

Minutes of the Meeting of the Swanage Town Council
held at The Swanage School, High Street, Swanage on
MONDAY, 13th SEPTEMBER 2021 at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT:-

Councillor A. Harris – Chair

Councillor J. Bishop
Councillor M.P. Bonfield
Councillor C. Finch
Councillor T. Foster
Councillor D. Monkhouse
Councillor C. Moreton
Councillor G. Suttle
Councillor C. Tomes
Councillor W. Trite
Councillor M. Whitwam

In addition to Members of the Council and officers, two members of the public, and one member of the local press attended the Meeting.

Reverend James Mercer, Associate Minister, The St Aldhelm Benefice, offered a short prayer before the commencement of the Meeting.

The Town Mayor then led tributes to the late Mr Clive Dragon, which was followed by a minute's silence. It was noted that Mr Dragon had worked for the Town Council as an Enforcement Officer for over 16 years and had enjoyed his role helping people and acting as an ambassador for the town. He would be greatly missed by his work colleagues and Town Councillors alike.

Public Participation Time

The following matters were raised:-

- **Purbeck Local Plan (PLP)** - concerns regarding the timescale for the adoption of the PLP and whether this would now be progressing in light of the Dorset Local Plan. Councillor Trite as Dorset Councillor confirmed that it would be going ahead and that he would obtain an update and report back accordingly.
- **Neighbourhood Planning (NP)** – a question raised as to whether the Town Council would be considering a Neighbourhood Plan for the town, and reference made to other local councils who had already commenced the NP process.
- **Swanage and Herston Football Club** – a question regarding the future of facilities at Day's Park.

The Chair opened the Council Meeting at 7.10 p.m.

49. **APOLOGIES**

An apology for her inability to attend the Meeting was received from Councillor Rogers.

50. **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.

Agenda Item No. 13 – Councillor Bonfield declared a non-disclosable pecuniary interest under the Code of Conduct by reason of being a regular long-term beach hut user.

51. **MINUTES**

(a) Proposed by Councillor Tomes, seconded by Councillor Whitwam and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 26th
July 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed.

(b) Proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Bishop and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the
Council held on 11th August 2021 be approved as a
correct record and signed.

52. **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

Proposed by Councillor Trite, seconded by Councillor Bonfield and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Personnel
Committee held on 30th July 2021 be approved as a
correct record and signed.

53. **PLANNING AND CONSULTATION COMMITTEE**

Proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Whitwam and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning and
Consultation Committee held on 25th August 2021 be
approved as a correct record and signed.

54. **PLANNING AND CONSULTATION COMMITTEE**

Proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Harris and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning and
Consultation Committee held on 6th September 2021 be
approved as a correct record and signed.

55. **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

Proposed by Councillor Trite, seconded by Councillor Foster and RESOLVED
UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Personnel
Committee held on 10th September 2021 be approved
as a correct record and signed.

Consideration was given to the following recommendation contained in the
Minutes:-

3. **TO CONSIDER MAKING A ONE-OFF NON-CONSOLIDATED
PAYMENT TO ALL COUNCIL STAFF**

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

That a one-off payment of £250 be made to each of
the Council's current employees in recognition and
appreciation of the collective effort made by the
Council team during the busy summer months.

56. **STATEMENT OF CASH BALANCE**

- (a) A Statement of Cash Balance as at 31st July 2021 was submitted for information (a copy attached at the end of these Minutes).
- (b) A Statement of Cash Balance as at 31st August 2021 was submitted for information (a copy attached at the end of these Minutes).

57. **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

In accordance with Regulations 5 and 6 of the Council's Financial Regulations, the following Payment Schedules were submitted for information:-

- Payment Schedule 4, amounting to £158,027.25
- Payment Schedule 5, amounting to £277,800.18

58. **TO RECEIVE THE EXTERNAL AUDITOR REPORT AND CERTIFICATE 2020/21 (SECTION 3 OF PART 3 OF THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW)**

The Town Clerk was pleased to report that no matters had been identified by the External Auditor for consideration by the Town Council, and a 'clean bill of health' had been received. Thanks were extended to officers, and to the Town Clerk and the Council's Finance Manager, Alison Spencer.

It was AGREED:-

That the Town Council notes receipt of the external auditor report and certificate from PKF Littlejohn LLP for the year ended 31st March 2021 and that no further action is required.

59. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor Harris reported that since the last Council Meeting held on 26th July 2021, in her capacity of Town Mayor she had attended the following events:-

- **BBC's filming of 'Songs of Praise' on 29th July** – held in Prince Albert Gardens.
- **Swanage Linking Lives Tea Party on 31st July** - held in the All Saints Church Hall.
- **The Princess and the Pauper musical on 24th August** – held at the Mowlem Theatre, which had been a fully deaf accessible production, incorporating deaf and hearing actors, sign song, and British Sign Language-inspired choreography.
- **Herston Village Hall Public Exhibition on 11th September** – regarding proposals for a new Village Hall.
- **Swanage Folk Festival Procession, along with the Town Crier, on 11th September.**

60. **REPORT FROM DORSET COUNCILLORS**

Updates were given on the following matters:-

- **Swanage Paramedic Car** – it was noted that there had been no opportunity for the Dorset Councillors to speak about the service at DC's People and Health Overview Committee Meeting held on 2nd September 2021. However, there would be an opportunity for public questions at the Dorset Council (DC) Cabinet Meeting being held on 5th October 2021.
- **Dorset Waste Services** – it was reported that DC continued to receive complaints regarding household bin collection services, which had recently been exacerbated by the lack of drivers, an increase in Covid-19 cases amongst staff members, and the loss of trucks.

Comments were made regarding instances of inconsiderate parking seen around the town which at times made it difficult for waste lorries to access some of the smaller lanes/areas to collect waste.

- **Dorset Council's financial position** – it was reported that DC's funds were under severe pressure as at the end of quarter one, standing at a deficit of c. £9m, which was mainly due to adult social care costs.
- **Refused Planning Application No. 6/2020/0281 5 Ballard Estate, Swanage – Planning Appeal Allowed decision** - disappointment expressed regarding the Planning Inspector's decision regarding this application, and reference made to the Swanage Local Plan, Policy STCD: Swanage Townscape Character and Development – Areas of distinctive local character, which had sought to conserve the special character of this estate, and concerns raised that it would now be vulnerable to over-development in the future.
- **DC's Parking Transformation Project** – it was anticipated that a decision on the final proposals for on-street parking charges across the DC area would be made at DC's Cabinet Meeting being held on 2nd November 2021, with the new parking charges being introduced in January 2022. Concerns were raised regarding the proposals for Station Road in Swanage, and comments made that it would be important to preserve the existing short-term parking arrangements for shoppers. A request had been made to DC for a Task and Finish group to be established to review the proposals and consultation responses.

61. **TO CONSIDER TOWN COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO DORSET COUNCIL'S (DC) PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

Further to Minute No. 156 of the Council Meeting held on 15th March 2021 Members gave further consideration to DC's Community Governance Review, which had been approved for public consultation at DC's Meeting held on 15th July 2021.

It was reported that Review had been discussed at a recent meeting of the SE Purbeck Parishes Chairs and Clerks, and attendees had been in agreement that if parish councils were satisfied with their existing governance arrangements then they needed to make this clear to Dorset Council.

During the ensuing discussion Members were strongly in favour of not making any changes to the arrangements for the Parish of Swanage, and would respond to Dorset Council accordingly.

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

That the Town Council submits a response to Dorset Council making it clear that the Council is satisfied with existing governance arrangements for the Parish of Swanage.

62. **WORKING PARTY MATTERS**

(a) **Sports, Leisure and Wellbeing – Update**

Further to Minute No. 33 (b) of the Council Meeting held on 26th July 2021 updates were given on the following matters:-

King George's Playing Field (KGPF)

A meeting had been held in KGPF on 8th September 2021 and a review had been undertaken of the area, which had included the skate park, play park and Forres Field. During the review it was noted that the new half pipe had not yet been installed in the skate park, and that a number of items of play equipment in the play park would need to be replaced in due course. The Operations Manager would be following these matters up, and it was proposed that a tender exercise would be undertaken in due course for the play park.

It was also hoped that the Council could work together with the Sustainable Swanage Group to explore future options for the whole area, and initial discussions would take place in due course.

Former St Mark's School Playing Field/Playground

Further to Minute No. 40 (f) of the Council Meeting held on 26th July 2021 it was reported that the working party would be meeting at the playing field on 15th September 2021 to consider options for the future use of the area.

63. **SWANAGE MARKET – TO CONSIDER DRAFT CANCELLATION POLICY**

Consideration was given to a briefing note dated September 2021 prepared by the Visitor Services Manager (VSM) which set out proposals for a 'Swanage Friday Market Bad Weather Protocol'. It was explained that since the Town Council had taken over the running of the market there had been several occasions when bad weather had resulted in restrictions on the use of canopies, the possibility of market cancellation had been considered, and questions surrounding this had been raised by market traders and members of the public.

To ensure a clear and transparent decision-making process, alongside a clear communication process, a protocol had been produced, which set out a two-stage approach to managing extreme weather. It was noted that the VSM had reviewed a number of other councils' protocols during this process.

During the ensuing discussion a question was raised regarding the wind speeds as set out in the protocol. It was confirmed that advice would be taken from the Met Office website which provided guidance on wind gusts/speeds, and for information purposes the details of the Beaufort Scale had been included in the appendix to the briefing note.

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

That the Town Council adopts the 'Swanage Friday Market Bad Weather Protocol' as set out in the VSM's briefing note dated September 2021.

Further to his declaration of interest under Minute No. 50 Councillor Bonfield left the room during consideration of the following item.

64. **SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES – BEACH HUTS 2022/23**

Consideration was given to a Briefing Note prepared by the VSM dated September 2021. The VSM had undertaken a review of beach hut charges, which had not been increased for the last three years, and the following key changes to fees were proposed for 2022/23:-

1. *The period discount fee structure is built around a more logical structure of % discounts. The table below details this % applied and ranges from 15% to 50% depending on season and type of hut. This will help to make promotion of our discounts clearer to customers and will provide a template when we wish to increase prices in the future. It should be noted that this approach does produce some relatively large price changes, both increases and decreases, but it is felt that this is worthwhile considering we produce a clearer price structure for the future. The discounts have also been removed from the two summer periods, as in practice these were just the full price without any discount.*
2. *For many years now the winter daily huts have all been £5. It is proposed that we increase this to £6 per hut. For weekly winter huts we propose that we increase the Lower-level huts from £25 to £30 per week and leave the Upper level at £25.*

3. *It is anticipated that the Spa and Spa Retreat huts will not be open for the 2022-23 season, but it is prudent to approve prices in case the opportunity arises to keep them open.*

It was explained that the current set of fees was considered to be relatively complicated and, particularly for the discounted periods, could be confusing and difficult to explain to customers.

It was noted that there had already been a significant number of enquiries for beach huts for the 2022/23 season and the VSM was keen for the prices to be set.

It was proposed by Councillor Finch, seconded by Councillor Monkhouse, and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

That the proposed beach hut fees for 2022-23 be adopted, as set out in the VSM's Briefing Note dated September 2021.

Councillor Bishop declared a non-disclosable pecuniary interest under the Code of Conduct by reason of being a regular beach hut user and did not take part in any discussion, decision, or vote.

Councillor Bonfield returned to the Meeting

65. **RURAL MARKET TOWN GROUP MEMBERSHIP (RMTG)**

Further to Minute No. 60 of the Council Meeting held on 19th October 2020 it was reported that the Town Council's free trial membership of RMTG had come to an end in July 2021. Consideration was therefore given to an email dated 29th July 2021 from the RMTG regarding future paid membership at a cost of £130 (+VAT) per annum. It was noted that if the Council's membership was renewed then a further free period of two months would be provided until the end of September 2021.

The RMTG was a Special Interest Group of the Local Government Association which represented rural areas across England, and Members discussed the benefits of membership, which included important information sharing, weekly newsletters/updates, conferences, and surveys. The RMTG also lobbied government in relation to a wide range of rural issues, which had previously included broadband, rural housing and vulnerability.

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

That the Council's membership of the RMTG be renewed at a cost of £130 (+VAT) per annum.

66. **PRINCE ALBERT GARDENS – CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FOR MEMORIAL TREE AND PLAQUE**

Consideration was given to a briefing note prepared by the Town Clerk which set out a request from Swanage Museum and Heritage Centre for permission for a memorial tree to be planted, a native rowan tree, in memory of John Page (a former Swanage Town Councillor, and dedicated volunteer for Swanage Museum), along with a plaque adjacent to the tree, in Prince Albert Gardens (PAG). There would be no cost to the Town Council apart from future maintenance costs.

During the discussion it was noted that the work to reconstruct the Albert Memorial in PAG had almost been completed, and that the Swanage and Purbeck Development Trust had identified where the tree and plaque could be sited as part of the new garden layout around the memorial. Members agreed that this would be a fitting tribute to Mr Page. However, it was felt that the Operations Manager should be consulted regarding an appropriate size for the plaque.

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

That the Town Council grants approval for the planting of a rowan tree and installation of a plaque in memory of John Page in Prince Albert Gardens, subject to agreement of the Operations Manager regarding the size of the plaque.

67. **DORSET ASSOCIATION OF PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS (DAPTC) ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING SATURDAY 13th NOVEMBER 2021 – TO CONSIDER WHETHER TO PROPOSE ANY MOTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

The Annual General Meeting of the DAPTC was scheduled to be held on 13th November 2021 and the Town Council had been invited to consider whether to propose any motions for consideration at the meeting. Any motions needed to be submitted by 24th September 2021.

During the ensuing discussion a question was raised as to whether it would be appropriate to propose a motion regarding maintaining rural access to health and emergency care services.

Given the fact that there would be no opportunity for further discussion prior to the deadline for submission of motions before the next Council Meeting, it was proposed by Councillor Monkhouse, seconded by Councillor Tomes and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That delegated authority be given to the Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor to consider whether to submit a proposal in accordance with the above.

68. **DATE OF NEXT COUNCIL MEETING - TO CONSIDER POSTPONEMENT BY ONE WEEK TO 1st NOVEMBER 2021 TO ALLOW FOR HALF TERM**

It was reported that, due to planned staff absences during the week commencing 25th October 2021, it was proposed that the next Council Meeting scheduled for 25th October would be postponed by one week to 1st November 2021.

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

That the next Council Meeting is postponed by one week to 1st November 2021.

69. **REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

- (a) Councillor Whitwam reported on the following matters:-
Purbeck Community Rail Partnership (PCRP) – Councillor Whitwam had chaired a meeting of the PCRP on 2nd September 2021 at which the proposed 90-day trial of the Wareham to Swanage rail service had been discussed. It was noted that it was intended for the trial to be spread throughout the period from Easter to September 2022.
Swanage Pier Trust Meeting - held on 3rd September 2021.
- (b) **Mowlem Institute Trust** - Councillor Bonfield provided an update on recent meetings of the Trust that he had attended. It was noted that the entrance and hallway of the Mowlem Theatre had recently been refurbished and updated, and new disabled toilet facilities were in the process of being installed.
- (c) **Swanage Regatta and Carnival Committee** – Councillor Tomes reported that the Swanage Carnival souvenir and ‘grand draw’ caravan had been in situ this season, raising funds towards next year’s proposed Carnival, which would be held from 30th July to 6th August 2022 all being well.

The Committee was looking for volunteers to join the ‘Carnival Team’.

- (d) **Swanage Community Housing Group** – further to Minute No. 13 of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 24th May 2021 Councillor Monkhouse provided an update on recent meetings of the Group, and it was noted that the Swanage Community Land Trust had been incorporated as a Community Benefit Society on 3rd September 2021. The project was moving forward and a further community engagement event was being planned by the Group in November 2021.
- (e) **Friends of Swanage Hospital** – Councillor Harris reported that she would be attending an open day in the new therapeutic patient garden at Swanage Hospital 15th September 2021. It was noted that the Friends had launched a campaign to reinstate walk-in access to the hospital’s Minor Injuries Unit.

70. **REPORTING OF DELEGATED MATTERS**

There were no matters to report.

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

- (a) **Removal of Paramedic Car from Swanage – Update** – it was reported that Councillor Suttle had made a request for Dorset Council’s Cabinet to consider the establishment of a Task and Finish group to review the Dorset NHS CCG’s proposals for public engagement about the future of the paramedic car. It was agreed that a letter would be sent from the Town Council in support of the establishment of such a group.
- (b) **A & E Local – Update** - there was no further update to give at this time. However, it was suggested that the matter be revisited by the Emergency Health Services Working Party.
- (c) **Wellbeing Swanage – Update** – further to Minute No. 40 (c) of the Council Meeting held on 26th July 2021, an update was provided about the Chapel Lane Project.
- (d) **Sustainable Swanage Project – Update July 2021** – a copy of the latest newsletter had been provided, which included updates from the various working groups, details of surveys being undertaken, meetings held and volunteering opportunities which were available.
- (e) **DAPTC Register of Interests and Code of Conduct – reminder – training and uploading of digital registers by 30th October 2021** – a request was made for details of upcoming training courses would be circulated to Members accordingly.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Foster and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** -

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 items 21, 22, and 23 for reasons of legal and commercial confidentiality.

72. **RENTS AND LICENCES PANEL – UPDATE FOLLOWING MEETING HELD ON 23rd AUGUST 2021**

Further to Minute No. 42 (a) of the Council Meeting held on 26th July 2021 it was reported that a meeting of the Rents and Licences Panel had been convened on 23rd August 2021 and that further consideration had been given to legal advice received. It was noted that the Council's defence in a claim for the grant of a new tenancy in respect of commercial property in its ownership had since been lodged with the County Court.

73. **OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT – EXTENSION OF CONTRACT WITH WESSEX GROUNDS SERVICES LTD TO PROVIDE INTERIM GROUNDS MANAGEMENT SERVICES**

Further to Minute No. 41 of the Council Meeting held on 26th July 2021, Members gave consideration to a briefing note prepared by the Operations Manager which provided an update on the support provided to the Operations Department to date by Wessex Grounds Management Services Ltd. It was reported that since commencement of the contract the impact upon the work of the Department had been extremely positive and had enabled works programmes to be developed, and more effective working methods to start to be introduced.

In order to sustain and build upon the work that had been undertaken to date, it was recommended that the contract with Wessex Grounds Services Ltd be extended until such time as a permanent appointment had been made to the post of Grounds and Estates Manager, and for a period thereafter to ensure an effective and smooth handover of working arrangements. A recruitment exercise was currently at an advanced stage, but even so the contract extension could be for a period of 12 to 16 weeks.

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

That the contract with Wessex Grounds Services Ltd be extended until a permanent appointment to the Grounds and Estates Manager role is made, and for a limited period thereafter to enable effective handover arrangements.

74. **AWARD OF BIKE HIRE CONCESSION – TO AGREE NEXT STEPS**

Further to Minute No. 164 of the Council Meeting held on 15th March 2021 consideration was given to a briefing note prepared by the Visitor Services Manager which set out discussions and actions taken to date.

It was reported that the award of the bike hire concession had not been progressed over the busy summer season. However, the Town Council was now moving towards being able to provide a commitment to the preferred tenderer, subject to seeking legal advice and final approval over some outstanding actions and costs, which were detailed in the briefing note. The business was keen to obtain a firm commitment from the Council as soon as possible so that an order for bikes could be placed, so that trading could commence in April 2022.

During the debate Members were in favour of moving forward in line with the recommendations made in the briefing note. It was proposed by Councillor Tomes, seconded by Councillor Bonfield and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

To agree in principle to the issuing of a lease or licence to the preferred tenderer, subject to legal advice and agreement over the allocation of the costs associated with water and electric connections, drainage, planning and legal services.

It was FURTHER RESOLVED:-

That authority for the approval of the allocation of costs, together with the determination of any minor matters, be delegated to council officers in consultation with the Sports, Leisure and Wellbeing Working Party.

The meeting concluded at 8.20 p.m.
