

Minutes of the Meeting of the Swanage Town Council  
held at The Methodist Church, High Street, Swanage on  
**MONDAY, 23<sup>rd</sup> MARCH 2026** at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT:-

Councillor M. Bonfield – Chairman

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

In addition to Members of the Council and officers, nine members of the public and one member of the local press and media attended the Meeting.

**Public Participation Time**

The following matters were raised during Public Participation Time:-

- A representative of Cultural Purbeck provided an update on the group's progress. It was noted that, although the 2026 Dorset Town of Culture bid had been unsuccessful it had demonstrated the value of partnership working across the area. This had led to the formation of Cultural Purbeck, a partnership of cultural organisations which was currently formalising its structure as a CIO and developing a business plan. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) had launched a bid opportunity for the UK Town of Culture 2028. An Expression of Interest would be submitted within the small town category on the theme of 'Stone to Sea'. If successful at stage one, funding of £60,000 would be made available by DCMS to support further development. The Council was invited to provide a letter of support.
- Thanks were given to the Council for considering funding towards an improved hearing loop and accessible signage for the Mowlem Theatre. It was noted that, following the Council's previous grant award of up to £15,000 in support of the 'Raise the Roof' campaign, approximately £12,400 had been utilised. A request was made for the Council to release this remaining amount, together with an additional £1,000, to support the proposed improvements, which would enhance accessibility and participation in cultural activities.
- In regard to agenda item 16 (d) the Punch and Judy concessionaire made representation regarding the continued provision of a beach hut on Shore Road for the remainder of the current licence period to 2027. It was highlighted that this would support the continuation of a longstanding family attraction on the seafront, of which there are very few remaining in the country.
- A local business owner raised concerns regarding proposed amendments to Dorset Council's Purbeck Watercraft Bylaws, specifically a potential voluntary no-anchor zone. The speaker questioned the evidence base for the proposal, suggesting there was limited evidence of safety problems. Concerns were also raised that the designation could discourage craft from using the area, with a potential adverse impact on local businesses.  
During the representation, the Chairman intervened to advise the speaker not to name individual officers and that any concerns around due process should be raised via the Council's Complaints Procedure.

Rev. Karen James offered a short prayer before the commencement of the Meeting.

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

196. **Apologies**  
Apologies for their inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillors Burridge and Moreton.
197. **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.
198. **Minutes**  
(a) Proposed by Councillor Burridge, seconded by Councillor Sutton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-  
That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed.
199. **Finance and Governance Committee**  
(a) Proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Vile and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-  
That the Minutes of the Finance and Governance Committee Meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed.
200. **Planning and Consultation Committee**  
(a) Proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Lejeune and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-  
That the Minutes of the Planning and Consultation Committee Meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed.
201. **Environment and Green Spaces Committee**  
(a) Proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Coward and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-  
That the Minutes of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee Meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed.
202. **Finance and Governance Committee**  
(a) Proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Sutton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-  
That the Minutes of the Finance and Governance Committee Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed.

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

- 6) **Council Priorities Spring/Summer 2026**  
It was proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Bishop and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the draft Council Priority Plan for spring/summer 2026 be approved, including the UK Town of Culture 2028 bid.

**10) Annual Review of Corporate Risk Register**

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

That the revised Corporate Risk Register for 2026/27, incorporating the amendments in the table be adopted.

203. **Community Services Committee**

(a) Proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Lejeune and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Minutes of the Community Services Committee Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed.

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

**9) Beach Gardens – Conversion of court 6 to a multi-use tennis and pickleball court**

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

That the proposal for the installation of a polyurethane resin surface and Pickleball court lines on court 6 at Beach Gardens, together with the required budget of £4,750, be approved and that the scale of charges for Pickleball at Beach Gardens, be approved incorporating provision for the charge for schools to be waived for the first 12 months.

204. **Statement of Cash Balance**

(a) A Statement of Cash Balance as at 28<sup>th</sup> February 2026 was submitted for information (a copy attached at the end of these Minutes).

205. **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 11, amounting to £600,182.22.

206. **Chairman's Announcements**

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

- Dorset Police training – It was reported that Councillors and Officers had attended a Cyber Attack Training event, hosted by Dorset Police. It was noted that should anyone suspect they had been subject to a Cyber Attack in relation to their bank account they should report this via the telephone number 159.
- International Women's Day - The Mayor had attended a poetry event at the Mowlem Theatre entitled 'A Celebration of Purbeck Women' where enlightening poems were shared. Thanks were provided to Councillor Vile for speaking at the event.

207. **Cultural Purbeck – To consider request for support for submission of an Expression of Interest for Swanage and the Isle of Purbeck to be the UK Town of Culture 2028 (small town category)**

Further to Minute No. 189 of the Council Meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026, Members considered a proposal from Cultural Purbeck to submit an Expression of Interest to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport for Swanage and the Isle of Purbeck to be the UK Town of Culture 2028 (small town category). It was noted that the bid would be led by Cultural Purbeck with no immediate financial commitment required from the Council.

Members acknowledged the potential cultural, economic and community benefits of the initiative and supported the proposal. Thanks were provided to Cultural Purbeck for their work to date and the vision for the future.

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

That the Town Council supports Cultural Purbeck in its submission of an Expression of Interest to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport for Swanage and the Isle of Purbeck to be the UK Town of Culture 2028 (small town category), and that a letter of support from the Town Council be provided to accompany the submission.

208. **Mowlem Theatre – To consider grant request for hearing loop**

Consideration was given to a briefing paper which set out a request from the Mowlem Theatre for grant funding towards the installation of new hearing loops and accessible signage within the auditorium and studio. It was noted that a grant of up to £15,000 had previously been awarded for the ‘Raise the Roof’ campaign, of which £12,406 had been utilised, leaving a balance of £2,594.

Members noted that the total project cost was £11,276, with partial funding already secured, and that the request was for the remaining £2,594 together with an additional £1,106. It was further noted that the additional funding could be met from an underspend in the Council’s community grants budget and would support accessibility and participation in cultural activities.

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

That the Town Council allocates the remaining £2,594 from the previously approved grant, together with an additional £1,106 from the community grants budget, towards the provision of new hearing loops and accessible signage at the Mowlem Theatre.

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

(a) **Beach Huts & Commercial Space Task & Finish Group held on 23<sup>rd</sup> February and 18<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

It was reported that Members had considered the proposed criteria, and it was agreed that a visit would be arranged to view the beach huts at the factory. An update would be provided to a future meeting.

(b) **Fishers’ Huts Working Party, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2026**

It was reported that a review of the Fishers’ Huts waiting list had been undertaken at the meeting, and that a further review of criteria would be carried out prior to reporting to a future meeting.

(c) **Seafront Masterplan Working Party, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

At the meeting, a draft business case had been shared with Members for review, and an updated copy would be brought to a future council meeting.

(d) **Car Parks Working Party, 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

It was noted that a discussion had been held regarding the ‘Charging Ahead’ project for the installation of additional Electric Vehicle Charging Points. Further discussions would be held and an update provided to a future council meeting.

(e) **Events Working Party, 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

At the meeting, Members had received an update on potential event management software and had considered the implementation of policies relating to parking, camping, and the use of the Recreation Ground for events. It was noted that an Event Organiser drop-in session would be held at the Mowlem Theatre, Studio, on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026, with the intention of recruiting new volunteers.

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

**Band of Brothers** – It was reported that a new group had been established to provide a support network for men, focussing on their mental health and wellbeing. Updates would be provided to future meetings.

**Focus Centre** – It was noted that work to progress a community bus service was ongoing, and that representatives would be visiting Totnes, where a community bus network had been established several years ago and now operated five buses serving the area.

211. **Report from Dorset Councillors**

The following updates were provided by Councillors Tomes and Suttle:

- **Electoral Review** – It was reported that a public consultation had been launched by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on new Dorset Council ward boundaries. The review aimed to ensure that wards reflected local communities and that each councillor represented a similar number of electors. Following an earlier consultation, the Commission proposed that Dorset Council should retain 82 councillors, the same number as at present.
- **St Mary’s road traffic incident** – It was reported that further to an incident involving a child in the vicinity of St Mary’s primary school, a meeting with the headteacher, Dorset Highways, Dorset Councillors and Cllr Andrews would be arranged following the Easter holiday to discuss a potential reduction in speed limit.

212. **Reporting of delegated matters**

Further to Minute No. 194 (a) of the Council Meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026, it was noted that the Punch and Judy concession had been brought back to Council for consideration (see Minute No. 215 (d) below).

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

- (a) Members noted that the revised date for next meeting of the Traffic Management Advisory Committee was 24<sup>th</sup> June 2026 at 4.00 p.m.

**EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Bishop 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 15 (in order to preserve the integrity of the forthcoming public consultation process) and items 16 and 17 (due to legal and commercial confidentiality).

214. **Neighbourhood Plan – To consider approval of draft Pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan to be issued for Regulation 14 public consultation and authorisation of increased budget for professional fees**

Further to Minute No. 193 of the Council Meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026, Members considered an update on the draft Pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan and progress towards Regulation 14 consultation. It was noted that further work had been undertaken by the Steering Group and officers, including engagement with Dorset Council planning officers, and that the draft Plan had been updated accordingly.

Members also considered the need for additional budget provision to cover outstanding professional fees, support fees for taking the Plan through the Regulation 14 consultation, and the essential tasks required to progress the Plan to submission and through the examination process.

It was proposed by Councillor Foster and seconded by Councillor Sutton:-

That the Council approves the draft Pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan 2026-2043 to be issued for Regulation 14 public consultation (subject to any final amendments being approved at a Meeting of the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group prior to launch of the consultation).

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

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

That an additional budget of £8,931 be allocated to the existing budget of £10,000, for 2025-26, total budget of £18,931 (to cover overspend to date, and the latest invoice from ONH Planning Consultants of £3,322).

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

That an additional budget of £7,950 be allocated to the existing budget of £3,000 for 2026/27, giving a total budget of £10,950, to enable ONH Planning Consultants to complete work on the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan to the required standard and timetable, as set out above, (to cover £2,000 already allocated for the website and £8,950 projected additional costs).

215. **Property Related Legal Matters**

(a) **Sandpit Field and Weather Station Field, acquisition from Mowlem Land Trust and Gift of Public Pleasure Grounds Trust – To consider valuation advice**

Further to Minute No. 195 of the Council Meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026, consideration was given to briefing paper, which set out the valuation advice received in relation to the proposed acquisition of Sandpit Field and the Weather Station Field from the Mowlem Land Trust and Gift of Public Pleasure Grounds Trust. It was noted that, subject to stabilisation works, the land may have future value as public open space, although current valuation is nominal due to its condition.

Members noted that further legal advice will be sought in relation to the Trust's proposed retention of a small parcel of land at Sandpit Field.

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

To proceed with the acquisition of Sandpit Field and the Weather Station Field from the Mowlem Land Trust and Gift of Public Pleasure Grounds Trust for a nominal sum, in light of the valuation advice received.

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

Further to Minute No. 194 (e) of the Council Meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> February, Members considered an update on negotiations with the owner of 1 Victoria Terrace regarding the repair and rebuilding of the boundary wall.

Members noted that agreement had been reached in principle with the property owner as to the apportionment of costs. It was further noted that preparatory works were underway, and that an expression of interest had been publicised in connection with the construction works, which were anticipated to commence in summer 2026.

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

That the Council confirms acceptance of the agreement from the owner of 1 Victoria Terrace to contribute towards the costs (including professional fees) associated with rebuilding the boundary wall, as set out in their email of 20<sup>th</sup> March 2026, subject to ongoing professional advice.

(c) **Beach Concession – To note award of contract and consider matters arising**

Further to Minute No. 151 (a) of the Council Meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2025, Members noted the contents of a briefing paper which confirmed the beach hire concession had been awarded to Mr Carlo Wiggins. Members also considered a proposal for a mid-term review of the licence fee, with a 2.5% increase to be applied in 2029.

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

That the Town Council agrees to apply a 2.5% increase to the licence fee from 2029.

(d) **Punch & Judy Concession – To consider matters arising from negotiations re. licence for 2026/27**

Further to Minute No. 194 of the Council Meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026, Members considered representations from the Punch and Judy concessionaire in respect of the use of beach hut in connection with the Punch and Judy licence.

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

To suspend Standing Order 9 (a) in order to reverse (within six months) that part of the resolution, contained within Minute No. 194 (a) of the Council Meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026, relating to exclusion of the use of a Shore Road beach hut and provision of alternative storage

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

That the use of a beach hut be provided to the Punch and Judy concessionaire during the period of

operation of the annual licence for the remainder of the current licence period.

(e) **Extension to Museum Lease**

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

That two town councillors be authorised to sign the Museum lease.

216. **Procurement**

(a) **Town centre catenary and hire of festoon lighting – To award contract**

Members considered a report following an invitation to quote process for the replacement of the town centre catenary and the hire of festoon lighting, further to earlier recommendations from the Capital Projects Sub-Committee and Finance and Governance Committee.

It was noted that two compliant submissions had been received, with the most economically advantageous offer being from WGS Power and Lighting Ltd. The proposal included the installation of stainless steel catenary and the supply of festoon lighting on a four-year hire arrangement, with ownership of the festoon passing to the Council at the end of the term at no cost.

Members considered the benefits of stainless steel catenary in a coastal environment and the timing of installation ahead of the 2026 May Bank Holiday weekend.

It was proposed by Councillor Suttle, seconded by Councillor Bishop and  
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Council awards the contract to WGS Power and Lighting Ltd to install new stainless steel catenary within the town centre and provide festoon lighting on a hire arrangement for a four year period for the total sum of £29,834.20.

Councillor Tomes declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 17 (b) due to being a relative of the contractor.

Further to his declaration Councillor Tomes left the meeting prior to consideration of the following item.

(b) **Seaweed and sand management services, Main Beach – To award contract**

Members considered a briefing paper which set out the background in regard to the award of a contract for seaweed and sand management services on Swanage Main Beach. It was reported that the contract had initially been awarded for one-year and extended for a further year following a successful trial.

It was noted that a single submission had been received from the current contractor, DWG Smith Ltd, which had been assessed on a 60/40 cost and quality basis and found to be compliant.

Members noted the inclusion of a fuel price adjustment mechanism linked to the DESNZ index and that expenditure would remain weather and season dependent.

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

That the Council awards the contract for seaweed and sand management services on Swanage Main Beach for the 2026 and 2027 seasons to DWG Smith Ltd.

Councillor Tomes re-entered the meeting.

(c) **Beach signage – To award contract**

It was reported that since the agenda had been issued a quotation for under £10,000, had been received in respect of the beach signage and although three quotes had been sought, only one company had responded. It was noted that as this sum was below the threshold set out in the Council's Financial Regulations, the contract could be awarded by officers without the need for a Council resolution.

(d) **Insurance – To award contract and consider cyber insurance cover**

Members considered the contents of a briefing paper which set out the outcome of an Invitation to Tender for the Council's insurance services from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026, with additional Cyber Insurance and Projects Insurance. Following the tender exercise one tender, from the Council's current insurance provider, had been received setting out two options, for a 1-year or 3-year period.

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

That the Council awards the contract to Zurich for the provision of Insurance Services under a three-year contract, effective from 1st April 2026.

It was noted that project insurance could be purchased as and when required.

It was also noted that Zurich did not offer Cyber insurance, but that a quote had been provided from an alternative supplier.

Members considered the benefits and disadvantages of taking out such cover in relation to the risk.

It was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Vile and  
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Council awards a contract to Coalition Risk Solutions Ltd for Cyber Insurance for 1 year at a cost of £1,413.76.

(e) **Car park terminals maintenance – To award contract**

Members considered the contents of a briefing paper which set out the maintenance contract options as provided by Flowbird, the supplier of the car park terminals.

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

That the Council issues a maintenance contract to Flowbird for 3 years, at a cost of £19,478.02, with the option of a further 1-year extension.

(f) **Parade railings repairs – To award contract**

Members considered a briefing paper regarding repairs to the railings at The Parade, to be carried out in conjunction with Dorset Council. In the interests of safety and timely completion ahead of the visitor season Members noted the necessity to proceed with repair works as soon as possible, despite proposals to carry out replacement works later in the year.

It was noted that Dorset Council had previously undertaken a procurement exercise and awarded a contract to Southern Counties Engineering. Mindful of the quality of the work previously completed and the urgency of the matter, it was proposed by Councillor Suttle, seconded by Councillor Coward and  
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Council awards a contract to Southern Counties Engineering for a sum of up to £7,500 to complete repairs to the Parade Railings as soon as is possible.

The Meeting closed at 8.20 p.m.