

Minutes of the Meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT & GREEN SPACES COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, High Street, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY, 11<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2023** at **2.15 p.m.**

Chair: -

Councillor C Moreton

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor T Foster (Town Mayor)

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Tomes

Swanage Town Council

Councillor B Trite (from 2.40 p.m.)

Swanage Town Council

Councillor M Whitwam (from 2.17p.m.)

Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives: -

Mr D Pratten

Beach Buddies and Planet Purbeck

Mr F Roberts

Swanage Landers

Mrs S Spurling

Sustainable Swanage

Also in attendance: -

Dr M Ayres

Town Clerk

Mr C Milmer

Visitor Services and Business

Development Manager (VSBDM)

Mrs J Moulder

Business Development Support

Officer

Ms G Percival

Assets & Compliance Manager

Mr M Snowdon

Assets & Compliance Support Officer

There was one representative of the press 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 Councillor Harris, Tracey Churcher (National Trust), Brian Bleese (Dorset Wildlife Trust) and Katie Black (Durlston Country Park). Councillor Monkhouse attended the meeting remotely.

**2) Declarations of Interest**

Members were invited to declare their interests and consider any requests for Grants of Dispensations in accordance with section 9 and Appendix B of the Council's Code of Conduct.

No declarations were made on this occasion.

**3) Matters arising from the Meeting of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

There were no matters raised on this occasion.

Councillor Whitwam entered the meeting at 2.17pm

4) **Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation Action Plan 2030: Council Buildings**

Further to Minute No. 4 of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023, the Visitor Services and Business Development Manager presented a revised version of the Council's Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation Action Plan 2030: Council Buildings. It was reported that investigations have continued with the assistance of building management system engineers and Low Carbon Dorset regarding the potential utilisation of LED Lighting, Building Management Systems (BMS), Solar Panels and Heat Pumps to meet the targets as set out in the Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation Action Plan 2030.

It was noted that specialist advice had been received, indicating that due to the hours of operation and construction type, the only building suitable for a BMS would be the Town Hall and this would only provide a small benefit to efficiency. Therefore, until further information is received, BMSs have been excluded from the Action Plan.

It was further reported that Low Carbon Dorset had provided positioning and installation guidance regarding Solar Panels which indicated that solar panels would not be suitable for Swanage Information Centre, beach huts or public conveniences, although they would be feasible at the Operations Department Depot and Beach Gardens Pavilion.

The cost of installing solar panels in the two remaining viable locations, together with LED lighting to all sites, was estimated to be in the region of £100,000. Attention was drawn to the potential availability of a match-funding grant of up to £75,000 from Low Carbon Dorset, which, together with the Town Council's allocated capital budget of £50,000, could enable the LED lighting and Solar Panel works to be completed during the 2023-24 financial year.

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

**TO RECOMMEND:**

That a procurement of LED Lighting in Council Buildings and Solar Panels for Beach Gardens Pavilion and the Operations Department Depot should be undertaken, on the condition that the work is part-funded by Low Carbon Dorset and the work is implemented in the 2023-24 financial year.

An update was provided regarding the use of heat pumps. Low Carbon Dorset had advised that heat pump technology could be deployed at the Town Hall, albeit with limited efficiency given the size of the building. The cost of installing Heat Pumps in the Town Hall, Operations Depot and Swanage Information Centre was estimated to be in the region of £175,000. The Council had been advised that the existing gas boilers in these buildings had a reasonable lifespan remaining, with appropriate ongoing maintenance work. This time could be used to enable the Town Council to save towards the cost of introducing heat pumps over the next seven years in order to meet its 2030 target. It was proposed by Councillor Whitwam, seconded by Councillor Foster and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

To recommend to the Finance and Governance Committee that £25,000 be allocated to a capital reserve for each year from 2024/25 to 2030/31, in order to fund the £175,000 estimated cost of installing heat pumps, in order to facilitate the decarbonisation of the Town Council's buildings.

After a brief further discussion, during which the difficulty of meeting the Town Council's carbon neutral target for 2030 was acknowledged, it was **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

To review the Town Council's approach towards achieving carbon neutrality at the next Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting.

## 5) **Electric Vehicle Charging in Town Council Car Parks**

Further to Minute No. 7 of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023, the Visitor Services and Business Development Manager provided an update regarding preparation that had been undertaken in order to submit a grant application to Dorset Council's "Charging Ahead" scheme to fund the installation of additional electric vehicle charging points (EVCPs) in the Town Council's car parks. It was noted that the aim of the funding is to provide relatively easy access to EV charging for residents who are unable to charge their car at their own property. The installation would also be part funded by Mer, the owner of the charging machines.

A feasibility study, undertaken by the EVCP installation company JoJu, had indicated that nine machines could be installed at no cost to Swanage Town Council, thereby providing 18 charging spaces. This would include 22 kwh chargers situated in Main Beach and North Beach Car Parks and 50 kwh chargers at Mermond Place Car Park.

The proposal was welcomed by members of the committee and it was proposed by Councillor Moreton, seconded by Councillor Tomes and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

To prepare and submit a Charging Ahead grant application to Dorset Council as soon as possible, on the basis that the decision as to whether to accept any grant offer is reserved to full Council, after taking into consideration legal advice on the procurement process, the licence agreement and grant acceptance letter.

Attention was drawn to the fact that one of the grant requirements is the provision of free overnight parking for vehicles using the charging machines. It was **AGREED:**

That a review of overnight parking charges for Electric Vehicles using charging machines within Swanage Town Council Car Parks should be carried out at the next meeting of the Tourism and Local Economy Committee.

It was further reported that the feasibility study had examined the possibility of providing charging machines for electric bicycles, although these could not be funded by the Charging Ahead grant. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that to include this as part of the proposal would require the installation of covered areas at an additional cost to Swanage Town Council. Therefore, after a brief discussion, it was **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That the installation of electric bicycle charging should not be taken forward at the present time.

It was noted that there are several constraints which will be placed on Swanage Town Council if the decision is taken to accept the Charging Ahead grant and enter into a licence agreement with the charging machine owner. One of these constraints would be the charging machine owner has a 15-year exclusivity guarantee. Were the Town Council to wish to withdraw from the agreement prior to the end of the 15-year term then financial penalties would also apply. Due to the licence agreement being negotiated by Dorset Council, it was understood that these terms and conditions would have to be agreed to as part of accepting the grant.

Finally, attention was drawn to the aim of the Charging Ahead scheme to make EVCPs available to residents and it was noted that, in the future, proposals might be brought forward for other locations in the town.

## 6) **Sustainable Swanage - Update**

An update was provided on the activities of Sustainable Swanage since the last meeting of the committee.

- Planet Purbeck had provided £1,500 in funding to enable the provision of nature-based learning activities. Some of this has been used to establish free natural history courses, including a recent tree course with more to be organised in spring 2024.
- A Dorset Green Homes event had been well received with over 30 visits so far. Some of the visitors had gone on to apply changes to their own homes.
- The recent open evening about the Swan Brook had been a success, including a talk from the Environment Agency and over 50 attendees.
- Potential collaboration between the National Trust, Dorset AONB and Planet Purbeck is due to be discussed at an upcoming meeting in October 2023 to identify nature monitoring activities that the community can undertake.
- The Repair Café has secured a location to operate from and has received a lot of support and guidance from the Wimborne Repair Café.
- The newly formed Friends of the Downs group will be meeting soon to discuss topics such as seed sowing and plug planting.
- It was noted that during the Planet Purbeck festival there had been multiple short featurettes and films shown to 380 people. One feature focussed on the Downs and Swanage Town Council was thanked for securing the designation of Local Nature Reserve for this location.

The Chairman wished to record the committee's thanks to Sustainable Swanage for all their work over recent months.

## 7) **Swanage Greenspaces update**

### a) **Swanage Greenspace Strategy Proposal**

The Assets and Compliance Manager highlighted the fact that Swanage Town Council manages a diverse selection of greenspaces with different uses and varying management plans. Attention was drawn to the benefits of developing a Swanage Greenspace Strategy to provide a strategic framework for the management and development of these spaces. This would establish guiding principles for all Council greenspaces and provide greater public transparency on the Council's principles and standards in respect of greenspaces, as well as clearly defining future priorities. It may also assist in attracting external funding to further enhance the greenspaces and encourage more public utilisation. This would require public consultation.

It was proposed by Councillor Tomes, seconded by Councillor Whitwam and

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY :

That a Greenspace Strategy be prepared to provide a strategic framework for the management and development of greenspaces owned and managed by the Town Council.

It was noted that this work would be overseen by this Committee, with the final strategy being approved by the Council.

### b) **Perennial, seasonal and tree planting 2023**

Further to Minute No. 7) of the Environment Committee meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2023, the Assets and Compliance Manager provided an update with regards to the implementation of a more environmentally beneficial approach to planting.

It was reported that by increasing the number of perennial plants used, the number of summer bedding plants required was reduced from approximately 4,200 to 2,000. Feedback from the public had been positive. Members were informed that it is proposed to continue with this approach during 2024 so that, over time, as the perennials establish themselves further, the reliance on summer bedding plants will continue to be reduced.

Additional planting within the current works schedule included planting 90 metres of native hedgerow within Godlingston Cemetery and wildflower plug and seed planting across several locations. 36 trees have been purchased with additional trees sourced from the Council's tree nursery and from donations by local residents in cases where trees had outgrown their current location.

Councillor Trite entered the meeting at 2.40pm

**8) Update on Environmental Matters**

**a) Green Energy Contract**

The committee was advised that Council had agreed to enter into a Green Energy Contract to procure electricity from a 100% renewable energy supplier (see Minute No. 109(b) of the Council meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2023).

**b) Environmental Action Plan**

It was reported that a review of the Environmental Action Plan had not been included on the agenda for this meeting due to the ongoing progress of many items. A review will be carried out at the next meeting.

**9) Budget 2024–25 - One off budget proposals**

Consideration was given to a briefing note that provided details of three revenue and one capital expenditure items proposed for inclusion in the Town Council's environment budgets for the 2024-25 financial year, as follows:

One-off significant revenue expenditure items:

- Prince Albert Gardens Footpaths - £40,000 to Repair and reinstate footpath surfacing which has seen significant deterioration in a large proportion of areas.
- King Georges Playing Field - £2,600 to install a Water Refill point on the wall of the Main Beach Car Park to support users of the Car Park, playground and skatepark.
- Climate Crisis Training - £2,500 to provide training to all staff and Councillors (Action 1.5 of the Environmental Action Plan)

Capital budget:

- Reserve to decarbonise the Council's gas boilers and replace with heat pumps by 2030 as per the Climate Crisis 2019 declaration discussed above, under Minute No. 4.

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

That the one-off and capital budget expenditure items listed above be taken forward to the next meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee for consideration as part of the budget setting process for 2024/25.

**10) Waste Management**

**a) Update on Activities from Beach Buddies**

The representative of Beach Buddies provided an update on the group's recent activities. The twice weekly cleans held on Sunday mornings and Tuesday evenings continued across the summer, although the Tuesday evening sessions ceased at the end of September due to the darker evenings.

It was reported that across the last nine months, 55 beach cleans had been carried out, clearing over 800kg of debris and litter. On occasions when there was a surplus of volunteers, cleaning operations had been extended inland to include prominent areas of the town. Additionally, volunteers are deployed during some of the events hosted in the town to assist the council workforce in managing the increased amount of waste created.

**b) Update on Activities from Swanage Landers**

The representative of Swanage Landers provided an update on recent activities, which had become more reactive due to limited availability. The High Street had been a focus, especially during the spring, and Victoria Avenue verge is planned to be the next area tackled.

It was reported that four weeks ago, the A351 was attended as notification had been received that the grass was due to be cut. A second sweep was due to be conducted now the grass had been cut. The primary items found this year had been disposable vapes and aluminium cans; all cans were subsequently recycled.

The main focus of the Swanage Landers had been supporting the periodic road sweeps arranged and funded by the Town Council. It was felt that it would be prudent to conduct another sweep due to Dorset Council treating weeds in several locations four weeks ago.

The Chairman wished to record the committee's thanks to both Beach Buddies and Swanage Landers for their hard work over recent months.

**11) Items of information and matters for forthcoming agendas**

**a) St Marks Playing Field – 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023 event and next steps.**

The Assets and Compliance Manager reported that since the picnic in the park event on 1<sup>st</sup> May, the field had continued to be used informally. A recent meeting had been held between the Assets and Compliance Manager, Sustainable Swanage, and Swanage & Purbeck Development Trust about management of this space, and a meeting had been scheduled for the Sports, Leisure and Wellbeing working party on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2023 to further discuss the public feedback received and the future use of this area.

**b) Domestic food waste collections**

Councillor Foster raised the issue that many blocks of flats within Swanage do not benefit or have access to food waste collections despite being assured by Dorset Council that all households should have such access. She had volunteered to work on how best to remedy this issue and will bring forward a report to a future meeting.

**12) Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting had been scheduled for 2.15 p.m. on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

The Meeting closed at 3.05 p.m.

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