

Minutes of a Meeting of the **TOURISM COMMITTEE**
held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY,**
21st NOVEMBER 2018 at **10.00 a.m.**

Chair: -

Councillor C Finch

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor M Bonfield

Swanage Town Council

Councillor G Marsh

Swanage Town Council

Councillor T Morris

Swanage Town Council

Councillor W. Trite

Swanage Town Council

Councillor M Whitwam

Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives:-

Ms K Black

Durlston Country Park

Mr M Norris

Swanage Museum & Heritage Centre

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, Purbeck District Council

Mr C Milmer

Visitor Services Manager and Business
Development Officer

Mrs S Tattersall

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 I Brown (Maritime Coastguard Agency), Mr R Johnson (Swanage Pier Trust), and Mr D Rawsthorn (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 4th July 2018**

8) **Updates from Outside Representatives**

Swanage Railway

It was requested that the following sentence should be amended to read:

- It was noted that, due to the ongoing dry conditions, there was a nationwide mainline steam ban at the present time.

4) **Events**

a) **Review of 2018**

A Briefing Note dated November 2018 had been prepared by the Visitor Services

Manager (VSM) and had been provided to Committee Members for information purposes. It was reported that 2018 had been a successful year for the town in relation to events held, visitor numbers, and funds raised for local and national charities.

The Town Council's event application process had been revised for 2018, with all bookings being made via an online form on the Council's website, which had worked well and had made it easier for the Visitor Services Team to ensure that all the required documentation had been received. Further enhancements to the event administration process were planned over the coming years.

It was noted that a meeting of interested parties had recently been held to discuss the possibility of a Jazz Festival in 2019, and it was anticipated that a proposal to hold a smaller festival in the town in the future would be forthcoming.

b) Festivals and events for 2019, including consideration of requests for use of Town Council property

Consideration was given to a schedule dated 15th November 2018 prepared by the VSM detailing provisional event requests for the use of Town Council operated premises which had been approved at the Monthly Council Meeting on 17th September 2018, along with a request for the following new event:

- **King George's Playing Field** – 'Fun in the Park', 11th August 2019. A community event being hosted by Swanage Rotary in aid of Swanage Area Dementia Friendly Community.

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

That the request from Swanage Rotary, as set out in the schedule dated 15th November 2018 prepared by the VSM, be approved, subject to submission of the required documentation at the appropriate time.

5) To establish working party to explore options for a new Swanage tourism website and brand awareness

Consideration was given to a Briefing Note dated November 2018 prepared by the VSM which set out a list of existing websites and online tourism guides (along with links to these) for various towns across Dorset. The VSM felt that Swanage could be marketed more proactively/effectively through its own tourism website.

A discussion ensued during which comments were made that Swanage, as a tourist destination, had little visibility online. Suggestions were made that students from Bournemouth University may be interested in taking this as a project, and whether a new mobile 'app' should be considered instead of a website, as usage of mobile applications was increasing.

Committee Members felt that further consideration should be given to a separate tourism website, and that a working party should be established to explore all options and costs.

It was therefore AGREED:

That a working party be appointed, consisting of Councillors Bonfield and Finch, the VSM, and the Tourism Manager, to explore the options and costings for a new Swanage tourism website in greater detail, and present its recommendations to a future Committee Meeting.

6) Consideration of ideas for Swanage to become an eco-friendly town

A Briefing Note prepared by Sarah Spurling, Project Officer, Litter Free Coast and Sea, was provided to Committee Members for information purposes. The Briefing Note gave

details about the Swanage ‘Love our Beach’ Project. The project had received funding for a period of two years, until January 2020, the main aim of which was to help improve and maintain bathing water quality in Swanage, with a focus on the reduction of fats, oils and greases in the drain network, and reduction in coastal litter. A successful project launch event had been held at The Swanage School on 3rd November 2018 to raise awareness of this important initiative.

A discussion ensued regarding potential enhancements which could be considered to improve the town for the benefit of local residents and visitors alike, which included:

- ‘Plastic-free’ town proposals – contact was suggested with Wimborne and Lyme Regis who were both undertaking plastic-free initiatives
- Increased recycling facilities
- Free water bottle refill scheme, posters, stickers – publicise and encourage involvement (businesses could also sign up as a ‘Refill Station’)
- A local awards scheme for businesses to encourage the move to ‘recycle/re-use’ (packaging and cups)
- Swanage Community Awards Scheme – a new ‘Green Champion’ category to be added to the scheme
- Whether part of the Wessex Water funding received by the Town Council (arising from the Environment Agency’s Enforcement Undertaking) could be used to support environmental projects in the town

It was noted that the Swanage Information Centre already provided a free water bottle refill service, and was planning an educational interactive display in the Centre, regarding environmental issues, in partnership with Wessex Water.

The VSM would research these suggestions further, including what it would take to become a ‘plastic-free’ town, and bring back his findings to a future Committee Meeting.

Further to Standing Order No. 12) a) viii, it was proposed by the Chairman and AGREED:

That Item 9) on the agenda be brought forward to Item 7).

7) **Budget Setting 2019/20**

a) Review of Tourism Budgets

Consideration was given to tourism budgets, and a Briefing Note dated November 2018 prepared by the VSM which gave an overview of expenditure/works to be undertaken 2018/19, and proposals for 2019/20 and 2020/21.

A discussion ensued during which a question was raised as to whether the Council’s contributions made to the District Council towards the Tourism Manager post, and the Visit Dorset website, should continue in view of the impending local government reorganisation proposals. The Tourism Manager confirmed that a partnership agreement would be established with the new unitary council, and that it would be ‘business as usual’, although it was anticipated that a review would be undertaken in the future. Committee Members therefore agreed that these contributions should be retained in the draft budget at the present time, and that close contact should be maintained with the Tourism Manager.

The VSM gave an overview of proposed expenditure, and each item was discussed in turn. Members were in agreement that the proposals should be taken forward for further consideration, subject to the following amendments/recommendations:

- **No. 3) Stools and tables upper level beach huts** – trial to be undertaken over the winter months and, if successful, to be purchased by the end of March 2019.
- **No. 4) Additional permanent employee to provide weekend cover** - in view of local government reorganisation, and the unknown impact this may have on Town Council budgets in the future, it was felt that a permanent position could not be

considered at the present time, and that actual footfall figures on Sundays should be obtained to evidence the need for an additional post. A suggestion was therefore made that a 'trial' should be considered, and other options explored regarding opening hours and staff rotas, the outcome/details of which to be brought back to a future Committee Meeting.

- **No. 7) Large deckchair** – a request was made for the VSM to investigate sponsorship opportunities for the deckchair, although concerns were raised regarding branding/advertising.
- **No. 9) Free drinking water tap** – Committee Members felt that sufficient drinking water taps were available, and did not support the costs of installing an additional tap. A request was made for the existing facilities to be more widely advertised, and for improved signage (including the words 'refill your water bottle here').
- **No. 13) Recycling bins and collection at Beach Gardens** – Committee Members felt that this was the responsibility of the Dorset Waste Partnership. The VSM would investigate what had happened to the recycling bins that used to be situated along the seafront.
- **No. 15) Swanage tourism website** – no further action at this time, working party to bring recommendations and costings to a future Committee Meeting.

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

That the 'Review of Tourism Budgets', as set out in the Briefing Note dated November 2018, subject to the amendments as listed 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 2019/20.

b) Scale of Charges 2019/20 – Recommendation to Estimates Meeting

Consideration was given to the draft scale of charges for the Boat Park, Beach Gardens and Swanage Information Centre for 2019/20, which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

It was reported that the Boat Park fees and charges had not been increased. However, in view of the number of requests received by the Council regarding the possible launch of kayaks from the Boat Park, new charges were proposed for kayak launch and trailer storage, which were welcomed by Committee Members.

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

That the draft scale of charges for 2019/20 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 2019/20.

8) Consideration of a new customer survey for 2019/20

Consideration was given to the possibility of a new customer survey for 2019/20. It was reported that in a recent seafront survey undertaken in Bournemouth, Swanage had been identified as the top destination to visit.

During the ensuing discussion concerns were raised regarding the potential costs of undertaking such a survey, and that the Council would need to be clear about what it would do with any responses/the type of analysis to be undertaken before commissioning the

survey. Suggestions were made that consideration should be given to ‘trade days’ at the TIC, an ‘in-house’ survey, and whether volunteers could assist the TIC in collating such feedback and act as ‘ambassadors’ for the town.

Committee Members agreed that more information was required before consideration could be given to this matter.

9) Accessible Swanage – update

A Briefing Note dated November 2018 had been prepared by the VSM providing updates on actions and improvements undertaken to date, which included:

- A refurbishment programme of the Town Council’s public conveniences, which included accessible toilets at three sites (including new facilities and a shower in Beach Gardens).
- The VSM had attended a ‘Heritage Ability’ event which had provided him with an opportunity to better understand what accessibility meant for different people, and to gain an appreciation of what improvements the Town Council may wish to consider in the future to enhance the visitor experience.
- Two wheelchairs for public use were being hired out from the Swanage Information Centre, and were proving very popular.
- The Swanage Information Centre and Beach Gardens Kiosk Teams, and the Seafront Advisor, had received very useful dementia awareness training.
- The District Council had produced an ‘Accessible Purbeck Guide’ which was available through the Town Council’s website. Paper copies were also available from the Swanage Information Centre on request.

Future activities included:

- A beach access mat would be considered for Swanage beach for 2019-20, which would allow users flat access to the water’s edge.
- New accessibility guides were being created/worked on over the winter period by Visit England for the Swanage Information Centre, the beach and Beach Gardens.
- A ‘Stroll and Roll’ was being organised by a local resident, who was also a wheelchair user, so that the VSM, and other interested parties, could experience Swanage in a wheelchair, and highlight any difficulties users may have.
- Enhancement of Beach Gardens as a ‘dementia friendly’ destination.

It was noted that Studland Beach provided the use of a wheelchair which could access the sea, and that the two ‘Trampers’ at Durlston Country Park could be used by anyone with walking difficulties. The Park also had an ‘Access For All’ page on its website, and provided guided walks for the partially-sighted. A question was raised as to whether the Town Council could include an ‘accessibility’ page on its own website.

Further to Standing Order No. 12) a) viii, it was proposed by the Chairman and AGREED:

That Item 11) on the agenda be brought forward to Item 10).

10) Updates from Outside Representatives

Durlston Country Park

It was reported that the Park had had a good summer, and updates were given on activities and events to date, which included the following:

- The Friends of Durlston, a group which had been established in 1988, had received the ‘Volunteer Group of the Year’ Award at the recent Dorset Volunteer Groups of the Year Awards. Congratulations were extended to the group.
- The Park’s Heritage Lottery Fund Bid had been successful, and thanks and appreciation were given to the Town Council for its support.

- Improvements were continuing to the Park's paths and viewpoints, and there was a new community transport 'lift-share' service.
- Three containers would soon be delivered which would be utilised as new sheds in the woodland area. Tree works would be undertaken during the winter.
- Senior Ranger, Katie Black, as Rights of Way (RoW) Officer, would be considering projects for the RoW network in Purbeck, and was looking for suggestions for improvements in the Swanage area, which could be put forward for funding. It was noted that the network of paths within Swanage Bay View Caravan Park was currently being reviewed. Part of the footpath at Prospect was closed due to the construction works for the new housing development, and at Peveril Point where a diversion was being put in place.
- It was reported that the repairs to the footpath, from the Heritage Centre to the Stone Quay, would be undertaken next week, weather permitting.

Swanage Railway

A report had been prepared and provided to Committee Members at the meeting for their information. Updates included:

- **2018 passengers** – 5% down at circa 182,000 as at the end of October, impacted by the poor weather conditions in the spring, followed by the summer heatwave.
- **2018 Santa Specials** – online bookings now closed as almost all 44 trains were full. Limited spaces available, telephone bookings only.
- **South Western Railway services to Corfe Castle** – these had proved popular on summer Saturdays in 2018. It was anticipated that the service would return in 2019.
- **2018 Dorset Tourism Awards** – the Railway had received a Gold Award in the Large Attraction category. Congratulations were extended to all at Swanage Railway for this outstanding achievement.
- **2018 Group Travel Trade Show** – the Railway attended the Group Leisure & Travel Show at the NEC in Birmingham in October.
- **2019 Rail Tours, and Sea Train Adventure** – details provided.
- **Project Wareham** – an update was given, and it was anticipated that a second year trial service would be held, four times a day, five days a week to/from Wareham.
- **General Manager** – it was reported that Mr Matt Green had left the Railway in September. Appreciation and thanks were passed on to Mr Green accordingly.
- **Durlston Bus Route No. 5** – the Railway was keen to be involved in discussions regarding next year's service. It was noted that this matter would be discussed at the next meeting of the Heritage Group being held on 26th November 2018.
- **2018/19 Timetable/Special Events** – details provided.

Swanage Museum & Heritage Centre

A good year was reported, and updates were given as follows:

- Retail sales were up circa 8%.
- The Museum had welcomed some 65,000 visitors – a more reliable electronic visitor counting system had been installed to monitor visitor numbers.
- World War One Centenary Commemoration displays had been created, and also displayed in a local store.
- It was reported that, in partnership with the National Trust, new displays highlighting the important role played by Studland and Swanage during the run up to the D-Day Landings in 1944 were planned.
- 1st September 2019 would see the 80th anniversary of the start of World War Two.
- The Museum was still awaiting completion of the building lease from the District

Council, once completed proposals for the extension of/improvements to the Swanage Museum & Heritage Centre building would be submitted. It was agreed that Councillor Trite, as District Councillor, would chase PDC accordingly.

11) **Tourism Reports**

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

A report and update 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 updates included:

Swanage Information Centre

- The TIC Team had received a Silver Award at the 2018 Dorset Tourism Awards for 'Visitor Service Information Service of the Year'. Congratulations were extended to the Team for this well-deserved award.
- The Team continued to receive excellent TripAdvisor and Google reviews.
- A good range of quality photos had been taken during the summer by a professional photographer which could be used for promotion/marketing activities.
- The amount of traffic using Shore Road when it was closed had reduced, with vehicles driving at slower speeds, and going one way only – although further work was required here.

Beach Gardens – Putting and Tennis

- 17% increase in turnover (or £4,000) compared to previous year.
- Tennis diary would be online after Christmas 2018.
- Table tennis had arrived in May.
- CCTV and some new signage planned for 2019/20.

Beach Huts

- Beach Hut turnover for 2018-19 up by 13% on 2017-18.
- Reviewed the 'lottery' approach to beach hut bookings for 2019 – new approach, adopted in September 2018, on a 'first-come-first-served' approach, or 'hotel room' style booking.
- Deposit of 15% required for all bookings for 2019.
- The first two rows of beach huts at the Spa would be removed during the winter of 2018/19, this work was the first stage of an improvement scheme for the area which was under development.

Boat Park

- A number of concerns around the parking bays and cars had been raised during the year, and would be considered at the Boat Park Working Party Meeting next week.

Marketing

- Promotion of the beach huts and Beach Gardens had been undertaken in the local Gazette and Advertiser.
- TIC's Facebook page had reached 1,935 likes and 1,982 followers.
- The Christmas marketing leaflet had been designed and printed, with support from Durlston Country Park, Swanage Railway, and the Chamber of Trade. Copies were provided to Committee Members for distribution accordingly, and would also be widely promoted on Social Media.

Other

- The 'Artisans on the Beach' event had changed a little for 2018, and would be a Friday to Sunday event, with late night opening on Saturdays. A launch event was planned at the Shore Road beach huts on 1st December 2018 at 12.00 p.m.

b) **Tourism Manager**

Reports and updates on the Visit Dorset Tourism Partnership, dated June and September 2018, had been prepared by the Tourism Manager, and circulated to Committee Members with the agenda paperwork for their information.

Updates included the following:

- **Dorset Tourism Awards** - congratulations were extended to Swanage Information Centre, Discover Purbeck Information Centre, and Swanage Railway, for their respective Silver, Bronze, and Gold Awards.
- **Launch of the new Visit Dorset series of videos** – which would be used in promotional campaigns for 2019.
- www.visit-dorset.com – visits to the site continued to grow with a 17% increase in traffic on June last year, which translated to 225,000 visitors looking for ideas for holidays in the area over the previous month. Competitions in partnership with Camp Bestival and Greenwood Grange were currently being promoted.
- **Visit Dorset Blog** – the blog posts had taken off and were being enjoyed and shared by many. Full details of all the latest blogs could be found at: <https://www.visit-dorset.com/ideas-and-inspiration/blog>
- **Online Accommodation Booking** - a short survey had been carried out with Visit Dorset accommodation members, with the aim of getting a better understanding of their feelings around online booking, and to find out what platforms members were using. This information would be used to look at ways to further develop online booking on the Visit Dorset site for the benefit of members and visitors alike. The findings would be shared when available.
- **Social Media** - Visit Dorset was now engaging with nearly 60,000 fans and followers. To keep up to date with the latest activity please visit:
Twitter: [@dorsettourism](https://twitter.com/dorsettourism) and [@visitdorsetbiz](https://twitter.com/visitdorsetbiz)
Facebook.com: [visit-dorset](https://www.facebook.com/visit-dorset)
Instagram.com: [visitdorsetofficial](https://www.instagram.com/visitdorsetofficial)
Youtube.com: [officialvisitdorset](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCv8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8)
- **‘Escape the City’ Campaign** - working in partnership with the promoters of Camp Bestival on a week long campaign using digital posters sites across 29 sites in London.
- **Press and PR** – which included published features, and ITV airtime promotion.
- **English Tourism Week 2019** – 30th March 2019 to 7th April 2019. For further information please visit: <https://www.visitbritain.org/get-involved-english-tourism-week-2019>

9) Items of information and matters for forthcoming agendas

- a) **Circumnavigation of the Isle of Purbeck event - 30th March to 1st April 2019** – it was reported that this event would include a two-day walk around the historical boundary of Purbeck. The VSM would be taking part by running around the boundary, and it was hoped that this would become a regular event in the future.
- b) **Town Hall plastic drinking cups** – a question was raised as to whether the cups were recyclable. It was reported that once the existing stock of cups had run out no further cups would be ordered. Attendees were therefore encouraged to bring their own reusable cups to future meetings, or glasses would be made available on request.

10) Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting had been scheduled for Wednesday 13th March 2019, at the Town Hall at 10.00 a.m.

The meeting closed at 12.15 p.m.
