

Minutes of the Meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT & GREEN SPACES COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, High Street, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY, 28th FEBRUARY 2024** at **2.15 p.m.**

Chair: -

Councillor C Moreton

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor T Foster (Town Mayor)

Swanage Town Council

Councillor A Harris

Swanage Town Council

Councillor D Monkhouse

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Tomes

Swanage Town Council

Councillor M Whitwam

Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives: -

Mr P Floyd

Planet Purbeck

Mr D Pratten

Beach Buddies

Mr F Roberts

Swanage Landers

Mrs E Teasdale

Litter Free Dorset

Also in attendance: -

Dr M Ayres

Town Clerk

Mr C Milmer

Visitor Services and Business

Development Manager (VSBDM)

Ms G Percival

Assets & Compliance Manager

Mr M Snowdon

Assets & Compliance Support Officer

There was one representative of the press and one member of the public 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 Trite and Mrs T Churcher (National Trust).

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 11th October 2023**

There were no matters raised on this occasion.

4) **Matters arising from the Meetings of the Coastal Change and Beach Management Advisory Committee, held on 1st November 2023 and 7th February 2024**

The Assets & Compliance Manager provided an update regarding the Seaweed Management Plan and confirmed that an advert had been published seeking expressions

of interest from suitably qualified contractors to work with the Council in delivering the agreed plan.

The Visitor Services and Business Development Manager reported on ongoing discussions regarding the town centre flood defence project in conjunction with Dorset Council and the Environment Agency and noted that public consultation is scheduled to take place later in 2024.

5) Environment Action Plan

The VSBDM briefly discussed the current Environmental Action Plan (Version 10) which has evolved since its commencement in 2020. As new actions are identified, the document is updated in consultation with the relevant working party.

Whilst solid progress has been made, with many actions now completed, others are currently still in progress and some would be discussed as part of the other items on the agenda. It was envisaged that there would be a more fundamental review of the Environmental Action Plan at the next meeting.

6) Picnic in the Park Event

The VSBDM discussed the event held on 1st May 2023 within Herston Community Field which was led by Sustainable Swanage. Moving forward, there is a possibility that the event will be led by the National Trust with the involvement of Swanage & Purbeck Development Trust as part of the Herston Village Hall redevelopment project.

A request had been submitted to Swanage Town Council for assistance with the funding of the event. This would be considered as part of the budget allocation for the Environmental Community Engagement Action Plan (see Minute No. 10 below).

The Chairman wished the organising committee being formed every success.

7) Swanage Central Beach Water Quality Overview

The VSBDM introduced the Swanage Central Beach Water Quality Overview, which is a document developed two years ago and has been available to the public on the Council's website since that time. It was developed primarily due to the number of queries received at the Visitor Information Centre regarding water quality incidents on the beach. The document details how Swanage Town Council are informed about water quality incidents and the steps taken in response, as well as detailing relevant statistics from recent years.

Concern was expressed that the risk warnings provided by the Environment Agency only cover the period May to September each year, despite the town having seen a growth in year-round sea swimming. The Environment Agency had been approached to ascertain if year-round data would be available. However, the Environment Agency had clarified that this was not possible as it constructs a predictive risk model using large data sets and there was not enough information available to provide accurate modelling for the off-peak season at the current time.

It was noted that although the number of incidents relating to the Ocean Bay Storm Overflow in the 2022-2023 period has remained similar to the 2021-2022 period, the duration (measured in minutes) of spills had doubled.

A request will be made to the Beach Management Advisory Committee for these matters to be added as an agenda item to be considered further at its next meeting.

8) Motion for the Ocean

The VSBDM introduced the Motion for the Ocean initiative, led by the Ocean Conservation Trust. It was noted that in order for the Town Council to adopt the Motion for the Ocean it must:

- a) Declare an urgent need for ocean recovery; and
- b) Ensure that the actions identified in the Motion are achieved.

The Committee welcomed this proposal and it was proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Moreton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That a working party be established to develop an Action Plan to support ocean recovery, to be brought before the Environment & Green Spaces Committee for consideration at its next meeting.

Councillors Foster, Tomes & Monkhouse expressed a willingness to serve on the working party.

9) Swan Brook Partnership

Ian Rees from the Dorset National Landscape team (formerly the Dorset AONB) presented a report on the ecological condition of the Swan Brook which had been produced in partnership with Sustainable Swanage, National Trust, Planet Purbeck and Litter Free Dorset.

It was reported that the report provides an initial analysis of the current condition of Swan Brook, assesses the various factors which affect the health of this river and its impact upon the water quality of the sea, as well as identifying steps that can be taken to further monitor its condition and make a positive improvement to its overall health. The formation of a partnership group was recommended to deliver on the actions identified within the report, including raising awareness through community consultation and engagement. A request was made for Swanage Town Council to support the development of the project and to help deliver the partnership programme, in particular the community consultation and engagement elements.

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

To offer formal support to the development of the Swan Brook Partnership Project.

A question was asked as to whether the project could be expanded to include the Ulwell Stream as well, and it was acknowledged that this merited further consideration.

10) Environmental Community Engagement

The VSBDM reported that until recently, the work of environmental community engagement had been undertaken by the Sustainable Swanage Project Officer who had now moved on to another role. Environmental community engagement is an objective of the Town Council's Environmental Policy and the Town Council's Corporate Plan 2023-2025 commits to supporting Sustainable Swanage until March 2025. However, Dorset Coast Forum had notified the Town Council that it is unable to continue to host the support officer role and hence consideration was given as to how best to proceed in engaging the community in the delivery of the Town Council's environmental action plan.

It was recognised how much had been achieved by Sustainable Swanage with regards to community engagement and attention was drawn to the importance of ensuring that this work is built upon. Consequently, a draft Environmental Community Engagement Plan had been drafted, the content of which was considered by the committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Monkhouse, seconded by Councillor Moreton and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Environmental Community Engagement Action Plan 2024-25 be approved and adopted.

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

To delegate to officers the procurement of external support to deliver the Action Plan, funded from the £20,000 Environmental Projects budget, with any single commitment in excess of £10,000 being presented to Council for approval.

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

To delegate oversight of the delivery of the
Environmental Community Action Plan 2024-25 to
the Environmental Action Plan Working Party.

The importance of members of the working party attending meetings to drive this
work forward was noted.

11) **Waste Management**

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

The representative of Beach Buddies provided an update on the group's
activities. In the last calendar year, 71 beach cleans had been carried out,
clearing over 1,182kg of debris and litter. This represented a slight decrease on
the amount of waste recorded in the previous calendar year. On occasions when
there was a surplus of volunteers, cleaning operations had been extended inland
to include prominent areas of the town.

It was noted that Swanage Town Council had recently appointed a new beach
cleaner and the Beach Buddies volunteers had reported that this appointment
was already having a measurable effect in reducing the debris and litter
encountered.

The general trend regarding types of litter revealed a decrease in the amount of
PPE, polystyrene and fast food packaging although there had been a noticeable
increase in the amount of cigarette butts and dog waste being encountered.

After a brief discussion regarding how best to raise awareness and tackle the
increasing issue of dog waste, it was agreed that this would be an important task
to include on the Environmental Community Engagement Action Plan.

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

The representative of Swanage Landers provided an update on recent activities,
which had been more reactive than proactive due to limited availability. Focused
projects had included:

- Attending areas identified as having a larger amount of litter and
debris.
- Assisting with road sweeping campaigns (4 completed in 2023)
- Main route verge clearance. Recently completed was the A351 from
Coombe Corner through to Norden Farm.

c) **Update on Dorset Waste Partnership (DWP) Summer schedule**

The Assets & Compliance Manager reported that she had attended a recent
meeting with DWP regarding their plans for waste collection during the summer.
This would be similar to the plan utilised in 2023, although a commitment had
also been made that collections would continue until 7pm during the peak season.

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

a) **Solar Panel & LED Lighting update**

The Assets & Compliance Manager reported that a full grant application had been
submitted to Low Carbon Dorset, although a decision on the application had not yet
been received.

13) **Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting had been scheduled for 2.15 p.m. on Wednesday
26th June 2024.

The Meeting closed at 3.20 p.m.
