



Highcliffe Residents Association Community Interest Company

Quarterly Members' Meeting

Thursday 14 December 2023 at 7.00 pm at

The Old School, 254 Lymington Road, Highcliffe BH23 5ET

Present:

HRA Chair - Joan Rose
HRA Directors - Anne Bassett, Carol MacBean
BCP Councillors - Paul Hilliard, Andy Martin
Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Cllr – Adam Sofianos.

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair, Joan Rose, welcomed BCP and Parish Cllrs, and also our speakers, Liane Haddock from the Police Neighbourhood Team and Leanne Giddings from MacMillan Caring Locally.

2. Apologies for absence

HRA Director – Ben Lock
Chair of Highcliffe and Walkford PC and BCP Cllr – Lesley Dedman
BCP Cllr – David Martin
HRA members – Heather Dempsey.

3. Minutes of Meeting held on 28 September 2023

The minutes of the last meeting are posted on the HRA website and hard copies were available at the meeting.

The minutes were proposed, seconded and agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

4. Financial and Membership Report.

At the October meeting of the HRA Executive Committee it was agreed that the loan with the Charity Bank should be repaid in full. The final payment was made on 1 November 2023, bringing the total amount repaid for the year to £13,644.77. This has been written off within the November accounts which are now showing a loss of £6576.28.

As of today, our bank balances at CAF Bank are £19,398.76 and at Nat West £856.64.

Current membership stands at 654 members, of whom 530 are households. We are actively

looking to improve on this in 2024.

6. Neighbourhood Policing (item 6 was taken before item 5, to allow our Neighbourhood Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) Liane Haddock to return to duty.

Looking back over October 2023, Liane reported that there have been some concerns about anti-social behaviour (ASB) by youths on the Recreation Ground and that the team have been patrolling when they can. Currently on the Neighbourhood Team there is 1 full time PCSO (Liane), 1 part time PCSO and a new Police Constable (Olly Hudson) covering the whole of the Christchurch area. One PCSO is off sick and another on maternity leave.

Some garage break ins have been reported in the Walkford area and one arrest has been made. However, there are no CCTV, witnesses or vehicle registration for the other break ins and so without these lines of enquiry, further action cannot be taken. Liane advised that residents should keep sheds and garages securely locked with good quality locks and use security lighting where possible.

A turquoise or green hatchback has been seen in the vicinity and anyone noticing anything suspicious is asked to phone 999. There are response officers on 24 hr shifts and they will respond if they are able.

ASB has also been reported at the Cliffhanger car park and officers dealt with a male driver in that respect in November. It is important to report all incidents as even if the police cannot attend, they look at the statistics and where they know there are problems they will patrol. There are some response officers based at Boscombe who will attend in an emergency.

BCP employs a Community Safety Officer at the town centre dealing with ASB and you can report ASB via the BCP website at this link:

<https://www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/communities/crime-disorder-and-antisocial-behaviour/antisocial-behaviour>

For non-emergency (no threat to life or limb) use 101 to report or you can use the Dorset police website.

Use 999 for emergencies – where there is fear for life or a crime is still taking place.

The more reports, the more staff will be focussed on an area. Residents can also speak to an officer at the regular surgeries held at Stewarts Garden Centre or at Waitrose in Christchurch. (Alternate Tuesdays at 12 noon for an hour.

Liane left some leaflets and crime prevention items for members to take home with them.

Joan Rose, HRA Chair, thanked Liane for her attendance and reported that she and others had met with Chief Superintendent Heather Dixey and Police Commissioner David Sedwick prior to the public meeting on 30 November 2023. They had left the meeting feeling more positive that the police are listening and that the following positive moves are being made:

- staffing is to be increased in the area
- residents can sign up to Dorset Alert which will give news of police activities locally
- Boscombe Police Station has been re-opened, albeit staff are very thinly spread.

The 101 system is cumbersome, but we should persevere and report crimes.

Cllr Andy Martin mentioned that the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme is proposed as part of BCP budget cuts and it is very important that as many people as possible have their say by taking part in the current budget consultation.

5. MacMillan Caring Locally – Leanne Giddings

Leanne thanked the HRA for inviting her to speak and explained that she is a community fundraiser for MacMillan Caring Locally, supporting the MacMillan Unit at Christchurch Hospital. This the local hospice for the area and offers specialist palliative care and the “hospice at home”. MacMillan Caring Locally is not a local branch neither is it the same organisation as MacMillan Cancer Support, although both are named in honour of Douglas Macmillan, MBE.

The organisation covers a wide area including Highcliffe and are a well-established charity celebrating their 50th anniversary next year. As part of the celebrations, Leanne is encouraging people to join their Golden Partnership Scheme whereby anyone who is part of a group, organisation, club or a business owner can adopt them as their charity for 2024.

Each year they need to raise £1.8m to cover those of the charity’s services which are not funded by the NHS. You can support them by:

- having a collection box
- organising fundraising events
- offering support and advice on fundraising
- having a charity stand at your local event
- volunteering with them.

A calendar of events is being finalised and Leanne will let Joan have a copy when it is ready. One such event is the White Xmas Dip at Boscombe Beach at 9.30 am on Xmas Day.

Joan thanked Leanne and offered to put her in touch with the Highcliffe Food and Arts Festival and the Music Festival organisers.

7. Update on Current Issues and Recent HRA activities

Following our AGM in September some excellent new volunteers came forward to help with running HRA. They have already made some positive contributions and Joan thanked:

- Fred – for helping to look after the building at Old School
- Stuart – who has some good ideas for the future and suggested the new seating plan for meetings
- Richard – who is helping with all things law and order.

Heather Dempsey has also kindly offered to take over the newsletter from Mary Reader, who has now retired from our committee and who will be greatly missed.

If anyone else has the time or skills to help us please see Joan after the meeting.

We have been dealing with some damp issues in the Parish Council Office including repointing, replastering and repainting a wall and improving the external drainage.

Our heating system has now been adjusted to be available for evening meetings.

Following the decision made at our AGM, Carol MacBean, Joan and Kathryn Hartnell have been moving ahead with obtaining the necessary permissions for a transfer of OS to a suitable community-based organisation. We are currently in talks with the Parish Council and will keep members updated with progress.

As mentioned earlier in the meeting, Chair Joan met with the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Superintendent Dixey privately and is optimistic that channels of communication are now improved. We need residents to let us know about their concerns as the more information we are able to give the police, the better service we will receive from them. HRA is working with Friars Cliff Residents Association on community safety issues.

The promised new road markings are now in evidence in the east of Highcliffe and there will be more discussion going forward about reducing speed limits. Once again, members are asked to let us know of their concerns.

Finally, Joan expressed her thanks to the Parish Council for the large Xmas Tree outside Tesco and to Highcliffe Action Team for the smaller trees along the High Street.

8. Update from BCP Councillors, followed by questions from Members

Cllr Andy Martin, BCP Cllr

- One in five local authorities have flagged that they are in danger of not balancing their budgets for 2024/25, potentially triggering Government intervention in the running of their services. BCP will avoid this by keeping in control of their finances and have now reduced their expected deficit from £44m to £12m. Proposals to find this last £12m of savings are currently out for consultation. This level of efficiencies will inevitably mean cuts to services.
- Proposals include to reduce library opening hours, closing the waste tip for 2 days a week and deleting the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme officer (as mentioned by Liane above.) We await the results of the consultation.
- The future of the social care day service is also the subject of a current consultation. There are eight centres across the BCP area, including the Tricuro building next door to Old School. The expectation is that this building will be declared surplus to requirements, in which case BCP may look to retain it and lease it to another organisation to provide health, council or police services. This presents an opportunity for a local service hub.
- Cllr Martin will attend a Cabinet meeting on Tuesday afternoon to formalise the proposals for the seafront, including paths and access. The Parish Council (PC) has agreed to contribute £100K to the work, including the path from the Cliffhanger.
- The work discussed at the last meeting to put yellow lines to the south of the Lymington Road has now been completed.
- BCP has made two organisational changes which Cllr Martin hopes will benefit Highcliffe. The first is to split the Planning Committee in two to cover the east and west of the BCP area. This will mean the Committee will be more locally focussed

and knowledgeable about the local area it covers. Secondly, a Transport Advisory Group has been established in order to speed up decisions around traffic management, such as yellow lines.

- A number of concerns have been raised about the Cat and Fiddle Junction on the A35. This is in Hampshire and the County Council has not previously been interested in making any changes. However, Cllr Martin understands that they still have £6m Levelling Up grant to spend and they have indicated that this may be looked at for the future.
- The Cabinet considered the Draft Local Plan yesterday and it will go to Full Council in January, then out to consultation. Due to efforts made by local Cllrs, in particular Adam Sofianos, the policies around the future protection of green spaces have been tightened up and this applies particularly to Highcliffe. However, the final Plan will need Government agreement.

Q. A resident asked about the reduction in the speed limit to 30 mph at the approach to the Milestone Roundabout which was discussed at the last meeting.

A. Traffic Regulation Orders are now being drawn up and this will be in place soon.

Q. A resident asked about the arrangements for the Transport Advisory Group and whether the public can attend.

A. Cllr Martin did not yet know what the arrangements for this will be, but he understood that Montague Road is being raised at the meeting.

Q. A resident asked about the current position with the Jesmond Wood planning appeal.

A. BCP has objected to the grounds of the appeal and is awaiting the decision of the Planning Inspectorate.

Q. A further question was asked about the invitation made to residents to consider an alternative plan for Jesmond Wood.

A. No request to discuss a pre-planning application has yet has been received by BCP. Although the PC has invited the applicant to a meeting with an officer present, this had not been taken up.

Cllr Martin concluded by reminding the meeting that BCP has a website:

<https://haveyoursay.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/>

where you can register for information about consultations. Alternately Highcliffe Library provides information about current consultations.

There will be a consultation in February or March 2024 about the future of the library service and how we can best use the 24 libraries in the BCP area. Joan, the Chair commented on the importance of libraries, especially for children and in providing access to those who are not on-line.

Cllr Paul Hilliard, BCP Cllr

- Cllr Hilliard reminded everyone that the budget consultation finishes next Wednesday and asked everyone to engage with this.
- It is likely that although parks maintenance will continue, decisions will be made to reduce the cutting of grass verges and fields. At the Friars Cliff Residents meeting

last week there was a discussion about whether residents might wish to cut the verges themselves, in which case BCP will arrange to take the rubbish away. This might be something HRA might consider.

- A key object of the budget consultation is to understand what people want from the Council and what is most valued by local communities. Of a population of 400,000 only 1800 responses had been received so far. Cllr Hilliard wanted to reassure everyone that the council are listening.
- As a result of recent heavy rainfall, a number of people had made complaints about blocked drains and manhole covers. Please note that this is dealt with by Wessex Water not BCP, so any reports should be made to them.
- The new road markings around Highcliffe Secondary School have been in force since the summer and he was not aware of any issues with them.
- The tenders have been evaluated for the Highcliffe Castle Tea Rooms and an announcement will be made in the New Year.

Q. Is the Council going to look at trimming back the vegetation around the cliff paths? Some of these have recently flooded due to the rain.

A. BCP officers had not realised how bad some of the paths had become and repairs will be carried out, however, the focus will be on the main paths. The Council cannot be responsible for the smaller (nominated) paths that have been made by walkers. The PC is providing £100K towards the overall costs of repair.

Cllr Sofianos commented that this was still under discussion, but that where a path is to be repaired his view is that it should be made accessible all the way down with the vegetation removed. It is challenging for the council to keep all the nominated paths clear.

Chair Joan commented that she was optimistic following the meetings that have been had with Council officers and that it may be possible to have a local working group, much like the beach cleaning, to keep the paths maintained.

Q. An issue was raised about residents cutting verges and whether public liability insurance was required.

A. It was felt that if it was just outside your own house this was OK but if a larger area was being considered it may need to be done formally as part of an organisation and so covered by their insurance. JR to check further and consult with FCRA.

9. Update from Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council, followed by questions from Members to Parish Councillors

Cllr Adam Sofianos, Vice Chair of Highcliffe and Walkford PC

- Adam reported that the PC has a budget setting meeting in January. As a local government body, the PC represents Highcliffe and Walkford. The underfunding which is affecting BCP's budget cascades down to the PC and the local neighbourhood.
- Local people will start to see the effect of budget cuts, even if they are not using adult social care or children's services. We will start to see this in the maintenance of

open spaces. The PC is looking to see if it can fill the gap, whilst continue to support new and ongoing projects. The next PC meeting is Wed 10 Jan 2024, at 7.00 pm and all are invited.

Adam described the PC's main projects as:

- **Footpaths**
The PC has set aside £100K as a reserve to support the clifftop projects once the work has been agreed by BCP.
- **High Street**
The PC will allocate about £120K to improve traffic management and reduce speed in the High Street and improve the pavements. Once again, this is to encourage BCP to support this work financially.
- **The Recreation Ground**
It is hoped the PC will finally take control of the Recreation Ground in January 2024. There is an improvement plan for this area, including improvement of the pavilion and public toilets and more facilities for families, such as play equipment.
- **Highcliffe Food and Arts Festival**
BCP will no longer be providing a grant to help with running the festival, so the PC has given a grant of £10K.
- **Old School**
The PC has put aside some resource to investigate the possibility of taking transfer of Old School. If this proceeds, it will require a large restoration project.

In terms of ongoing projects, the PC is supporting, these include:

- Public spaces – Winfield Road, Nea meadows and the Roeshot and Walkford Allotments.
- Support to Highcliffe in Bloom, the Toddler Group and Highcliffe Hawks will continue.

Adam noted that the PC's main revenue source is the precept which is collected by BCP with the Council Tax and diverted to the PC. For a Band D dwelling this equates to £22.94 pa. For 2024/25 the PC has requested an increase of £4 per dwelling (Band D), equating approximately to £2 pa increase for a Band A dwelling. This is expected to generate an overall increase in income of £180K pa.

The agenda for the next meeting will be published on the PC's website a week before the meeting.

Q. Joan asked about the protocol for members of the public asking questions at meetings of the PC.

A. As the PC is a part of local Government, it must adhere to the procedures laid down in the Local Government Acts. Parish Councillors may speak for up to 3 mins on each item on the agenda.

At the beginning of the meeting there is an open invitation to members of the public to ask questions. It is better if you can email the Clerk in advance with your question, or complete the on-line form. This means that a more informed answer can be prepared.

After the public questions, further dialogue with the public is at the discretion of the Chair. If a resident can add value with additional information on a subject, this is allowed. People are encouraged to come to the meetings and they will find them useful if they are interested in local matters.

Q. As regards the Recreation Ground, will BCP continue to cut the grass?

A. The PC will own the Recreation Ground but BCP will retain some responsibilities for maintenance, such as groundskeeping, for the first 2 years.

Q. The paths along the clifftop have very deep puddles in places.

A. Adam agrees they have, but that we need to get through the first phase of repair with BCP, with Andy Martin leading this on our behalf. It may be possible to bring together a voluntary group to look at this in future.

Q. A resident noted that there is very big puddle in front of the children's play area in the Recreation Ground.

A. Adam responded that this is one of a number of snagging issues which will need to be addressed before the PC take over.

HRA Chair Joan thanked our councillors for all the work they are doing for Highcliffe and Walkford and for attending the meeting as residents find it very informative to hear from them. The more involved we all are with local issues the stronger our community will be.

10. Any Other Urgent Business

A query was raised about the activity at the BCP pound at Chewton Bunny, where heavy machinery and 4 beach huts had been seen. BCP councillors had no specific knowledge of this but agreed to find out what was happening and let HRA know.

11. Date and time of next meeting

The Chair thanked everyone for coming and wished all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Our next meeting takes place on:

Thursday 28 March 2024 at 7.00pm