

Minutes of the Meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT & GREEN SPACES COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, High Street, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY, 12th FEBRUARY 2025** at **2.15 p.m.**

Chairman: -

Councillor D Monkhouse

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor T Foster

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Moreton

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Tomes

Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives: -

Ms K Black

Durlston Country Park

Ms A Brocklesby

National Trust

Ms K Brookes

Dorset Council

Mr P Floyd

Sustainable Swanage

Mr L Luke

Planet Purbeck

Mr A Mears

Wessex Water

Mrs J Owens

Sustainable Swanage

Also in attendance: -

Dr M Ayres

Town Clerk

Mr C Milmer

Visitor Services and Business

Development Manager (VSBDM)

Ms G Percival

Assets & Compliance Manager

Mr G Roman

Grounds & Estates Manager

Mr M Snowden

Assets & Compliance Support Officer

Mr A Young

Purbeck Energy Group

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

Public Participation Time

There were no matters raised.

1) Apologies

Apologies for their inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillors Coward and Dorrington, Mr D Pratten (Beach Buddies) and Mr F Roberts (Swanage Landers).

2) 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.

No declarations were made on this occasion.

3) Matters arising from the Meeting of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee held on 23rd October 2024

A brief update was provided further to Minute Nos 5, 6 and 10.

Minute No. 12 - An update was provided regarding a recent meeting between Dorset Council Waste Services and the Waste Management working party. During the meeting, assurances were given that the town would receive an increased number of visits from the mechanical road sweeper, along with a more responsive approach to addressing any reported issues.

4) Review of the Carbon Neutral target for 2030 - Update

a) Liaison with other Councils

Further to Minute No. 15 of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting held on 23rd October 2024, the Chairman reported that both Weymouth and Bridport Town Councils had been contacted to discuss their approaches to Carbon Neutral targets and their confidence in achieving them. Interest had been expressed in collaborative working among coastal towns to advance progress and standardise target reviews.

The Climate Sector Support Officer from Dorset Council outlined her role in supporting schools, town & parish councils, and public sector organisations in tackling climate change, including joint working to implement Dorset Council's environmental goals. A recent survey highlighted the need for greater collaboration and the sharing of knowledge between councils. As a result, a sustainability ambassador programme was being developed to bring together representatives from interested town & parish councils, creating a forum for exchanging ideas and best practices.

b) Carbon Literacy Training

It was reported that as part of the Town Council's commitment to addressing the climate crisis, training was being offered to all staff and councillors. It was noted that the Environmental Action Plan contained a commitment to provide climate crisis training by 2025. In that respect a one-day interactive course on carbon literacy had been sourced. The content would be tailored to the local area, using real-life examples to ensure the training is relevant.

c) Energy efficiency building audit

A representative from the Purbeck Energy Group reported on recent site assessments conducted with the support of councillors, the VSBDM, and the Assets & Compliance Manager. The assessments aimed to identify further steps to improve the energy efficiency of council-owned assets.

While some buildings, due to their age or construction, would be challenging or costly to upgrade, several cost-effective improvements were identified that could provide noticeable benefits. The VSBDM confirmed that these recommendations would be compiled into a report, including a plan and specifications, to support the procurement process. This report would be presented at a forthcoming meeting for consideration.

5) Motion for the Ocean Action Plan - Update

Further to Minute No. 7 of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting held on 23rd October 2024, the VSBDM reported progress on the development of the Motion for the Ocean Action Plan. Consultation had taken place with a marine scientist familiar with the local area. It was envisaged that the first phase of the plan would involve third-party specialists preparing reports to enhance understanding of biodiversity in Swanage Bay and serve as a foundation for public consultation. It had been suggested that a 'Bio-Blitz', supported by local groups, could be arranged to help document marine life over a set period.

The Climate Sector Support Officer from Dorset Council noted that the Climate Ambassador Project could offer students from local schools and colleges the chance to participate via work experience and assistance with relevant projects. The National Trust representative suggested local groups and organisations that could support this initiative.

6) Water Quality – Update further to discussion at Coastal Change and Beach Management Advisory Committee

Further to Minute No. 5 of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting held on 23rd October 2024 and a subsequent meeting of the Coastal Change and Beach Management Advisory Committee, consideration was given to a briefing note which provided an update on the installation of a noticeboard outside of the Swanage Information Centre, dedicated to the display of water quality data, and a forthcoming public meeting that had been arranged to provide information on water quality testing, how the local water systems function and provide an opportunity for attendees to meet a representative from Wessex Water.

The Chairman provided an update regarding ongoing discussions with Wessex Water about the monitoring of water quality, and the number of spills from the outflows in both Swanage and Durlston bays. It was reported that there are upcoming changes to the regulations concerning combined rainwater and sewage outflows, including the introduction of a Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan which specifies the maximum number of spills that can occur from an overflow in a specified period of time. Attention was drawn to the use of new technology at Bournemouth, where a SONDE device had been deployed to provide real-time data on bathing water quality. Although it was noted that Swanage was unlikely to be seen by external authorities as a priority location for such a device, support was expressed for this technology to be deployed locally and further information would be provided to a future meeting.

The representative from Wessex Water provided context to some of the data detailed in the briefing note for this agenda item and highlighted some of the challenges as a result of surface water flowing into the sewer network. Attention was drawn to Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 which sets out the requirement for developers to divert surface rainwater to rivers and streams and prevent the flow of additional surface water into the sewer system. It was noted that this was yet to be implemented by central government, and consideration was given to a recommendation of the Coastal Change & Beach Management Committee that a letter should be sent to relevant authorities in support of this legislation being applied. After a brief discussion, it was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Tomes and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That the Council writes to the relevant authorities, including the local MP, in support of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 being implemented in a timely manner.

7) Sustainable Swanage - Update

The representative of Sustainable Swanage provided an update on recent and forthcoming activities, which included:

- Further to the public meeting held in September 2024, entitled “Repair and Reuse”, the project had now been formally set up with a co-ordinator in place and would be supported by the Swanage & Purbeck Development Trust.
- Following the public meeting held in November 2024, regarding the Swanage Streams Partnership, it was proposed that an oral history project would be established to properly record memories of this important environment. Consideration would also be given to curating an exhibition on the history of the watercourses in this area.
- A public meeting to establish a new recycling group would be held in July 2025 concentrating on items not currently recycled by Dorset Council’s household recycling service.

- A public meeting would be held in September 2025, focusing on local produce and reducing food waste. It aims to highlight local groups that redistribute unsold food from cafés, restaurants, and supermarkets to those in need.
- A public meeting would be held in October 2025 to focus on trees in the area and what can be done to prevent their unnecessary removal and promote additional tree planting.
- A public meeting would be held in November 2025 providing updates on the progress of the Swanage Streams Partnership.

Members were encouraged to attend an upcoming meeting on the topic of the local natural environment to be held on 8th April 2025. Updates would be provided by Swanage Town Council’s Grounds and Estates Manager and by the “Friends of the Downs” on recent environmental work.

8) Environment Action Plan update on matters not otherwise included on the agenda

The VSBDM reported on the current activities being undertaken in support of delivering the Environmental Action Plan, which included:

- The implementation of the Tree Warden Scheme;
- An audit of Town-Council-managed hedges in the area;
- Supporting Dorset Waste Services to increase the household recycling rates across Swanage;
- Ongoing works to deliver the Charging Ahead scheme and increase the availability of electric vehicle charging facilities in council-owned car parks.

9) Greenspaces Strategy – Greenspaces Questionnaire

Further to Minute No. 10 of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting held on 23rd October 2024, the Assets & Compliance Manager provided an update on the recently published public greenspace questionnaire. The survey aimed to look at the various green spaces used by the public, how often they were used and in the identification of key issues which prevented full use or enjoyment of those areas. The survey had now closed and the level of response had been positive. A full report including the proposed next steps would be presented to the next meeting of this committee.

10) Community engagement proposals for Greenspaces

Consideration was given to proposals submitted by Planet Purbeck in respect of the greenspace review and community engagement regarding the use of King George’s Field, Queen Elizabeth II (Forres) Field, and Herston Community Field. It was stated that the review aimed to better understand usage and explore improvements for both people and wildlife.

a) King Georges Field and QEII Field user engagement proposal

The representative from Planet Purbeck highlighted the importance of identifying existing features, understanding current usage, and optimising areas not designated for the Environment Agency, Wessex Water, car parking, or football pitches.

b) Herston Community Field Proposal

The representative of Planet Purbeck reported that community engagement regarding Herston Community Field would be undertaken in collaboration with the National Trust due to that organisation utilising the green space for previous events. The two organisations would be working together to fully understand ways that the area can be enhanced and to gain insight into users’ aspirations for the future use of the site.

Further to a brief discussion about the cost estimates contained in Planet Purbeck’s proposal and the Town Council’s available budget, it was proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Moreton and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That Planet Purbeck be commissioned to undertake the King George's Field and Queen Elizabeth II (Forres) Field user engagement consultation, together with the Herston Community Field community engagement consultation, as a single project within the total budget of £7,150.

Thanks were given to Planet Purbeck for compiling a thorough proposal.

11) The Swanage Downs and Peveril Point – 2024 review and plans for 2025

The Grounds and Estates Manager provided an update on the current management plan for this green space which aims to create a balance between public use and wildlife friendly areas. This had been achieved through the utilisation of council resources and with contributions and assistance from volunteer groups, such as the Friends of the Downs. A number of surveys had been conducted over a 26-week period, which had identified 542 butterflies, 9 species of grasses and 42 species of wildflowers.

Community days had been held to inform the public about ongoing work and volunteers and interested residents had received training in tree and wildflower identification, as well as bee, butterfly, and insect recognition.

The 2025 management plan will continue the 2024 approach, including designated area maintenance, autumn cut-and-collect of long grass, and increased tree planting near the wooded section of the Downs.

Thanks were extended to the Grounds & Estates Manager and volunteers for their dedication and hard work.

12) Waste Management

a) Update on activities from Beach Buddies

Members noted the information circulated prior to the meeting in which it was reported that in 2024, 60 beach cleans had been conducted with a total weight of collected litter and debris of 1,068 kg. To date in 2025, 138 kg of litter and debris had been collected over four beach cleans.

The Chairman thanked the Beach Buddies team for their hard work.

b) Update on activities from Swanage Landers

The Swanage Landers representative was unable to attend and therefore an update would be provided at a future meeting.

13) Environmental Engagement Budget

a) 2024–25 Budget – Update

Members noted that the agreed budget allocation for the 2024-25 financial period was £20,000, with £7,150 remaining to deliver the community engagement proposals submitted by Planet Purbeck, approved under Minute No. 10 above.

b) 2025–26 Budget – Proposals

Members received a report detailing an indicative proposed budget allocation of the environmental engagement budget for 2025-26 and noted the contents, which would be further reviewed at a future meeting.

14) Items of information and matters for forthcoming agendas

a) Town Council Energy Footprint Report - 2024

The VSBDM reported that this item would be brought to a forthcoming meeting.

b) Consideration of energy efficiencies for Council Buildings

Further to the update provided under Minute No. 4(c), it was noted that this item would be brought back to a future meeting.

c) **Public conveniences – Water efficiency surveys**

The Assets & Compliance Manager reported that the Commercial Team at Wessex Water had assisted in carrying out a water efficiency survey on the Town Council's public conveniences in February 2025. The report would be brought to a forthcoming meeting.

15) **Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting had been provisionally scheduled for 2.15 p.m. on Wednesday 25th June 2025.

The Meeting closed at 4.00 p.m.
