

Minutes of a Meeting of the **TOURISM COMMITTEE**
held at the Town Hall on **MONDAY 2ND MARCH 2015**
at **10.00 a.m.**

Chairman: -

Councillor I Brown

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor Mrs C Bartlett

Swanage Town Council

Councillor M Bonfield

Swanage Town Council

Councillor Mrs G Marsh

Swanage Town Council

Councillor M Whitwam

Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives:-

Miss K Black

Durlston Country Park

Mrs K Delahay

Swanage & Purbeck Hospitality Association

PC K Hickman

Dorset Police

PCSO I Leslie

Dorset Police

Mr P Sykes

Swanage Railway Co. Ltd. and

Swanage & Purbeck Hospitality Association

Also Present: -

Dr M Ayres

Town Clerk

Miss N Clark

Management Support Officer

Mrs C Hooper

Tourist Information Centre Supervisor

Miss H Lagden

Purbeck District Council

Public Participation Time

There were six members of the public present.

The following matters were raised during Public Participation Time:-

- A short presentation was given regarding the Swanage and Purbeck Sculpture Trail. Funding was in place for this initiative and permission was now being sought to find appropriate places in and around Swanage to erect permanent stone carvings and sculptures.
- The Purbeck Marathon – it was reported that the event organisers would be contacting local landowners regarding the possibility of permanently marking the route of the marathon, with a series of way markers and mile markers. A request was made for start and finish markers to be installed on the Downs and Sandpit Field.
- Swanage Town Crier – a short presentation and overview was given of Town Crier competitions and World Championships that had previously been held, and a request was made for the Council to consider supporting a weekend-long Town Crier event and competition to be held in Swanage in 2016.

1) Apologies

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from Councillors Mrs Patrick, Poultney and Wiggins, and Mrs C Finch (Chamber of Trade).

2) **Declarations Of Interest**

Members were invited to declare their interest under the Code of Conduct as defined by regulations made under section 30 (3) of the Localism Act 2011.

There were no declarations to record on this occasion.

3) **Matters arising from Minutes of the Tourism Committee Meeting held on 7th November 2014**

There were no matters arising.

4) **Report from the Meeting of the Beach Management Sub-Committee held on 25th February 2015**

Councillor Bonfield reported that the meeting had been very well attended and it had been an enjoyable afternoon. Pupils from St Mary's Catholic Primary School had been invited to attend the meeting and they took the opportunity to ask the Sub-Committee various questions during Public Participation Time.

Wessex Water – an overview was given of an email received from Wessex Water which advised that they were planning to make the improvements to the Ulwell stream outfall during the 2015/16 financial year, although construction dates were not known as yet. A further update would follow.

Beach Recharge – an overview was given of an email received from Purbeck District Council (PDC). It was reported that the recharge at Poole had gone ahead but because of an objection which had been raised by Natural England it was not possible for Swanage to take part in the pilot study. Officers from PDC, Poole Borough Council and the Environment Agency would be exploring if they could find a way ahead and possibly undertake such a scheme in the future.

Enforcement Officer (on the water)/Budget 2015/16 – it was reported that PDC had made a small increase to the budget for this season, although the contract had not yet been issued. A further update would follow.

Inflatable tenders landing on the beach – further to a letter of request received for access to Main Beach by a non-motorised dinghy, it was reported that the general consensus of Sub-Committee Members was that there should be designated 'dinghy landing areas', namely at Main Beach (north-side of the jetty/clock tower), the Stone Quay and Ocean Bay. The provision of lockers for a small fee, for storage of life jackets and belongings whilst dinghy owners were ashore, was also discussed. This had been trialled at Salcombe and had proved successful. It was therefore proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by the Chairman and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

That approval in principle be given and that officers be authorised to explore available options for establishing landing areas and lockers at appropriate locations.

5) **Events**

a) **Town Crier Contest – consideration of request to hold an event in 2016**

Further to the presentation given in Public Participation Time, a brief outline was given by the Chairman of a letter that had been received from the Swanage Town Crier, which detailed achievements to date and included the request for consideration to hold a weekend-long event in 2016. A discussion ensued and the Committee confirmed that they would wish to support such an event. However, the general consensus was that the possibility of working with a nearby authority to run a 'Purbeck event' should be explored. It was therefore **AGREED:**

That the Town Crier should be asked to make contact with the Guild of Town Criers to discuss the proposed event and then provide details and

costs of holding the event to the Committee for further consideration before an approach was made to the neighbouring authority and a decision made.

b) Purbeck Marathon 2015

i) Consideration of request received for the 2015 event

Further to the request given in Public Participation Time, the Chairman gave an overview of a letter received from the marathon organisers detailing the events planned for 20th September 2015 and requesting permission to use Prince Albert Gardens and The Downs as the race start area, and Sandpit Field as the race finish area and ‘Charity Village’. The event would possibly be expanded this year with the addition of a shorter 16.5 mile race and a ‘fun run’ on the same day.

A discussion ensued and the Committee agreed that this was a very popular event which brought visitors to the town. However, clarification was required regarding the details of the proposed ‘Charity Village’ before a decision could be made.

To enable this to be given, the Chairman invoked Standing Order No. 69 so as to allow members of the public to address the Meeting.

The meeting re-convened at 10.25 a.m.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Bartlett, seconded by the Chairman and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

That the request for the use of Town Council facilities for the 2015 event be approved for one year only, subject to compliance with the Town Council’s standard requirements for event organisers.

It was further **AGREED:**

That proposals for future years would have to be discussed with and assessed by the Town Council on a year by year basis.

ii) Consideration of request received for permanent route start and finish markers

Further to the request made in Public Participation Time, consideration was given to the possibility of permanent marathon start and finish markers. The markers would be carved in Purbeck stone and it was possible that these could be made in conjunction with the Swanage and Purbeck Art Trail.

Although the Committee agreed that they would wish to support this request, it was felt that further information would be required before a final decision could be made.

To enable this to be given, the Chairman invoked Standing Order No. 69 so as to allow members of the public to address the Meeting.

The meeting re-convened at 10.28 a.m.

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Bonfield and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

That the request for the permanent route start and finish markers be approved in

principle, subject to the receipt of a formal proposal from the event organisers, which should include confirmation of planning permission, details of the dimensions of the markers and materials to be used, and arrangements for their future upkeep.

c) Swanage Carnival and Regatta

i) Consideration of request for promotional stand at Prince Albert Gardens

The Chairman gave a brief overview of a meeting held with Carnival Representatives. A discussion ensued and concern was expressed that the stand should not have a negative impact on the character of the area, and should not obstruct the walkway. It was therefore proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Mrs Bartlett and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

That approval be given in principle for a promotional stand on or near Prince Albert Gardens, subject to the Carnival Committee providing further details.

ii) Consideration of request for car boot sale along closed section of Shore Road

During discussion of this request concerns were raised including the fact that Shore Road was closed for pedestrian and beach/beach hut users' safety during the summer season, that access would possibly be required for emergency services and early morning business deliveries, and that the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) may have to use the area around the old shelter site as temporary office space whilst works are being undertaken at the TIC building.

The question was raised as to whether only one side of Shore Road could be used, or whether an alternative site would be more suitable, e.g. North Beach car park, the Football Club or the Red Lion car park which had previously hosted the car boot sales. It was therefore **AGREED:**

That the Carnival Committee should look to hold the car boot sale at an alternative site in the interests of safety.

6) The Swanage and Purbeck Sculpture Trail – consideration of request received seeking permission to site a new sculpture

Further to the presentation given in Public Participation Time, the Chairman referred to the letter of request received seeking permission to site a permanent new sculpture in the town. A discussion ensued and the Committee was in agreement that this initiative should be supported, and would benefit the town and tourism. Local artists and sculptors, natural resources and stone would be used.

It was noted that there were many local artists and sculptors in Purbeck who worked hard to raise the profile of Swanage during Purbeck Art Weeks and other such events. As alluded to in Public Participation Time, it was also possible that this project could marry well with the Purbeck Marathon plans. Thanks were given by the Committee to the Trail organisers.

It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Mrs Bartlett and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

That approval be given in principle to place a sculpture on Town Council property, subject to suitable site(s) being agreed and planning regulations being complied with.

7) **Swanage Tourist Information Centre – Social Media Policy (Facebook/Twitter feeds)**

A copy of an exemplar Social Media Policy document had been circulated with the Agenda for information purposes. It was reported that the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) Supervisor had been using Twitter on a trial basis after having attended a presentation at ‘Twitter Central’, in conjunction with Visit England, on a trial undertaken in other towns to promote tourism.

Visit England had been encouraging more use of Twitter and this had also been useful in getting important messages and information out to the public. It was noted that the TIC now had over 1,500 followers on Facebook and Twitter, from all over the world, and it was felt that it was an important tool not just to promote the town and tourism, but also to share information quickly e.g. emergency situations. The TIC was therefore seeking approval to continue use of social media and move forward with the Visit England scheme. It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Bonfield and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

TO RECOMMEND:

That authority be granted to the Tourist Information Centre Supervisor to operate official Swanage Town Council tourism Facebook and Twitter accounts, subject to Council approval of a tailored Social Media Policy.

It was further AGREED:

That once operational, permission be granted for the Town Council to sign up to the Visit England Twitter scheme.

8) **Accessible Tourism – consideration of request for a Talking QR:code**

It was reported that this innovative audio service had been developed to assist people who were print disabled, through literacy or language difficulties or poor sight, to independently access information, such as venue and visitor information, instructions and menus, without having to locate and ask a member of staff, or ask somebody else to read the information to them. A QR:code reader was often already pre-loaded on smartphones and once a QR:code was scanned the smartphone would discreetly play the information using a human voice, providing a quality solution to enhance visitor experience. The VisitDorset website had a code and it was felt that it gave a professional look.

A discussion ensued regarding suitable sites in and around the town for QR:codes, including car parks and signs, e.g. to direct tourists to visitor attractions and give details of ‘today’s events’, the TIC page on VisitDorset and in the Swanage & Purbeck Holiday Guide. It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Mrs Bartlett and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That the Committee fully support investigation of Talking QR:code services for the town, to be considered further once a formal proposal had been received from Tourist Information Centre and Purbeck District Council representatives, including location details and cost.

9) **Private Beach Hut Sites – Policy on Waiting List – update**

It was reported that there was a lengthy waiting list for private beach hut sites. It

was explained to the meeting that the beach huts were privately owned and were situated on Council-owned land, under annual licences.

Following a complaint received regarding the current waiting list system, it had been agreed that a formal review of the private beach hut site waiting list policy, including matters such as how offers of a site are made and the steps to be taken when people declined such an offer, needed to be undertaken. A discussion ensued and it was felt that the list should be further reviewed to ensure that those registered were still interested in renting a site as many people's circumstances could have changed and they no longer wished to remain on the waiting list, which could significantly reduce it.

Committee Members were in agreement that the waiting list should be closed and a letter written to everyone on the list to ask whether they were still interested in renting a site.

It was further agreed that in view of the minimal cost of having a site the policy should be amended to make clear that upon refusal of an offer of a site that person should then be removed from the list altogether. It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Mrs Bartlett and **RESOLVED NANIMOUSLY:**

That the current private beach hut sites waiting list be closed until further notice and a letter sent to all people on the list to see if they were still interested in renting a site, confirmation of the amended waiting list policy to be included within the letter making it clear that if the offer of a site was refused then that person would be removed from the waiting list.

Given the length of waiting list, it was **AGREED:**

That the Town Clerk write to the District Engineer to explore the possibility of providing additional beach hut sites on the beach.

10) Beach Hut Lettings – confirmation of delegation arrangements to Tourist Information Centre Supervisor

Consideration was given to a request for the delegation of beach hut lettings arrangements to the TIC Supervisor. It was felt that that the Town Council should maximise publicity and occupation of the new beach huts. It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Bartlett and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

That delegated authority be granted to the TIC Supervisor to maximise publicity and occupancy rates of the new beach huts, to include measures such as promotional offers and raffle prizes.

11) Swanage Value of Tourism Data

Consideration was given to the acquisition of data for the purpose of understanding the contribution of tourism to the local economy. A copy of the Swanage Tourism Summary 2013, by Purbeck District Council, had been circulated with the Agenda for information purposes.

The general consensus was that insufficient data was currently held to accurately follow business trends, and it was also felt that this type of data may attract businesses to the area in the future, could be included in Business Plans, and could also inform local planning policy. The data was a year behind, with 2014 figures being available imminently. The cost for this tailored data was £250 per annum.

It was proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Whitwam and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That the Committee support acquisition of the tourism data, to be funded from within existing budgets.

12) **Tourism Reports**

Mrs C Hooper, Tourist Information Centre Supervisor, reported on the following matters:-

a) **Future Events – Planning ahead**

It was reported that the Annual Events Organisers' Meeting had been held last week. Representatives from the Town and District Councils, Dorset Police, the Fire Service, event planners and road and safety advisory groups were invited to these meetings to discuss how each organisation could assist each other with the event planning process. All event organisers are advised to attend a Safety Advisory Group meeting so that all emergency services are notified of relevant information pertaining to the events being held. To prevent the risk of events clashing, event organisers were also advised to provide dates for up to three years ahead and to have a 'plan B' in case of any unforeseen issues, e.g. adverse weather conditions.

b) **Swanage Fish Festival - 5th – 7th June 2015**

Marketing material would be going 'live' this week (website, social media and posters). Plans were going well, there would be a cooking book and event brochure. Please see website for full details of the event www.swanagefishfest.org.

c) **VisitEngland – Twitter Scheme**

Further to Agenda Item 7, it was reported that the scheme would be going live imminently and joining paperwork had now been received.

d) **Beach Huts**

Bookings were now being received and the extra row of huts were proving popular. The TIC team were looking forward to the official 'open day' event.

Ms H Lagden, Purbeck Tourism Officer, reported on the following matters:-

a) **Swanage & Purbeck Holiday Guide**

The 2015 edition was now being distributed. It was reported that there had been a reduction in advertising in the guide. It would appear that more people were undertaking online searches instead. The question was therefore being put to PDC that if the guide no longer proved viable then what other alternatives could be considered. Suggestions given included a digital guide online, a leaflet which could be updated regularly giving information on the area and details of accommodation available, and use of Social Media.

b) **VisitDorset Website**

The website was performing well. Broadchurch and Far from the Madding Crowd filming had given website figures a boost, with traffic from all over the world.

c) **Portland Port**

It was reported that a meeting with Portland Port, along with representatives from Swanage Railway and other local tourist attractions, had been very worthwhile. Portland Port were keen to find destinations for their cruise liner passengers and the Railway and Purbeck would be included. Flyers and leaflets would be provided to the passengers and it was hoped that this would boost tourism in the area. This initiative may also be extended to include cruise liner passengers from other ports.

d) **Events**

It was reported that organisations were able to input details of their own events onto the VisitDorset website for up to 10 years ahead, which would assist with planning and prevent any 'clashes' of dates.

13) Updates from Outside Representatives

Swanage Railway

Mr David Rawsthorn, the new Head of Sales and Marketing at Swanage Railway, was introduced to the Committee.

An update report and details of planned events in 2015 had been circulated to Committee Members prior to the meeting. It was reported that 216,267 passengers had travelled on the railway in 2014, beating the previous best total of 212,095 in 2009. An update was given on the trial services between Swanage and Wareham, which were hoped to commence in Spring 2016. The Railway would be driving forward with sales and marketing activities at that time, with the Railway shifting focus to digital media.

Details of an initiative being discussed between a boat operator and holiday park in Poole to market combined boat and train tickets were given. The park had 1,000+ pitches which could mean an increase in visitors to Swanage. Details were also given of a sightseeing bus service from Bournemouth to Poole Quay which would link with these boat trips.

Durlston Country Park

It was reported that it had been an interesting winter, scrub work had been undertaken and work had started at the old tip site. It was advised that the emergency telephone by the lighthouse was now working again.

A varied events programme was coming up and eight boat trips had been booked for Friday evenings during the summer season. The bus service would be running again this year between May – September, although there was still £1,000 funding to raise. The Park would be keen to have half-hourly services.

Swanage & Purbeck Hospitality Association

It was reported that the Chairman had been away on business for an extended period recently. The S&PHA would be keen to meet up with the Chamber of Trade to discuss how the organisations could possibly work together in the future.

Swanage Fish Festival

It was reported that there would be folk music, a barbecue and bar at Prince Albert Gardens on the evening of Saturday 6th June 2015, and music and stalls on Sunday 7th June 2015. There would also be a barbecue at Durlston Castle on the Sunday.

Switch on Swanage

There would be summer fete with music, a barbecue and bar at Prince Albert Gardens on Friday 28th August 2015 and Saturday 29th August 2015.

14) Items of Information and Matters for Forthcoming Agendas

- a) **Official Opening of New Beach Huts – Saturday 14th March 2015** – it was reported that the official opening would be held on 14th March 2015 between 11.00 a.m. and 2.00 p.m. A raffle would be held with a chance to win prizes including the use of a beach hut for a week out of season and a full valet with a voucher for a free MOT at any Westover location.
- b) **Tourism Committee Chairman** – the Chairman reported that this would be his last Committee Meeting. The Committee gave thanks to the Chairman for his dedication and work on behalf of the Committee during his time in office.
- c) **Swanage & Purbeck Holiday Guide 2015** – further to the comments made by the Purbeck Tourism Officer, a request was made to include the guide as an Agenda Item at a future Committee Meeting.

15) Provisional Meeting dates for 2015/16

It was provisionally agreed that the meetings should be held on the first Monday in June, November and February each year. It was further agreed that the Beach Management Sub-Committee meetings should be held at least three to four weeks prior to the Tourism Committee meetings to enable the Tourism Committee to review

questions and requests raised, and information provided, in more depth before their meeting. This would also be discussed at the next Beach Management Sub-Committee meeting to be held in June 2015.

A request was made that if Committee Members had any further thoughts or suggestions regarding future meeting dates and times they should contact the Town Council accordingly.

It was therefore noted that provisional meeting dates for the Tourism Committee had been scheduled for:

Monday 1st June 2015 at 10.00 a.m., Monday 2nd November 2015 at 10.00 a.m. and Monday 1st February 2016 at 10.00 a.m.

The Meeting closed at 11.25 a.m.
