

Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Swanage
Town Council held at the Town Hall, High Street, Swanage on
MONDAY, 26th FEBRUARY 2024 at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT:-

Councillor T. Foster – Chairman

Councillor C. Moreton

Councillor J. Bishop

Councillor M. Bonfield

Councillor C. Finch

Councillor A. Harris

Councillor G. Suttle

Councillor C. Tomes

Councillor W. Trite

Councillor M. Whitwam

In addition to Members of the Council and officers, one Member of the public and one Member of the local press attended the Meeting.

Public Participation Time

The following matters were raised during Public Participation Time:-

- In respect of agenda item 4, concern was raised over the potential for the Town Council to incur expenditure in regard to engaging legal representation in connection with an objection to the proposed increase in tolls for the Sandbanks Ferry. It was stated that if the Town Council entered into a joint objection with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP) and Dorset Council, as it had done previously, it should not have to fund an equal share of the costs.

190. **Apologies**

There were no apologies to record on this occasion. Councillor Monkhouse attended the meeting remotely.

191. **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 No. 4 - Councillor Moreton declared a non-pecuniary interest under the Code of Conduct by reason of being a member of the Town Band, which had submitted a grant application.

Further to this declaration of interest, Councillor Moreton left the meeting prior to consideration of the following item.

192. **Grants Panel – To consider recommendations**

Consideration was given to a briefing paper prepared by the Planning and Community Engagement Manager, which set out the grant applications received for 2023/24 financial year. It was noted that the Council had approved a grants budget of £10,000 for 2023/24 and a total of £5,850 had been awarded to date. A further total of £2,440 had been requested and it has been proposed that £1,150 be awarded as outlined below:

Applicant	Sum Requested	Recommended grant	Summary of project	Reason for support
<u>Friends of Swanage Primary School</u>	£500	£500	PTA – Friends Group. To provide a pond area within the school grounds to give children the opportunity to get close to nature, to learn about wildlife and pondlife, and observe how this changes with the different seasons.	Recommend approval. Benefit to local community's/children's health and wellbeing, social activities. The PTA's determination and fundraising efforts are to be congratulated.
<u>Home-Start Wessex</u>	£900	£0	Registered charity based in Kinson, Bournemouth, offering support, friendship, and practical help to vulnerable and disadvantaged families with at least one child under the age of five in the East Dorset area - supported for a period of at least six months.	Recommend decline - in line with the Council's existing grant policy, Points 3 to 3.6.
<u>Life Education Wessex</u>	£350	£0	Registered charity. Undertakes range of fundraising events/applications. Delivery partner of the UK's leading health, drug, and emotional well-being education programme 'Coram Life Education' to children aged 3–13 years.	Recommend decline - in line with the Council's existing grant policy, Points 3 to 3.6.
<u>Swanage Skatepark Community Project</u>	£500	£500	Community group/project. Raising funds to be able to host a 'Skatepark Community Day', the first of its kind to be held in Purbeck. The one day event will provide focused physical activity and encourage new hobbies for the younger generation.	Recommend approval. Benefit to local community's/children's health and wellbeing, social activities. The Group's drive and fundraising efforts are to be congratulated.
<u>Swanage Town Band</u>	£150	£150	Committee run (by members). The Town Band provides the local community and visitors alike with live music at local events, promoting the practice and enjoyment.	Recommend approval. Benefit to the local community's health and wellbeing (free events/social activities). In support of funding the capital purchase (of new music).

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

That the Town Council approves the
recommendations of the Grants Panel from its
meeting held on 24th January 2024, as set out in the
table above.

Attention was drawn to discussions held at the Grants Panel Meeting, as detailed in
the briefing paper, regarding consideration being given to regular/annual donations to local
volunteer/community groups, subject to appropriate eligibility guidelines being met, to help
protect the invaluable services provided by these groups in the future. It was, therefore,
AGREED:-

That the Grants Panel be asked to review the
Council's grants and donations policy and report its
recommendations to a future meeting.

193. **Sandbanks Ferry proposed increase in tolls – To consider making representation to
Secretary of State for Transport**

Members considered the contents of a briefing paper which outlined the
proposals from the operating company of the Sandbanks Ferry to increase tolls for all
classes of vehicle and reduce the discounts on bulk ticket purchases. It was noted that the
deadline to lodge an objection with the Secretary of State for Transport was 22nd March
2024.

A discussion ensued around the potential for joint working with Dorset Council
and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, as the Council had done in 2020.
Whilst Members welcomed the potential for joint working, concern was expressed that
any commitment to incur costs in connection with legal representation at a public inquiry
would have to be negotiated on a basis that was fair to Swanage Town Council.

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

To object to the application from the Bournemouth-
Swanage Motor Road and Ferry Company to
increase its tolls, to explore joint working with other
councils and to grant delegated authority to the
Planning and Consultation Committee to agree the
grounds for objection and make a submission to the
Secretary of State for Transport.

Given the part that he had played in preparations for previous public inquiries into
proposed toll increases, it was agreed that Councillor Bishop would be invited to
participate in discussions at the next meeting of the Planning and Consultation Committee,
being held on Monday 4th March 2024, to formulate the letter of objection.

194. **VAT – To consider exercising Option to Tax on Hardstanding, Shore Road**

Further to Minute No. 158 of the Council Meeting held on 18th December 2023,
consideration was given to a briefing paper, prepared by the Town Clerk, which
considered the benefits of opting to tax the hardstanding in connection with the award of
concessions, given that it is currently anticipated that the Council will have to incur
expenditure to prepare the sites in advance of the concessions taking up occupation.
Attention was drawn to the content of VAT Notice 742A – *Opting to tax land and
buildings*.

Members acknowledged the importance of taking appropriate steps to protect the Council's financial position in respect of being able to reclaim VAT in connection with expenditure on exempt supplies. It was, therefore, proposed by Councillor Suttle, seconded by Councillor Bonfield and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Town Council authorises officers to take the necessary steps to opt to tax the hardstanding on Shore Road, seeking permission from HMRC and taking specialist advice if required.

195. **To consider date of parish assembly 2024**

Members noted that being an election year the Annual Parish Assembly would need to be held outside of the pre-election period, beginning on Monday 11th March 2024, and after the date of the Annual Council meeting being held on 13th May 2024. It was therefore AGREED:-

That the date of the Annual Parish Assembly be held in late May 2024 with a date to be confirmed in due course.

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

(a) **Emergency Health Services**

It was anticipated that a response to the FOI request that had recently been sent to SWAST, seeking data in relation to the number of call outs of the ambulance car, together with staffing levels, for the period July to December 2023, should be received prior to the next Council meeting. It was also hoped that a letter that had been drafted to the NHS seeking further information on future plans for emergency health services would soon be sent.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, 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 items 8 and 9 for reasons of legal and commercial confidentiality.

197. **Procurement**

(a) **Electric Vehicle – To consider purchase options.**

Members considered a briefing paper prepared by the Assets and Compliance Manager which set out purchase options with regards to a new electric dropside vehicle. It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Harris and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

To authorise placing an order for a Ford Transit Leader Single Chassis Cab 350 L3 electric dropside vehicle for the sum of £43,945.86 via the Halton Housing Fleet Procurement Framework - Lot 3, and to place one of the Nissan Cabstar diesel vehicles up for auction upon delivery of the new vehicle.

198. **Concessions on Town Council property – Update and consideration of next steps**

Further to Minute No. 188 of the Council Meeting held on 29th January 2024, consideration was given to a briefing paper prepared by the Visitor Services and Business Development Manager, which provided an update on the award of the seafront concessions and related matters.

Particular attention was drawn to the fact that due to changed circumstances, and a number of complicating factors in connection with the site, the business that had submitted the highest scoring expression of interest for the North Beach Kiosk concession had withdrawn from the process. Consideration was given to the potential options for the future of this site, given its physical limitations and the challenges arising from climate change. It was also noted that an approach had been received from the RNLI to relocate their lifeguard base to this part of the beach to enhance the lifeguards' line of sight across the designated swimming zone. It was proposed by Councillor Suttle, seconded by Councillor Finch and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That the Town Council should not seek any further commercial interest in the North Beach Kiosk base and that consideration should be given to the potential for the RNLI lifeguard hut to be relocated to this part of the beach.

It was **FURTHER RESOLVED:-**

That delegated authority be granted to officers to take what steps are required in respect of the removal of the existing wooden kiosk staging from the beach.

Acknowledging that this decision would reduce the Council's budgeted income, consideration was given to the other commercial opportunities that the Council had advertised in the autumn of 2023. It was noted that there remained the potential for a catering concession at Main Beach Car Park, although it was recognised that any invitation for expressions of interest would have to be managed alongside officers' other workload, in accordance with the Council's agreed priorities. It was recognised that, given the timetable adopted in respect of the seafront concessions, it was unlikely that any additional concessions would be in place for the 2024 summer season. It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Suttle and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That delegated authority be granted to officers to re-release a call for expressions of interest in operating a catering concession at Main Beach carpark.

The Meeting closed at 7.45 p.m.
