

Minutes of an Informal Meeting of the **BEACH MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE** held via Zoom video conferencing platform on **WEDNESDAY 13th OCTOBER 2021** at **2.15 p.m.**

In Attendance: Councillor M Bonfield – Chairman
Councillor C Finch
Councillor C Tomes

Mr B Compton – Ocean Bay Watersports (from 2.35 p.m.)
Mr H Potter – Swanage Pier Trust
Mr D Roper - Swanage Angling Club
Mr C Wiggins – Beach Concessions Representative

Councillor A Harris
Councillor C Moreton
Ms B Betts – Environmental Advice Manager, Dorset Council
Mrs E Evans – Management Support Officer
Mr C Milmer – Visitor Services Manager
Mrs G Percival – Operations Manager

Public Participation Time

There was one member of the public and one member of the local press present at the meeting.

1) Apologies

Apologies for their inability to attend the meeting were received from Mr K Bragg (Private Beach Hut Owners' Representative), Mr I Brown (Coastguard Station Officer), Mr T Greasty (Designated Bathing Zone Representative), Mr R Johnson (Swanage Pier Trust), Mr P Loudoun (Seaweed Removal), Mr R Marsh (Stone Quay Rep), Mr S Pinkard (RNLI), Mr G Richardson (RNLI Community Safety Officer), Mr K Sheppard (RNLI Lifeguards), Mr E Taylor (Wessex Water), Mr S Thompson (Cumulus), Mr D Turnbull (RNLI), Mr I Weston (Coastwatch) and Ms E Wright (National Trust).

2) To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting of the Beach Management Advisory Committee held on 24th February 2021

It was proposed by Councillor Tomes, seconded by Councillor Finch, and AGREED:
That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Beach Management Advisory Committee held on 24th February 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed.

3) Matters arising from the Notes of the Informal Meeting of the Beach Management Advisory Committee held on 30th June 2021

There were no matters raised.

4) Swanage and Studland water safety, update from Bridget Betts, Environmental Advice Manager, Dorset Council

Further to Minute No. 4) of the Beach Management Advisory Committee meeting held on 24th February 2021, Bridget Betts, Environmental Advice Manager, Dorset Council,

provided an update regarding water and beach safety at Swanage and Studland bays. It was noted that the success of the multi-agency partnership, established in August 2020, had been recognised at a national level.

Ms Betts shared a Powerpoint presentation which covered the issues that had initially instigated the formation of the multi-agency partnership, the issues that had been addressed pre-season, and the key actions moving forward.

During the post season meeting with partners the key headlines reported were a noticeable reduction in antisocial behaviour, swimmers reported that they felt safer, bay patrols, and the provision of advice, was well received and the use of social media and information leaflets had proved useful. The key message S.L.O.W. – See, Look, Observe, Watch, had been publicised on social media and shared widely.

It was also reported that the closure of the parish slipway to motor vehicles had benefited the area and the installation of additional 5 knots buoys had improved visibility of the speed limit.

The key actions noted from the post season meeting included the agreement that there remained a need for bay enforcement and that further education around drinking alcohol and the use of personal watercraft should be undertaken. Additional work around communication was needed to include social media posts with more longevity, liaising with Poole harbour commissioners and the inclusion of BCP and Coastwatch representatives to the partnership.

An initial discussion around the possibility of a Harbour Master to cover Swanage and Studland would be arranged in due course and an update provided to a future meeting.

The chairman thanked Ms B Betts for her update and for the work of the partnership.

Mr B Compton joined the meeting at 2.35 p.m.

5) Use of Swanage beach for commercial water sports

A briefing note had been circulated prior to the meeting detailing the proposal for engagement with outdoor adventure companies to use Swanage beach to launch kayaks on a commercial basis.

A debate ensued around the existing use of the beach by the current concessions, and the potential conflict of additional commercial companies accessing the beach for watersport activities.

Comments were made around the scale of operations and time of year the companies would require access to the beach and concerns were raised around the safety of beach users and potential hinderance to pedestrians whilst companies moved equipment. Concerns were also raised over the area of beach that would be utilised in light of the increase in visitor numbers, parking/dropping off of equipment, storage of equipment and officer time required for the management of the operation.

Further to discussion Committee Members expressed the view that any proposal for additional commercial water sports needed further exploration.

It was therefore proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Finch and AGREED: -

That the use of Swanage Beach for commercial watersports be placed on the agenda of a future meeting of the Seafront Masterplan working party for further consideration.

6) Accessible beach - Consideration of beach access ramps and beach wheelchairs

Consideration was given to a briefing paper prepared by the VSM to consider accessibility improvements for Swanage Beach and the incorporation of beach accessibility as a key element into the 'Seafront Strategy'.

Members were supportive of improving accessibility and the success of beach wheelchairs and matting at Studland Bay was noted. A discussion ensued around the possible position of matting and the practical implications of tidal motion, seaweed clearance and beach raking.

A suggestion was also made for the installation of handrails along groynes or along the side of the banjo pier to enable easier access to the shoreline.

Further to discussion committee members were in agreement to trial the beach access matting and that delegation be given to officers to specify the most appropriate location.

7) **Update from Wessex Water – water quality during summer season 2021**

Consideration was given to an update, provided by Wessex Water, regarding the water quality in Swanage Bay over the 2021 season. The email stated that although a small number of storm drains are situated in Swanage, there had been no notifiable events to the Environment Agency during the 2021 season and that bathing water sample results, analysed to date, indicated a high quality of bathing water over the season.

The report added that planned maintenance to the Peveril Point sewage plant had been scheduled to take place during November 2021 and March 2022, dependent on weather, and would include the replacement of membranes situated in two of the six membrane tanks.

A brief discussion ensued in which the quality of water was queried, and the difference between notifiable events and the advice not to bathe was discussed. It was stated that the advice not to bathe had been in place three times over the season, following extremely heavy rainfall, and signage had been positioned to advise the public.

Members agreed that it would be beneficial to contact Wessex Water for further information regarding the reasons behind the advice not to bathe and for clarity over the triggers that instigate the warning system. It was also stated that LitterFree Dorset had been working on the production of consumer friendly information around water quality in the bay. A further update would be provided to a future meeting.

8) **Update from the Visitor Services Manager**

An update was provided by the VSM and included:

- **Overview of season** - It was reported that the season had been extremely busy. High income levels reported across all areas. Staff performed well despite high workloads.
- **Beach Huts** – Unprecedented demand resulted in an increase in income. The main issue for customers was the inability to obtain a hut due to demand.
- **Events** – A few successful events held this year included May Market, Rowing Regatta and Folk Festival amongst others.
- **Swanage Information Centre** – Gazebo utilised again this season and useful to greet customers. Beach hut booking took up large amount of staff time. Large number of visitors highlighted the need for the front desk area to be re-modelled.
- **Seafront Advisors** – DC had provided £15,000 towards additional Seafront Advisors. Role changed slightly to include basic maintenance and supporting DC Waste Services.
- **Waste Management** – Beach cleaners undertook daily cleans. New litter bins arrived in June, however capacity was not sufficient. Additional barrel bins arrived late June.
- **Dogs on the Beach** – Complaints had been received regarding dogs on the beach despite improved and additional signage installation Winter 2020. This will be reviewed.
- **Lifeguards** – RNLI lifeguards were in place from May to early September. Lockers will be installed on the Banjo Pier for the 2022 season.

The chair thanked the VSM and staff for their hard work and assistance in keeping the bins clean which had been noticed by visitors. The Operations Manager and her team were also thanked for their hard work to keep the town looking attractive.

9) Updates from representatives/organisations

Swanage Pier Trust – In conjunction with Coastal Forum, Pier Trust and SP&DT an application had been submitted for funding towards a Pathfinder study of Swanage seafront to look into the feasibility of a Marine Hub for Swanage.

Swanage Angling Club – had seen an increase in member numbers.

Private Beach Hut Owners' Representative – Comments made over the maintenance of the promenade and the responsibility to undertake repairs. The subsidence of the cliff impacting the integrity of the walkway was mentioned and where the responsibility for the structural repairs fell. In response concerned owners were advised to contact the Flood and Coastal Erosion Team, Dorset Council and SCCF for clarity and to keep Dorset Councillors Suttle and Trite up to date with developments.

Ocean Bay Watersports – Reported that the Partnership had worked well. Weather affected business with numbers lower at the start of the season. Jet skiers had engaged well and responded positively to safety messages. A bank of sand had been positioned on the beach, by use of a mini digger, to offer protection to the shop/huts.

Councillor Moreton left the meeting at 3.55 p.m.

Beach Concessions – Thanked the council for the installation of steps onto the beach opposite the Shore Road beach huts. No incidents to report and thanked Phil Palmer for the improvement in the safety of boats/motorised water craft users over the season.

10) Items of information and matters for forthcoming agendas

a) Swanage Town Centre Flood Defences

No further comment was made.

b) The Spa Redevelopment Project proposals

It was reported that the seismic surveys for the assessment of ground movement were ongoing and a report would be provided to a future meeting.

c) Review of boat park to be undertaken during winter season 2021/22

The review would be undertaken and information shared with the committee in due course.

d) Access to the town for boat users

It was reported that the VSM had received several emails regarding small boat access to the town. It was agreed that this item would be placed on the agenda of a future meeting to discuss appropriate signage to guide tenders to the correct area.

e) Water skis

It was noted that there had been some conflict between water skiers and boat owners, particularly in the area of sea off Ballard Down. It was noted that discussion would be held with the Swanage and Studland water safety group and an update provided to a future meeting.

11) Date of next meeting

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 23rd February 2022 @ 2.15 p.m.

The meeting closed at 4.10 p.m.
