

PORTLAND TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE 2012, MARINE & ENVIRONMENT PARTNERSHIP HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 7TH DECEMBER 2011

PRESENT: Councillors R. Wild (Chair), Mrs S. Bradley, Mrs J. Collinge, R. Hughes, Mrs P. McCartney, D. Symes and Mrs S. West, together with Geoff Peters (National Coastwatch Institution), Andy Matthews (Portland Community Partnership), Lyn Cooch (Portland Ranger) and Charles Frampton and Hannah Sofaer (Portland Sculpture & Quarry Trust).

IN ATTENDANCE: Ian Looker (Town Clerk)

822 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors R. Denton-White, Mrs E. Munro-Price, I. Munro-Price and T. Woodcock, together with Yvonne Beven (Revive Portland) and John Tweed (Weymouth & Portland National Sailing Academy).

823 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr. Symes declared a personal interest in the Grove Sports Fields regarding the Queen Elizabeth II Challenge.

824 – MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5TH OCTOBER 2011

Mrs Cooch requested that Minute 813, para 2 be amended to read, “Mrs Cooch said that lots of efforts were being made to get more Cultural Olympiad events taking place on the Island.” With this amendment the minutes were formally agreed and signed as a correct record.

825 – MINUTE UPDATE AND MATTERS ARISING

a) Minute 813, Para 1 – 2012 Olympics: Look and Feel Initiative

Mr Matthews asked whether it was possible for the Council to buy £1,700 worth of planters on behalf of the Portland Community Partnership to be reimbursed by the Partnership, thus saving the cost of VAT. The Clerk was asked to investigate.

b) Minute 815 – Recruitment of Countryside Access Volunteers and Volunteer Rangers

Mrs Cooch queried the basis of the note in the Clerk’s Report on the response of the Town Council, feeling there had been a misunderstanding of the situation. The volunteer ranger service was supported by Dorset County’s Countryside Access unit to provide help in footpath management. The letter sent to the Town Council from Amanda Prior, attached to the last Partnership meeting agenda, was simply a request to support the volunteer ranger scheme in principle and would not involve any extra work on the part of the Town’s footpath liaison officer.

It was agreed to convey this message back to the Town Council.

826 – 2012 OLYMPICS

There were no formal reports to hand. Cllr. West said she was due to be interviewed for an Olympic ambassador post. Cllr. Hughes expressed concern that the Weymouth Town Bridge would be closed for the duration of the Games from 10.00am to 10.00pm.

827 – NATIONAL COASTGUARD CLOSURE

Cllr. West asked how the intended closures would be likely to affect the work of the National Coastwatch Institution. Responding, Mr Peters stressed that the Institution had deliberately kept a low profile to avoid being caught up in the politics involved. He pointed out that their station had recorded 160 incidents last year. One of the Institution's concerns centred on the provision of regular hourly reports on the hour and whether they could all be assimilated under the new regime. Local members had been shocked at the news of the withdrawal of the nearby helicopter service. There were two pointers to the future, plans to open Coastwatch stations at the Needles and Hengistbury Head and the possibility of more radio involvement.

Cllr. Hughes took up the reference to the Coastguard helicopter. He understood the Dorset Police were likely to lose their own helicopter. He wondered whether the functions could be continued by a joint service, particularly as the Coastguard's needs tended to be in the daytime and the Police's at night.

Mr Matthews suggested the helicopter pad at Osprey Quay be brought into service for commercial flights in order to help defray the costs of the emergency service.

In summary it was proposed by Cllr. McCartney and **RECOMMENDED** – that a letter be sent to the Marine & Coastguard Agency, expressing the Council's total disappointment with the closure of the Coastguard station at Weymouth, its relocation to Fareham and the recent announcement of the termination of the local Coastguard helicopter service without consultation.

828 – THE QUEEN ELIZABETH II FIELDS CHALLENGE

Members were provided with copies of a report to the Borough Management Committee in January concerning the Challenge. The sites mentioned in the report included the Sweethill Lane Open Space at Southwell and the Grove Sports Fields.

The Clerk referred to reservations about the Challenge he had heard expressed by fellow town clerks and had passed on to the Partnership. Since the last meeting he had been in contact with the Borough's Head of Open Spaces and the Town Clerk at Swanage and both had assured him that the administrative pitfalls in the King George VI Playing Fields scheme would not be repeated in the Queen Elizabeth II Challenge.

It was proposed by Cllr. Wild and **RECOMMENDED** – that the Town Council write to SWRDA requesting that open space land in their ownership be maintained as such by transfer to another public body, such as the Borough Council, and be included in the Queen Elizabeth Challenge scheme.

829 – DRY-STONE WALLING

Mrs Cooch opened the discussion by explaining that two years ago there had been a proposal to fund a dry-stone walling project. A key component of this was to carry out an Island-wide audit of the work required and the approximate cost. The situation was complicated by many of the walls in question being in private ownership. However the Court Leet had indicated a willingness to be involved and help fund the cost of an audit. Mrs Cooch suggested that the Town Council might care to donate “a few hundred pounds” itself, acting in concert with the Court Leet, Portland Community Partnership and the Dry-Stone Walling Association. She was due to meet a dry-stone walling tutor at a course on the Island the following week and would find out whether he might undertake the audit and at what cost, and report back to the next meeting of the Partnership.

The Clerk was asked to consult the Borough Planning department on the responsibility of landowners to maintain their stone walls and who should bear the cost.

830 – BROADBAND ON THE ISLAND

The Clerk referred members to his report of the recent broadband meeting organised by the County, in particular the questions raised at the end, to which he felt satisfactory assurances had not been given. These included the “charity” approach to funding broadband, the possibility of freeloading and the possible neglect of rural areas, including Weston and Southwell. The Clerk added that he was trying to arrange for a BT broadband manager to discuss the issues with Council.

From the chair Cllr. Wild said they would continue to monitor the planning applications for telecommunication boxes coming to the Planning Committee.

831 – WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Cllr. Collinge proposed and it was **RECOMMENDED** – that four slimline i.e. small grit bins be purchased for the following sites: Belgrave Place, Higher Light Lane, Old Hill and Verne Hill Road, together with the grit to fill them and the Borough lengthsman being asked to install them.

832 – COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PLANNING

The Clerk outlined the County’s wish for the Island to put together resilience plans to deal with a variety of emergency scenarios. It had been arranged that Carly Galloway, an emergency planning officer with the Borough/District would give a presentation on the details involved.

833 – STANDARD AGENDA ITEMS (by exception)

b) Litter and Fly-Tipped Material

Cllr. West drew attention to five black sacks of rubbish deposited at the top of the Incline and asked that the Clerk arrange with the Borough to dispose of them.

834 – ISSUES RAISED BY PARTNERSHIP MEMBERS

a) Budget Cuts

Mr Frampton said he understood the Borough had to make £16 million in budget savings. What effect would this have on Portland Town Council? Cllr. Wild replied that none was envisaged.

b) Coastguard Lookout Station

Mr Peters spoke of a new project at the Station for a new combined storage area and training centre within the compound of the existing building. Plans had now been submitted. One additional feature was that it would include a display advertising other Island attractions.

c) Island Plan

Mr Matthews mentioned that the next meeting of the Portland Community Partnership on 10th January 2012 would include discussion of the formulation of a community plan for the Island.

835 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair advised members that the next meeting of the Partnership would take place at the Council Offices on Wednesday, 1st February 2012, starting at 7.00 pm.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm.

Signed..... (Chair) Date.....