

Minutes of the Meeting of the **TOURISM AND LOCAL ECONOMY COMMITTEE** held at The Grand Hotel, Burlington Road, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY 25th MARCH 2026** at **2.15 p.m.**

Chairman: -

Councillor C Tomes

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor M Bonfield

Swanage Town Council

Councillor M Coward

Swanage Town Council

Councillor T Foster

Swanage Town Council

Councillor J Lejeune

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Sutton

Swanage Town Council

Councillor S Vile

Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives: -

Ms L Bish

Swanage Chamber of Trade

Mr M Curtis

Heart of Swanage

Ms L Egan

Swanage Chamber of Trade

Ms A Hinsull

Accessible Swanage

Ms A King

Swanage Railway

Ms S Libicka

Swanage Chamber of Trade

Ms H Shutler

Accessible Swanage

Mr R Sutcliffe

Mowlem Theatre

Mr P Sykes

Swanage Railway

Mr M Whitwam

Purbeck Community Rail Partnership

Also Present: -

Dr M Ayres

Town Clerk

Mrs S Layton-Kelly

Administration Officer

Mr C Milmer

Visitor Services and Business Development Manager

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

Public Participation Time

The following matters were raised:-

- A concern was raised regarding the potential impact on disabled visitors accessing the seafront following the removal of on-street parking in order to retain two-way traffic and widen the pavement as part of Dorset Council's preferred option for enhancements to Shore Road.
- A member of the public requested that consideration to be given to a change of date for the Fish and Food Festival being held in 2027.

1) Apologies

Apologies for their inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillor Dorrington, Mr M Kean (Bournemouth & Swanage Motor Road & Ferry Company), Mr R Marsh (Swanage Fishermen's Association), and Mr K Sheppard (RNLI Lifeguards).

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) Charity Beach Huts - Councillor Bonfield declared a non-pecuniary interest under the Code of Conduct by reason of being the Chair of Dementia Friendly Purbeck.

There were no other declarations on this occasion.

3) Matters arising from the Minutes of the Meeting of the Tourism & Local Economy Committee held on 9th July 2025

There were no matters raised.

4) Charity Beach Huts

Consideration was given to a briefing paper which set out the applications received for the allocation of beach huts to charities and community groups for the 2026-2027 season. The applications were considered in turn:-

- **Dorset Council Purbeck Local Office** – support to unpaid carers in the Purbeck area. It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Sutton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-
To continue to offer a beach hut to the Dorset Council Purbeck Local Office in 2026-27 with delegated authority granted to the VSBDM to enable the carers to utilise the hut as much as possible.
- **Dementia Friendly Purbeck**
Prior to consideration of the following item, Councillor Bonfield declared a non-pecuniary interest by reason of being Chair of Dementia Friendly Purbeck, and did not take part in any discussion, decision, or vote.
It was proposed by Councillor Vile, seconded by Councillor Coward and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-
To grant the VSBDM delegated authority to approve requested dates for use of a beach hut by Dementia Friendly Purbeck, subject to availability.
- **Other requests received as part of the published application process (Agenda Item 4, Appendix 1, requests 3-10).**
It was proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Lejeune and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-
To grant the VSBDM delegated authority to approve requested dates subject to availability for the following organisations: Sandford and Wareham WI, Jurassic Care, Volunteer Centre Dorset, Lewis Manning Hospice Care, Allsorted C.I.C., H&H Care Dorset, Friends of MS Purbeck, and Swanage Linking Lives.

The Committee then considered three requests from charities based outside of Purbeck.

- **The Creative Skills Hub (Gillingham, Dorset)**
It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Sutton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

To grant the VSBDM delegated authority to approve requested dates for use of a beach hut by The Creative Skills Hub subject to availability.

- **Kirsty Louise Streek Foundation (Southampton)**

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

To grant the VSBDM delegated authority to approve requested dates for use of a beach hut by Kirsty Louise Streek Foundation, subject to availability.

- **Oxfordshire Foster Care Association**

Following further discussion during which points were raised regarding the requested dates being within the peak holiday season, it was proposed by Councillor Vile, seconded by Councillor Coward and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

To grant the VSBDM delegated authority to approve requested dates subject to availability for this year, but that the policy regarding allocation of Charity Beach Huts during peak season be reviewed for the future.

The Committee then considered a recommendation to refuse the requests for use of a beach hut from the following organisations.

- **Wareham Junior Swimming Club**

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

That the application be declined due to previous applications from sports clubs being declined.

- **Swanage Folk Festival**

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

That the application be declined due to the proposed use being to support a seafront event rather than to support wellbeing, and that the Folk Festival be invited to hire a beach hut for the event weekend.

5) Events

The Committee considered a briefing paper submitted by the VSBDM, which set out the recommendations proposed by the Event Working Party at a meeting that had been held on 11th March 2026.

- **Proposed Event Field Camping Policy**

It was noted that as a general rule camping was not permitted on the events field, except in accordance with the criteria detailed within the briefing paper (Agenda Item 5) Point 1.) which are as follows:-

- Purpose – to provide security for any stalls and/or equipment left on site overnight
- All camping requests must be approved in advance by the Council
- A camping unit is defined as something fit for two persons (no caravans are permitted)

- Permission must be sought from the Council for any camping outside the event days. This will only be provided for up to one night in advance and one night after and only in cases where there remains relevant equipment on site, unless specific reasons can be demonstrated otherwise
- For larger events, one additional camping unit is permitted for the event organiser
- Camping units must be marked on the event plan
- The Council reserves the right to ask anyone to remove any camping units that do not meet these criteria

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

That the proposed criteria as set out in Point 1. of the briefing paper is added to the terms and conditions that each event user is required to sign before their event is approved.

- **Proposed Event Field Car Parking Policy**

It was noted that as a general rule parking was not permitted on the events field, except in accordance with the criteria detailed within the briefing paper (Agenda Item 5) Point 2.) which are as follows:-

- Purpose – to service stalls or equipment that would not be operatable if the vehicle was not on site. Vehicles that do not meet this need will not be permitted, unless previous permission has been received from the Council. The Council reserves the right to define if a vehicle is essential in the operation of a stall or activity
- Vehicles must be marked on the event plan
- Should be as hidden and out of sight as far as possible behind stalls
- Six parking permits for Town Council car parks are provided on request
- The Council reserves the right to ask anyone to remove any vehicles that do not meet these criteria

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

That the proposed criteria as set out in Point 2. of the briefing paper is added to the terms and conditions that each event user is required to sign before their event is approved.

- **Proposed Recreation Ground Events Policy**

It was noted that the Recreation Ground is generally regarded as a place of rest and reflection and therefore should not be used for large music events or events that are considered to be detrimental to the general ambience. However, it was recognised that the bandstand, which was used for small-scale live music events, was considered to enhance the area. It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Coward and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the proposed Recreation Ground Events Policy that the Recreational Ground is not to be used for large scale music events or events that are considered to be detrimental to the general ambience, as set out in Point 3. of the briefing paper, be agreed.

- **Proposed event approvals for June 2027**

The Committee considered the proposed event schedule for June 2027 as detailed in the briefing paper provided by the VSBDM (Item 5) Point 4). A discussion followed regarding the clash of dates between the Fish and Food Festival and the Alzheimer's Trek. However, the VSBDM explained that the Alzheimer's Trek was a national event booked years in advance and could not be moved. It was also noted that moving the date of the Fish Festival may clash with other festival dates throughout Dorset. It was proposed by Councillor Coward, seconded by Councillor Lejeune and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

To provide provisional approval to the events for June 2027, as set out in Point 4. of the briefing paper.

- **Event requests received – Four-day family funfair**

The Committee considered a request for a 'Four Day Family Funfair' to be held on either King George's Field, Sandpit Field or Day's Park during April or May. The Events Working Party recommended that this event was declined as there was a high risk that the proposed fields would be unsuitable for events during this period due to weather conditions. It was also felt that there was insufficient time for officers to ensure all associated requirements and documentation would be in place. It was proposed by Councillor Vile, seconded by Councillor Lejeune and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

To approve the proposal to decline the 'Four Day Family Funfair' event as set out in Point 5. of the briefing paper.

It was further noted by the VSBDM, that all other requests received over the recent period had been approved under delegated authority, in accordance with the Council's policy regarding small or low impact events.

6) **Regenerative Tourism Strategy**

The VSBDM drew the Committee's attention to a proposal to establish a Task and Finish group to consider Regenerative Tourism and to feed back to the next meeting of the Tourism and Local Economy Committee. It was proposed by Councillor Tomes, seconded by Councillor Sutton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

To set up a Task and Finish group to consider a Regenerative Tourism strategy.

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

That Councillors Tomes, Foster, and Bonfield form the Task and Finish group to explore ways to develop a strategy regarding regenerative tourism.

7) **Swanage Beach Accessibility – Developing a vision for the future**

The VSBDM reported that in January he had responded to a grant opportunity published by Dorset Coast Forum for funding to improve beach access infrastructure. Included in the bid were the following:-

- i. Additional beach access mats
- ii. Changing places toilets
- iii. Storage sheds and beach wheelchairs

The VSBDM encouraged participation from committee members to establish a clear vision of what an accessible beach would look like in Swanage and proposed that a Task and Finish group be formed to develop this vision and report back to the next Tourism and Local Economy Committee meeting. It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Vile and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That a Task and Finish group be established to set out a vision for an accessible beach in Swanage.

8) UK Town of Culture bid 2028 -Update

The Chairman gave a brief update regarding Swanage's proposed bid to become the first UK Town of Culture 2028 (small town category). It was noted that, further to minute No. 207 of the Council Meeting held on 23rd March 2026, the Town Council had agreed to support the bid, which was being led by Cultural Purbeck, and which centred around the theme of 'Stone to Sea'. The bid had also gained support from other local parish councils.

9) Update from Task and Finish Groups

a) Pedestrian Signage – the VSBDM reported that many of the smaller signs had been improved and were now Swanage Blue. The Station Approach signage was scheduled for completion by the end of April, whilst signage at the Mowlem would not be completed until October.

b) Visit Swanage Website – it was noted that the Task and Finish Group was due to hold its first meeting in the coming weeks and would report back to a future meeting of the Committee.

10) Visitor Statistics for 2022-2024

The VSBDM drew the Committee's attention to revised visitor statistics for Swanage 2022 to 2024 sent out in a briefing note that had been circulated with the agenda papers. It was reported that the adjusted figures now incorporated a more comprehensive local dataset, including Swanage car park data, a broader range of local attractions, and the full annual events programme. The new datasets would form the baseline for future years.

11) Update from the Visitor Services & Business Development Manager

The committee received an update from the VSBDM.

- The Swanage Information Centre was currently recruiting for a permanent member of staff.
- A marketing initiative was currently underway, including the introduction of an events leaflet for Swanage. A total of 20,000 leaflets had been distributed throughout the South of England, while a further 5,000 had been produced for local distribution in the town and at the Information Centre. A town guide had also been produced, with 5,000 copies distributed across Dorset, and a town map would be revised in early summer.
- Bandstand leaflets were circulated to attendees, and it was noted that 5,000 copies had been produced. These would include an insert detailing the performances scheduled at the bandstand for the year.
- A reminder was given that the Beach Gardens Sports Park would be holding an open day on Saturday 28th March, with free putting available, everyone welcome.

12) Updates from Outside Representatives

Outside representatives provided the following updates:-

- **Bournemouth & Swanage Motor Road & Ferry Company** – the Chairman read out a statement and update provided by the Chairman of the Bournemouth & Swanage Motor Road & Ferry Company. This included reference to a recent media statement addressing redundancies associated with the Sandbanks Ferry.
- **Mowlem Theatre** – various fund-raising projects were ongoing.

- **Swanage Railway** – it was reported that the Railway had achieved its most profitable year in several years.
- **Accessible Swanage** – an update was provided on projects to make Swanage a more accessible destination. It was noted that, every couple of months, the group intend to invite speakers to engage with the community and provide a platform for community input.
- **Swanage Chamber of Trade** – it was noted that membership had continued to grow and now stood at approximately 50. The Chairman of the Tourism and Local Economy Committee was invited to attend the next meeting of the Chamber of Trade, scheduled for 14th April 2026, at which he would be presented with a cheque for the sum of £600.00 as a contribution towards the Christmas lights. Representatives also expressed an interest in being involved in the next procurement exercise for the Christmas Lights. A further invitation was extended to the VSBDM in order to discuss upcoming plans and events. Concerns were raised regarding the decline in the number of Bed & Breakfast establishments in the town. It was noted by the Chamber that there was a general aspiration to promote Swanage as an all-year-round destination, with particular emphasis on hosting events in the shoulder months of the year.
- **Purbeck Community Rail Partnership** – the Committee received a brief report from Mr Mike Whitwam. The Chairman expressed his thanks to Mr Whitwam for his contribution during his tenure on the Committee.

13) Provisional date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting had been provisionally scheduled for Wednesday 8th July 2026 at 2.15 p.m. at the Grand Hotel, Swanage.

The Chairman thanked everyone present for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 3.45 p.m.
