

Minutes of the Meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT & GREEN SPACES COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, High Street, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY, 25TH JUNE 2025** at **2.15 p.m.**

Chairman: -

Councillor C Sutton

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor M Bonfield

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Tomes

Swanage Town Council

Councillor J Dorrington

Swanage Town Council

Councillor S Vile

Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives: -

Ms B Cooke

National Trust

Mr L Luke

Planet Purbeck

Mrs J Owens

Sustainable Swanage

Mr F Roberts

Swanage Landers

Also in attendance: -

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 member of the public present at the meeting.

Public Participation Time

There were no matters raised.

1) Apologies

Apologies for his inability to attend the meeting were received from Mr D Pratten (Beach Buddies).

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 12th February 2025

No matters were raised on this occasion.

4) Matters arising from the Meeting of the Coastal Change and Beach Management Advisory Committee held on 4th June 2025

No matters were raised on this occasion.

5) Motion for the Ocean Action Plan - Update

Further to Minute No. 5 of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting held on 12th February 2025, the VSBDM provided a brief summary of the ‘Motion for the Ocean Declaration’, approved at the Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting held on 26th June 2024, and presented the ‘Motion for the Ocean Action Plan’ which had been developed by the Environmental Policy and Action Plan working party over the last 12 months. Item 4 of the Action Plan, outlining a proposed bio-audit to be completed in August 2025, was highlighted as an important step to engage with the community and obtain vital information on the biodiversity of Swanage bay. After a brief discussion, it was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Bonfield and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the ‘Motion for the Ocean’ Action Plan be adopted, with progress reports to be made to forthcoming meetings of this Committee.

6) Energy Footprint 2024 - Report

The VSBDM presented the Energy Footprint Report for 2024, which also contained a comparison with data from 2022 and 2023. The report detailed energy use, water use, and waste generated by the Town Council over a 12-month period.

It was noted the data indicated that there had been a 5 per cent increase in carbon emissions compared to the 2022 figures. The 2024 results indicated this was in part the result of an increase in diesel usage due to the acquisition of a single tractor during 2023. The tractor delivered a range of efficiencies, but it was also noted that the longer growing season that was becoming more common now, had resulted in an increased level of work for the grounds team over the year.

Additional information was provided regarding the energy generated from PV solar panels installed at Beach Gardens and the depot in 2024. Due to the dates when installation was completed, it was not possible to present complete data, although it was noted that this will be integrated into the analysis for the 2025 Energy Footprint report.

Looking towards the next 12 months, it was anticipated that a reduction in energy usage will be seen as more of the actions contained within the Environmental Action Plan are implemented and the full effect of the energy generated by the PV Solar panels is able to be seen across a full 12-month period.

The Assets & Compliance Manager reported that Wessex Water had sent third party contractors in February 2025 to inspect Council buildings and provide reports aimed at improving water efficiency, which are currently awaited.

Other steps that could be taken to reduce energy consumption were discussed together with the informal report produced in January 2025 by Purbeck Energy Group. After a brief discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Tomes, seconded by Councillor Vile and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That officers should approach specialist consultants to deliver a formal energy audit in order to assess the feasibility of potential energy saving measures within the Town Hall, with options being presented to this committee in advance of the budget setting process for the next financial year.

7) Review of the Carbon Neutral target for 2030 - Update

Further to Minute No. 4 of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting held on 12th February 2025, the VSBDM detailed the Carbon Neutral target and the actions to deliver this included within the Environment Action Plan. It was explained that there appears to be a general trend to move away from strict Carbon Neutral targets

to focus more on de-carbonisation by taking steps such as reducing gas consumption and sourcing electricity from 100% renewable energy suppliers.

Discussion was held over whether the Carbon Neutral target for 2030 is still realistic and achievable. It was noted that there are still goals that can be achieved and although the level of progress desired at this time had not been fully realised, as technology continues to rapidly advance and new approaches are designed, it was felt that the target remains a potentially realistic goal. It was noted that the 2030 carbon neutral target was set in 2019, and therefore the current year marked halfway through this period. Thus a mid-point energy audit, to accurately detail the current progress and look at any other steps which could be taken would be beneficial.

After a brief discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Tomes, seconded by Councillor Vile and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the current Carbon Neutral target for 2030 should be kept in place and that further advice should be taken from Dorset Council officers and specialists regarding energy usage and the approach to recording relevant data in order to ensure that best practice is followed and more usable data is made available.

It was FURTHER RESOLVED:

That progress towards the Carbon Neutral target should be reviewed in six months' time.

After a further brief discussion, looking at when a formal public update could be prepared and released, it was noted that more time was required to fully understand the impact of the steps already taken, including the installation of the PV Solar panels. It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by the Chairman and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That an updated energy audit be commissioned to take place in early 2026 with the results being presented to this committee in June 2026.

8) Sustainable Swanage - Update

The representative of Sustainable Swanage provided an update on recent and forthcoming activities. Since the last meeting of this committee, Sustainable Swanage had organised three public meetings to share information on environmental matters with the community, set out future plans, cultivate public interest and develop a pool of volunteers. These meetings had included:

- March focused on Youth Voice which looked at the desire of younger people to be more included in environmental matters and the potential for reinstatement of the Saturday morning Forest Schools. The meeting generated interest in the National Trust Environmental Leadership courses.
- April saw Growing Greener Swanage meet with presentations delivered on Peveril Point & The Downs Local Nature Reserve, ongoing wildflower and butterfly surveys to monitor changes to biodiversity and the potential for developing a local tree warden scheme.
- June focused on Rethinking Rubbish, looking at establishing recycling groups which could collect items not currently collected or processed by Dorset Council.

In addition to these public meetings, the Repair and Re-use café had launched at Herston Village Hall in April 2025 with attendance that far exceeded the expected turn out. This will continue to meet monthly to provide this service.

Members were encouraged to attend a forthcoming public meeting on the topic of the Motion for the Ocean to be held on 15th July 2025 within the Mowlem community room.

9) Swanage Streams Partnership Flood Management Project – Proposed diversion of Public Footpath SE3/2

The Rivers & Coast Project Officer for the National Trust provided a brief presentation on the Swanage Streams Partnership and the Flood Management project which is being funded and supported by the Environment Agency and DEFRA. One aspect of this is improvements to the land at Godlingston Manor Farm, which would involve the implementation of measures at specific locations to slow the flow of water with an aim to mitigate the changing weather patterns being experienced such as increased storm events. Part of the Godlingston Manor Farm works would require a minor diversion to an existing public footpath from the western side of a tributary to the eastern side of the tributary.

A formal application had been submitted to Dorset Council and, subject to any unforeseen delays, a public consultation would take place in the first half of 2026. After a brief discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by the Chairman and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

To provide support to the application submitted to
Dorset Council for the proposed footpath diversion
at Godlingston Manor Farm.

10) Environment Action Plan - Report

Further to Minute No. 8) of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting held on 12th February 2025, Members noted the contents of the updated version of the Environment Action Plan and considered the formation of a working party to review it in detail and update the document, where appropriate, with key actions, prioritised appropriately, and any newly identified actions required. After a brief discussion, it was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by the Councillor Bonfield and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

To form a task & finish group to review and update
the Environment Action Plan, comprised of
Councillors Sutton, Tomes, Vile, Bonfield,
Dorrington and Brookes.

11) Swanage Greenspaces Strategy – Presentation of Strategy and Action Plan

The Assets & Compliance Manager provided an overview of the draft Swanage Greenspace Strategy 2025 which aims to set out the vision for the current and future management and development of the diverse range of greenspaces that are owned and managed by the Council. The current document details information on the overall strategic management approach, site specific management plans and includes useful information for visitors including accessibility details. In addition, it contains the Greenspace Action Plan which was informed by the public greenspace survey undertaken in early 2025. It was noted that this was an iterative document and will be enhanced over time as additional management plans are developed.

After a brief discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Vile, seconded by the Chairman and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

To adopt the Swanage Greenspace Strategy 2025,
together with the Greenspace Action Plan, including
the timetable for 2025/26.

12) Community engagement in Greenspaces – Update from Planet Purbeck

a) King George's Field user engagement

Further to Minute No. 10 a) of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting held on 12th February 2025, the VSBDM reported that a number of projects had been assigned to Planet Purbeck over the previous six months, including the Swanage Streams Partnership, supporting Sustainable Swanage and the greenspaces engagement for King George's Field and Herston Community Field. Due to Planet Purbeck having a finite amount of time and resources, it had become necessary to review and re-prioritise the projects. The result of this review had been a request to defer the community engagement in respect of King George's Field for 12 months which would also reduce the forecasted expenditure from the Environmental Engagement Plan 2025/26 budget.

After a brief discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Tomes, seconded by the Chairman and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

To defer the King George's Field Stakeholder Engagement until 2026.

It was FURTHER RESOLVED:

That a request be made to the Finance & Governance Committee that the funding in place for the King George's Field Stakeholder Engagement (within the Environmental Engagement Plan 2025/26 budget) be carried forward to the 2026/27 financial year subject to budget analysis and approval.

b) Herston Community Field proposal

The representative from Planet Purbeck reported that they had operated a stand at the recent Herston Community Fun day held in May 2025 within this greenspace to engage with the public, answer questions and to obtain verbal feedback and survey submissions on what would be beneficial to enhance the space for the public and for wildlife. Lots of valuable feedback had been received. This work will be continued with additional planned public engagements in the local area with the results being collated and brought to a forthcoming meeting of this committee.

13) Waste Management

a) Update on activities from Beach Buddies

An update was provided by the Chairman on behalf of Beach Buddies which reported that in 2025, there had been a total of 23 beach cleans carried out so far leading to the removal of 503kg of litter and debris, the majority of this having been collected from North Beach. This has been made possible by a pool of volunteers with an average of 18 attending each beach clean. It was also reported that the main beach was noticeably cleaner than previously recorded with thanks offered to the Council beach operatives for their work in achieving this. It was noted that the possibility of Beach Buddies volunteers cleaning other areas of the town was currently under consideration.

b) Update on activities from Swanage Landers

The representative of Swanage Landers provided an update on their activities which included the aforementioned conversation with Beach Buddies and the potential for their volunteers to assist in cleaning other areas of the town in addition to the beach. It was noted that in 2026, Litter Free Purbeck through Swanage Landers and Beach Buddies will have been working with volunteers for 10 years to collect litter.

In addition to this, with the assistance of the Council Operations Department, the second Mechanical Road Sweep this year has been booked to be carried out in July. It was noted that Dorset Council no longer employed a street sweeper in Swanage and that it had indicated that it would increase the number of road sweeps in Swanage to compensate for this. It was suggested that officers should request an update from Dorset Council at the end of 2025 to ascertain what services had been carried out during the year, and for the response to be reported to a future committee meeting. The Assets & Compliance Manager reported that Dorset Council had implemented a good level of waste collections for the summer season, operating seven days a week and continuing up until 6-7pm every evening.

14) Environmental Engagement Budget - update

The VSBDM reported that the Environmental Engagement budget approved for 2025/26 totalled £20,000, which included supporting the Swanage Streams Partnership, the Marine bio-audit for the Motion for the Ocean action plan and both the Herston Field and King George's field Stakeholder engagement projects.

Further to Minute No. 12)a) above, it was noted that the King George's Field Stakeholder Engagement would be deferred and that a proposal would be made to the Finance & Governance Committee to carry forward the £4,500 approved for this project into the 2026/27 financial year.

15) Items of information and matters for forthcoming agendas

a) Consideration of energy efficiencies for Council buildings

It was noted that this had been discussed under Minute No. 7), above.

b) Public Conveniences – Water efficiency surveys

Further to Minute No. 6 above, it was again noted that the Council is awaiting receipt of the survey results which will be reported to a forthcoming meeting.

c) Friends of Peveril Point and the Downs LNR Open Day – 5th July 2025

The Assets & Compliance Manager reported that the Open Day on 5th July 2025 will be the third year that it has run. This year the event will run from 11am-2pm and will include guided butterfly identification walks and wildflower walks.

d) Dorset Council – Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy 2025 consultation

It was reported that at the Planning and Consultation Committee Meeting held on 2nd June 2025, Dorset Council's public consultation on its draft Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy 2025 had been considered. Committee members agreed that it may be prudent for the Environment and Green Spaces Committee to review the consultation documents and provide any feedback on the strategy to the Planning and Consultation Committee. After a brief discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by the Chairman and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Chairman of the Environment & Green Spaces Committee and the Assets & Compliance Manager work together to review the Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy 2025 documentation and to provide any relevant feedback to Dorset Council via the Planning and Consultation Committee.

16) Date of next meeting

It was noted that the date of the next meeting was 2.15 p.m. on 8th October 2025.

The Meeting closed at 4.05 p.m.