

Draft Minutes of the **SPECIAL MEETING** of the
Swanage Town Council held at the Town Hall, High Street,
Swanage on **WEDNESDAY, 28th MAY 2025** at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT:-

Councillor M. Bonfield (Town Mayor) – Chairman

Councillor T. Foster
Councillor J. Lejeune
Councillor C. Moreton
Councillor C. Sutton
Councillor C. Tomes
Councillor S. Vile

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

22. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from Councillors Brookes, Coward and Monkhouse.

23. **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.

There were no declarations to record on this occasion.

24. **TO CONSIDER THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE INTERNAL AUDITOR AND TO CONFIRM THERE IS NO CONFLICT OF INTEREST WITH THE EXTERNAL AUDITOR**

It was reported that the external auditor required affirmation of the independence of the internal auditor. Although this was not a statutory requirement it was noted as good practice, as per Section 4.9: Independence within the JPAG *Practitioners' Guide*, which recommends a review of the personal, financial and professional independence of the internal auditor on an annual basis.

It was further reported that as a part of the Intermediate Level Review the external auditor, BDO LLP, requires evidenced confirmation on an annual basis that there are no conflicts of interest with the aforementioned auditor. Following consideration of these matters, it was proposed by Councillor Moreton, seconded by Councillor Lejeune and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

To confirm the independence of the appointed internal auditor, Darkin-Miller Chartered Accountants, and that there are no conflicts of interest with the external auditor, BDO LLP.

25. **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2024/25**

(a) **Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25**

Consideration was given to the Annual Internal Audit Report (AIAR) for 2024/25, page 3 of the AGAR. It was noted that the Internal Auditor had stated No for the Internal control objective, N 'The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2023/24 AGAR'. It was reported that this was because the Notice of Conclusion of Audit could not be published on or before 30 September 2024 as the auditor did not issue their final report until 24 February 2025, due to questions raised by a local elector.

Consideration was also given to the supplementary Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25 prepared by Darkin-Miller Chartered Accountants. The document provided background information and explanations regarding the recommendations made and conclusions reached in respect of the Council's services, in accordance with the objective of internal audit to provide an appraisal function for the Council's internal control system.

It was reported that a total of 14 recommendations had been made during the year, 4 high, 3 medium and 7 low, with only the focussed recommendations (h & m) being included within the report, as requested by the Finance & Governance Committee.

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

That the Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25 be
accepted and approved.

26. **TO REVIEW THE SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROL 2023/24**

In accordance with paragraph 6(1)(a) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, a Report on the Findings of the Review of the System of Internal Control 2024/25 was submitted for consideration. The report set out the role of the internal auditor and the steps taken during the year to enhance the Council's system of control, including the review of policy documents and charitable trust governance. The importance of the internal audit process and the scrutiny role played by the Finance & Governance Committee were highlighted. It was noted that Standing Orders and Financial regulations would be reviewed during 2025/26. It was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Moreton, and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That the Report on the Findings of the Review of the
System of Internal Control 2024/25 be approved and
accepted.

27. **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2024/25**

(a) **Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25**

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

That the Annual Governance Statement 2024/25 be
approved and signed for submission to the Council's
external auditor with the Annual Governance &
Accountability Return 2024/25.

(b) **Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25**

Members considered the Accounting Statements 2024/25 and the supplementary Financial Review 2024/25 provided to support and explain the figures in Section 2 of the AGAR. It was reported that reserves had increased by £3.3k over the 2024/25 financial year in total. Following clarification about some of the significant variances, it was proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Sutton and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That the Accounting Statements 2024/25 be approved and
signed for submission to the Council's external auditor
with the Annual Governance & Accountability Return
2024/25.

It was suggested that a link be provided to the Financial Review 2024/25 in the next Council newsletter.

28. **ANNUAL TREASURY REPORT 2024/25**

It was reported that it had been a busy year with short-term investment transactions, in an effort to maximise yields given the availability of high rates, between 5% and 4.35%. It was noted that 200,000 units in the CCLA property fund had been sold during the year and that the timeframe for the next redemption would be reviewed by the Finance & Governance Committee in July, following an update on the capital programme. It was further reported that £393k in income had been received in 2024/25, with a £61k gain on the sale of CCLA units and £332k received from interest/dividends, against a £240k budget.

A total of £92k had been appropriated to the Treasury Risk Management Reserve, which held £214k at 31 March 2025. It was noted that an unrealised loss on the M&G and Ninety-One investments stood at £211k at year end, with any potential loss being covered off by the reserve. The positive impact of investment income and the need to consider the possible loss of this income in financing the Green Seafront Scheme was highlighted, with £240k contributing to the revenue account and £153k contributing to Earmarked Reserves in 2024/25. It was proposed by the Town Mayor seconded by Councillor Moreton, and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Annual Treasury Report 2024/25 be approved and accepted.

On behalf of the Town Council, the Town Mayor offered his thanks to the Council's Finance Manager, together with the Town Clerk, for the excellent way in which the financial reports had been prepared and presented.

29. **ITEMS OF INFORMATION AND MATTERS FOR FORTHCOMING AGENDAS**

- **Internal Audit Report 2024/25 - Visit 6 of 6** - Members were informed that the interim Internal Audit report for visit 6 had been received, with no recommendations having been made.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Vile and AGREED:-

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 item 9 due to commercial confidentiality.

30. **PROCUREMENT – TO CONSIDER ENTERING INTO A CONTRACT FOR THE DESIGN, SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF NEW SKATEPARK EQUIPMENT WITHIN SWANAGE SKATEPARK**

Following the assessment of three tender submissions, the Assets & Compliance Manager reported that two companies had been invited to present their proposals for the skatepark on the afternoon of 28th May. It was reported that the presentations were attended by a panel consisting of the Assets & Compliance Manager, the lead councillor of the Sports, Leisure and Wellbeing Working Party (Councillor Tomes) and representatives of Swanage Skatepark Community Project (SSCP). It was further reported that scoring had been undertaken by the panel and the highest scoring submission was from King Ramps Ltd. It was noted that as part of the contract a consultation with users would take place, during which the designs would be presented, prior to the Council being asked to give final approval. The contract would be subject to two satisfactory references and installation was due to take place in Autumn 2025.

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

To award a contract for the design, supply and
installation of new skatepark equipment to King
Ramps Ltd in the sum of £75,000, subject to two
satisfactory references being received.

The meeting closed at 7.30 p.m.
