

Minutes of the Meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT & GREEN SPACES COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, High Street, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY, 26th JUNE 2024** at **2.15 p.m.**

Chairman: -

Councillor D Monkhouse

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor J Dorrington

Swanage Town Council (until 3.20 p.m.)

Councillor C Moreton

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Sutton

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Tomes

Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives: -

Mrs J Owens

Sustainable Swanage

Mr F Roberts

Swanage Landers

Mr D Skinner

Planet Purbeck

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 M Snowdon

Assets & Compliance Support Officer

There was one representative of the press 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 Councillor Foster, Councillor Coward, Mr D Pratten (Beach Buddies), Ms T Churcher (National Trust), Mr B Bleese (Dorset Wildlife Trust) and Ms K Black (Durlston Country Park).

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 28th February 2024

Further to Minute No. 4 of the meeting of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee held on 28th February 2024, the Assets & Compliance Manager reported that a contract has been awarded for seaweed management and that the relevant plan had been implemented. It was noted that several signs have been displayed to inform the public of the new approach to seaweed on the beach.

4) Review of the Corporate Plan: Protecting the Natural Environment and addressing the Climate Crisis

The Town Clerk presented an overview of the process for reviewing the Corporate Plan for the period 2025-29, following the local elections last May. As a first step each of the Council's standing committees were being asked to review the relevant page within the existing plan to highlight any potential changes. Later in the year there would be a councillor workshop and public engagement, prior to a draft revised plan being brought before the Finance & Governance Committee. The importance of inviting contributions from each committee's outside representatives was highlighted.

Members briefly reviewed the 'Protecting the Natural Environment and Addressing the Climate Crisis' section of the Corporate Plan, which included a commitment to supporting Sustainable Swanage and the various community projects that it had helped to establish. After a brief discussion, it was noted that the ongoing Rivers Project and the Motion for the Ocean declaration should be considered for inclusion in the revised Corporate Plan as priority projects.

5) Environment Action Plan – Review of progress to date and consideration of future approach

The VSBDM briefly introduced the current Environmental Action Plan (Version 11) which had evolved since its first iteration in 2020. As new actions were identified, the document had been updated in consultation with the relevant working party. It was noted that while solid progress had been made, with many actions now completed, others were still in progress. It was acknowledged that now would be an opportune time to start reviewing the content of the plan and to establish if there are any new actions which need to be included. It was suggested that a shorter list of targeted actions may provide the best way forward.

The Chairman noted that in the first instance the review would be undertaken by the Environmental Policy and Action Plan working party, prior to a revised version being brought back before the Environment and Green Spaces Committee for consideration.

6) Sustainable Swanage - Update

The representative for Sustainable Swanage reported that the group had assisted in the setting up of multiple local community projects focusing on Energy Conservation, Active Travel and Repair and Reuse under the direction of Sarah Spurling, the highly dedicated project officer, who had now moved on to a new role. With the continued support of the Town Council, Sustainable Swanage had engaged Planet Purbeck to put in place a programme of events for the next 12 months. It was noted that one of the critical issues facing Sustainable Swanage is finding volunteers who have the time and are willing to co-ordinate and run new project groups. A brief progress update was given on the following work streams.

- i) Repair and Reuse group has been successful but would like to expand into electrical and mechanical upcycling. This would require finding individuals with the necessary skills or experience.
- ii) Healthy Homes group has assisted a lot of homeowners in Swanage with guidance on solar panel installations, insulation advice and signposting to other organisations that could help.
- iii) Improving our Water Quality – A public meeting in late 2023 had led to the creation of the Swan Brook Partnership which was now in the process of widening its scope to include the Ulwell water system. It was noted that a public meeting scheduled for November 2024 may fit in with the Motion for the Ocean declaration if it were to be adopted by the Town Council.
- iv) In the last year, Youth Climate Vision had worked with the Swanage School to assist in the planting of trees and developing designated areas in an ecologically friendly way. In the coming months they were planning to continue to work with local schools to establish what the expectations of local children are, regarding climate change and biodiversity.

- v) Greening & Biodiversity group has assisted with the planting of trees along Victoria Avenue and on Prospect Green. They had also developed information leaflets and a tree trail walk around Swanage.

It was noted that the Friends of the Downs were holding an Open Day on 29th June 2024 in support of the Peveril Point and the Downs Local Nature Reserve. This would include guided walks, talks on the monitoring of wildlife and various other activities. This was being strongly supported by the Town Council's operations team and a number of other groups would also be in attendance, including Swanage Swift Group and Greengage Nursery.

7) **Motion for the Ocean – To consider draft declaration**

The Chairman presented a draft declaration for the Motion for the Ocean initiative which had been formulated by the Environmental Policy and Action Plan working party. The model declaration had been amended to tailor it to Swanage and the challenges to ocean recovery in this area. If adopted, an action plan would be developed over a 12-month period and would benefit from the engagement of local stakeholders and their experience and knowledge.

Following a brief discussion, it was agreed that the implications of some of the commitments contained in the draft declaration would need to be better understood prior to the adoption of the draft declaration being considered at the council meeting to be held on 22nd July. It was proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Tomes and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

TO RECOMMEND:

That the draft Motion for the Ocean declaration be approved and adopted, subject to clarification being provided regarding the implications of some of the commitments set out therein, and that the Environmental Policy and Action Plan working party be tasked with the development of a Motion for the Ocean action plan within twelve months.

8) **Swanage Town Council's Energy Footprint – To receive 2023 report**

The VSBDM presented the Energy Footprint Report for 2023, which also contained a comparison with data from 2022, when the analysis first commenced. The report detailed energy use, water use and waste generated by the Town Council over a 12-month period. It was noted that the data suggests that there was a 5 per cent reduction in carbon emissions year-on-year, but it was noted that there was a significant degree of uncertainty about this due to changes in billing and other factors. Looking towards the next 12 months, it was anticipated that a further reduction in energy usage will be seen as more of the actions contained within the Environmental Action Plan are implemented.

The Assets and Compliance Manager reported that the installation of Solar Photovoltaic Panels on Council-owned buildings within the town is underway (Environment Policy Action Plan item 2.1) and that low-energy LED lighting would be installed by the end of July 2024. The upcoming replacement of a fossil fuel vehicle with another electric vehicle, which is due to be delivered imminently, was also noted.

9) **Swanage Town Council Greenspaces Strategy – Proposed format for review**

Further to Minute No. 7(a) of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting held on 11th October 2023, the Assets and Compliance Manager presented a briefing note which set out the likely format for the Council's first Greenspaces Strategy. The document was designed to inform the budget setting process, ensure the Council's wider strategic plans and policies are embedded into the management of green spaces and provide a framework for their development enabling input by the public and wider stakeholders. Appendices will include management plans for specific locations. It was noted that a draft copy of the strategy would be presented to a future meeting of the committee.

10) To review Carbon Neutral 2030 target and measures to reduce the Council's energy use

The VSBDM reported on the works that are underway in response to the actions identified in the adopted Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation Action Plan 2030: Council Buildings.

- Installation of low-energy LED lighting in Council buildings.
- Installation of Solar PV panels on the Council Operations Depot and Workshop and Beach Gardens Pavilion. Other potential sites had been discounted due to a number of factors including available roof space, prohibitive costs and planning restrictions due to buildings being located within conservation areas.
- An earmarked reserve has been formed to build up funds for the installation of heat pumps and contributions of £25k a year have been allocated in the budget so that this part of the strategy can potentially be implemented in 2029/30. It was noted that further investigation is required to identify the actual level of energy efficiency that will be delivered by heat pumps considering the age and construction of some Council buildings. If this was not feasible then the reserve could be allocated to other related projects.

Although considerable progress had been made towards reducing the Council's carbon footprint, attention was drawn to the fact that it is unlikely that the Council will reach its Carbon Neutral target by 2030 given some of the difficulties that would need to be overcome. However, it was agreed that the target should remain in place for the time being to concentrate efforts on exploring whether there are ways in which this objective could be met. It was agreed that the Town Council should review the actions taken by other local councils to identify if there were lessons that could be learned from their experiences.

11) Waste Management

a) Update on Dorset Waste Partnership (DWP) Summer schedule

It was reported that the plans agreed with DWP for the summer period are being implemented and proceeding well: collections are taking place every day between 7am and 7pm with only a few exceptions. Additionally, regular road sweeping is now taking place in the town which has reduced the reliance on Town Council funded road sweeping requirements.

b) Update on activities from Beach Buddies

The VSBDM provided an update on behalf of the representative of Beach Buddies which highlighted that the group continues to be well supported by volunteers and receives co-operation from the council operatives and the visitor services team. Up to the end of May 2024, 20 beach cleans had been conducted with an average of 20 volunteers per clean who have removed a total of over 500kg of litter and debris. Additional cleans have been put in place to assist at community events such as the recent skatepark open day.

c) Update on activities from Swanage Landers

The representative of Swanage Landers provided an update on recent activities and confirmed that volunteers are being actively sought to take on certain leadership responsibilities. The importance of this voluntary work to the local environment was highlighted and the Chairman thanked all those engaged in litter clearance for their efforts on behalf of the local community.

Councillor Dorrington left the meeting at 3.20 p.m.

12) Review of representatives on the Committee

The Chairman invited those present to consider whether there were additional outside representatives who had specific areas of expertise that would be of benefit to the Environment and Green Spaces Committee who could be invited to attend future meetings to help deliver the Council's priorities. It was suggested that a representative from Purbeck Energy Group would be a valuable addition to the committee.

It was noted that a recommendation could be made to the Town Council to amend the Terms of Reference for the Environment and Green Spaces Committee to include any new groups invited in the list of outside representatives. Therefore, it was proposed by Councillor Monkhouse, seconded by Councillor Sutton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

TO RECOMMEND:

That Purbeck Energy Group be added to the list of outside representatives in the Terms of Reference for the Environment & Green Spaces Committee.

13) Items of information and matters for forthcoming agendas

a) Rivers Project update

The VSBDM reported that Planet Purbeck had succeeded in securing a grant from Wessex Water to support a project officer for the Rivers Project.

b) Review and update Environmental Budget

The VSBDM reported that the environmental budget will be presented at the next Environment and Green Spaces Committee meeting for review and discussion as part of budget setting for 2025/26.

14) Date of next meeting

Members considered the best time for future committee meetings and it was agreed that they should continue to be held at 2.15 p.m. on Wednesday afternoons. It was noted that the next meeting had been scheduled for 2.15 p.m. on Wednesday 23rd October 2024.

The Meeting closed at 3.30 p.m.
