beach could be ‘sifted’ to remove the debris.

During the ensuing discussion the VSM advised that he had spoken to beach users regarding this matter and that the majority of users had confirmed that the stones would not stop them from visiting, and some felt that seaweed would be more of an issue than stones when visiting a beach. Members were in agreement that it would not be appropriate to undertake any work on the beach at this time of the year, and that it would be more prudent to undertake a review at the end of the season and to consider the matter again at the next Meeting of the Advisory Committee in October 2019.

It was noted that beach levels were being monitored by the Channel Coast Observatory, and that the Environment Agency was aware of the Town Council’s concerns.

6) Swanage Market – establishment of working party to review future arrangements

Further to Minute No. 6 of the Tourism Committee Meeting held on 13th March 2019, the VSM reported that he had made a number of visits to Swanage Market to speak with market stallholders to find out whether they would be interested in continuing with a weekly market through the winter months. Stallholders had confirmed that they would be keen to keep the market going, and it was noted that, at a recent meeting of the Sustainable Swanage Steering Group, comments had been made that local residents liked to ‘buy local, in small quantities’.

During the ensuing discussion Members were in agreement that consideration should be given to options for a small winter market, and it was therefore proposed by Councillor Finch, seconded by Councillor Moreton, and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That a working party be established, consisting of Councillors Bonfield, Finch, Moreton and Page, and the VSM, to consider/explore options for the future operation of the market, and to present its findings/recommendations to a future Council Meeting.

7) Beach Huts

a) Review of Booking System

Consideration was given to a Briefing Note prepared by the VSM dated July 2019. It was reported that the one year trial of the current beach hut booking approach had been a success, with very little negative feedback received, and the Council had seen record levels of occupancy this year, with the 2019-20 income budget having already been surpassed. The VSM was therefore keen for the booking system to be continued for the foreseeable future.

The VSM had also undertaken a review of beach hut charges, which had not been increased for the last two years, and a number of small increases were now proposed. However, it was felt that the annual charge for the Shore Road lower level was rather high, and a reduction in this fee was recommended.

During the ensuing discussion Committee Members were in agreement that the booking process had been a great improvement. However, although Members were in support of the increased beach hut charges, they were reluctant to reduce the annual

charge for the lower level as it was felt that this could have an impact on summer season bookings and lead to a reduction in overall income. It was therefore felt that a further review of the upper level charges should be undertaken to encourage greater usage in the shoulder/winter months.

It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Finch, and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That the Town Council continues with the current beach hut booking approach for the foreseeable future.

It was further proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Finch, and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

TO RECOMMEND:

That proposed beach hut fees for 2020-21 are adopted, as set out in the VSM's Briefing Note dated July 2019, except for the proposed reduction in the Shore Road lower level annual charge, which is to remain at the same level.

It was further agreed that a revised proposal should be presented to the next Monthly Council Meeting.

b) Smoke-free beach huts – proposed ban on smoking outside the Shore Road beach huts and the Spa

Consideration was given to a Briefing Note prepared by the VSM dated July 2019 setting out proposals for a 'no smoking zone' on the frontage of the Shore Road beach huts. It was explained that, as the beach huts were close together, anyone smoking could have an adverse impact on a 'non-smoking' neighbour, and regular requests had been received from 'non-smoking' hirers to be moved to alternative huts. If the Town Council was agreeable to this proposal, then suitable signage/a map and proposed enforcement action would be brought back to a future meeting for further consideration. It was hoped to implement these proposals with effect from March 2020.

During the ensuing discussion Committee Members were in support of a 'no smoking area' but felt that further advice/information was required before a decision could be made, particularly in respect of current government legislation and the legalities of imposing such a ban/enforcement on Town Council property.

It was proposed by Councillor Finch, seconded by Councillor Page, and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That delegated authority be given to the VSM to obtain further advice and information, and to explore options for a 'smoke free zone' at the Shore Road beach huts, the details of which to be brought back to a future Committee Meeting for further consideration.

8) Swanage Ambassadors – recruitment of volunteers

Consideration was given to a Briefing Note prepared by the VSM dated July 2019 setting out proposals for the recruitment of a volunteer 'Swanage Ambassador' for a trial period over the summer season 2019. It was explained that the use of volunteers was a great way to promote the town out to a wider number of visitors, and could also be used to support the TIC team at busy times and during the peak summer season. If the trial was successful then it was proposed to formalise these arrangements during the winter, with a small team of Ambassadors being recruited from Easter 2020.

During the ensuing discussion Committee Members were in support of the trial, and comments made that the volunteers could also liaise with event organisers to find out more detailed information about events which could also be passed on to visitors accordingly.

The success of the use of volunteers in Dorchester was discussed, and it was noted that the National Coastal Tourism Academy's 'Dorset Ambassador' online learning was still available through <http://www.dorsetambassador.co.uk/>

It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Tomes, and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That approval be given to the trial of one 'Swanage Ambassador' for the summer season 2019 and, if successful, a formalised arrangement to be brought back to a future Committee Meeting for further consideration/approval.

9) **Events**

a) Christmas 2019 arrangements

Further to Minute Nos. 7 and 59 of the Tourism Committee Meeting held on 14th March 2018 and the Monthly Council Meeting held on 23rd July 2018 respectively, consideration was given to a Briefing Note dated July 2019 prepared by the VSM setting out proposals for the town's Christmas 2019 marketing campaign.

The VSM reported on the success of the 2018 campaign, and advised that he would be redesigning the Christmas leaflet for 2019, again working in partnership. It was noted that work was currently underway to enhance the town's Christmas lights this year, and the 'Artisans on the Beach' event had already been approved and would be held from 30th November 2019 to 2nd January 2020.

Committee Members noted the details and were in support of this year's campaign, as set out in the VSM's Briefing Note

b) VE Day 75th Anniversary celebrations – establishment of working party

It was reported that the Railway was currently considering options for events for the VE Day 75th Anniversary, which was on 8th May 2020 and was a Bank Holiday. Ideas put forward so far included a '1940's weekend', wartime posters and bunting on all stations, a 'wartime travelling picnic' on the train, and re-enactors on the railway/around the town.

During the ensuing discussion Members agreed that it would be prudent for the Town Council to work in partnership with interested parties to consider options for commemoration events in the town, and it was therefore proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Finch, and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That a working party be established, consisting of Councillors Bonfield, Finch, Moreton and Tomes, and the VSM, to arrange to meet with interested parties to explore ideas/options in greater detail and to bring its findings/recommendations back to a future Committee/Council Meeting.

10) **Tourism Reports**

a) Visitor Services Manager & Business Development Officer (VSM)

The VSM provided updates on the following matters:-

Swanage Information Centre

- Continuing to receive excellent Google reviews (138 reviews, 4.6 rating).
- Slow retail sales, Q1 down by 25%, however July was looking very strong.

- Lots of work on Google – important improvement, a whole range of locations now owned by STC (the Centre had so far identified approximately 30 sites, including the public toilets).
- The Centre’s events guide was proving very popular.

Beach

- Giant deck chair for grassed area by TIC arrived today.
- New beach safety boards would be installed on Friday.
- Deckchair concession now operating further along the beach.
- The four new Seafront Advisors had settled in well.

Beach Gardens – Putting and Tennis

- Very good year to date, particularly hot drink sales.
- Tennis diary now online and taking online payments.
- Table tennis has been moved into storage for remainder of season until a more suitable location can be identified.
- No single-use plastic being used at ‘Tea on the Green’.

Beach Huts

- Spa beach huts mostly closed, however, the top level and Spa Retreats were still open, and water and toilet facilities had been provided.
- Beach hut turnover for 2019-20 very good – despite very little promotion, income so far £108k compared to budget of £106k, and last year’s actual of £121k.
- Stalls and tables were now available in upper level beach huts.
- Five chairs were now available in all beach huts.
- The Carnival 2020 beach hut competition was now live.
- STC branded parasols were now available for hire for beach huts.
- A revised beach hut leaflet had been produced.

Boat Park

- Should exceed income budget this year, however, launch income had been lower than last year due to sea conditions.
- Parked cars had been less of a problem this year.
- Using Seafront Advisors at the boat park had led to a greater staff presence which had helped resolve any problems.

Marketing

- Beach huts and Beach Gardens advertised in Bournemouth map.
- Advertising in Gazette and Advertiser to promote Beach Gardens.
- Facebook had reached over 2,300 followers.

Other

- ‘Artisans on the Beach’ event applications would be going out next week.
- Sustainable Swanage Steering Group – visitors were increasingly looking to see destinations as sustainable.
- Managed 46 event applications so far for 2019 (on Town Council owned land).

b) Tourism Manager

The Tourism Manager gave a brief update, which included the following:

- **Norden Project** – funding had been obtained towards improvements at the site. The project was looking to promote Norden Parking as a ‘destination’ where

users could park up and use other services e.g. train, bus and/or bicycles, thereby reducing congestion on the road network. An information leaflet would be available in due course.

- **Visit Dorset Tourism Service** – it was reported that there would be no changes to the Tourism Manager’s role at the present time. It was noted that Councillor Suttle was Dorset Council’s Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Skills, and the Council would be looking to develop its tourism offer.
- **Visit-dorset.com and social media update** – the sites continued to perform well.

The Tourism Manager advised that she would circulate a full Tourism Report to Committee Members following the meeting.

11) Updates from Outside Representatives

Swanage Museum & Heritage Centre

Updates were given on the following matters:

- World War One Centenary Commemoration displays and, in partnership with the National Trust, displays highlighting the important role played by Studland and Swanage during the run up to the D-Day Landings in 1944, had been created.
- 1st September 2019 would see the 80th anniversary of the start of World War Two and a further display was planned. The Museum was also keen to be involved in the 75th Anniversary of VE Day 2020 Commemoration events planning.
- It was reported that visitor numbers and retail sales were up so far this year.
- Prince Albert Memorial Restoration Project – it was hoped that this would be completed during 2020.

Swanage Railway

A ‘mixed’ start to the season was reported, with passenger numbers slightly down so far this year. Further updates were provided as follows:

- **Flying Scotsman** – the visit had been a huge success with 98% of seats filled. It was noted that a news report on the Railway had been aired on TV on the BBC news.
- **Swanage Regatta and Carnival Week** – additional services would be running.
- **Classic Transport Rally** – 6th to 8th September 2019.
- **Autumn Steam Gala** – 11th to 13th October 2019.
- **Santa Specials 30th November to 24th December 2019** - tickets were now on sale.
- **Project Wareham** – it was hoped that the Swanage to Wareham service would recommence from May 2020 to mid-September 2020.
- **UK Rail Tours** - there would be four ‘Summer Sunday’ trains running from London Waterloo Station to Swanage this season.
- **Steam Charters** – further excursions were planned for 12th & 26th September, and a Christmas Market trip, leaving Swanage to Bath and Bristol, on 5th December 2019.

Durlston Country Park

It was reported that, due to the recent superb weather, the fields around the park were blooming. Further updates were provided as follows:

- **Durlston D5 Bus Service** – thanks were given to the Town Council for its financial assistance towards this season’s service, which would run until 21st September 2019. It was noted that a survey would be undertaken this year regarding who frequented the service, and which stops they used.

- **Durlston Pleasure Grounds Project** – the project was progressing well and the ‘Durlston Shed’ was now open four days per week for activities.
- **Proposed improvement works to the South West Coast Path around Durlston** – it was reported that parts of the path would be closed at times whilst improvement works were being undertaken. Details of the works and alternative walking routes would be publicised in due course.
- **Drinking water station** – this was being installed today which would mean that visitors to the Park could refill their water bottles for free.
- The Park had received a **Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence** for the sixth year running.
- **The Nature Nursery** – it was reported that the nursery would sadly be closing on Friday 19th July 2019. The Park would be looking at ways it could use this space in the future.

12) Items of information and matters for forthcoming agendas

- a) **Consideration of a trial of overnight parking facilities for ‘touring’ campervans/ motorhomes in North Beach car park** – a request made for this matter to be placed on the agenda of a future Transport Committee meeting.

10) Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting had been scheduled for Tuesday 19th November 2019 at 10.00 a.m.

The meeting closed at 11.50 a.m.
