

Council Offices, Commercial Road, Weymouth, Dorset, DT4 8NG

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**Minutes of meeting**

**MEETING:** Services Committee

**DATE & TIME**: Wednesday 10th July 2019 at 7.00pm

**PLACE:** Town Council Offices, Commercial Road, Weymouth, DT4 8NG

**Councillors**

**Present:**

Cllr David Northam (Chair)

Cllr Kevin Brookes (Vice Chair)

Cllr Alex Fuhrmann

Cllr Ryan Hope

Cllr Gill Taylor

Cllr Kate Wheller

Cllr Mark Tewkesbury

Cllr Ken Whatley

Cllr Graham Lambert

Cllr Jan Bergman Cllr David Harris Cllr Christine James

**Not present:**

Cllr Tia Roos

**Officers**

Jane Biscombe (Town Clerk)

Tara Williams (Parks & Open Spaces Manager)

Kevin Good (Beach Manager)

Niki Ayles (Democratic and Admin Officer)

There were four members of the public present and one member of the press.

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| S0008 | **Welcome by the Chair**  Cllr Northam welcomed everyone to this meeting of the Weymouth Town Council Services Committee and said that it is great to have full attendance for this session. |
| S0009 | **Apologies for Absence**  Apologies for absence were approved from Cllr Tia Roos, who was substituted by Cllr Kate Wheller. |
| S0010  S0011 | **Declarations of Interest**  Cllr Whatley and Cllr Northam declared a non-pecuniary interest regarding the beach concessions as they know several concession holders.  **Minutes of the last meeting**  Resolved:  Proposer: Cllr Brookes  Seconder: Cllr Taylor  Councillors agreed unanimously that the minutes of the last meeting held on Tuesday 28th May 2019 were a correct record, and the minutes were duly signed. |
| S0012 | **Councillors Questions**  Two questions had been received from Cllr Graham Lambert. These questions and the responses are detailed within the agenda for this meeting.  **Allotments:**  Cllr Lambert was content with the response provided and thanked Tara Williams and the team for pulling the information together and felt that the report demonstrates the good work being undertaken.  Cllr Tewkesbury highlighted that vacant allotment plots had been advertised on the Weymouth Town Council website but asked where people who do not have access to the internet can find the information. Tara Williams, Parks and Open Spaces Manager, confirmed that vacant plots had also been advertised in the Dorset Echo. Members of the public can also visit the Weymouth Town Council office to obtain this information.  **Afforestation:**  Cllr Lambert drew Members attention to a report that has been published stressing the importance of afforestation globally. Cllr Lambert highlighted that the planting of trees is not only important for climate change but also to people’s health and wellbeing.  Cllr Northam felt that the Neighbourhood Plan would be a good place to include this. Cllr James stressed that there is a need to look at the Council’s plots of land to ensure that tree planting did not compromise future developments. Cllr Wheller stressed that there could be grass cutting implications and therefore this will need to be considered before any work is undertaken.  Tara Williams reported that, currently, Officers cannot gain access to the Council’s tree stock information but will do so as soon as possible and will provide the Committee with statistics regarding the tree stock across the area.  Cllr Tewkesbury requested that Members comments regarding planting be passed on to Dorset Council. Cllr Brookes suggested that when people submit planning applications wishing to remove old trees, Members should recommend that two or more trees should be planted in its place.  **Toilet Cleansing Contract:**  Cllr Wakeling suggested that rather than employing a single contractor for all of the town’s toilet cleansing, that the contract could be split in half and two organisations taken on to undertake the work. The Council could then obtain a good comparison regarding which were good and whether the costs were different.  This would be discussed when considering this item on the agenda.  **Wyke Cemetery:**  Cllr Hamilton reported that she had visited the Cemetery this evening and, as the report notes, badger activity in the cemetery does not appear to have caused a significant impact to graves with regards to subsidence. Cllr Hamilton asked whether the Council needs to spend this much money if there is no damage to monuments and if signs are put up to warn people of the potential hazards.  This would be discussed when considering the item on the agenda. |
| S0013 | **Public Comments and Questions**  **The Beach:**  Cllr O’Leary, Dorset Council, reported that several businesses on the beach are concerned about the level of the beach, which is as high as it has ever been, and asked whether there are any plans to keep it at its current level or whether it will be lowered.  Kevin Good, Beach Manager, explained that there are issues surrounding flood defence and coastal erosion and a study by Dorset Council looking at physical coastal impacts as well as economic impacts is being finalised in the coming months. This Beach Management Plan will ultimately decide the thresholds for beach levels in order to minimise flood risk and maximise the continued amenity use of Weymouth’s award-winning beach. That document is the property of Dorset Council and Cllr O’Leary is advised to talk to their Technical Services Department if he wishes to see the report prior to its publication.  **Allotments (Littlemoor):**  Cllr O’Leary recalled some mention of allotments in Littlemoor at the last meeting. That land is at the end of the Youth Club but he thought that it was leased to Big 4 to run a community garden.  Tara Williams explained that this project has stalled and she will be attending the next board meeting to offer support.  **Signage on the Rodwell Trail:**  A member of the public stated that there have never been signs on the trail and he would like to see speed signs put up.  Tara Williams explained that signage was previously constantly defaced and therefore the decision had been made to take them down. She is liaising with Dorset Council who are looking to implement a One Path initiative which is about sharing the trail, respecting the trail and enjoying the trail. Cllr Northam summarised that the matter is under investigation and has been reported to Dorset Council.  **The Swannery:**  A member of the public complained about the weeds by the Gurkha Restaurant, on the bowling green side.  Cllr Northam explained that this is something that is now dealt with by Dorset Council, and public comments regarding the maintenance of this area will be passed on to them.  **Bins on Abbotsbury Road:**  A member of the public raised concern about rubbish bags being placed next to the bin near to the Rodwell Trail on Abbotsbury Road because the bins are overflowing, and seagulls are ripping them open. He has been told that the bins are only emptied three times a week and workers do not pick up the bags that have been placed alongside.  Cllr Northam requested that Tara Williams contact Dorset Waste Partnership regarding the concerns and to ask if it would be possible to collect bags left next to bins.  **Dorset Council Staff:**  A member of the public raised concern regarding DC staff at The Marsh.  Cllr Northam thanked the member of the public for reporting his concerns but said that this is a matter for Dorset Council. The Town Clerk, Jane Biscombe, stressed that Weymouth Town Council do not manage DC staff and therefore it is not appropriate for members of the public to be encouraged to attend Town Council meetings to talk about this. However, they can be provided with the details of who they do need to contact. Cllr Taylor asked that members of the public be referred to her as The Marsh is in her area.  **The Beach:**  A member of the public highlighted that since the peninsula has been built, the curve of the cove has altered, and shingle is coming from the pier bandstand.  Cllr Northam replied that it is recognised that this has changed the deposition of the whole area and, as reported by Kevin Good, Dorset Council are undertaking an investigation.  **Dress Code:**  Cllr Wheller requested that Councillors remove hats during meetings.  Jane Biscombe clarified that there was no agreed policy of dress and nothing in the Standing Orders. Cllr Northam asked Members to remember that they are representing the public and to dress in what they deem an appropriate manner. |
| S0014  S0015  S0016  S0017  S0018 | **Toilet Cleansing Contract**  Jane Biscombe summarised the Toilet Cleansing Contract report written by Matt Ryan, Deputy Town Clerk, who was unable to attend this evening’s meeting. The current toilet cleansing arrangement with Dorset Council is coming to an end. However, Dorset Council have agreed to extend this arrangement by three months.  Cllr Tewkesbury proposed that toilet cleansing services be brought in-house so that there can be more flexibility with regards to the staff employed and so that staff can maintain other areas. Cllr Tewkesbury also suggested that Weymouth Town Council could employ their own staff to clean the Council Offices for example.  Jane Biscombe confirmed that a number of staff currently employed for cleansing toilets in Weymouth will be transferred to whichever organisation undertakes the work under TUPE regulations. Jane Biscombe highlighted that one of the benefits of appointing a contractor is that they are responsible for covering sickness and annual leave. When there is just one person undertaking three hours of cleaning that can be difficult. However, provided that Members can be fully prepared for the cost and time implications, Officers can put plans in place.  Cllr Wheller was concerned that the report states that the new facility will help facilitate the town’s capacity issues and suggests that it will remove the need for the seasonal toilets. However, the seasonal toilets are on the Esplanade and the infrastructure is there and to not have a facility there is out of the question. Cllr Wheller continued that the approved design of the Beach office development differs from earlier versions in that the doors open outwards. Cllr Wheller would prefer to see an in-house attendant in place to ensure a high standard of facility and deter vandalism.  Jane Biscombe would ask Matt Ryan to explore this and said that the seasonal toilets are a separate issue from toilet cleansing but she will ensure that the temporary toilets are included if that reflects the Councils wishes.  Cllr Harris asked whether Dorset Council should be asked to continue with the toilet cleansing until Spring 2020 so that Weymouth Town Council has more time to explore this. Cllr Harris was in favour on employing an in-house team but highlighted that the Council does not yet know what they are going to do about charging for using the toilets.  Resolved:  Proposer: Cllr Tewkesbury  Seconder: Cllr Wheller  Councillors agreed unanimously to pass the recommendations subject to the amendments made at the meeting as detailed below:  The Services Committee agreed that:  a) Officers request to extend the current agreement with Dorset Council to the end of March 2020;  b) That officers prepare a fully costed report for a future meeting on bringing the service in-house.    **Seasonal Beach and Promenade – catering, retail and attraction opportunities**  Jane Biscombe summarised the report. Some of the seasonal beach and promenade licences are up for renewal and extending them is not an option. These provide an important source of significant income to the Councils and, as such, they represent a large tendering project. The proposal before Members is to pursue the tendering route and bring in additional expertise.  Cllr Fuhrmann referred to page eleven of the agenda which recommends that an emphasis is placed upon sustainable best practice such as plastic straws and asked whether the Council could insist that eco-friendly materials are used. Jane Biscombe confirmed that it could be a mandatory condition of the lease.  Kevin Good reported that Weymouth Beach has been an active member of the Litter Free Coast and Sea partnership (LFCS) for many years working on numerous initiatives to educate and raise awareness of the issues surrounding single use plastics, marine litter and water quality. LFCS have already been consulted regarding the sustainable best practice examples outlined in the report and would be further consulted prior to the tender being issued.  Officers agreed to contact Litter Free Coast and Sea representatives to visit Weymouth Town Council and give members a briefing as to what they do.  Cllr Wheller reported that there was a desire to have a more diverse, healthy food offer in the kiosks, and as a high-profile issue it could be included in the tenders.  Cllr Northam highlighted that the report mentions that the current planning permission for the seasonal licences runs from March to October each year. A request has recently been made by one licensee (in another area of the beach) to extend this to all year round but this was declined by the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency have also previously indicated that there would be a flood risk across the wider beach area, and he would like to understand what needs to be done to overcome those problems so that it could be all year round.  Jane Biscombe informed Members that if they want to apply for a change in planning, there is not sufficient time to do this before the tendering process needs to start. Kevin Good explained that increasingly, there is talk of flood risk in certain areas of Weymouth Beach and also suggested that from a business need point of view more “off season” and wet weather attractions would be more beneficial to Weymouth’s tourism offer than all year-round cafes of which there are already 4 within the main Weymouth Beach section as well as those on the opposite side of the Esplanade. In addition, the dual-servery kiosks were put out to tender in 2010 based on the extent to which other seasonal caterers would be around them therefore they could issue a legal appeal.  Cllr Northam requested that Jane Biscombe ask the Environment Agency for a position statement regarding the suitability of all year round structures on Weymouth Sands and what would need to be done to the structures to allow them to operate all year.  Cllr James had been approached several weeks ago about the Merlin Tower, which is not currently operational. Under the terms of the lease granted by WPBC there was to be no other observation tower or wheel near the Merlin Tower, which is now in the control of Dorset Council.  Kevin Good reported that the Merlin lease is held by Dorset Council and the facility is on their land. Renegotiation of the contract was commenced in 2017, and a clause exists that another observation tower would not be authorised on Dorset Council land during the time of that licence.  Cllr Northam requested that Dorset Council be asked for an update regarding the Merlin Tower’s operations and the validity of any exclusivity clause or covenants in relation to what Weymouth Town Council can (and cannot) licence on Weymouth Beach.  Kevin Good informed Members that the only attraction up for renewal currently is the Snail Ride pitch. Cllr Hope asked whether the contract for this could be extended for one year so all of the attractions are tendered out together. Kevin Good will look at the legal side of extending the Snail Ride contract for a year to bring it in line with the other attractions however this would be in direct contravention of the original tender and may attract challenge.  Cllr Northam highlighted that with regards to community regeneration, Councils are to encourage local business and he was concerned that by tendering out all attractions at the same time, some of that choice and competition may be lost.  Cllr Wheller stressed that Weymouth has a lot of families who have had kiosks for generations and she is not sure that the Council would want to upset those families as they have a wealth of experience in terms of what works and how to get the best out of what they are offering.  Kevin Good pointed out that, as detailed in the report, the tender submissions would be evaluated against several criteria to include the financial offer, experience, sustainability, quality etc. The tendering process will be advertised nationally and the tender itself will state what preference will be given to each criteria. The Council is not bound to take the highest offer, or any offer, and it is not purely financially based. It should also be noted that the more prescriptive the tender form takes it is possible that reduced rental income will be offered.  The tendering of the beach kiosks will be going out as soon as possible in order to give as much time as possible to evaluate tenders as they are submitted.  Resolved:  Proposer: Cllr Hope  Seconder: Cllr Tewkesbury  Members agreed the recommendation as amended at the meeting unanimously as follows:  The Services Committee agreed:   1. That tenders are required to demonstrate best practice sustainability options 2. That tenders should include healthy options 3. That officers carry out a tendering exercise/s as described for the Weymouth beach Seasonal Catering sites (SC1, SC2, SC3 and SC4) and Retail sites (R1, R2 and R3) as set out in the report 4. That the Beach Attraction site (A3) be offered for one year if possible; 5. That officers negotiate new agreements for the continuation of the Heritage Attractions (Clairvoyant, Punch and Judy and Donkey Rides) for a period of 10 years with the current operators; and If they do not wish to continue or should negotiations be unsuccessful to tender the site/s on the basis directed by the Committee; 6. To tender attraction sites A4, A5 and A6 during the 2020 season for commencement March 2021; 7. Engage external procurement expertise and support from existing budgets.   **Wyke Cemetery**  Tara Williams presented the report, the full details of which can be found in the agenda for this meeting. There are a number of holes adjacent to graves. The badgers are not tunnelling under graves but are using them as shelter. No human remains have been discovered and there is no subsidence to graves. However, some action has to be taken as there are health and safety issues, and there is a need to alleviate the distress of a number of grave owners who have contacted Weymouth Town Council. There are a number of trip hazards for both visitors and staff, and this needs to be taken into consideration.  The ecologist’s report has recommended filling the badger holes, possibly retaining the main sett on the site. Complete exclusion from the site will be difficult and therefore it has been suggested that an artificial sett is introduced. This may not stop what is happening but will mitigate against what is happening currently. Should an artificial sett be introduced it could take several months for the badgers to relocate to it, if at all. However, the timeframe is tight as work has to be undertaken between 1st July and 30th November. Badgers like to forage in long grass and therefore the grass in the cemetery is being cut every fortnight to stop outlying badgers from coming on to the site. Long term Tara Williams felt that an artificial sett will need to be introduced and Weymouth Town Council is looking to procure land adjacent to the cemetery which is currently owned by Wessex Water.  Cllr Harris requested that, as the badgers have been present for a long time, Dorset Council be asked to contribute towards the cost of any work as they knew that the badgers were there.  Resolved:  Proposer: Cllr Wheller  Seconder: Cllr Harris    Members voted unanimously to agree the following recommendation:  The Services Committee agreed:   1. To engage a legally compliant ecologist to exclude badgers from the holes which are currently associated with graves; 2. Retain the main sett in the southern edge of the site that is located in undisturbed brambles with minimal risk to visitors; 3. Erect permanent signage to make visitors aware of the sett and the need for vigilance; 4. That officers regularly monitor the site; and 5. An ecologist is commissioned to undertake a report in spring 2020 to record badger activity within the site. 6. Request that Dorset Council contribute to the cost.   Cllr Fuhrmann left the meeting briefly at this point.  **Tumbledown Farm:**  Resolved:  Proposer: Cllr Fuhrmann  Seconder: Cllr Hope  Members voted unanimously to agree the following:  Members agreed five Councillors, namely Councillors Orrell, Gray, Barrow, Northam and James, to sit on the Tumbledown Farm partnership group, plus Cllrs Lambert and Harris to act as substitutes if required.  However, should a Unitary Councillor obtain a Unitary place on the partnership group, this will open up additional places for Weymouth Town Councillors. Cllr Gray and Cllr Barrow will be asked whether they both wish to sit on the group.  **Community Infrastructure Levy:**  Members were asked to agree to leave the CIL funds unallocated at this stage pending the outcome of the strategic workshop in September.  Cllr Wheller asked if they could be used to advance the work at The Marsh prior to the release of S106 funding. It is felt that building a skate park would reduce the incidents of vandalism on the playground. The interim work has started and a lot of the groundwork has been done, and the CIL money would go a long way towards it.  Tara Williams explained that the funding from the developer would not be available until September 2020. The developer has been written to, but a response has not yet been received. However, discussions have been held regarding the CIL money and Jane Biscombe will be writing to Dorset Council to ask if the funds can be released early. Discussions have been held with the Community Safety Team and all agree that something needs to be introduced for older children, and it would be a positive step if the CIL money was used, as long as the legalities are checked as if work starts this could impact the allocation of the S106 funds.  Cllr Hope reported that he had been told that the money from the 106 agreement is to be used specifically for a skate park, and he was concerned about what would happen if other money was used for that. He would like to see the skate park happen but he would support the recommendation to wait until September.  Cllr Taylor agreed with the recommendation to wait until the outcome of the strategic workshop in September but was concerned that she has not seen evidence of what the young people on The Marsh want. A consultation was held a couple of years ago, but few young people were involved. Cllr Taylor felt that the young people may just want a bus shelter to congregate in.  Cllr Northam highlighted that an action from the Full Council was for Youth Officers to engage with young people on The Marsh to ascertain what they want. Hopefully this will determine what is required rather than what this Committee thinks is required.  Cllr Brookes support the recommendation to wait and said that the sum allocated to the Council will not be the last. He asked whether the Council could get an indication regarding when the next bits of funding would come in and where they would come from. Jane Biscombe agreed to look into this.  Resolved:  Proposer: Cllr Bergman  Seconder: Cllr Fuhrmann  Councillors agreed by a majority to leave the funds unallocated at this stage pending the outcome of the strategic workshop in September. |
| S0019 | **Information Items**  **Free Parking Days Allocation and Christmas Parking Update**  It was agreed at the last meeting that one of the free parking days would be allocated to the Beach Motocross on 13th October 2019. Cllr James highlighted that residents would like free parking on a Sunday.  A response is currently awaited from Dorset Council regarding the initial proposition that has been sent to them, and Cllr Northam suggested that this matter is brought back to this Committee once their response has been received.  **Actions from previous meetings**  Jane Biscombe informed Members that a new section has been added to all agendas regarding actions from previous meetings. There will be an additional Full Council Meeting at 7.00 pm on Wednesday 31st July 2019.  Cllr Whatley requested that if any Member wishes to be part of a Working Group or a Champion Member, that they express their interest prior to the meeting so that only a short period of time is spent discussing it during a meeting.  The meeting closed at 9.10 pm. |