

Minutes of the Meeting of the Swanage Town Council
held at The Town Hall, High Street, Swanage on
MONDAY, 23rd FEBRUARY 2026 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 C. Sutton
Councillor C. Tomes

In addition to Members of the Council and officers, 12 members of the public and two members of the local press and media attended the Meeting.

Public Participation Time

The following matters were raised during Public Participation Time:-

- Queries were raised regarding the decision-making process in respect of the Green Seafront Stabilisation Scheme and whether the town would receive sufficient benefits to justify the additional £2.5 million cost of the larger scheme. It was noted that a business plan had not yet been published.
- Thanks were expressed to the town's two Dorset Councillors for supporting the retention of two-way traffic along Shore Road. Reference was made to a report prepared by the resident which raised queries regarding the development of the Shore Road proposals and it was noted that a revised copy would be issued shortly. The need for residents and business owners to be fully informed when decisions relating to the Green Seafront Stabilisation Scheme were made was highlighted.
- A resident of Shore Road commented on the proposed traffic measures, noting that the town was in need of a well-designed pedestrian-friendly promenade. Good design was considered paramount to ensure successful shared use of space between vehicles and pedestrians.
- Further to an item in the minutes of the January Council Meeting, a member of the public noted the generosity of Swanage residents, which had assisted Graham Warburton in raising significant funds for the Salvation Army, and expressed thanks to him. It was also commented that it would have been beneficial had public consultation regarding Shore Road and the Green Seafront Stabilisation Scheme been conducted separately. In addition, the resident noted that a submission he had made for inclusion on the agenda of a meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Sub-Committee meeting had not yet been considered.
- Support was expressed for the need to stabilise the seafront land, and it was noted that two-way traffic had historically operated successfully along Shore Road. It was further noted that issues such as open car doors and other obstructions on the pavement would need to be addressed to ensure that the area functioned effectively, especially for disabled residents and visitors.

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

The Chairman opened the Council Meeting at 7.15 p.m.

178. **Apologies**
Apologies for their inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillors Suttle and Vile.
179. **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.
There were no declarations to record on this occasion.
180. **Minutes**
(a) Proposed by Councillor Moreton, seconded by Councillor Sutton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-
That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 26th January 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed.
181. **Planning and Consultation Committee**
(a) Proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Lejeune and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-
That the Minutes of the Planning and Consultation Committee Meeting held on 2nd February 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed.
- Consideration was given to the following recommendation contained in the Minutes:-
- 8(a)(i) Swanage Neighbourhood Plan website – to recommend approval of creation of website and allocate budget at the Council Meeting on 23rd February 2026**
It was proposed by Councillor Lejeune, seconded by Councillor Burrridge and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-
That the creation of a dedicated Swanage Neighbourhood Plan website, and the allocation of a budget of up to £2,000 for this additional work by ONH Planning Consultants, be approved.
182. **Statement of Cash Balance**
(a) A Statement of Cash Balance as at 31st January 2026 was submitted for information (a copy attached at the end of these Minutes).
183. **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 10, amounting to £632,561.77.
184. **Chairman's Announcements**
The Town Mayor reported his attendance at the following events since the Council Meeting held in January:
 - Rotary Young Musician of the Year – The Mayor noted the enthusiasm of this young group of musicians and had an enjoyable afternoon.
 - Folk Festival Presentation and AGM – It was reported that £10,000 had been donated to local charities.

- Silver Afternoon Tea – The Deputy Mayor attended the afternoon tea event on behalf of the Mayor.
- Swanage Community Awards – It was reported that the nominations were now open and awards would be issued at the Annual Parish Assembly being held on 20th April 2026.

185. **Shore Road Enhancement Project - To consider report from Dorset Council setting out preferred option**

Further to Minute No. 169 of the Council Meeting held on 26th January 2026, consideration was given to a briefing paper which set out Dorset Council's preferred option for enhancements to Shore Road, following public engagement undertaken during summer 2025. This would retain two-way traffic on Shore Road whilst removing on-street parking in order to enable wider footways and deliver public-realm enhancements (including a reduction in street 'clutter' on the pavements), introduce a 20-mph speed limit and make associated changes to the wider highways network.

It was noted that the planned works to Shore Road would be co-ordinated with the Green Seafront Stabilisation Scheme. It was clarified that the pavements would be widened on the seaward side with some smaller targeted improvements on the landward side.

It was explained that the current proposal represented an initial plan and an indicative timescale was noted for next steps. Subject to the proposals gaining Town Council support, it was anticipated that Dorset Council would prepare a more detailed design by late summer 2026, with the proposals then being subject to formal public consultation in autumn 2026. Members committed to working with Dorset Council to refine the designs to ensure that the best possible outcomes would be achieved for Swanage.

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

That the Town Council wholeheartedly supports
Dorset Council's preferred option for Shore Road
enhancements proceeding to the next stage of
development.

186. **To consider recommendations of the Grants Panel**

Consideration was given to a briefing paper prepared by the Planning and Community Engagement Manager, which set out recent grant applications received for the 2025/26 financial year.

It was noted that the Council had approved a grants budget of £10,000 for 2025/26, a total of £2,518.50 had been awarded to date, and a further £9,188.80 had been requested. Members considered the summary of the recommendations of the Grants Panel as outlined below:

Applicant	Sum Requested	Recommended grant	Summary of project	Reason for support
1 st Swanage Guides	£300.00	£300.00	Swanage District Guides Association – Registered Charity No. 301224 (Girl Guiding (UK) – Registered Charity No. 306016) This application seeks a small grant to assist towards the costs of a trip to Switzerland in August 2026 for 20 Guides and leaders.	Recommend approval - the grant request fits within the Town Council's criteria by supporting a non-profit youth organisation, benefiting local girls and young women, and providing developmental, cultural and educational value to the community. Supports confidence, independence, and personal growth for young people.

It was proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Dorrington and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**
That the Town Council approves the recommendation of the Grants Panel to award a grant of £300 to the Swanage District Guides Association.

Purbeck Art Weeks Festival	£1,500.00 (to be paid in 3 annual instalments of £500)	£1,050 (to be paid in 3 annual instalments of £350.00)	Registered Charity No. 1140350. The application seeks funding over a three-year period towards <i>Purbeck Young Artist</i> workshops in Swanage schools, costed at £350 each (provided free of charge to all primary and secondary schools in Purbeck), taking place from March to May, with residual funds going towards a proposed <i>Whispering Dome</i> music project. A grant application has been made to Dorset Council for £5,000 towards the cost of the <i>Whispering Dome</i> project.	Recommend approval at £350 x 3 years (£1,050 in total) in support of the school youth workshops - a wide range of free, year-round entertainment and activities is available for all ages, providing significant benefits to the mental health, wellbeing, and social engagement of both the local community and visitors. These activities also generate economic benefits by attracting additional visitors to the area.
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It was noted that Members had considered the total amount requested of £1,500 and recommended that a total of sum of £1,050 be offered.

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

That the Town Council approves the recommendation of the Grants Panel to award a grant of £1,050 (to be paid in three equal annual instalments of £350) to Purbeck Art Weeks.

Purbeck Film Festival	£500.00	£ - decline	Registered Charity No. 1195008. The application seeks funding towards the costs of this year's festival (16 th October to 1 st November), an established annual event held across various venues in Purbeck/Dorset. The festival provides a wide range of film screenings which facilitate an enjoyable social gathering whilst also showing many different cultures, viewpoints, and lifestyles. Financial support is currently	Recommendation - decline as submitted – this is a long-established, ticketed event - in line with the Council's existing grant policy, eligibility Points 3 to 3.6 refer (grant awards have been made in previous years towards the costs of the festival). However, the application notes that one of the festival's aims is to provide film-related activities and workshops for local children. It is also recognised that the festival hosts a <i>Short Film Evening</i> intended to encourage and promote the work
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			received from the British Film Institute, sponsors and donors, fundraising activities, and audience revenue.	of young film- makers. Members therefore recommend that the Council invites the festival organisers to consider a specific youth-focused project for inclusion in this year's event, which could be eligible for grant funding. Members would welcome the resubmission of a grant application in support of such a project.
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It was proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Dorrington and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Town Council approves the recommendation of the Grants Panel to refuse the grant application from Purbeck Film Festival for a sum of £500.

Swanage Depression Support Group	£500.00	£500.00	Volunteer-led community group. The group re-opened in May 2025 after a period of closure. Its aim is to provide support for individuals experiencing depression through open meetings at The Focus Centre, where members can receive confidential assistance. Meetings are held twice monthly, with a charge of £2 per session. These fees do not cover the group's costs which include monthly room hire, insurance, supervisory visits from a mental health professional, and refreshments.	Recommendation - approve – to safeguard this important local service. The group contributes significantly to the wellbeing and mental health of local residents and provides a clear benefit to the community. Members feel that this group could be considered for regular annual funding in the future, should the proposed new grant guidelines be approved/adopted, which would provide additional stability and help ensure the continuation of its valuable service.
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It was proposed by Councillor Tomes, seconded by Councillor Sutton and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Town Council approves the recommendation of the Grants Panel to award a grant of £500 to the Swanage Depression Support Group.

Swanage Town Band	£388.80	£150.00	Registered Charity – No. 1214942. The application seeks funding to assist with the purchase/costs of: 1. Printed panels to existing A frame £98.00 2. Printed vinyl banner with fixing eyelets £76.00 3. VAT on the above £34.80 4. Design work on the above £80.00 5. New music for next year £100.00.	Recommendation - approve £150 – to support the purchase of new music (previous grants of the same amount were awarded for this purpose in 2024 and 2025) - in support of funding the purchase of new music, in recognition of the valuable contribution that the band makes to the town and local community, supporting community health and wellbeing through free events, social activities, and youth engagement. It is noted that the Band donates its surplus funds to other charitable causes; in 2025/26, donations were made to Swanage Carnival, Weldmar Hospice, and towards a second Admiral Nurse.
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It was proposed by Councillor Coward, seconded by Councillor Bishop and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Town Council approves the recommendation of the Grants Panel to award a grant of £150 to the Swanage Town Band.

The Swanage Emporium	£6,000.00	£ - decline	The legal structure of the new shop and café at 52 High Street is currently unknown (TBA) The application seeks funding towards the installation of accessible toilet facilities at the premises to serve a new café area within the shop, at an estimated cost of £6,000 (no supporting costings provided at this stage). It is intended that the café will provide drinks and snacks to residents and visitors, offering an additional space for people meet in a relaxed and comfortable setting, with accessible facilities available. Income generated by The Swanage Emporium is to support The Loft Swanage Community Centre.	Recommend decline as submitted – does not currently meet the Council’s Grant Guidelines - Eligibility Criteria, Point 2, which states that applications will only be considered from community groups and organisations that are a properly constituted body. Met with applicant who advised that further discussions are planned with his accountant to finalise the arrangements for the new ventures. At present, there is insufficient information regarding the intended legal set-up of the new café within The Swanage Emporium shop at 52 High Street. While The Loft Community Centre in Commercial Road is established as a CIC, the
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				structure for the new High Street café remains unclear. Recommend a further meeting with applicant once the organisational arrangements have been finalised, to allow the proposal to be reconsidered if appropriate.
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It was proposed by Councillor Moreton, seconded by Councillor Burridge and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Town Council approves the recommendation of the Grants Panel to refuse the grant application for £6,000 from the Swanage Emporium.

Whilst the application was not approved, Members noted their willingness to meet with the applicant in the future to discuss the proposals.

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

(a) **Property Panel held on 6th February 2026**

It was noted that discussions at this meeting in relation to the Shore Place concessions would be considered under Agenda Item 17 (see Minute No. 194 (c) below). Matters relating to leases, licences and rent reviews were also discussed.

(b) **Museum Task & Finish Group held on 6th February 2026**

It was noted that this had been a positive meeting with Museum representatives and that the Town Council maintained its support for the Museum. Discussions had included the potential joint use of the Town Hall building, although consideration would be given to the existing lease arrangements.

188. **To consider revised Committee meeting dates.**

(a) **Finance & Governance Committee – Change from 11th to 18th March**

(b) **Community Services Committee – Change from 15th July to 1st July**

(c) **Coastal Change and Beach Management Advisory Committee – Change from 3rd June to 22nd April**

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

That the change in Committee meeting dates as set out above be approved.

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

Cultural Purbeck – It was reported that Cultural Purbeck anticipated setting up as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with four trustees. It was noted that the group hoped to submit a bid to be the UK Town of Culture 2028 and that an event would be held at Emmanuel Baptist Church on 27th February 2026. A report would be provided to the next Council meeting.

190. **Report from Dorset Councillors**

The following updates were provided by Councillor Tomes:

- **Budget** – It was reported that due to funding constraints Dorset Council had increased Council Tax by 4.99%. It was anticipated that a three-year financial settlement would be agreed with central government that would provide greater

certainty for the authority. Work relating to the 'Our Future Council' programme was continuing, with the aim of delivering savings across the Council.

- **Road repairs/gully issues** – It was reported that £5 million had been allocated for road repairs and gully clearance.
- **Aster Housing** – Councillor Tomes reported that he had seconded a motion at a meeting of Dorset Council requesting registered providers to review the disposal of housing stock and the maintenance arrangements that had resulted in properties being sold.

191. **Reporting of delegated matters**

No delegated matters were reported this month.

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

There were no matters raised.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was proposed by Councillor Bishop, seconded by Councillor Coward 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 item 16 (in order to preserve the integrity of the forthcoming public consultation process) and items 17 and 18 (due to legal and commercial confidentiality).

193. **Neighbourhood Plan – To consider approval of draft Neighbourhood Plan to be issued for Regulation 14 public consultation**

Members received an update regarding progress towards completion of the draft Neighbourhood Plan. Following consideration by the Steering Group and the Planning and Consultation Committee, a workshop had been held to consider the draft plan in detail. It was noted that the Committee had made a formal recommendation to the Council to approve the draft plan. However, a number of questions raised at the workshop had yet to be resolved. Consequently, it was proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Burridge and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Council defers consideration of the draft Neighbourhood Plan to a future meeting.

194. **Property Related Legal Matters**

(a) **Punch and Judy Concession – To consider amendments to licence for 2026 and 2027 seasons**

Further to Minute No. 47 of the Council Meeting held on 23rd June 2025, consideration was given to amendments to the licence agreement for the performance of Punch & Judy shows on the Main Beach for the 2026 and 2027 seasons. The principal changes were summarised in a briefing note circulated prior to the meeting. The licence holder had requested an extension to the season, commencing in late-May instead of mid-July and operating until mid-September. In previous years a beach hut had been made available in connection with the operation of the concession and this had also been requested for an extended period for the next two seasons. Attention was drawn to potential alternative arrangements.

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

That the extended season requested by the Punch and Judy concessionaire be agreed for the 2026 and

2027 seasons, at the current fee of £150 per season, excluding use of a Shore Road beach hut, and that delegated authority be granted to officers to make alternative arrangements to provide secure storage for use by the concessionaire.

Officers noted that if agreement could not be reached with the concessionaire the matter would be brought back to a forthcoming Council meeting.

(b) Swanage Museum – To consider extension to existing lease

Further to Minute No. 10 of the Community Services Committee Meeting held on 15th October 2025, and discussion at recent meetings of the Museum Task & Finish Group, consideration was given to a proposal to extend the lease of the Heritage Centre building to Swanage Museum for a period of up to two years. It was noted that the Museum was currently looking to strengthen its trustee base and review key elements of its operation to ensure a sustainable future. It was, therefore, felt that a comparatively short lease extension would allow the Museum Trust to finalise its plans, prior to entering into a longer-term commitment. It was proposed by Councillor Lejeune, seconded by Councillor Moreton and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That the Council enters into a renewal lease with Swanage Museum for a period of up to two years on the same terms as the existing lease (excluded from the security of tenure provisions of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954) and agrees to pay the cost of its own legal fees.

(c) Shore Place – To consider proposed event usage by business tenants

Members considered a briefing paper regarding a proposal from the two concessionaires operating from Shore Place to deliver a programme of wellbeing-focused activities, including yoga, fitness sessions and related events. The Property Panel had reviewed the proposal and expressed support in principle, subject to a number of conditions, including a one-year trial period, agreed allocation of use between charities and businesses, seasonal restrictions, and the use of an adapted Sports and Wellbeing Licence.

Members noted the potential benefit to both residents and tourists to accommodate well-being activities in this location. It was proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Foster and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That the proposed arrangements for the use of Shore Place by the two concessionaires, as set out in section two of the briefing paper, be approved.

Members noted the plans by the Swanage Sauna to install a webcam, to be positioned with a view to the sea. It was proposed by Councillor Moreton, seconded by Councillor Coward and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That the Council notes the proposed installation of a webcam by the Swanage Sauna.

Consideration was given to a proposed amendment to the Council's Sports and Wellbeing Licence criteria to allow greater flexibility in recognising appropriate instructor qualifications. It was proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Foster and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That the proposed change to the Council's Sport Licence arrangements, as set out in section 4 of the briefing paper, be approved.

(d) **Mowlem Land (De Moulham) Trust and Gift of Public Pleasure Grounds Trust – To consider approval of draft management agreements and authorisation of Members to sign documents.**

Further to Minute No. 176 (c) of the Council Meeting held on 26th January 2026, Members considered draft management agreements between the Town Council and the Mowlem Land Trust and the Gift of Public Pleasure Grounds Trust, following earlier agreement to formalise management arrangements on the advice of the Council's insurers and legal advisors. It was noted that both Trusts had considered the draft agreements and requested that the Council enter into formal arrangements, subject to final amendments. Members were advised that a number of clarifications and additional clauses were currently being reviewed by the Council's solicitors. It was proposed by Councillor Bishop, seconded by Councillor Moreton and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

To enter into management agreements with the Mowlem Land Trust and Gift of Public Pleasure Grounds Trust (subject to final amendments) and to authorise the signing of the same by two councillors.

(e) **Marsh Way/Victoria Terrace boundary wall – Consideration of next steps**

Members noted a verbal update regarding ongoing negotiations around the works to the boundary wall, which it was anticipated would be commenced over the summer.

(f) **Vodafone Mast, Day's Park – Update on lease renewal and rent review**

A verbal update was provided following a meeting with representatives of Vodafone held at the Football Club. It was noted that the Council's professional advisers had been instructed to assess revised proposals that had subsequently been submitted and that an update on the Town Council's position would be provided to a future meeting.

195. **Mowlem Land (De Moulham) Trust and Gift of Public Pleasure Grounds Trust – To consider correspondence from Trusts regarding proposed acquisition of Sandpit Field and Weather Station Field by Town Council to facilitate ground stabilisation work, together with legal and professional advice**

Further to Minute No.152 of the Council Meeting held on 15th December 2025, Members considered the contents of a briefing paper which detailed the correspondence from both Trusts requesting that the Town Council acquire Sandpit Field and Weather Station Field for a nominal sum, in order to facilitate required ground stabilisation works. Members noted the legal advice received, which outlined the potential routes for acquisition, together with their respective advantages and disadvantages. It was further noted that independent valuation advice had not yet been obtained and would be required to inform any final decision.

A lengthy discussion ensued, during which Members considered the options available and the need to determine a way forward. The Mowlem Land Trust's proposal to retain a small section of Sandpit Field in order to secure the future enforceability of the estate covenants was scrutinised. The importance of seeking further legal and valuation advice was highlighted. It was proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Tomes and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That the Town Council agrees to acquire Sandpit Field and the Weather Station Field from the Mowlem Land Trust and Gift of Public Pleasure Grounds Trust for a nominal sum, subject to the consideration of valuation advice and further legal guidance regarding the Trust's proposed retention of a small parcel of land at Sandpit Field.

The Meeting closed at 8.35 p.m.