

Minutes of a Meeting of the **TOURISM COMMITTEE**
held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **TUESDAY,**
23rd MARCH 2021 at **10.00 a.m.**

Chair: -

Councillor C Tomes

Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor M Bonfield

Swanage Town Council (from 10.10 a.m.)

Councillor C Finch

Swanage Town Council

Councillor T Foster

Swanage Town Council

Councillor A Harris

Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Moreton

Swanage Town Council

Councillor M Whitwam

Swanage Town Council

Outside Representatives:-

Ms A Brocklesby

National Trust (until 11.00 a.m.)

Mr R Johnson

Swanage Pier Trust (from 10.25 a.m.)

Mr M Norris

Swanage Museum & Heritage Centre

Ms A Rothery

Swanage Chamber of Trade

Mr A Tuckey

Durlston Country Park

Also Present: -

Dr M Ayres

Town Clerk

Mrs E Evans

Management Support Officer

Miss H Lagden

Tourism Manager, Dorset Council

Mr C Milmer

Visitor Services Manager and Business
Development Officer

Mr R Waitt

Planet Purbeck (until 10.55 a.m.)

Public Participation Time

There were three members of the public present at the meeting.

Councillor Tomes welcomed all attendees and introductions were provided.

1) **Apologies**

Apologies for his inability to attend the Meeting was received from Mr M Smith (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.

There were no declarations to record on this occasion.

3) **Matters arising from Minutes of the Tourism Committee Meeting held on 17th November 2020**

There were no matters raised.

Councillor Bonfield joined the Meeting at 10.10 a.m.

4) Matters arising from Minutes of the Beach Management Advisory Committee Meeting held on 11th November 2020

It was noted that the ‘Safe bathing zone’ should be referred to as ‘Designated bathing zone’.

5) Matters arising from Minutes of the Beach Management Advisory Committee Meeting held on 24th February 2021

As previously noted under Minute 4), ‘Safe bathing zone’ should be referred to as ‘Designated bathing zone’.

An update was requested regarding the clearance of the land slip on private property at the north end of the beach. In response it was advised that joint agency engagement between Dorset Council, the Environment Agency and the Marine Management Organisation had previously resulted in a timely and efficient operation. Furthermore, a meeting would be scheduled in due course with Swanage Coastguard, Swanage Town Council and Dorset Council’s Flood and Coastal Erosion team and an update provided to a future meeting.

6) Tourism marketing plan for 2021/22 - update

Further to Minute No. 6) of the Tourism Committee meeting held on 17th November 2020, consideration was given to a Briefing Note prepared by the Visitor Services Manager. It was reported that a number of members of the Marketing Working Party had held several interviews with local business owners to better understand the marketing barriers they faced and opportunities that existed. It was envisaged that over the next few months around twenty interviews would be held with various business owners from different sectors, which would assist in identifying the direction of marketing, branding, seasonal tourism and accessibility.

The findings from the interviews would be reviewed, and a proposal for a future Marketing Plan would be provided to the committee, prior to budget setting for 2021/22.

7) Sustainable Swanage Vision - update

Further to Minute No. 7) of the Tourism Committee meeting held on 17th November 2020, the VSM gave an update on implementation of the Environmental Policy Action plan, which included the need to develop a Sustainable Tourism Vision. It was acknowledged that the Vision would need consideration, and members were encouraged to provide suggestions prior to the Tourism Committee meeting in November. The representatives present offered assistance in contributing to the Vision and in promoting the branding.

Mr R Johnson joined the meeting at 10.25 a.m.

It was reported that a number of environmental actions were in the course of being implemented, including:

- improved signage for drinking water taps;
- all events held on Town Council grounds to complete an Environment Assessment form;
- car free days in Swanage to be promoted throughout the summer;
- an energy audit completed to review the potential for renewable energy for the Information Centre, public toilets and beach huts.

8) Events

The content of a briefing note prepared by the VSM, setting out upcoming scheduled events, was noted. It was reported that at the council meeting held on 15th March 2021, members agreed that events may be permitted from 17th May, provided the event organisers can demonstrate controlled access and conform with government guidelines. In

addition, any proposed events would require discussion by the working party and be approved at full council meetings. Three events had been scheduled between 17th May to 20th June which included an angling competition, a running event and an outdoor food market.

It was anticipated that should government guidelines permit, all events would be permitted after 21st June. It was acknowledged that it had been a challenging year for events but with proposed relaxations in Covid-19 guidelines, a positive season could be expected.

9) Swanage Friday Market

The VSM reported that the Swanage Friday Market had run successfully throughout the winter and that the summer market would commence on 2nd April 2021. Non-essential market stalls would be permitted from 16th April, in accordance with government guidelines. The recent resurfacing of the car park was noted which included the new markings establishing the position of the market.

It was noted that from 7th May 2021 ‘Artisans at the Market’ will commence to provide an opportunity for unique, handmade, local gifts to be sold. The ‘Artisans’ would be trading on the first Friday of the month.

10) Bay Enforcement - update

Further to Minute No. 4) of the Beach Management Advisory Committee meeting held on 24th February 2021, an update was provided by the VSM about the work undertaken by Dorset Council as the byelaw authority. This included the provision of new signage at boat access points, new leaflets explaining relevant byelaws and appropriate behaviour while using craft, and the procurement of additional buoys to be added to the 5-knot buoy line to increase awareness. It was anticipated that these would be in place prior to the summer season.

In addition, it was reported that the Town Council had provided funding to enable a patrol boat to operate within the bay between May and September to offer advice to water users, a centralised Marine Police incident recording form had been established, and consideration was being given to restrictions to be placed on the Parish Slipway to discourage the use of vehicles and large trailers for launching at this location.

The value of cross agency working between Dorset Council, the Town Council, National Trust, Dorset Coast Forum, Police, Coastguard and other associations, including an open water swimmer, was noted.

11) Swanage Town Data 2019

A report provided by The South West Research Company was noted. The VSM stated that the report was useful, in particular the statistical modelling, in determining the benefit of tourism to the local economy.

12) Tourism Reports

a) Visitor Services Manager & Business Development Officer

A verbal report on service provision, and actions was provided by the VSM, which included:

- **Beach Lockers** – It was anticipated that lifebelt lockers would be positioned on the Banjo Pier prior to the summer season.
- **Beach Huts** – Beach huts would be available to hire from 17th April with bookings open from 24th March. Current restrictions meant that every other hut would be available, until 21st June when all huts will be able to be hired, dependant on government guidelines at the time.
- **Beach Gardens** – scheduled to re-open on 2nd April, Good Friday.

- **Swanage Information Centre** – scheduled to re-open in April utilising the gazebo in the front garden for service provision.
- **Seasonal staff** – the Town Ambassador role would form part of the Seafront Advisor role but include meeting and greeting trains and coaches to provide visitor information. Three seafront advisors would start in April with a further advisor starting in the summer. Market attendant and other operational duties would form part of the role.
- **Boat Park** – following an audit taken at the end of 2020 recommendations to revise boat park payments and staffing requirements were made and the changes would be implemented from April 2021.

The chair thanked the VSM and staff for their hard work throughout challenging times.

b) Tourism Manager

An update was provided by the Tourism Manager, noting the challenges faced in re-opening the tourism sector:

- **Cross Agency working** – Visit Dorset had worked with Public Health England, Police, Fire service, BCP council and Town and Parish councils on the Dorset Tactical Response plan.
- **Communication** – trade newsletters were emailed to partners a few times per week with business support information. A ‘Visitor Pledge’ booklet would be circulated, via email, to accommodation providers to offer a positive message to visitors regarding respecting the area. Promotion via social media would also be forthcoming.
- **Licences** – extended licences had been granted for ‘pop-up’ campsites to discourage bush camping.
- **Campaigns** – Various campaigns had been discussed, with consideration given to the balance of local community concerns with visitor expectation. It was anticipated that similar messaging to last year was being considered such as ‘#Respect, Protect, Enjoy’.
- **Tourism Website** – work was continuing with the Tourism marketing working party to contribute to the Visit Dorset website.
- **Visitor Information Centres** – further to the Dorset Council consultation the Information Centres in Dorchester, Lyme Regis and Sherborne would no longer be council run. An update on alternative options would be provided to a future meeting.
- **BBQ’s** – the sale of disposable BBQ’s was currently under discussion with Dorset Council and stakeholders to ensure a consistent approach across the county. The National Trust confirmed removal of the BBQ areas on the beach to discourage use.

13) Updates from Outside Representatives

Museum and Heritage Centre

- **Re-opening** – risk assessments were currently being undertaken to provide limited opening from 17th May, dependant on volunteer numbers/availability.

Durlston Country Park

- **Re-opening** – limited re-opening from April with an outside information point.
- **Play trail** – a new children’s play trail was being established to include

rope swings, sky nets and sensory equipment to encourage engagement with nature for all.

- **Roaming Rangers** – employed to provide light touch engagement with visitors to the park. The possibility of joint training/information sharing with the Town Council’s Ambassador role was discussed.

Mr A Brocklesby left the meeting at 11.00 a.m.

Chamber of Trade

- **Promotional film** – it was reported that the promotional film, which had been funded by an economic recovery grant from Dorset Council, had been completed during 2020. Swanage Railway had provided additional funds, and with remaining grant money the production of another film was being considered to promote the re-opening of non-essential retail and to encourage day trips.

Swanage Pier Trust

- **Re-opening** – the pier would re-open on 12th April and the 1859 café would offer outside dining only from this date.

Swanage Railway

- **Re-opening** – services would re-start from 12th April with social distancing measures in place. Harmans Cross station would remain closed until 21st June when it is anticipated that the usual services will commence.

14) Items of information and matters for forthcoming agendas

The following item of information was provided:

- A meeting to discuss the Downs nature reserve would be held this evening, 23rd March 2021 at 7.00 p.m., and further details could be found on the Town Council’s Facebook page.

It was noted that the provision of shade in parks and refuse collection/litter would be discussed by the Operations Committee and an invitation was extended to members to attend the next meeting, scheduled for 31st March 2021.

The following items were suggested for forthcoming agendas:

- Review of Committee membership.

15) Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting would be confirmed at the Annual Council meeting in May 2021.

The chair thanked everyone present for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 11.15 a.m.
