

Minutes of a Meeting of the **TOURISM AND LOCAL ECONOMY COMMITTEE** held at The Grand Hotel, Burlington Road, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY 27th NOVEMBER 2024** at **2.15 p.m.**

Chairman: -

Councillor C Tomes

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor M Bonfield

Swanage Town Council

Councillor J Dorrington

Swanage Town Council

Councillor T Foster

Swanage Town Council

Councillor J Lejeune

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Moreton

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Sutton

Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives: -

Ms L Bish

Swanage Chamber of Trade

Ms L Egan

Swanage Chamber of Trade

Ms A Hinsull

Accessible Swanage

Mr R Patterson

Swanage Railway

Mr P Sykes

Swanage Railway

Mr M Whitwam

Purbeck Community Rail Partnership

Also Present: -

Dr M Ayres

Town Clerk

Mrs E Evans

Democratic Services Officer

Mr C Milmer

Visitor Services and Business Development Manager

Mrs J Moulder

Business Development Officer

There were four members of the public and one member of the local press present at the meeting.

Public Participation Time

There were no matters raised.

1) **Apologies**

There were no apologies to record.

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.

Agenda Item 12) - Councillor Tomes declared a pecuniary interest under the Code of Conduct by reason of being a private beach hut user.

Agenda Item 12 c) – Councillor Bonfield declared a pecuniary interest under the Code of Conduct by reason of being a boat park user.

3) **Matters arising from the Minutes of the Meeting of the Tourism & Local Economy Committee held on 3rd July 2024**

There were no matters raised.

4) Coastal Change and Beach Management Advisory Committee held on 13th November 2024

a) Matters arising from the Meeting held on 13th November 2024

It was noted that Dorset Council would be reviewing the local byelaws governing activities and regulations related to the use of the sea and coastal areas. The Town Council would work with Dorset Council and further discussion would be held at the meeting of the Swanage and Studland Bay Water Safety Partnership, being held in December.

A query was raised around the revised positioning of the temporary concrete sea defences. In response it was stated that the Environment Agency had provided information at the Coastal Change and Beach Management Advisory Committee meeting held in July 2024 and, as the Pierhead development had been designed with flood protection, the positioning of blocks in the lower High Street was not deemed essential.

A query was raised regarding the options available for beach recharge. In response it was stated that a public consultation was anticipated in February 2025.

b) To note the date of the next meeting as Wednesday 12th February 2025 at 2.15 p.m. at the Town Hall

It was noted that the next meeting of the advisory committee would be held on Wednesday 12th February 2025 at 2.15 p.m. at the Town Hall.

5) Car Parks working party – To consider recommendation regarding Dorset Council’s Restricted Mobility Car Park Permit Scheme

Consideration was given to a briefing paper prepared by the VSBDM which outlined the recommendation of the Car Parks Working Party regarding a Restricted Mobility Car Park Permit. It was noted that the Town Council did not previously offer discounted parking for Blue Badge holders, although accessible parking bays were available in all car parks. The Town Council supports the group ‘Accessible Swanage,’ which advocated adopting a scheme similar to Dorset Council’s Restricted Mobility Scheme.

Dorset Council’s Restricted Mobility Scheme provided free parking benefits for Blue Badge holders who could demonstrate receipt of certain qualifying mobility-related benefits, such as the higher rate mobility components of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment, among others. The scheme also applied to vehicles registered as tax-exempt for disability reasons.

It was stated that administrative challenges and potential GDPR issues prohibited the Town Council implementing its own scheme, but acceptance of Dorset Council’s Restricted Mobility Permits in Town Council owned car parks under similar terms, could be considered. Permit holders were permitted to park for up to three hours free of charge, once daily, provided they displayed the Blue Badge and the Restricted Mobility Permit.

The scheme excluded privately owned car parks, such as the Co-op car park, unless those owners opted to participate. By March 2024, Dorset Council had issued 843 restricted mobility permits, with only a small proportion in Swanage. It was anticipated that local usage of these permits would increase, potentially resulting in minimal reductions in car park income.

Members noted the benefit for residents with substantial mobility impairments and Dorset Council’s clear and transparent scheme. It was stated that if implemented, it might necessitate a review of the Council’s Off-Street Parking Places Order and updating car park signage.

It was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Bonfield and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

TO RECOMMEND

That the Town Council should introduce Dorset Council’s Restricted Mobility Scheme in Town-Council owned car parks.

6) Events - To consider 2026 applications and potential administration charges for events

Members considered the contents of a briefing paper prepared by the VSBDM regarding the provisional approval for events scheduled in 2026 and the potential introduction of administration fees. Members recognised the administrative burden of managing events and considered charging an administration fee to cover these costs. However, it was noted that should the Council charge a hire fee for event fields this would have VAT implications for any future works on these sites and an administration fee would likely need to be charged to recoup costs. Furthermore, the majority of events in Swanage were organised by community or charity groups, however, some were profit-generating businesses or national charity events.

Members discussed the charging element and how it would be implemented, especially for charity and community events. A discussion ensued around the creation of a schedule of charges and delegating the setting of fees for 2025 commercial events to the VSBDM, in consultation with the Events Working Party.

It was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Dorrington and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

TO RECOMMEND

That the Town Council provisionally approves the events scheduled for 2026, subject to any relevant administration fee.

It was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Sutton and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

To explore the possibilities of charging an administration fee for events and to request officers to work with the Events Working Party to develop a proposal to be brought to the next meeting of the Tourism & Local Economy Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Lejeune, seconded by Councillor Bonfield and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That delegated authority be provided to the Visitor Services and Business Development Manager, in consultation with the Events Working Party, for the setting of administration fees for 'commercial' events in 2025.

7) Tourism Marketing - Visit Swanage website update

The VSBDM provided an update regarding the Visit Swanage website, which included:

- The website launched in January 2024 and attracted 2,500 – 3,000 users. In August 2024 the users had increased to 11,000.
- The top five searches on the site were 'What's On', 'Eat and Drink', 'Attractions', 'Shopping' and 'Trails'.
- It was reported that 66% of users accessed the site via a mobile device, 76% were new users and 22% returned throughout the year.
- Initial discussions had been held regarding the 'Motion for the Ocean' and the inclusion of photos from under the sea to encourage visitors/residents to consider what lies beyond the sand. It was also anticipated this initiative would increase ecotourism.
- It was noted that the proposed improvements to the towns signage and a map of trails could be included on the site, providing a unified trail system.

8) Beach Huts – To consider charity beach hut procedure for 2026

The VSBDM provided information about the use of the Charity Beach Huts and proposed future arrangements.

Members noted the challenges in meeting user preferences for specific dates, particularly as most requests centred around Carnival Week. It was noted that the Town Council had allocated two beach huts for charity and community use, with one specifically reserved for schools to support pupils' mental health. Members emphasised the need to balance raising expectations with what could realistically be offered. They also acknowledged the administrative burden of offering one-day options during off-peak periods.

Further to discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Foster and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That delegated authority be provided to the Beach Hut working party to agree the procedure for booking charity beach huts for 2026.

9) Pedestrian Signage - To consider renovation of signs to assist wayfinding around town

Consideration was given to a briefing paper prepared by the VSBDM which outlined issues with the existing wayfinding signage in town. It was noted that the Town Council had worked with the Swanage Chamber of Trade and Commerce to address issues with pedestrian wayfinding signage which had highlighted that the existing black and blue heritage signposts, owned by Dorset Council, required improvements, including repainting, removal of outdated or broken signs, and enhancing directional clarity.

Some signs featured inconsistent colouring, excessive or confusing directional arrows, or insufficient emphasis on toilet locations, while others were damaged or poorly placed. An audit of the signage was being conducted by the Chamber of Trade and Dorset Council. However, major changes to seafront signage would be deferred until further details were known about the planned Green Seafront and coastal defence works, which might provide funding opportunities.

The Council proposed a phased approach:

- **Phase 1:** Repainting all signs in a consistent 'Swanage Blue' colour during the winter of 2024-25, emphasising toilet signage, and removing or replacing outdated signs. Dorset Council had allocated £250 for maintenance, with additional funding or resources potentially provided by Swanage Town Council.
- **Phase 2:** A comprehensive review as part of broader seafront enhancements planned for 2026-2027.

Thanks were provided to the representatives of the Chamber of Trade and Commerce for their work on this matter.

It was proposed by Councillor Moreton, seconded by Councillor Sutton and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That the current black and blue pedestrian signage with a 'Swanage Blue' colour be repainted by the Town Council in the winter of 2024/25, subject to receiving appropriate permissions from Dorset Council.

It was proposed by Councillor Lejeune, seconded by Councillor Dorrington and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That the Town Council works with the Swanage Chamber and Dorset Council to identify and remove signs no longer of value and identify where

additional signs might be required, and if necessary to fund these from a proposed budget in 2025/26.

10) Dorset Town of Culture 2026 – To note approval to support a bid in principle

Further to Minute No. 126 of the Council Meeting held on 18th November 2024, Members noted that the Council had approved in principle to support the submission of a bid for the Dorset Town of Culture 2026.

The proposal would see Swanage Town Council, potentially with support from other parish councils, providing £30,000 alongside an equal amount from Dorset Council to deliver an enhanced cultural offer across the area in 2026. The theme that the bid focuses on is ‘Culture for all!’ with the bid stating, ‘our vision is that cultural activities and events across the area should be accessible to all’. The Mowlem Theatre would be leading on the project. On 2nd December the Council would be notified as to whether the bid submission had reached the second stage of the application process.

Should the bid reach the second stage the intention would be to hold a large workshop with cultural providers and other stakeholders to seek their views regarding the final application which is required to be submitted by 18th January 2025.

11) Consideration of First Aid provision by the Town Council and the role of Beach Warden/Seafront Advisor

Consideration was given to a briefing paper prepared by the VSBDM which set out the existing provision of first aid by Town Council staff and the RNLI lifeguards. It was noted that when the RNLI Lifeguard unit began operations on the beach in 2016, it was understood that first aid on the beach would no longer be provided by the Town Council. Instead, all first aid requests were to be directed to the lifeguards as the primary responders.

It was reported that staff at the Swanage Information Centre were expected to provide basic first aid, such as hot water for weever fish stings and plasters for self-application. However, customers of the Information Centre often expected a higher standard of first aid, which the staff were not trained to deliver. Additionally, event organisers occasionally directed attendees to the Information Centre for first aid assistance.

Members discussed the benefits of enabling staff to provide basic first aid while ensuring that individuals requiring more advanced treatment were appropriately directed to the RNLI Lifeguards, local pharmacies, or hospitals as needed.

It was therefore proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Sutton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Swanage Information Centre provides only basic first aid (i.e. plasters for self-application and hot water for weever fish stings) and support as required to the emergency services, as led by them, together with a signposting service for further treatment.

It was FURTHER RESOLVED:-

To ensure that all events held on Town Council land, however small, have a named individual with appropriate training in first aid.

Members considered the role of beach warden and/or seafront advisor as set out in the briefing paper. It was noted that the role had played an important part in the reassurance of beach users and in the operations of various front-line teams and discussions around its future functions required further consideration. It was suggested

that a working party be established to explore this matter, and a report be provided to a future meeting.

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

That a Beach Warden/Seafront Advisor working party be appointed, consisting of Councillors Bonfield, Dorrington, Sutton and Tomes, to consider the future parameters of the role of Beach Warden/Seafront Advisor.

12) Budget Setting 2025-26

a) Draft Capital Programme 2025/26

Consideration was given to a briefing paper prepared by the VSBDM which detailed the draft Capital Programme for 2025/26. It was noted that the total amount referred to all projects related to all committees.

It was proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Moreton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Tourism & Local Economy Committee projects set out in the Draft Capital Programme (Appendix 1) be taken forward to the meeting of the Finance & Governance Committee to be held on 11th December 2024 for consideration as part of the budget setting process for 2025/26.

b) Draft Significant One-Off Revenue Expenditure 2025/26

Members considered the proposed draft one-off revenue expenditure as set out in the briefing paper. It was noted that the total amounted to £39,500 and that Project Initiation documents would be provided accordingly to inform the Finance and Governance Committee.

It was proposed by the Town Mayor seconded by Councillor Sutton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the items listed in the proposed significant one-off revenue expenditure/minor works schedule (section 1) be taken forward to the meeting of the Finance & Governance Committee to be held on 11th December 2024 for consideration as part of the budget setting process for 2025/26.

Further to his declaration under Minute No. 2) Councillor Bonfield left the room during consideration of the following item.

c) Scale of fees and charges 2025/26

Consideration was given to the scale of fees and charges for the Boat Park as detailed in the briefing paper. It was noted that the annual launch fee for the Boat Park had been popular two years previously, however, it was anticipated that the proposed reduction from £285.00 to £265.00 would encourage additional use of the discounted rate and provide an increase in overall income.

It was proposed by the Town Mayor seconded by Councillor Dorrington and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the annual launch fee for the Boat Park should be reduced from £285.00 to £265.00 and be taken forward to the meeting of the Finance & Governance Committee to be held on 11th December 2024 for

consideration as part of the budget setting process for 2025/26.

Councillor Bonfield re-entered the meeting.

Members considered the scale of fees and charges, excluding the private sites fees, which would be deferred due to the receipt of communication from the Beach Hut Association just prior to the meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor Moreton seconded by Councillor Lejeune and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the scale of fees and charges 2025/26 relevant to the Tourism & Local Economy Committee (Appendices 2 and 3), excluding Private Sites, be taken forward to the meeting of the Finance & Governance Committee to be held on 11th December 2024 for consideration as part of the budget setting process for 2025/26.

Consideration was given to the recommendation of the Market Working Party to retain the Swanage Market fees for 2025/26 at the same rate as 2024/25. Attention was drawn to challenges involving some market traders only committing to stalls on favourable days, which created issues with consistent plot placement. It was proposed that weekly traders should make their payments a week in advance to ensure adequate plot allocation each week. The following amendments to the terms and conditions of the Market would be required:

“All market traders paying on a weekly basis, will be required to pay for at least one week in advance, which will be used for the subsequent week, whether they attend the market or not. On their first week in attendance, or at the beginning of the summer or winter season, each weekly trader will be required to pay for the current week and the week in advance. Genuine reasons for non-attendance, in which the payment in advance might be transferred to an alternative week, must be submitted to the Visitor Services Manager in writing for consideration and approval.”

It was proposed by the Town Mayor seconded by Councillor Moreton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the additional terms for the Market as detailed above be adopted.

13) Update from the Visitor Services & Business Development Manager

The following update was provided by the VSBDM and included:

- **Beach Huts** – A new set of booking procedures had been implemented in October 2024. The bookings had seen an increase in demand and the huts were booked very quickly. The income had therefore increased. The main concerns raised by customers were around the restrictions in longer lets and the speed at which the huts were booked. It was reported that a technical problem arose on the last day of booking, which affected everyone in the same way, but this will be resolved for the forthcoming year.
- **AccessAble** - TIC [Swanage Information Centre | AccessAble](#), keen to put all of the town's accessible toilets on the website at a cost of just under £500.
- **Sauna** – It was reported that the sauna had been delivered to the seafront on 26th November and it was anticipated to be operational by mid-December.

During the week commencing 2nd December 2024, it was noted that a trench would be dug from the Mowlem to the sauna for an electricity connection. However, the road and footpath would remain open.

- **Christmas in Swanage** – The Swanage information centre staff have delivered the Christmas poster and the £2 parking all winter poster to most shops around town which had received a positive response.
- **Switch on the Lights** – It was noted that the switch on event would take place on Saturday 30th November 2024. At the event Santa’s sleigh and Polar Express dancers would be at the Mowlem Triangle from 3.00 p.m.
- **Water Quality** – A new sign would be installed outside the Information Centre, regarding water quality for 2024, which was reported to be ‘Excellent’. It was noted that the Town Council had been awarded the Blue Flag Award for the 23rd consecutive year.

14) Updates from outside representatives

Outside representatives provided the following updates:

- **Purbeck Community Rail Partnership** - It was reported that Perenco had withdrawn from talks regarding the possibility of developing a hydrogen engine service. Initial discussions were being held with the owners of Blue Pool for the establishment of a halt at the site.
- **Accessible Swanage** – It was reported that Accessible Swanage had recently celebrated its first anniversary. The first year had seen the group working with the Town Council and stakeholders to provide information regarding dropped kerb locations, improvements to Station Approach, the seafront scheme, and the provision of accessibility information around the town. A national initiative entitled ‘Safe Places’ was noted as a positive step in the provision of safe places should members of the public feel vulnerable. It was reported that 125 businesses in Poole had signed up for the initiative. Members were encouraged to contact Accessible Swanage if they wished to join a panel to explore the idea further.
- **Swanage Railway** - It was reported that Swanage Railway had undertaken changes to prevent insolvency e.g. had changed to cashless payment methods, withdrawn the dining train and was in the second year of the Polar Express experience. The need for the Town Council and the Swanage Railway to work effectively together was noted and the railway was encouraged to supply event dates to the VSBDM to aid with a coordinated approach to event planning and promotion. It was noted that two rail tours had been scheduled on 25th June 2025 and 10th September 2025.
- **Chamber of Trade** – It was reported that the Chamber was growing in membership and emphasised the importance of collaboration with the Council and other businesses had been highlighted. It was noted that some events negatively impacted shop owners by drawing trade away, but there was a feeling that improved communication and the inclusion of local businesses could help mitigate this.

15) Items of information and matters for forthcoming agendas

Members were encouraged to raise items for forthcoming agendas and contact the Town Hall with any suggestions.

16) Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 19th March 2025 at 2.15p.m. at The Grand Hotel, Burlington Road, Swanage.

The Chairman thanked everyone present for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 4.10 p.m.