

Minutes of a Meeting of the **TOURISM AND LOCAL ECONOMY COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY 22nd MARCH 2023** at **2.15 p.m.**

Chairman: -

Councillor C Tomes

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor M Bonfield

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Finch

Swanage Town Council

Councillor T Foster

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Moreton

Swanage Town Council

Councillor M Whitwam

Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives: -

Ms L Bish

Grand Hotel (Swanage Chamber of Trade)

Mr M Norris

Swanage Museum and Heritage Centre

Mr P Sykes

Swanage Railway

Mr A Tuckey

Durlston Country Park

Also Present: -

Dr M Ayres

Town Clerk

Mrs E Evans

Democratic Services Officer

Ms T Ferrari

Dorset Police (until 3.15 p.m.)

Ms H Lagden

Visit Dorset

Mr C Milmer

Visitor Services and Business

Development Manager

Mrs G Percival

Assets and Compliance Manager

Mr C Rosenberg

Dorset Police (until 3.15 p.m.)

Public Participation Time

There were three members of the public and one member of the local press present at the meeting.

In connection with Item 9) on the agenda a request was made for material displayed on the Town Hall notice board, in particular the agendas for forthcoming meetings, to be produced in large print. It was noted that the Accessibility Report action plan contained a large number of recommendations and the Committee was asked how these could be delivered and in what timescale.

Three questions were posed to the Committee about the relationship between Swanage Railway and Dorset Council, how the success of the Wareham service would be measured, and what the arrangements were for access to the public conveniences.

In connection with Item 10) on the agenda, the proprietor of the Wipeout attraction offered to answer questions from those present regarding his proposal to operate from King George's Field this summer.

1) Apologies

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from Mr R. Marsh (Swanage Fisherman's Association) and Ms D Paige (Mowlem Theatre Trustees).

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.

Councillor Bonfield declared an interest in agenda item 15 by reason of being a user of Peveril Point boat park.

3) Matters arising from the notes of the informal Meeting of the Tourism & Local Economy Committee held on 16th November 2022

There were no matters raised.

4) Matters arising from the Minutes of the Meeting of the Beach Management Advisory Committee held on 8th February 2023

It was noted that the Minutes would be approved at the next meeting of the Beach Management Advisory Committee, and Councillor Bonfield provided a verbal update in his capacity as Chairman of the Advisory Committee, which contained the following points:

- The Visitor Services and Business Development Manager and the Chairman visited St Mary's Primary School to see their ideas for the seafront, which included activities on the beach and a dog friendly area.
- It was noted that members of the public had raised the query regarding the length of time lifeguards were utilised on Swanage beach and it was explained that there was a cost implication attached to the RNLI Lifeguard provision.

a) Shore Road shower timings

It was reported that the showers would be kept open later in the year, opening beginning of May and closing in October.

b) Water ski area and displaced boats from Studland

It was noted that this would be raised at the stakeholder meeting in the autumn.

5) Report from Purbeck Tourism Workshop held on 15th March 2023

Further to Minute No. 8 of the meeting of the Tourism & Local Economy Committee held on 16th November 2022, it was reported that an inaugural Purbeck Tourism Workshop had been held on 15th March 2023. The meeting had been well attended by representatives of neighbouring parishes, Visit Dorset, conservation bodies and visitor organisations. It had been acknowledged that there would be great benefits arising from further joint working towards a shared plan for tourism across the Purbeck area. A proposal as to next steps would be brought to the next Committee meeting in June.

6) Corporate Plan 2023-25 – To consider consultation responses

A report was provided on the feedback relating to the Town Council's priority to promote sustainable tourism and support the local economy, which had been received as part of the public consultation on the Corporate Plan 2023-25. The main subjects that had drawn comment were: pedestrianisation of the southern section of Shore Rd; the need for improved access for pedestrians along the whole length of Shore Rd; clarity over proposals for improved access from the sea; the need to ensure that the stabilisation works of the seafront land north of Victoria Avenue do not radically alter the character of the seafront; and a desire to ensure that there remains some quieter time for local residents during the shoulder months.

Thanks were given to all those who had participated in the consultation and it was noted that the comments received would be borne in mind in forthcoming discussions about relevant issues.

7) Impact of criminal activity on retail outlets and the local economy – To consider a partnership response

It was reported that a meeting had been held on 21st March 2023 with the Neighbourhood Policing Team and members of the Chamber of Trade in attendance.

It was noted that shopkeepers had experienced a large increase in shoplifting, however, the reported figures did not reflect this with two cases reported during July to September 2022, five reported October to December 2022, and five reported to date for the first part of 2023. The importance of reporting crimes was stressed as this had a direct impact on the police resources assigned to the town. It was noted that a PC should be joining the force in June 2023 and would be tackling issues in the town.

It was reported that Shopwatch would be reinstated which enabled contact between shops and incidents as they occurred in the town. Previous incidents were noted such as August Bank Holiday 2022, and in response it was stated that only by reporting incidents could more resources be deployed.

Further to discussion it was suggested that a letter be written to the Police Crime Commissioner and the local M.P. to request additional police resources for the town.

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

That a joint letter be sent from the Chamber of Trade and the Tourism & Local Economy Committee to the MP and Dorset Police calling for additional police resourcing to address concerns about the economic impact of anti-social behaviour in the town.

8) Seafront Masterplan – Progress report

Further to Minute No. 6 of the meeting of the Tourism & Local Economy Committee held on 16th November 2022, it was reported that work is currently being undertaken by Dorset Coast Forum to draft the Swanage Seafront Masterplan, which will help the Town Council and other partners to plan investment in improvements over the coming 10-15 years. More than 1,000 comments had been received from residents and visitors during the phase one public consultation last autumn, and these were being used to shape the plan. Further consultation is planned for later in the spring, and those present were encouraged to participate.

9) Accessibility Audit – Update and implementation of action plan

Further to Minute No. 136 of the Council Meeting held on 30th January 2023, consideration was given to a briefing note prepared by the VSBDM drawing attention to a range of actions that were already being taken by the Council to improve accessibility and setting out potential next steps in implementing the Swanage Accessibility Audit Action Plan. It was noted that the comprehensive nature of the plan, which included almost 100 action points, meant that it could only be implemented with the co-operation of a range of partner organisations over a number of years.

Members of the Committee expressed strong support for the plan, and it was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Bonfield and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

That Councillors Bonfield, Finch and Tomes be appointed as a working party to oversee implementation of the Swanage Accessibility Audit Action Plan.

It was **FURTHER RESOLVED:**

That a member of the Disability Reference Group be invited to attend future meetings of the Tourism & Local Economy Committee, and that the Committee should meet in future at an accessible venue.

In connection with the above, the manager of the Grand Hotel offered that building as a potential venue, and Durlston Castle was noted as another option.

10) To consider potential for a temporary tourist attraction on King George’s Playing Field, summer 2023

Consideration was given to a briefing paper, prepared by the VSBDM, which set out a proposal to introduce a new temporary tourist attraction on King George’s Playing Field, or potentially Forres Field, during July and August 2023. It was explained that this had been prompted by a specific proposal from a young local business owner, who had spoken in public participation time, to locate an inflatable ‘Wipeout’ family-friendly assault course in this location.

The proposal had been given initial consideration by the Property Panel, at a meeting on 10th February, at which a range of concerns had been raised including the potential for increased pedestrian/vehicular interaction, poor drainage of the field, sourcing an electricity supply in light of the Council’s policy not to permit generators and the aesthetic impact of a fenced-off area of the playing field.

During the debate, concern was raised at the short timescale for finalising a proposal for this summer, in light of the wider demands on council resources connected with the delivery of the Council’s approved priority list. Attention was drawn to comments recorded under Minute No. 150 (b) of the Council Meeting held on 14th March 2022 that the Council should be looking ahead and planning commercial opportunities, instead of considering them on a ‘piecemeal’ basis. Therefore, it was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Tomes and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

That no further action be taken in connection with a temporary tourist attraction on King George’s or Forres Playing Fields for the summer of 2023, but that officers be instructed to draft a policy in respect of potential commercial opportunities on Town Council property for consideration at the next meeting of the Tourism & Local Economy Committee.

Councillors wished it to be recorded that they were supportive of the entrepreneurial spirit of the young businessman who had brought forward the idea and encouraged him to bring back a proposal in the future, once the Council had a policy in place.

11) Charity Beach Huts Policy

Consideration was given to a briefing paper, prepared by the VSBDM, which outlined the current arrangements for the use of beach huts by charities and the proposed Charity Beach Hut Policy, in order to formalise arrangements.

Further to discussion it was noted that the proposed policy be considered in further detail at the next meeting of the Tourism and Local Economy Committee to enable a range of charities to be approached, including those that work with other coastal beach hut partners and an application form would be developed and brought to the November 2023 Tourism and Local Economy Committee. It was suggested that the VSBDM be given delegated authority to make arrangements for the use of Charity Beach Huts for 2023-24.

A discussion ensued around various ways in which charities could utilise the huts and further to discussion it was proposed by Councillor Tomes, seconded by Councillor Foster and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That the Charity Beach Hut policy be brought forward to the next meeting of the Tourism and Local Economy Committee.

Furthermore, it was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Foster and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That delegated authority be given to the VSBDM to make arrangements for Charity Beach Hut use for 2023-24.

12) Tourism marketing – Proposal for a Tourism website

Further to Minute No. 9 of the meeting of the Tourism & Local Economy Committee held on 16th November 2022, consideration was given to a briefing note prepared by the VSBDM regarding the options for developing a new website to promote local tourism. The paper detailed the proposal for a Visit Swanage microsite, which would utilise Visit Dorset site templates, with the flexibility to tailor the site to the needs of Swanage. An additional benefit to this format of site would be that the Council would not need to employ additional staff to ensure that the microsite is kept up to date. The majority of the work to develop content, engage businesses and design pages would be undertaken by Visit Dorset.

Furthermore, it was suggested that officers would be provided with delegated authority to work with Visit Dorset to implement the Swanage microsite, in consultation with the Marketing Working Party.

The briefing paper detailed the cost and procurement of the site as follows:

Set up costs – one-off fee at start of contract	£16,148
Budget available for tourism website 2023-24	£12,000
Funding from tourism promotions budget (this will mean that some 2023-24 promotions will be reduced)	£2,000
Total budget available	£14,000
Budget deficit	£2,148

Furthermore, it was noted that high quality images and drone footage would be required at a suggested amount of £5,000 and therefore a deficit of £7,148 currently existed. It was stated that from 2024-25, an annual fee of £8,374 would be required to pay for the microsite, which would replace the previous £8,000 annual payment to Visit Dorset up to the end of 2022-23. The contract with Visit Dorset would be aligned with their contract with Simpleview which runs until 2024 with an extension until 2026.

In terms of procurement, the total cost was noted as above the threshold for seeking three quotes. However, given that this proposal could only be delivered in partnership with Dorset Council, that Dorset Council had previously undertaken a competitive tender exercise, and that Visit Dorset is in effect a proprietary product, it was proposed that Council invoke Financial Regulations 11.1.c and 11.1.g to make clear that the contract is exempt from Council's wider procurement regulations.

Members were enthusiastic to support this method of promoting Swanage as a whole package and appreciated the time saved by Town Council staff in the production and maintenance of a tourism website.

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

That the Visit Swanage microsite be approved and that delegated authority be given to officers to implement the microsite, in consultation with the Marketing Working Party.

Furthermore, it was RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

TO RECOMMEND:

That the Town Council approves the additional budget requirement of £7,148 to be met from the Council's general fund and that Financial Regulations 11.1.c and 11.1.g be invoked to enable a contract to be entered into without three quotes being sought.

13) Events

a) Events Policy – To review process of approval and reporting of refusal of permission for use of Town Council property

Consideration was given to a briefing paper, prepared by the VSBDM, which detailed the review undertaken with regards to the refusal of permission for use of Town Council property.

It was noted that the current process for event approval had been in place since November 2022. However, it had become apparent that the process should include a more transparent approach for event refusal. Therefore, it is proposed that where events are refused under delegated authority they would be reported to this Committee. In cases where an event had occurred in previous years, but the Council could no longer support the continuation of the event, it was proposed that that decision should now be approved by this Committee. The committee noted that once provisional approval had been provided for an event by Council or via the event risk matrix, officers have delegated authority to decline or cancel an event if the terms and conditions and/or health and safety concerns are not met. Any such decision would be undertaken, where possible, in consultation with the Event Working Party. The briefing paper contained detailed information regarding the Risk Matrix and Event requests to date. Members noted the two declined events within the past six months.

Further to a brief discussion it was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Foster and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That the revised event process regarding declined events as per the briefing note be approved.

b) Events 2023

It was reported that the Antiques Roadshow would be filming from Swanage Pier on 21st June 2023, and tickets were now on sale. It was also noted that the VSBDM had been approached by the Fairy Festival organisers to request that a horse be allowed on the field to provide 'unicorn' rides.

Further to a brief discussion it was **AGREED:-**

That a horse be permitted on Sandpit Field during the Fairy Festival in order to provide 'unicorn rides.'

14) Future of local banking and ATM provision – Update

It was reported that the Post Office, in its new location in Institute Road, would have an ATM installed around Easter.

15) Peveril Point Boat Park – Update on customer improvements

Further to his declaration of interest under Item 2 above, Councillor Bonfield left the Council Chamber during consideration of this item.

Consideration was given to a briefing note prepared by the VSBDM highlighting improvements that had been made to the operation of the boat park during the 2022-23 financial year, funded from a budget allocation of £15,000 which had been agreed as part of budget setting in January 2022. Attention was drawn to the fact that a number of other planned improvements had yet to be implemented, including measures to deter weed growth on the slipway, the installation of additional taps and the implementation of a

signage review. It was proposed by Councillor Finch, seconded by the Town Mayor and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

To seek to carry forward £5,000 from the 2022-23 boat park budget to the 2023-24 financial year to cover the costs of outstanding project work.

The briefing note also requested that consideration be given to the definition of a large trailer in the context of the Council's adopted scale of fees and charges. It was **FURTHER RESOLVED:**

That the definition of a large trailer be increased by 1.5m to 6m in length.

16) Tourism Reports

a) Visitor Services & Business Development Manager

A verbal update was provided which included:

- **Staff** – it was reported that not all seasonal roles had been filled.
- **Beach Huts** – were almost fully booked for the season.

b) Tourism Manager, Visit Dorset

The Tourism Manager provided a report which included:

- **Networking Event** – event held at Kingston Maurwood which enabled businesses to connect with each other.
- **Familiarisation Trip** – Visit to Weymouth to speak with businesses regarding group travel and linking coach and cruise tours to organise trips to other local towns such as Swanage.
- **BBC** – David Attenborough presenting from the Jurassic coast.

Members thanked the Tourism Manager for her support and looked forward to working with her in the future in connection with the tourism microsite.

c) Updates from Outside Representatives

Swanage Railway – 4th April 2023 will see the commencement of the diesel service to Wareham on a 90 day trial.

Swanage Museum – Open 6 days per week, research centre open 3 days per week. The team were working on 'Entertainment in Bygone years' with more information to follow.

Durlston Country Park – The Parkrun was proving successful with around 200 runners attending on a Saturday morning. Durlston Country Park was continuing to work with the Dorset Wildlife Trust and National Trust in connection with a potential new south Purbeck Nature Reserve.

Swanage Town Council – Changing Places WC situated in North Beach carpark. The official opening would take place on 31st March at 11 a.m. The Downs Nature Reserve opening would be held on Saturday 15th April as would a skatepark consultation event.

17) Items of information and matters for forthcoming agendas

a) Year of the Coast

The information was noted.

18) Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting will be held on Wednesday 5th July 2023 at 2.15 p.m.

The Chairman thanked everyone present for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 4.15 p.m.
