

Minutes of a Meeting of the **TOURISM COMMITTEE**
held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY,**
4th JULY 2018 at 10.00 a.m.

Chair: -

Councillor C Finch

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor T Morris

Swanage Town Council

Councillor W. Trite

Swanage Town Council – from 11.35 a.m.

Councillor M Whitwam

Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives:-

Mr M Norris

Swanage Museum & Heritage Centre – from
10.40 a.m.

Mr D Rawsthorn

Swanage Railway – from 10.15 a.m.

Mr P Sykes

Swanage Railway

Also Present: -

Dr M Ayres

Town Clerk

Miss N Clark

Acting Administration and Communications
Manager

Miss H Lagden

Tourism Manager, PDC

Mr C Milmer

Visitor Services Manager and Business
Development Officer

Public Participation Time

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

Prior to commencement of the Meeting, congratulations were extended to Mr C Milmer, Visitor Services Manager, who had completed a run, in stages, of the whole of the South West Coast Path (SWCP) in 22 days. Mr Milmer's run had also raised funds for the SWCP.

1) Apologies

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from Councillors Bonfield, Marsh and Poultney, Mr A Ainsworth (RNLI), Mr I Brown (Maritime Coastguard Agency), and Mr M Green (Swanage Railway).

2) Declarations Of Interest

Members were invited to declare their interests and consider any requests for Grants of Dispensations in accordance with paragraphs 9 - 13 of the Council's Code of Conduct and regulations made under chapter 7 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 14th March 2018

There were no matters raised.

4) Matters arising from the Beach Management Advisory Committee Meeting held on 31st January 2018

There were no matters raised.

5) **Beach Hut Booking Process – proposals for changes to be made to the booking system**

Consideration was given to a Briefing Note dated June 2018 prepared by the Visitor Services Manager (VSM) detailing proposals for changes to be made to the beach hut booking process. It was felt that the current booking system was complex, required a disproportionate amount of administration time, and reference was made to a complaint recently received by the Council which highlighted the difficulty the public had in understanding the process.

It was hoped that the new proposed system would enhance the customer experience, see a reduction in paper applications and cheque payments, and lead to increased customer satisfaction, with fewer cancellations and complaints. However, it was felt that the proposals needed to be reviewed in greater detail before a final decision could be made, and that a working party should be established to undertake this review. As a number of Councillor Committee Members had not been able to attend the meeting today, an invitation would be extended to these Members to join the working party if they so wished.

It was noted that the new online booking and payment system that had been introduced earlier in the year was working well.

Mr D Rawsthorn joined the meeting at 10.15 a.m.

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

That a working party be appointed, consisting of the Visitor Services Manager and volunteer Councillor Members of the Tourism Committee, to review the proposals for changes to be made to the beach hut booking process in detail and present its findings to a future Council Meeting for further consideration.

6) **Events – Requests for use of Town Council property in relation to forthcoming Events**

Consideration was given to a schedule prepared by the VSM detailing requests for the following events:

- **Sandpit Field and Main Beach** - Results Triathlon, 11th August 2019.
- **Sandpit Field and Main Beach** - Challenging Events Triathlon Festival, 29th – 30th June 2019.

It was reported that the VSM had taken the decision to bring forward provisional approval of these triathlons as there had been some confusion between two triathlon companies over dates for 2019, and it was felt prudent to resolve this issue at the earliest opportunity. The events were long-running events, had a proven track record, and the weekends being requested were the same as this year.

It was therefore proposed by Councillor Finch, seconded by Councillor Morris, and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That the requests from Results Triathlon, and Challenging Events, as set out in the schedule prepared by the Visitor Services Manager, be approved, subject to submission of the required documentation at the appropriate time.

7) **Tourism Reports**

b) Tourism Manager

The Tourism Manager gave updates on the following:

- **Visit Dorset Partnership** – a copy of this update would be circulated to Committee Members. The site continued to grow, and it was reported that circa 225,000 visitors had visited the site looking for ideas for holidays.
- **Visit Dorset ‘Blog’** – a number of blogs were issued each month on a wide range of topics, and included ‘guest blogs’ from Visit Dorset Members. It was noted that membership also continued to grow.
- **Online booking through Visit Dorset** – the existing system was complex with multiple systems feeding into it. A survey of accommodation providers had been undertaken and a working group had been set up to improve links through the Visit Dorset website.
- **Bestival/Camp Bestival** – a digital promotion would be undertaken on 29 digital screens across London titled ‘Escape the City’, and would include content on the Purbeck area.
- **The Tourism Manager and VSM** had met to discuss partnership working this season, and had also discussed this year’s ‘The Shore Beach Hut Competition’. The competition questionnaire had attracted circa 200 responses from local residents and 800 responses from non-residents last year. Positive comments had been made about the local environment, community, and that it was felt that the area was a ‘family-friendly’ destination. Negative comments had been received regarding car parking charges, litter and dog fouling. The responses would now be analysed, and feedback given at a future meeting.

It was noted that in a recent seafront survey undertaken in Bournemouth, Swanage had come out on top as the place to visit. A question was raised as to whether the students from Bournemouth University would be willing to undertake a similar survey on Swanage seafront. It was felt that this highlighted the importance of tourism to the local economy, and the Tourism Manager and VSM agreed to explore the possibility of a future survey being undertaken in Swanage.

Mr M Norris joined the meeting at 10.40 a.m.

b) Visitor Services Manager & Business Development Officer

The VSM provided an update on achievements and actions since the last meeting, which included:

Beach Gardens

- Refurbished Kiosk doing very well and receiving fantastic customer reviews.

Boat Park

- Boat Park reopened on 23rd May 2018, and has seen a strong demand for bookings.

Beach

- Blue Flag and Seaside Award successfully achieved for 2018.
- Punch and Judy due to arrive mid-July for six weeks.
- Seafront Advisor started in early June, and an additional Seafront Advisor due to start later in July.

Beach Huts

- Very strong performance on beach hut income year to date.
- Beach Hut competition now live for ‘win a beach hut for 2019 Carnival’.

Swanage Information Centre

- Three new staff appointed in April (one seasonal and two permanent).
- Change of opening days in winter months to Tuesday-Sunday.

- Retail sales were strong – up 17% on Q1 last year.

Events

- Over 60 applications received for events (small and large) for 2018.
- A range of new or revised events happening this year including:
 - Pirate Festival
 - Open Swim and Aquathon as part of Triathlon Festival
 - Additional Triathlon
 - Dementia Picnic in the Park
 - Open air Cinema
 - Many smaller events across the summer

Tourism Advertising

- Swanage advertising included in a widely distributed Bournemouth map.
- Facebook followers continue to increase - approx. 1,800.

8) Updates from Outside Representatives

Swanage Museum & Heritage Centre

Further to Minute No. 279 of the Monthly Council Meeting held on 30th April 2018, it was reported that a new lease was in the process of being finalised with the District Council. The transfer of the Museum & Heritage Centre building, and adjoining public conveniences, into the ownership of the Town Council was also being progressed. Options were now being explored for the museum to be expanded in its existing premises.

A good start to the year was reported, with increased retail sales seen, and an electronic visitor counting system was in place to monitor visitor numbers. It was noted, however, that local accommodation providers had commented that advance bookings were poor at present, and that an increase in Airbnb rentals locally appear to have had an impact on bookings.

Swanage Railway

Updates were given as follows:

- A poor start to the year was reported, due to the poor weather conditions in March/April. Visitor numbers had recovered during May, and were now ‘back on track’. It was noted that the railway had been collating visitor data for over 40 years.
- Overseas visitor numbers were up, in particular from Germany where promotional campaigns were being undertaken to attract visitors to British seaside resorts.
- Swanage Railway/South Western Railway (SWR), in partnership, would be running a trial ‘Summer Saturdays’ rail service direct from Salisbury to Corfe Castle this year, from 26th May until 8th September 2018, arriving in Corfe Castle at 11.15 a.m., and departing at 3.45 p.m. The service was being proactively marketed through social media channels. It was hoped that this service would be run again in 2019. SWR was also a member of the Bournemouth and Poole Attractions Group.
- It was hoped that the second 90-day trial diesel train service from Swanage to Wareham would also be undertaken in 2019.
- The May Diesel Gala had seen a mainline charter from London which had brought 160 passengers into the area, 110 of which had made the return trip. A further charter was planned for 29th July for the Swanage Carnival.
- Santa Specials would go on sale on 1st August 2018.
- It was noted that, due to the ongoing dry conditions, there was a nationwide steam ban at the present time.
- An increasing number of visitors were coming into the area via cruise ships, and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) would be forming a working group to put together proposals for itineraries for passengers. The Tourism Manager confirmed that she was in dialogue with the LEP in this respect.

Further to Minute No. 7. of the Tourism Committee Meeting held on 14th March 2018, an update was requested regarding the proposed new leaflet, and digital marketing campaign, to advertise Swanage as a Christmas destination. It was reported that this was still a ‘work in progress’, and details of ‘Artisans on the Beach’ 2018/19 was yet to be discussed. The Railway would provide the VSM with a briefing note regarding its Santa Specials, and a suggestion was made that the leaflets should also be produced in other languages for overseas visitors.

A query was raised regarding sand levels and gravel on Main Beach, and whether it would be possible for the Town Council to purchase a sifting machine. It was reported that the District Council (PDC) and the Environment Agency (EA) would need to be consulted on such matters, and that the EA, in partnership with PDC, was currently looking into beach recharge options, and funding routes would be explored. The beach was being regularly monitored by the Channel Coastal Observatory which would inform the EA and PDC in their discussions.

Councillor Trite joined the meeting at 11.35 a.m.

9) Items of information and matters for forthcoming agendas

a) Consideration of improved dementia friendly signage in the town’s public conveniences

– a letter had been received from a member of the Association of Inner Wheel Clubs of GB and NI regarding the promotion of appropriate dementia friendly signage in public conveniences. It was agreed that this matter would be placed on the agenda of a future General Operations Committee Meeting.

b) Single-use plastic and disposal of litter

– comments were made that event organisers should be encouraged to go ‘green’ for events held on Town Council property. The VSM reported that the Council’s event application form asked organisers for details of their plans in this respect. The VSM would be reviewing responses to this question and the matter would be placed on the agenda of a future Council Meeting.

c) Dorset Highways, consultation on proposed highway improvement works –

Northbrook Road, Swanage, outside St Mary’s RC Primary School – attention was drawn to the receipt of revised proposals, which would be considered accordingly.

10) Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting had been scheduled for Wednesday 21st November 2018, at the Town Hall at 10.00 a.m.

Best wishes were extended to everyone by the Chair for a successful summer season 2018.

The meeting closed at 11.55 a.m.
