

Minutes of a Meeting of the **BEACH MANAGEMENT
ADVISORY COMMITTEE** held via Zoom video
conferencing platform on **WEDNESDAY 24th
FEBRUARY 2021** at **2.15 p.m.**

In Attendance: Councillor M Bonfield – Chairman
Councillor C Finch (from 2.45 p.m.)
Councillor C Tomes

Mr I Brown – Coastguard Station Officer
Mr B Compton – Ocean Bay Watersports
Mr I Jamieson – RNLI Supervisor for Swanage & Poole
Mr P Palmer – Pierhead Watersports
Mr G Richardson - RNLI Community Safety Officer
Mr J Taylor – Pierhead Watersports
Mr C Wiggins – Beach Concessions Representative
Ms E Wright – National Trust

Councillor A Harris (from 2.50 p.m.)
Councillor T Foster
Councillor C Moreton
Councillor M Whitwam
Dr M Ayres – Town Clerk
Mrs K Bangle – Visitor Services Assistant
Ms B Betts – Environmental Advice Manager, Dorset Council
Mrs E Evans – Management Support Officer
Mr C Milmer – Visitor Services Manager
Mrs G Percival – Operations Manager
Mrs S Tattersall – Visitor Services Assistant Manager
Mrs K Watson – Visitor Services Assistant

Public Participation Time

There was one member of the public present at the meeting and two members of the local press.

The following matter was raised:-

- **Variable message signs** – Concerns were raised over the anticipated influx of visitors to the area over the summer season, and an enquiry made as to whether variable message signs could be situated on the A351, on the approach to Swanage, and near to the Sandbanks Ferry terminal, to advise motorists of the availability of car park spaces in the town. In response it was stated that these concerns would be discussed under Agenda item No.5) where the Visitor Services Manager would discuss beach management proposals for the summer season.
- **Dog waste bins** – A further comment was made regarding the frequency that the dog waste bins were emptied, in particular near to Buck Shore, and the quantity of bins

situated around town. In response it was stated that the concerns would be raised with the Waste Management working party, for consideration.

1) **Apologies**

Apologies for their inability to attend the meeting were received from Mr K Bragg (Private Beach Hut Owners' Representative), Mr T Greasty (Safe Bathing Zone Representative), Ms S Huntington (Environment Agency), Mr P Loudoun (Seaweed Removal), Mr R Marsh (Stone Quay Rep), Mr S Pinkard (RNLI), Mr D Roper (Swanage Angling Club) and Mr E Taylor (Wessex Water).

2) **To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting of the Beach Management Advisory Committee held on 11th November 2020**

It was AGREED:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Beach Management Advisory Committee held on 11th November 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed.

3) **Matters arising from Minutes of the Meeting of the Beach Management Advisory Committee held on 11th November 2020**

There were no matters raised.

4) **Swanage and Studland water safety, update from Bridget Betts, Environmental Advice Manager, Dorset Council**

Further to Minute No. 5) of the Beach Management Advisory Committee meeting held on 11th November 2020, Bridget Betts, Environmental Advice Manager, Dorset Council, provided an update regarding water safety in Swanage and Studland bays.

It was reported that progress had been made in regards to preventing vehicular access to the parish slipway, and further to Minute No. 4) of the Roads and Transport Committee Meeting held on 3rd February 2021, delegated authority had been provided to the Chairman, Councillor Whitwam, and the Operations Manager to devise a proposal to install two drop-down bollards at the top of the Parish Slipway to prevent vehicular access on safety grounds, and to publicise if appropriate.

It was stated that a sub-group had been formed, consisting of several members of the Beach Management Advisory Committee, water user representatives and associates with interpretation skills, to discuss signage, leaflet design and website requirements, to provide information and advice regarding water safety. It was anticipated that the updated signage, leaflets and website would be completed in readiness for the 2021 season, and a draft communication plan would be provided to a future meeting.

Further to a matter raised at the Beach Management Advisory Committee meeting held on 11th November 2020, regarding jet skis in Swanage Bay, it was reported that a centralised database had been established, for all incidents relating to water safety, and partners were reminded to use the Incident Recording form, monitored by Dorset Marine Policing Team, should water safety incidents be witnessed.

It was reported that training and education, in appropriate jet ski usage, was still under discussion with the Marine Police and RYA, however, dialogue had been established between two local watersport companies, to assist in the provision of a soft approach to enforcement during the school holidays and weekends from Easter until the October half term.

Furthermore, it was noted that a bill relating to jet ski licencing would be presented to parliament, for a second reading on 26th February 2021. The bill would establish a system of licencing for drivers of jet skis, to create an offence to use a jet ski without a licence, and

an update would be provided to a future meeting.

It was reported that an audit regarding the buoys used in Swanage and Studland bays had been completed. Weymouth Harbour Authority had been consulted as part of the process and the audit results had concluded that there was inconsistency in the distance and colour of buoys used in Swanage and Studland bays, compared to Weymouth bay. The cost to procure six additional buoys to be laid at 100 metre intervals in Swanage and Studland bays would be sought and an update provided to a future meeting.

A discussion ensued surrounding the position of the buoys in the bay which included the distance from the shoreline. In response it was noted that any change to position would be dependent on a change to the bye-law. Further to discussion, it was acknowledged that the bye-law would not be reviewed at this time, and the changes proposed for the 2021 season would be evaluated in the first instance.

The chairman thanked Ms Bridget Betts for her update.

5) **To consider beach management proposals for the summer season 2021**

A briefing note had been circulated prior to the meeting detailing the proposals for the summer season 2021. It was anticipated that the town would be extremely busy and it was noted that the Town Council intended to work closely with the relevant agencies, such as the emergency services and Dorset Council, including Dorset Highways, in preparation. Appropriate messaging regarding visitors would be discussed, and co-ordinated, with Visit Dorset.

The Town Council Beach Management document, circulated prior to the meeting, provided details of arrangements in place for safe use of the beach, which covered the use of facilities, staffing, risk management, environment and accessibility.

The VSM reported that the following services would commence as follows, subject to government Covid-19 guidelines in place at that time.

- Seafront Advisor recruitment to commence between April and July. A total of four posts on variable hours. The roles would cover the Boat Park and Beach as well as the Town as part of the new 'Town Ambassador' role. Additional hours had been budgeted to ensure that no reduction would be made to beach and Boat Park hours.
- The buoys demarcating the watercraft-free swimming area would be laid in the bay during week commencing 10th May 2021.
- RNLI Lifeguards would commence patrol on Saturday 29th May (May Half Term) and finish on 12th September (Folk Festival Weekend).
- The Green Seafront campaign would be promoted, to alleviate pressure on the beach, and encourage social distancing.
- The Swanage Information Centre would open to the public on 12th April.

Councillor Finch joined the meeting at 2.45 p.m.

6) **Main Beach**

a) **To consider concerns raised regarding stones on the beach**

Consideration was given to a concern raised regarding stones on the beach. It was reported that during previous discussions with contractors it had been suggested that the stones be raked into piles, rather than flattened, to provide areas for sand to accumulate.

Councillor Harris joined the meeting and Ms B Betts left the meeting at 2.50 p.m.

Further to discussion, it was accepted that wind direction and tides played an important role in the sand dispersion, and it was suggested that consideration be given to the above approach being trialled and reviewed in due course.

b) To consider request received for winter beach wardens

Consideration was given to an email, received from a member of the public, in which concerns over dog fouling, litter and cigarette ends on the beach, was raised. The member of the public proposed a winter beach warden be employed, with the offer of providing some sponsorship for the role, to patrol the beach and fine individuals for littering and allowing dog fouling.

A discussion ensued, in which it was noted that Dorset Council officers have the authority to serve Fixed Penalty Notices to any person responsible for dog fouling offences, and that Town Council staff do not have such powers. In addition, the productivity of a warden during the winter period was questioned.

Further to discussion it was proposed that Dorset Waste would be contacted regarding the supply of additional signage, and that the Town Council would continue social media campaigns regarding dog fouling and littering, to ensure the issue remains prominent.

7) Update from the Visitor Services Manager

- **Beach Huts** - It was reported that the beach huts would re-open 12th April, with social distancing measures in place.
- **Swanage Information Centre** – It was anticipated that the Tourist Information Centre would re-open to the public 12th April, and it was noted that two Visitor Service Assistants had assisted with the vaccination programme over recent months.
- **Marketing** – It was noted that a marketing strategy was currently being devised, and an update would be provided to a future meeting.
- **Water quality** – It was reported that the water quality approach had been reviewed. The Environment Agency would provide early warning to the Town Council to enable the timely positioning of signage.

8) Updates from representatives/organisations

Pierhead Watersports – The anticipated opening date was noted as 12th April.

RNLI – It was reported the lifejacket lockers, to be positioned on the Banjo Pier, were awaiting confirmation of ownership of the proposed site, prior to installation.

Swanage Coastguards – A busy year was reported with around 70 additional incidents compared with last year. Concern was raised over the debris left at the north end of the bay, with the suggestion made that this was removed before being taken by the tide. The chairman congratulated Mr I Brown on his recent award of the British Empire Medal.

Beach Concessions – A query was raised over the installation of steps onto the beach, opposite the Shore Road beach huts. In response it was noted this would be raised with the Operations Manager.

Ocean Bay Watersports – Preparations had been made for an anticipated busy season.

National Trust – It was reported that the employment of seasonal staff had not yet been confirmed. The ban on BBQs on the beach would be in place this year with the large stones removed to discourage BBQ usage. It was noted that Dorset Council would now be responsible for the enforcement of dog fouling offences on Studland Bay. The car park opening hours would be dependent on the employment of seasonal staff, and security staff may be employed to assist with the impact of an influx of visitors.

RNLI Lifeguards – Recruitment for the upcoming season was in progress and partners were encouraged to notify the RNLI should they be approached by interested parties.

A query was raised in regards to the damage to the Stone Quay and it was reported that signage would remain in place, whilst awaiting repair.

9) Items of information and matters for forthcoming agendas

a) Swanage Town Centre Flood Defences

It was noted that a public consultation, regarding the initial proposed designs would be undertaken shortly.

b) The Spa Redevelopment Project proposals

It was noted that ground stability probes were currently in position and a review of ground movement would be undertaken in six months' time. The next steps would be discussed at the forthcoming Capital Projects Sub-committee meeting, and an update provided to a future meeting of this Committee.

10) Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting would be confirmed at the Annual Council meeting in May 2021.

The chairman thanked all attendees, and praise was offered to the Visitor Service Assistants for their assistance with the vaccination programme.

The meeting closed at 3.30 p.m.
