

Minutes of a Meeting of the **TOURISM COMMITTEE**
held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY 24th**
JUNE 2015 at 2.15 p.m.

Chairman: -

Councillor G Suttle

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor M Bonfield

Swanage Town Council

Councillor Mrs G Green

Swanage Town Council

Councillor T Morris

Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives:-

Miss K Black

Durlston Country Park

Mr D Rawsthorn

Swanage Railway Co. Ltd. and

Also Present: -

Dr M Ayres

Town Clerk

Miss N Clark

Management Support Officer

Miss H Lagden

Purbeck District Council

Public Participation Time

There were no members of the public present.

1) **Apologies**

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from Councillors Poultney, Whitwam, Trite and Mrs Marsh, Mrs C Hooper (Tourist Information Centre Supervisor) and Mrs K Delahay (Swanage & Purbeck Hospitality 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.

There were no declarations to record on this occasion.

3) **Matters arising from Minutes of the Tourism Committee Meeting held on 2nd March 2015**

There were no matters raised.

4) **To appoint the following Sub-Committee:-**

a) **Beach Management**

It was reported that this Committee had traditionally been described as a Sub-Committee, which reported to the Tourism Committee. However, in view of the implications of the Code of Conduct for Sub-Committees, it was felt that a procedural change was required to make the Committee an Advisory Committee going forward.

It was agreed that Councillors Bonfield, Mrs Green and Mrs Marsh be appointed to the new Beach Management Advisory Committee.

b) **Review Terms of Reference and Sub-Committee Membership**

A copy of the existing Terms of Reference for the Beach Management Sub-Committee had been circulated with the agenda paperwork. It was reported that some minor amendments were required, to include the proposed new name of the

Committee, Committee membership, regularity of meetings and to make it clear that the Committee had no decision-making authority.

It was therefore proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Suttle and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

TO RECOMMEND:

That the Town Council authorise the procedural change to create the Committee as an Advisory Committee going forward, and to adopt the Terms of Reference, as amended.

5) 'Welcome to the Isle of Purbeck' signage – request for Council support

It was reported that local residents had undertaken a campaign to identify the Isle of Purbeck as a destination by the proposed placing of new signs at strategic points (Sandbanks Ferry, Wareham Causeway and Wareham By-pass), the signs would be titled 'Welcome to the Isle of Purbeck'. A discussion ensued and the general consensus was that the signs could be seen to benefit the local economy and thereby the residents of Swanage. Funding of £3,381.19 would be required for three new signs, and it was noted that the County Councillor, some neighbouring authorities and the National Trust had already confirmed their support for this initiative.

It was therefore proposed by Councillor Suttle, seconded by Councillor Mrs Green and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

TO RECOMMEND:

That, under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Town Council provides financial support towards the cost of providing new 'Welcome to the Isle of Purbeck' signage.

6) Publicising Swanage and Purbeck – next steps following decision to place the Swanage and Purbeck Holiday Guide online

Consideration was given to the decision of Purbeck District Council to discontinue the Swanage and Purbeck Holiday Guide in its present format and to re-design the guide as an inspirational digital guide from 2016.

This decision had been reached due to the reduction in advertising as businesses seek alternative ways of marketing, most having their own website and a large percentage using social media.

The new online guide would contain information about the wealth of attractions in the district, its stunning scenery, local produce and public transport.

During the ensuing discussion, Members acknowledged the increased demand for on-line information, but expressed some concern at this significant change – the traditional paper version of the Swanage Holiday Guide having been published for approximately 80 – 90 years. Concerns were also expressed that Swanage may lose its 'identity' and be lost within the Dorset wide publicity.

7) Tourism Reports

Ms H Lagden, Purbeck Tourism Officer, reported on the following matters:-

a) VisitDorset.com – advertising was being promoted through the website. It was reported that the website now had over two million visits per annum and more use was being made of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram through the site.

b) Change of policy for tourist accommodation – at present only businesses who were VisitEngland or AA approved were included. It was felt that there was a changing customer demand and this policy was being reviewed. Contact was being made with local business owners for their input and the general feeling had been

that Trip Advisor ratings were more important than star ratings to customers. It was proposed that an accommodation ‘charter’ would be introduced in future.

- c) **Website contract** – it was reported that the current website contract ended in May 2016 and Purbeck District Council, along with local authority partners Weymouth and Christchurch, would be looking at a new agreement which would see the system upgraded, and include Trip Advisor integration.
- d) **VisitEngland marketing campaign** – VisitEngland would be promoting seaside, family and ‘foodie’ breaks across the country and internationally.

Dr M Ayres, Town Clerk, reported on the following matters:-

- a) **Blue Flag and Seaside Award** – the Town Clerk was delighted to announce that once again Swanage had received the Blue Flag and Seaside Award. These awards were not just about water quality but also about the promotion of the beach, facilities on offer and quality of events held.
- b) **Events** – it was reported that the beach awareness day, that had been held as part of the first Swanage Fish Festival, had been successful with positive feedback having been received. A varied programme of events was scheduled to be held during the summer season, including Art on the Prom and a beachcomber activity contest as part of Swanage Carnival, two-minute beach cleans, a geology and fossil walk as part of the Swanage Walking Festival, and Swanage School Fun Day. The Swanage Rowing Regatta was scheduled to be held on Saturday, 27th June 2015.
- c) **Accommodation** – accommodation was looking to be fully booked for the Jazz Festival and Swanage Carnival week, and this year, the Allnatt Centre would be offering hostel-type accommodation during Swanage Carnival week at a very reasonable cost.
- d) **TIC - Beach hut bookings** were going well. More use was being made of Twitter as a promotional tool, which was proving successful.
- e) **Open day for Councillors** – a visit to the TIC would be arranged for Councillors as part of their induction training so they were aware of the services provided for residents and visitors throughout the year.
- f) **TIC building** – it was reported that the TIC building was in need of substantial repairs and would be vacated and relocated in due course. The Town Council had appointed a Working Party to explore alternative options for the future.

8) Updates from Outside Representatives

Durlston Country Park

It was reported that the Park had had a busy spring with visitors and schools, and good attendance numbers had been seen at the various events and exhibitions that had been held.

The Park now had two all-terrain Trumper electric buggies and an off-road wheelchair for hire. Sensory items had been installed in the garden for children, including a snail, braille birds, fragrant plants, a telescope and face boards. To enhance the views of the sea from the clifftop, glass panels had been inserted in the tall wall so children and those in wheelchairs could get a better view. This work had been part of the Park’s Disabled Access Project, which had been sponsored by Dorset Short Breaks. It was noted that since April the Trampers had been out circa 100 times.

Boundary work was currently taking place on the Town Council-owned land, with replacement fencing and gates, including bridle gates, being installed around the old tip site and nearby fields, the dry-stone walls were also being repaired. Over last winter there had been some scrub clearance undertaken on the old quarry field.

It was reported that the number five bus service was up and running and seemed to be attracting customers. Thanks were given to the Town Council for putting up the new bus stop/sign in Main Beach Car Park, which had assisted in letting passengers (and the bus driver) know where to catch/alight the bus.

It was noted that due to the DCC restructure currently being undertaken, with effect from mid-July 2015 Senior Ranger, Katie Black, would become Senior Ranger Purbeck. Katie's new responsibilities would include rights of way, verges and grounds that DCC were responsible for, as well as Durlston Country Park.

Swanage Railway

It was reported that passenger figures were up by 1% year to date and were in line with projections for 2015. Successful steam and diesel galas had been held in May 2015, and the next event would be Purbeck at War and Armed Forces Weekend on 27th and 28th June 2015. It was noted that 'Raise the Roof Productions' had filmed an episode of Holiday of a Lifetime for the BBC in Swanage last week and would be shown on TV during winter 2015.

Concerns were raised regarding the discontinuation of the Swanage and Purbeck Holiday Guide. It was reported that various smaller guides were now appearing and that it could be confusing for businesses when making the decision who to advertise with in the future.

Sadly the station toilets had been the subject of graffiti attacks on three consecutive nights recently. It was noted that if further vandalism occurred then the decision may be made to close the toilets as the Railway received no public funding to cover maintenance costs. Advice and guidance had been taken from Dorset Police.

9) Items of Information and Matters for Forthcoming Agendas

- a) **New seagull posters/signs** – a copy of the new poster to be displayed in the town and on the seafront had been circulated with the agenda paperwork for information purposes.
- b) **Private beach huts** – consideration to allow private beach hut owners to paint the existing brown beach huts to match the colour scheme of the new Shore Road Beach Bungalows, request made to include this as an agenda item at a future Committee Meeting.
- c) **Inflatable tenders landing on the beach- establishment of landing areas and new lifejacket lockers** – further to Minute No. 4) of the Tourism Committee Meeting held on 2nd March 2015, a request was made to include these matters as an agenda item at a future Committee Meeting.

10) Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting had been scheduled for Wednesday 4th November 2015 at 10.00 a.m.

The Meeting closed at 3.10 p.m
