

Minutes of the Meeting of the Swanage Town Council
held at The Town Hall, High Street, Swanage on
MONDAY, 15th DECEMBER 2025 at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT:-

Councillor M. Bonfield – Chairman

Councillor J. Bishop
Councillor P. Burridge
Councillor M. Coward
Councillor J. Dorrington
Councillor T. Foster
Councillor J. Lejeune
Councillor C. Moreton
Councillor G. Suttle
Councillor C. Sutton
Councillor C. Tomes
Councillor S. Vile

In addition to Members of the Council and officers, 10 members of the public and two members of the local press attended the Meeting.

Public Participation Time

The following matters were raised during Public Participation Time:-

- **Minute No. 131 (a) of the Council Meeting held on 17th November 2025** - A question was raised as to whether Council had received best value in regard to the commissioning of professional services to support the submission of planning applications for the essential and new Green Seafront scheme options.

Rev. Ian Bird offered a short prayer before the commencement of the Meeting.

The Chairman opened the Council Meeting at 7.05 p.m.

136. **Apologies**

There were no apologies to report.

137. **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.

Agenda item No. 8 - Councillor Tomes declared a disclosable non-pecuniary interest by reason of a family connection to the farmer of Herston Fields.

138. **Minutes**

(a) Proposed by Councillor Coward, seconded by Councillor Bishop and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 17th November 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed.

(b) Proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Sutton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Minutes of the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 24th November 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed.

139. **Tourism and Local Economy Committee**

- (a) Proposed by Councillor Tomes and seconded by Councillor Dorrington:-
That the Minutes of the Tourism and Local Economy Committee Meeting held on 12th November 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed.

Upon being put to the Meeting, ELEVEN Members voted IN FAVOUR of the Proposition and there was ONE ABSTENTION, whereupon the Proposition was declared CARRIED.

Consideration was given to the following recommendations contained in the Minutes:-

6) **Dorset Inclusive Blue Spaces Project Plan**

- It was proposed by Councillor Tomes, seconded by Councillor Coward and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-
That the Town Council supports the proposal and strategy of the Dorset Inclusive Blue Spaces Project Plan.

7a) **Events 2026**

- It was proposed by Councillor Tomes, seconded by Councillor Dorrington and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-
That the events for 2026 be agreed.

9) **Cultural Purbeck**

- It was proposed by Councillor Tomes, seconded by Councillor Foster and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-
That the Council expresses support and endorses the ambitions of Cultural Purbeck.

140. **Planning and Consultation Committee**

Prior to consideration of the Minutes, the Chairman of the Committee wished to thank all councillors who were appointed to the committee for their regular attendance and input at the monthly meetings.

- (a) Proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Lejeune and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-
That the Minutes of the Planning and Consultation Committee Meeting held on 1st December 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed.

141. **Statement of Cash Balance**

- (a) A Statement of Cash Balance as at 30th November 2025 was submitted for information (a copy attached at the end of these Minutes).

142. **Payment of Accounts**

In accordance with Regulations 5 and 6 of the Council's Financial Regulations, the following Payment Schedule was submitted for information:-

- Payment Schedule 8, amounting to £792,273.30.

143. **Chairman's Announcements**

The Town Mayor reported his attendance at the following events since the Council Meeting held in November:

- Dorset Coast Forum conference
- Artisans on the Beach
- Yuletide Express
- Switch on Swanage
- Dorset Council Chief Executive lunch with other representatives from local parish councils
- Chamber of Trade centenary celebrations at the Grand Hotel
- James Smith Funeral Directors Christmas networking event at Kingston Courtyard.

Further to his declaration under Minute No. 137, Councillor Tomes left the meeting prior to consideration of the following item.

144. **Herston Fields Village Green – To consider concerns regarding restricted access, advice from the Open Spaces Society, and potential membership**

Further to Minute No. 15 (a) of the Meeting of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee held on 8th October 2025, Members considered the contents of a briefing paper outlining concerns regarding restricted access to Herston Fields, together with advice received from the Open Spaces Society. It was suggested that, as a first step, the Town Council could write a letter to the landowner, the Scott Estate, in order for the concerns raised by residents to be brought to their attention.

It was proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Lejeune and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Town Council write a letter to the landowner, the Scott Estate, to draw to their attention the concerns of local residents about restricted access to Herston Fields.

Councillor Tomes rejoined the meeting.

Members noted that in order to receive further advice from the Open Spaces Society it would need to become a corporate member at a cost of £45 per annum. The benefits of the support and assistance in protecting common land, town and village greens, open spaces and public rights of way was noted. It was, therefore, proposed by Councillor Vile, seconded by Councillor Dorrington and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Town Council should become a corporate member of the Open Spaces Society at a cost of £45 per annum.

145. **Working Party and Task & Finish Groups Updates**

(a) **Aster Housing Task & Finish Group held on 21st November**

It was noted that a report of discussions at the recent Task and Finish Group would be given under the report from Dorset Councillors.

(b) **Museum Task & Finish Group held on 1st December**

Further to the meeting of the Community Services Committee, the Task & Finish Group had completed a review of several matters, including the renewal of the Heritage Centre lease, the Museum's plans for a sustainable future, and the potential relocation of a small granite globe (from the Burt family home in Beaulieu), possibly to Prince Albert Gardens. It was noted that a feasibility study regarding the possible use of the Town Hall building by the Museum would be

commissioned by the County Museum Advisor, and that the Council would not incur any costs for the study. An update would be provided to a future meeting.

(c) **Events Working Party held on 8th December**

The working party had considered the following matters:

- The organisers of the Boxing Day Swim had made a request to provide alcoholic drinks on the seafront. Members had felt this was not a suitable location, however Dorset Council had approved the use of Shore Road.
- The Jazz Festival had submitted a request to hold a New Orleans-themed event. It was noted that Members would invite the organisers to a future meeting to provide further details, after which the Council would consider whether to grant approval for the use of Council facilities.
- It was anticipated that the Purbeck Marathon would proceed in 2026.
- The VSBDM had negotiated a fee for the use of King George's Field with the organisers of Trek 26.
- A reduction in the proposed fee for the holding of commercial events from £1,000 p.a. to £750 p.a. had been recommended to the Finance and Governance Committee for consideration through the budget setting process.

146. **Reports from Council representatives on outside organisations**

There were no reports on this occasion.

147. **Report from Dorset Councillors**

The following updates were provided by Councillors Suttle and Tomes:

- Visit Dorset Designated Management Plan – It was reported that a meeting had been held on 27th November to consider the potential development of a Dorset-wide visitor management plan, focusing on sustainable tourism and opportunities to extend the visitor season. Members noted that Swanage's strong programme of events, many of which are organised and delivered by volunteers, is a testament to the town's community engagement and commitment.
- Devolution – It was reported that proposals for Wessex devolution were continuing to progress, although Swindon Council had decided not to participate in discussions. It was noted that the initial proposal had been rejected by central government, however, further work was being progressed by Dorset Council in partnership with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, Somerset Council and Wiltshire Council.
- Aster Housing – It was noted that the loss of homes in Swanage and Weymouth was of concern, with 35 homes lost over the past two years. It was agreed that Councillor Taylor, Dorset Council portfolio holder for housing, would be invited to attend a meeting with members of the Task & Finish Group and the Community Land Trust to discuss opportunities for joint working. Thanks were expressed to Councillors Suttle and Vile for their continued efforts in raising this issue.
- Streetlighting – It was reported that a meeting had been held with a local resident and that the Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Sustainability (Dorset Council) had been contacted regarding streetlighting and the brightness of lamps.

148. **Reporting of delegated matters**

(a) **To note award of contract to Ecotricity for electricity supply to Shore Place, 2025-27**

It was reported that, in order to avoid out of contract charges, the contract for the supply of electricity to Shore Place had been awarded to the Council's existing supplier, Ecotricity, under Financial Regulation 4.8. This had been authorised by the Town Clerk and Finance Manager in consultation with the Mayor and Deputy

Mayor at an estimated cost of £7,700 per annum. It was noted that a two-year contract had been agreed in order that Shore Place could be included in the next tender exercise for electricity provision across the Town Council's premises.

149. **Items of Information and Matters for Forthcoming Agendas**

There were no matters raised.

150. **Green Seafront Scheme**

(a) **To note receipt of review of engineering methodology**

Members noted the receipt of a technical note from Heidelberg Materials Contracting, commissioned following the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 4th August 2025, Minute No. 71(b) refers, that set out a review of the engineering methodology for the long-term stabilisation of the Green Seafront. The note, which addressed questions raised during public engagement regarding the use of soil nailing, had been made publicly available on the Council's website.

(b) **To approve project governance structure**

Members considered the draft project governance structure for the Green Seafront Stabilisation Scheme and concluded that it provided a clear framework for decision-making, oversight, and delivery, with defined roles for Council, the Seafront Masterplan Working Party, and officers.

It was, therefore, proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Coward and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the project governance structure for the Green Seafront Stabilisation Scheme be approved.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

That, under Standing Order No. 1 c), in the public interest, the press and public be excluded from the Meeting in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted under agenda items 15, 16 and 17 (due to legal and commercial confidentiality).

ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

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

That, under Standing Order No. 12 a) xviii), the Council Meeting be temporarily adjourned to allow councillors to reconvene in the downstairs meeting area to consider the confidential agenda items.

The Chairman invited members of the public present to participate in seasonal refreshments in the Council Chamber.

The meeting reconvened in the lower ground floor meeting room at 7.35 p.m.

151. **Property Related Legal Matters**

(a) **Beach Hire Concession – To consider outcome of tender process**

Further to Minute No. 130 (a) of the Council Meeting held on 17th November 2025, Members considered the contents of a briefing paper. It was noted that the Beach Hire Concession Task & Finish Group had reviewed the submissions and, due to each tender failing to comply fully with the tender requirements, had recommended the re-

issue of the tender, specifying the requirement for a full five-year financial plan. The Task and Finish group had also recommended that the same advertising approach as previously used should be applied, and that the tender return date be set for 16th January 2026, with a report to be presented to the Council meeting on 26th January 2026 for final consideration. It was, therefore, proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Foster and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the tender for the Beach Hire Concession be re-released as detailed in the briefing paper.

(b) **Marsh Way Boundary Wall – Update and consideration of legal advice**

Further to Minute No. 90 (b) of the Council Meeting held on 15th September 2025, consideration was given to a briefing paper which set out the actions taken to obtain quotations for professional advice regarding potential repair works to the boundary wall at Victoria Terrace / Land at Marsh Way. It was noted that three compliant submissions had been received, with Crickmay Stark Architects providing the most competitive tender.

The Council noted that, following a site inspection which had identified significant movement and potential for further deterioration, the Town Clerk had authorised urgent expenditure of £5,500 to Crickmay Stark Architects under delegated powers in accordance with Financial Regulation 4.8. This expenditure was limited to initial professional services and was approved pending consideration of legal advice and the conclusion of negotiations with the owner of the adjoining property regarding liability for the repairs and associated professional fees.

The briefing note also explained further investigations that had been undertaken to establish responsibility for the repairs to the wall. Following research into its history, counsel's opinion had been commissioned and was awaited at the time of the meeting.

Members agreed that if there was a requirement to consider this matter in detail then it could be brought to the Capital Projects Sub-Committee, in accordance with Minute No. 90 (b) of the Council Meeting held on 15th September 2025.

152. **Charitable Trust Review – Consideration of legal advice and determination of next steps**

Further to Minute No. 86 of the Council Meeting held on 24th July 2023 and Minute No. 228 of the Council Meeting held on 28th April 2025, consideration was given to a briefing paper regarding next steps in the Town Council's acquisition of the outright ownership of Sandpit Field and Weather Station Field, which are currently held by the Council in its capacity as corporate trustee of the Mowlem Land (De Moulham) Trust and the Gift of Public Pleasure Grounds Trust. It was noted that the Trusts had established a joint independent advisory committee, which had concluded that legal advice should be obtained regarding the best means by which the transfer of ownership could be achieved. Members were mindful of the need to avoid any delay in this matter. Consequently, it was proposed by Councillor Vile, seconded by Councillor Dorrington and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That specialist legal advice be instructed, at the sole expense of the Town Council, regarding the best means by which the Council can acquire the outright ownership of Sandpit Field and the Weather Station Field in order to undertake the ground stabilisation works required.

153. **Procurement**

(a) **Green Seafront Scheme – To consider awarding contract extension for ecological impact and biodiversity net gain (BNG) assessment.**

Further to Minute No. 215 (a) of the Council Meeting held on 24th March 2025, Members considered a briefing paper which set out a proposal to extend the existing contract with LC Ecological Services in relation to the Green Seafront Stabilisation Scheme. It was noted that following submission of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Dorset Council's Natural Environment Team had identified the need for additional ecological work to support the planning application, including bat activity surveys, a Landscape Ecological Management Plan and a Construction Environmental Management Plan.

Given the work already undertaken by LC Ecological Services and the low value of the extension, it was proposed by Councillor Tomes, seconded by Councillor Lejeune and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That, in accordance with Financial Regulation 11.1.e., the Council agree to extend the contract by £3,195, increasing the total contract value to £5,526.

(b) Designated Bathing Area – To award contract for installation and maintenance

Further to Minute No. 193 (b) of the Council Meeting held on 24th February 2025, consideration was given to a briefing paper which outlined the steps taken to advertise the tender for the future provision of the installation, maintenance and storage of the designated bathing area marker buoys at Swanage Main Beach, following the expiry of a one-year contract extension. It was noted that an invitation for expressions of interest had been advertised locally, resulting in one compliant submission from Swanage Sea Fishing Ltd. The Council further noted the requirement to suspend Financial Regulation 11.11 due to the absence of three quotations.

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

That Financial Regulation 11.11 be suspended in order to award a contract to Swanage Sea Fishing Ltd for three years at the sum of £6,050 per season (£18,150 for the period of the contract), to undertake the installation, maintenance and storage of designated bathing area marker buoys at Swanage Main Beach.

The Meeting closed at 7.50 p.m.