

Minutes of the Meeting of the **TOURISM AND LOCAL
ECONOMY COMMITTEE** held at The Grand Hotel,
Burlington Road, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY 15th JULY 2026**
at **2.15 p.m.**

Chairman: -

Councillor M Bonfield

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor P Burridge

Swanage Town Council

Councillor T Foster

Swanage Town Council

Councillor G Suttle

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Sutton

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Tomes

Swanage Town Council - until 4.05pm

Councillor S Vile

Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives: -

Mr B Adeney

Swanage Pier Trust

Ms L Bish

Swanage Chamber of Trade

Miss K Black

Durlston Country Park

Mr R Brown

Cultural Purbeck

Mrs L Egan

Swanage Chamber of Trade

Mrs C Finch

Swanage Pier Trust

Ms A Hinsull

Accessible Swanage

Mrs S Libicka

Swanage Chamber of Trade

Mr R Marsh

Swanage Fishermen's Association

Ms H Shutler

Accessible Swanage

Mr P Sykes

Swanage Railway

Also Present: -

Dr M Ayres

Town Clerk

Mrs S Layton-Kelly

Administration Officer

Mr C Milmer

Visitor Services and Business Development
Manager

Mrs J Moulder

Business Development Officer

Mr B Heath

Head of Operations, Weymouth Town Council

Mr W Holmes

Resort Manager, Weymouth Town Council

There were three members of the public present at the meeting.

Prior to commencement of the meeting, representatives of Weymouth Town Council gave a presentation about Weymouth's Beach Access Project. Committee members thanked the officers for their informative and insightful presentation and congratulated them on the success of the project.

The meeting opened at 2.40 p.m.

Public Participation Time

The following matters were raised:-

- The positive work being undertaken by Weymouth Town Council was acknowledged, and the Council's vision for the Beach Access Project was commended.

- The Accessible Swanage representative echoed the above views and advised that they were encouraged by the progress being made by both Weymouth Town Council and Swanage Town Council in their efforts to improve access to beaches.
- The issue of a recent social media post incorrectly stating that that asylum seekers were due to be housed in Swanage was raised. Dorset Councillor, Councillor Suttle, addressed the matter and reiterated that the Home Office was required to notify the local authority, Dorset Council, of any plans to use properties for asylum and resettlement accommodation in the area. Councillor Suttle confirmed that no such notification had been received in relation to Swanage and the surrounding parishes.

1) Apologies

Apologies for their inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillors Coward and Lejeune, Ms D Butler (Cultural Purbeck), Ms T Churcher (National Trust), Ms A King (Swanage Railway), Mr M Kean & Ms R Keen (Bournemouth & Swanage Motor Road & Ferry Company), Mr A Knill & Mr M Curtis (Heart of Swanage).

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.

Agenda Item 4) - Councillor Bonfield declared an interest under the Code of Conduct by reason of being a regular beach hut user.

3) Matters arising from the Minutes of the Meeting of the Tourism & Local Economy Committee held on 25th March 2026

There were no matters raised.

Further to his declaration under Minute No. 2), Councillor Bonfield left the room during consideration of the following item. In the absence of the Chairman, Councillor Tomes, Town Mayor, assumed the Chair.

4) Beach Huts – Proposed fees and charges for 2027-2028

Consideration was given to a briefing paper setting out the proposed beach hut fees and charges for 2027-2028. The briefing paper also outlined proposed amendments to the beach hut fee structure, and the current beach hut Terms and Conditions. The proposed amendments included the introduction of a cap on refund fees, and a revision to limit the use of heaters within beach huts to one heater per unit.

A discussion ensued, during which particular consideration was given as to whether the proposed 4% increase in beach hut fees and charges was reasonable. The proposals in the briefing paper were then considered in turn:-

- **Proposed changes to the beach hut fee structure for 2027-28, as set out in section 2. of the briefing paper.**

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

TO RECOMMEND:

That the proposed changes to the beach hut fee structure for 2027-28 be approved.

- **Proposed changes to the Terms and Conditions, as set out in section 5. of the briefing paper.**

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

TO RECOMMEND:

That the proposed changes to the Beach Hut Terms and Conditions be approved.

- **Proposed fees as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 of the briefing paper.**

It was proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Suttle and

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the proposed increase in beach hut fees and charges for 2027-2028 be referred to a forthcoming council meeting for further consideration.

The committee requested that the council should also give consideration to a 3% increase in beach hut fees and charges rather than the proposed 4%.

Councillor Bonfield re-entered the Meeting and re-assumed the Chair.

5) Updates from Task and Finish Groups

- a) **Visit Swanage** – it was reported that the Task and Finish group had been given a thorough insight into the Visit Dorset website. Members of the Group were currently gathering data and reviewing the website from a visitor's perspective, including its ease of use and the information available to tourists. The Group was also reviewing the website's 'Frequently Asked Questions' to assess how content influenced search results, particularly in light of the increasing reliance on artificial intelligence (AI) search tools. The findings would be reported back to the committee in due course.

It was noted that tourism websites were experiencing a decline in direct usage as increasing numbers of users relied on AI-powered search tools to obtain visitor information.

- b) **Regenerative Tourism** – further to Minute No. 6) of the Tourism and Local Economy (T&LE) Committee Meeting held on 25th March 2026, it was reported that the initial meeting of the Task and Finish Group had been postponed and would be rearranged for a future date.

Following changes to the membership of the T&LE Committee at the Annual Council Meeting in May 2026, it was agreed that the Task and Finish Group would need to be re-appointed. It was therefore proposed by Councillor Burrridge, seconded by Councillor Tomes and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That Councillors Bonfield, Foster, Sutton and Tomes, be appointed to the Regenerative Tourism Task and Finish Group to explore opportunities to develop a strategy for regenerative tourism.

- c) **Beach Access Vision** – further to the presentation given prior to commencement of the meeting, committee members noted the positive work being undertaken by Weymouth Town Council in developing an accessible beach. Members agreed that Swanage Town Council should build upon this approach by developing a Beach Access Vision, reflecting on the work already undertaken by Weymouth Town Council.

Following changes to the membership of the T&LE Committee at the Annual Council Meeting in May 2026, it was agreed that the Task and Finish Group would need to be re-appointed. It was therefore proposed by Councillor Tomes, seconded by Councillor Burrridge and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That Councillors Bonfield, Burrridge, Suttle, Sutton, Tomes, and Vile, be appointed to the Beach Access Vision Task and Finish Group to develop a formal Beach Access Vision.

A further point was raised regarding the beach regeneration scheme, specifically the proposal for a new groyne at The Mowlem. The Chairman confirmed that this formed part of Dorset Council's proposed beach recharge scheme and the public would be consulted in due course.

6) Heritage Attraction Group – Proposal to re-establish the group, extend membership and consider possible terms of reference

Consideration was given to the re-establishment of the Heritage Attractions Group. During discussion, it was agreed that membership should include, but not be limited to, Swanage Town Council, Swanage Museum, Swanage Pier, Swanage Railway, Durlston Country Park, the National Trust and Cultural Purbeck. It was proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Sutton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Heritage Attractions Group be re-established, with membership to include, but not to be limited to, Swanage Town Council, Swanage Museum, Swanage Pier, Swanage Railway, Durlston Country Park, the National Trust, and Cultural Purbeck.

7) Update from the Visitor Services & Business Development Manager (VSBDM)

The VSBDM provided a report on the following matters:

- Approximately 100 paper copies of the Swanage Market Questionnaire had been received to date with responses indicating a generally positive experience at the market. Further details will be reported at a future meeting.
- The Punch and Judy Show had commenced on Main Beach in May this year, rather than its usual June start, and May had proved to be a successful month for the show.
- A virement of £2,500 from the Beach Signage budget to the Swanage Information Centre Materials budget was reported, to enable the purchase of a replacement noticeboard.

8) Updates from Outside Representatives

Updates were received from outside representatives, which included reports on the following matters:

- The representative from Swanage Pier Trust reported that the Trust was preparing a bid for National Lottery funding to replace 58 piles on the Pier, together with extensive community engagement work. The target timescale for delivering the work would be over the winter of 2027/28. It was agreed that Swanage Town Council would provide a letter of support for the Round 1 application.
- The representative from Swanage Fishermen's Association raised concerns regarding swimmers coming ashore via the Stone Quay. It was noted that swimmers partaking in forthcoming endurance events would be using the Parish Slipway as an alternative.
- Representatives from the Chamber of Trade reported that membership had increased to 78 members and that 60 Christmas Light SOS 'Switch on Swanage' jars were currently in circulation throughout the town.
- The representative from Cultural Purbeck advised that its bid to become the UK Town of Culture 2028 had been unsuccessful and that no towns in Dorset had been successful this time. Work would, however, continue to deliver various projects contained within the bid.
- The Chairman read an update on behalf of Swanage Museum. The committee was advised that the Museum was continuing to progress its long-term development plans. It was noted that Swanage Town Council supported the Museum's ongoing work.

9) Items of Information and matters for forthcoming agendas

a) Purbeck Watercraft Byelaw 2025 - Update

The VSBDM advised the committee that an update on the Purbeck Watercraft Byelaw consultation was now available on Dorset Council's website.

b) Surf Life Saving School

The committee noted this as an item for a future agenda.

c) Swanage Town Council Banner Policy review

The Chairman requested that consideration be given to amendments to the Town Council's policy relating to the display of banners and that this should be included on a future agenda.

d) Charity Beach Hut Policy review

The committee noted that a review of the Charity Beach Hut Policy would be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

10) Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting had been scheduled for Wednesday 4th November 2026 at the Grand Hotel, Swanage, at 2.15 p.m.

The Chairman thanked everyone present for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 4.10 p.m.
