

Minutes of a Meeting of the **TOURISM COMMITTEE**
held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **TUESDAY,**
17th NOVEMBER 2020 at **10.00 a.m.**

Chair: -

Councillor C Tomes

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor M Bonfield
Councillor C Finch
Councillor T Foster
Councillor A Harris
Councillor C Moreton
Councillor C Tomes
Councillor M Whitwam

Swanage Town Council (from 10.15 a.m.)
Swanage Town Council
Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives:-

Ms K Black
Mr M Norris
Mr K Sheppard
Mr M Smith

Durlston Country Park
Swanage Museum & Heritage Centre
Lead Lifeguard Supervisor, RNLI
Face to Face Manager, RNLI

Also Present: -

Dr M Ayres
Mrs E Evans
Miss H Lagden
Mr C Milmer

Town Clerk
Management Support Officer
Tourism Manager, Dorset Council
Visitor Services Manager and Business
Development Officer

Public Participation Time

There were two members of the press present at the meeting.

Councillor Tomes thanked Councillor Finch for her hard work during her time as chair of the Tourism Committee.

1) Apologies

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from Councillor J Page, Mrs T Ferrari (Neighbourhood Policing Team) and Mr S Pinkard (RNLI).

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.

No interests were declared by those present at this point in the meeting.

3) Matters arising from Minutes of the Tourism Committee Meeting held on 19th November 2019

It was noted that a number of matters were ongoing. Further to Minute No. 5 it was reported that the Website and Marketing Working Party had not yet convened but that this would be discussed under Agenda Item 6. Further to Minute No. 6 it was noted that a meeting of the Public Conveniences Working Party had yet to be convened, and it was noted that such items would now most likely be taken to the Capital Projects Sub-Committee.

Further to Minute No. 7, regarding the smoking ban around the beach huts, it was reported that this had not progressed for the 2020 season due to the pandemic, but would be reviewed again in the future.

Councillor Bonfield joined the Meeting at 10.15 a.m.

4) Matters arising from Minutes of the Beach Management Advisory Committee Meeting held on 26th February 2020

There were no matters raised.

5) Update from the Beach Management Advisory Committee Meeting held on 11th November 2020

As chairman, Councillor Bonfield provided an overview of the meeting of the Beach Management Advisory Committee held on 11th November 2020, at which he had been re-elected. It was reported that a presentation had been provided by Bridget Betts, Environmental Advice Manager for Dorset Council regarding water safety in Swanage and Studland bays. The success of multi-agency working had been noted, and it had been reported that improved systems for reporting inappropriate behaviour on the water had been established.

Problems arising from the launching of motorised craft in Swanage bay were discussed, including vehicles using the parish slipway to launch craft. The Advisory Committee had recommended the restriction of vehicular access at this location for safety reasons.

Further to discussion, it was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Finch, and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

TO RECOMMEND:

That consideration be given to the installation of bollards at the top of the parish slipway to prevent vehicular access on safety grounds, and that legal advice be sought accordingly.

6) Tourism marketing plan for 2021/22

Consideration was given to a Briefing Note dated November 2020 prepared by the Visitor Services Manager which set out a list of services, the marketing budget allocated to each service for 2020/21 and the proposed budget for 2021/22.

A discussion ensued surrounding the promotion of Swanage, including out of season publicity, and effective ways to determine the success of marketing campaigns. The potential benefits of working with other organisations in the town to share resources and promote events were discussed.

Committee Members felt that further consideration should be given to the matters raised, and that the Website and Marketing working party should be re-established to explore all options and costs.

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

That the Website and Marketing working party be re-appointed, consisting of Councillors Bonfield and Tomes, Finch, Foster, the VSM and the Tourism Manager, to explore the options and costings associated with the marketing budget in greater detail, and present its recommendations to a future meeting.

7) Sustainable Swanage Vision

The VSM gave an overview of the progress of the Environmental Policy working party, which included the development of the environmental policy action plan. Sustainable

tourism formed a component of the action plan, and therefore it was felt that consideration needed to be given to practical ways that this could be implemented in Swanage.

It was reported that eco-tourism could attract visitors to the town and inspire visitors to embrace eco-values. Practical suggestions included a car free week, promoting litter picking events, encouragement of more plastic free businesses, increased use of public transport networks and electric/peddle bike hire with linked footways and cycle paths. Committee members were encouraged to provide suggestions on improving the footpath and bridleway networks to Ms K Black for consideration.

Attention was drawn to the need to develop clear branding for Swanage around sustainable tourism, and the involvement of local businesses was noted as critical in ensuring a cohesive approach.

It was agreed that sustainable tourism ideas should be channelled through the Environmental Policy working party in the first instance, although there was a need to co-ordinate this work with that of the Website and Marketing working party. This topic would remain as a standing item on the agenda for future meetings of the Tourism Committee.

8) Shore Road – report on responses to public consultation on the potential pedestrianisation of southern section between the Mowlem and Victoria Avenue and update

The content of a briefing note prepared by the Management Support Officer setting out the responses to the public consultation on the potential pedestrianisation of the southern section of Shore Road between Victoria Avenue and the Mowlem was noted. It was reported that on 23rd September 2020 the Roads and Transport Committee had agreed that a formal request be made to Dorset Council for that section of Shore Road to be closed on a permanent basis to improve public safety. It had since been confirmed that this measure would be considered as part of the flood defence enhancement scheme, which was currently under development by the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management team.

9) Events

a) Christmas Lights Switch on – live streaming of the event

Due to current social distancing measures, it had been decided that no publicity of the Christmas light switch on would be made this year, to avoid the gathering of crowds. It would, however, be filmed and available to view online.

10) Budget 2020-21

a) Fees and Charges

Consideration was given to the draft Scale of Charges for the Boat Park, Beach Gardens and Swanage Information Centre for 2021/22, which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Councillor Bonfield declared a non-pecuniary interest under the Code of Conduct by reason of being a user of the Town Council boat park. He remained in the meeting during consideration of the following item, but did not take part in any discussion, decision or vote.

The proposed changes to the budget were discussed which included:

- A change to the winter period for the Boat Park and the subsequent adjustment to prices** – revised winter dates to run from 1st October to 30th April.

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

That the change to the boat park winter season dates, and subsequent adjustment to the draft Scale of Charges for

2021/22, be taken forward to the next meeting of the Policy, Finance and Performance Management Committee for further consideration as part of the budget setting process for 2021/22.

- **Beach Gardens putting charge (per round) –**
£4.00 for Adults up by 50p from £3.50.
£2.00 for Children (under 16) up by 20p from £1.80.
£10.00 for a Family up by £1.00.

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

That the draft Scale of Charges for 2021/22, including the increase in putting charges, be taken forward to the next meeting of the Policy, Finance and Performance Management Committee for further consideration as part of the budget setting process for 2021/22.

b) Proposed budget options

The VSM gave an overview of a briefing paper which set out a number of proposed budget options, and each item was discussed in turn:

- **Market** - Expenditure including advertising of £1,000;
- **Swanage Bay Enforcement** – a total cost of circa £10,000 to be spread across a range of partners. Initial proposal to budget for 50% of total cost;
- **Visit Dorset Tourism Officer Support** – continuing financial contribution to Dorset Council (current cost is £5,000).

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

That the proposed budget options, set out above be taken forward to the next meeting of the Policy, Finance and Performance Management Committee for further consideration as part of the budget setting process for 2021/22.

- **Tourism budget – Tourism Committee to consider if additional promotional budget is required** – Members noted this would be discussed at a forthcoming meeting of the Website and Marketing working party meeting.

11) Tourism Reports

a) Visitor Services Manager & Business Development Officer

A report on service provision, and actions, during an unprecedented year was reported by the VSM, which included:

- **Tourist Information Centre** – re-opened on 4th July utilising a gazebo situated at the front of the building. A new EPOS system had been implemented at TIC and Beach Gardens.
- **Seasonal Staff** – 3 of the 4 seafront advisors were appointed with responsibility for the beach and boat park. The Town Ambassador role was not appointed this year. £40,000 had been saved this year due to a later start to the season and reduced hours.

- **Beach Huts** – re-opened in early July with every other beach hut available to hire. 124 refunds were made and 135 bookings were transferred to the next year. The bookings for the 2021/22 season opened in October and were fully booked in a short period of time. The deficit in 2020/21, due to Covid-19 restrictions, was noted as £60,000.
- **Beach Gardens** – the VSM and TIC staff assisted with operating Beach Gardens. The opening hours had been reduced and therefore the money made per hour of opening was higher than in previous years.
- **Boat Park** – the boat park was popular during the second half of the season and a card payment machine was implemented.
- **Market** – was taken over by the Town Council in May and developed well.
- **Covid-19 implications** – reductions noted in income including retail, boat park and Beach Gardens, however, reduced expenditure in all areas, including marketing, has meant that the overall out-turn for visitor services should be close to the approved budget.

The VSM noted that plans for next year included the building of a larger decking area at Beach Gardens, development of the Town Ambassador role and ensuring that systems and procedures were effective and suitable.

The VSM thanked his staff, managers, the tourism manager and other partners including Dorset Council and the RNLI lifeguards for all their support during a challenging year.

b) Tourism Manager

An update was provided by the Tourism Manager, noting the extraordinary year that had faced the tourism sector and that a balanced approach, to the promotion of tourism, had been required:

- **Cross Agency working** – Visit Dorset had worked with Public Health England, BCP council and worked closer with smaller businesses.
- **Communication** – Newsletters were emailed to partners once a week with business support information, grants and legislation advice.
- **Campaigns** – Various campaigns had been publicised including ‘#Respect, Protect, Enjoy’, ‘Good to Go’ and ‘Know before you Go’.
- **Tourism Website** – visits to the site between the beginning of July and the end of October recorded an increase of 26% from 2019.

Future plans included promoting businesses at Christmas, where restrictions allowed trade, and continued business support throughout 2021.

12) Updates from Outside Representatives

Museum and Heritage Centre

- **Refurbishment** – it was reported that the museum re-fit was nearing completion.
- **Finances** – Government grants and legacy donations had provided the income lost due to the closure of the museum due to Covid-19, which had enabled overheads to be covered.
- **Re-opening** – an Edwardian/Victorian themed re-opening event was in the planning stage.

RNLI

- **Fundraising/Safety awareness** – a different approach to fundraising/safety awareness had been established to conform to restrictions e.g. less touch points/interactive displays.

- **Lifeguards** – had not started at the usual time of the season however they had been present on Swanage beach from June. Recruitment for 2021 was underway and training had re-commenced in accordance with social distancing regulations.

Praise was given for the exceptional work of the RNLI and the provision of lifeguards on Swanage Bay.

Chamber of Trade

- **Promotional film** – it was reported that the promotional film, which had been funded by an economic recovery grant from Dorset Council, was progressing well and would be released prior to Christmas.

13) To review Committee membership

It was noted that hoteliers and owners of the local caravan parks were not represented on the Tourism Committee, and further to discussion it was agreed that the Website and Marketing working party could discuss membership and report back to a future meeting.

14) Items of information and matters for forthcoming agendas

The following items were suggested for forthcoming agendas: promotion of Green Spaces; provision of electric BBQ's; Covid-19 update.

15) Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting had been scheduled for 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday 23rd March 2021.

The meeting closed at 11.50 a.m.
