

Minutes of a Meeting of the **TOURISM COMMITTEE**
held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **TUESDAY,**
19th NOVEMBER 2019 at **10.00 a.m.**

Chair: -

Councillor C Finch

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor M Bonfield

Swanage Town Council

Councillor T Foster

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Moreton

Swanage Town Council

Councillor J Page

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Tomes

Swanage Town Council

Councillor M Whitwam

Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives:-

Ms K Black

Durlston Country Park – From 10.05 a.m.

Mr P Sykes

Swanage Railway

Also Present: -

Dr M Ayres

Town Clerk

Miss N Clark

Administration & Communications Manager

Mrs E Evans

Management Support Officer

Miss H Lagden

Tourism Manager, Dorset Council

Mr C Milmer

Visitor Services Manager and Business

Development Officer

Mrs S Tattershall

Visitor Services Assistant Manager

Public Participation Time

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

1) **Apologies**

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from, Mr M Norris (Swanage Museum & Heritage Centre), Mr D Rawsthorn (Swanage Railway) and Mr M Smith (RNLI Face-to-Face Manager).

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 16th July 2019**

There were no matters raised.

Ms K Black joined the Meeting at 10.05 a.m.

4) **Matters arising from Minutes of the Beach Management Advisory Committee Meeting held on 23rd October 2019**

Councillor Bonfield provided an overview of the Beach Management Advisory Committee Meeting held on 23rd October 2019, at which the Visitor Services Manager had

presented a list of budget proposals for 2020-21 (which would be discussed under Agenda Item No. 12 b) below). An information leaflet produced by Dorset Coast Forum regarding the temporary sea defences which had been put in place in Swanage for winter 2019-20, and the proposals for coastal defence improvements in lower High Street, had been circulated.

5) Tourism support from Dorset Council including website – Consideration of options

Further to Minute No. 5) of the Tourism Committee Meeting held on 21st November 2018, consideration was again given to the possibility of a separate tourism website for Swanage. The Visitor Services Manager (VSM) expressed keenness for Swanage to be marketed more proactively/effectively through its own tourism website.

Attention was drawn to the judging feedback report received from the Dorset Tourism Awards, a copy of which was provided under Agenda Item 15 a), which had also made a recommendation for the Swanage Information Centre to have its own website.

A discussion ensued regarding the ‘Visit Dorset’ website and the promotion of Swanage through this media. It was suggested that more local businesses needed to subscribe to ‘Visit Dorset’ to ensure that Swanage featured more prominently via this site. The Tourism Manager reported that she would be willing to undertake research with business owners to understand why more were not using the site, and discussed the possibility of Swanage having a ‘microsite’ within the ‘Visit Dorset’ site. Comments were made that future marketing needed to be more Swanage-focussed, and not Dorset-wide.

It was noted that the estimated set-up costs for a new website were between £3,000 (basic site) and £10,000, and the possibility of using Facebook and Twitter to market Swanage tourism was also discussed. However, Committee Members felt that further information would be required before a decision could be made, and that a working party should be established to explore all options and costs. It was felt that the Tourism Manager and outside representatives should also be invited to sit on the working party.

A discussion then ensued regarding the Town Council’s contributions made to Dorset Council towards officer costs and the Visit Dorset website, and whether this should continue in 2020/21. It was noted that the Tourism Manager was keen to review the Service Level Agreement between Dorset Council and the Town Council. Committee Members therefore agreed that these contributions should be retained in the draft budget at the present time.

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

TO RECOMMEND:

That consideration be given to the establishment of a Website and Marketing Working Party at a future Council Meeting.

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

That the current budget of £8,000 for Visit Dorset services be retained in the draft budgets, to 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 2020/21.

6) Beach Hut Competition Questionnaire – Results

The VSM gave an overview of the responses to the Beach Hut Competition Questionnaire, which were set out in a briefing note dated November 2019. The report focussed on responses to the question ‘What additional facilities or improvement might you

like to see made to Swanage beach front?'. It was reported that out of 484 responses, the headline figures were:

- 32% do nothing
- 11% more litter bins, or bin improvements/recycling
- 7% permanent closure of Shore Road (5% southern section, 1% whole road, 1% general improvements around signage/speed limit
- 6% additional chairs and benches
- 4% additional toilets
- 3% additional water points/fountains.

Other comments were made that visitors felt Swanage was a very friendly town with a strong community feel. A discussion was held on ways to better communicate this to businesses as a positive aspect. Other points raised included:

- **Clean Beach** – clean safe beach for children.
- **Public Conveniences** – requests for additional public toilets were noted, especially at the north end of the beach and longer opening times for all toilets.

It was therefore AGREED:-

That a meeting of the Public Conveniences Working Party be convened to discuss public toilet provision and opening times.

7) Smoke Free Zone around beach huts and Shore Road Toilets

Further to Minute No. 7) b) of the meeting of the Tourism Committee held on 16th July 2019, consideration was given to a briefing note prepared by the VSM regarding the issue of smoking and vaping outside the beach huts and in front of the Shore Road public toilets. Suggestions were made on ways to eliminate the issue of complaints from non-smokers and families using the beach huts which included the provision of a 'smoking area' or effective additional signage. Consideration was also given to the inclusion of electronic cigarettes within the smoking ban.

Councillor Whitwam left the room at 10.40 a.m.

Further discussion was held surrounding the Council's ability to enforce a smoking ban and possible amendments to the terms and conditions of hire, as set out in appendix 1 to the briefing note. Consideration was also given to the timescale to amend the terms of use as bookings had already been made for the 2020 season.

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

That further consideration be given to revised terms and conditions, and improved signage, regarding the prohibition of smoking and vaping for beach hut hire for the 2021 season, in order for a revised draft to be presented to the next committee meeting.

8) Swanage Town Advisor – Trial for 2020-21

Further to Minute No. 8) of the meeting of the Tourism Committee held on 16th July 2019, a discussion ensued regarding the appointment of town advisors who would have a primary role to promote a friendly, welcoming face of the town and offer guidance on tourist attractions and businesses to meet visitors' needs. It was noted that difficulties had been identified with the recruitment of volunteer 'ambassadors', hence a proposal was brought forward to add the role of 'town advisor' to that of seafront advisor.

Consideration was given to an overall increase in hours for seafront/town advisors from 1400 to 2000 p.a. and the rise in cost associated with that. It was stated that the posts would

be appointed on variable hours contracts, with one of the advisors being employed year-round as a trial for the first year.

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

That the role of Town Advisor be integrated into the role of Seafront Advisor, and that consideration of an increase in budget of £7,000 per annum to fund an increase in hours for 2020/21 be taken forward to the next Policy, Finance and Performance Management Committee on 11th December 2019 for further consideration.

Councillor Whitwam returned to the room at 10.50 a.m.

9) **Sustainable Tourism**

The Visitor Services Manager presented a briefing note on the importance of sustainable Tourism, especially in light of the Council's declaration of a climate crisis. Those present were invited to contribute ideas as to how this could be delivered. The main points raised were:

- **Increase in opportunities for recycling along the seafront** – ideas to be researched for future consideration.
- **Electric car charging** – it was reported that the charging point at Main Beach car park had been used 211 times this year, and that at the Mermond Place car park 290 times. Durlston County Park was looking into installing car charging ports in its car park, and the need for increased provision of such facilities was highlighted.
- **Bus Route D5** – attention was drawn to ongoing discussions around the possibility of permanently establishing the D5 bus route for community use. Consideration was given as to whether this could include a stop at Swanage Hospital. Further information would be reported to the forthcoming meeting of the Roads and Transport Committee.

Together with the briefing note prepared by the Visitor Services Manager, these points would be reported to the Council's Environment Policy Working Party for further consideration.

10) **Promoting Awards across Swanage**

Congratulations were given to the Swanage Information Centre team for its recent success in winning Gold in the Dorset Tourism Awards, and thanks to the Tourism Manager from Dorset Council for her support over recent years.

A discussion ensued which covered ways to encourage businesses to apply for awards relevant to their profession, and to discuss the ways in which success could be shared. It was suggested that the Swanage Town Council newsletter and website could be used to celebrate local success stories, and this would be given further consideration.

11) **Events**

a) **VE Day 75th Anniversary celebrations – update**

It was reported that the VE Day working party would meet on 6th December 2019 to further discuss the street party in the lower High Street and the music scheduled to take place in the bandstand during the evening. A further update would follow.

b) Christmas in Swanage 2019 – update

It was reported that the Christmas light switch-on on 30th November 2019 at 5.00 p.m. was being successfully promoted via Facebook, together with the Artisans on the Beach event.

It was confirmed that an open meeting had been arranged for Wednesday 22nd January 2020 at the Emmanuel Baptist Church to encourage business owners and members of the public to set up a Christmas Festivities Committee for 2020 with the objective of taking a more holistic approach to the Christmas events across the town.

In addition to this update two further events were discussed:

- **Swanage Lifeboat Soapbox Race** – attention was drawn to the importance of risk assessment and insurance, given the proposed location of this event on the Downs.
- **Fairy Festival** – information was provided regarding an enquiry received to hold a commercial event on 15th and 16th August 2020 which would involve approximately 30 to 40 traders on Sandpit Field. The organiser had requested that overnight camping be permitted for security personnel. Queries were raised whether this date would coincide with the Swanage RNLI Lifeboat Week, which would need further investigation.

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

That the proposal for a Swanage Lifeboat Soapbox Race be brought forward to a forthcoming Monthly Town Council meeting for approval.

12) 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 2020/21, which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The proposed changes to the budget were discussed which included:

- **Increase in Boat Park fees** – average 1.6% increase.
- **Beach Gardens putting charge** – £1.80 for Children (under 16) up by 5p from £1.75 per round.
- **Pavilion Hire** – 2% increase.
- **Deposit for additional beach hut key** – 100% increase from £10.00 to £20.00 as a deterrent to losing additional keys.

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

That the draft Scale of Charges for 2020/21 be taken forward to the next meeting of the Policy, Finance and Performance Management Committee on 11th December 2019 for further consideration as part of the budget setting process for 2020/21.

Consideration was also given to a request from Purbeck Runners for a reduced fee for hiring the Beach Gardens Pavilion on an annual instead of a weekly basis. It was proposed by Councillor Finch, seconded by Councillor Page and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

TO RECOMMEND:

That the Purbeck Runners group be granted the ability to book their weekly training sessions at Beach Gardens Pavilion on an annual basis, with a 25% discount being applied to the total booking fee.

b) Proposed budget options

The VSM gave an overview of budget options and expenditure, and each item was discussed in turn:

- **Seafront benches, works to Swanage Information Centre garden, and seafront waste management** – these items to be referred to the Capital Projects Working Party for consideration.
- **Seafront drinking water** - Committee Members felt that better signage should be installed on beach huts to indicate the location of drinking water points. The two taps at the north end of the seafront to be made more accessible with signs to raise awareness regarding the need to conserve water.
- **Event management system and Avalon (beach hut management system)** – committee members felt that these two items should be combined, with a budget of £4,000 to improve I.T. systems which may address both issues.
- **Additional public lifejacket lockers** – committee members supported a proposal to install additional lockers near to the RNLI lifeguard station, including an increase in budget allowance from £1,250 to £1,750.
- **Durlston Bus** – this item to be referred to the Transport Committee.
- **High quality bunting** – Committee Members felt that it would not be a viable option to purchase and store bunting, however, organisations could apply for a grant to purchase bunting if they wished.

It was therefore proposed by Councillor Tomes, seconded by Councillor Foster and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

That the revised budget options, set out in the table below, 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 2020/21.

| Area | Budget Proposal | Cost |
|----------------------------|--|-------------|
| Seafront Signage and taps | Drinking water - install improved water points around the beachfront with new signage. | £2,000 |
| Swanage Information Centre | Event Management System that can administer the necessary paperwork for events and allow event organisers to upload documents and track progress online. This will have the benefit of reducing the manual administration currently primarily undertaken by the Visitor Services Manager and provide a better service for customers in a more streamlined way. Avalon (beach hut management system) requires a number of improvements to meet the increased demand on the system and to improve customer functionality and look and feel. | £4,000 |
| Seafront | Public life jacket lockers – install lockers outside | £1,750 |

| Area | Budget Proposal | Cost |
|------|---|------|
| | the Shore Road Toilets – the cost assumes that the RNLI will fund the lockers and STC will fund the frame | |

c) **Proposed Tourism budgets**

The VSM gave an overview of the proposed budget for the 2020/21 financial year. Members were advised that the budget largely reflected incremental increases. It was therefore proposed by Councillor Finch, seconded by Councillor Page, and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That the proposed tourism budget 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 2020/21.

13) **Tourism Reports**

a) **Visitor Services Manager & Business Development Officer**

A report on achievements and actions since the last meeting had been prepared by the VSM, a copy of which was provided to Committee Members for information purposes. The update included:

- **Beach Huts** - turnover for 2019-20 up by 20% on 2018-19.
- **Beach Gardens** - turnover for 2019-20 up by 15% on 2018-19.
- **Retail Sales** - retail sales were up by 10%.
- **Christmas Leaflet** – widely distributed and published in the Dorset Magazine.

b) **Tourism Manager**

An update was provided by the Tourism Manager which included:

- **Dorset Council’s new Economic Growth Strategy**
- **Business Breakfast Meeting** – a breakfast meeting had been scheduled for Thursday 5th December 2019 at the Springfield Hotel from 7.30 a.m. to discuss the Economic Growth Strategy for Business and Tourism. An invitation was extended to Committee Members.
- **The Dorset Value of Tourism Statistics** – it was noted that tourism contributed £1.8 billion to the Dorset economy.
- **Tourism Website Improvements** - more information and data would be brought forward to the next committee meeting.
- **Sandbanks Ferry Suspension** – mitigation work while the ferry was suspended included a banner on the ‘Visit Dorset’ website promoting Swanage, which had received over one million views.

14) **Updates from Outside Representatives**

Swanage Railway

A report had been distributed at the start of the meeting on behalf of Swanage Railway which included:

- **Flying Scotsman** – the event had drawn large crowds to the town and had been a positive start to the year.
- **Passenger numbers** – it was reported that passenger numbers had been consistent with 2018 figures, until the ferry suspension in July 2019.
- **Autumn Steam Gala 11th to 13th October 2019** - it was reported that the Gala had been seriously impacted by the ferry suspension.

- **Santa Specials 30th November to 24th December 2019** - tickets were now on sale with some dates already sold out.
- **Projected forecast for 2019** – projected to be circa 2.5% to 3% down on the previous year, but confident of a better year in 2020.

Durlston Country Park

Updates were provided, which included the following:

- **Durlston D5 Bus Service** – Durlston Country Park would be exploring possible grant funding, and a further update would be reported to the Roads and Transport Committee following receipt of service options costings.
- **Durlston Pleasure Grounds Project** – the ‘Durlston Shed’ was now open four days per week for activities and had received positive feedback from the groups that had utilised it.
- **Tourism Awards** – the park had won a Gold Award in the Accessible and Inclusive category of the Dorset Tourism Awards 2019. The Park had also won the Green Flag Award for 2019.
- **Neighbour Car Scheme.**
- **Tree works were being undertaken, and new seating was being installed.**

15) Items of information and matters for forthcoming agendas

a) Swanage Information Centre - Dorset Tourism Awards 2019-20 Rounds 1 & 2 Judging Feedback Reports

The feedback reports were circulated to committee members for information purposes, and highlighted the outstanding service that Swanage Information Centre provided to its customers.

16) Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting had been scheduled for 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday 24th March 2020.

The meeting closed at 12.05 p.m.