

Highcliffe Residents' Association CIC

Quarterly Members' Meeting

11th June 2018 at 7.00pm at St Mark's Church Hall

MINUTES

1. Present:

- HRA Chairman Rob Austin; other HRA Directors: Sue Taylor, Jacqui Waddock, Ian Hartnell and Richard Reader,
- HRA Officers: Paul Taylor (Treasurer), Mary Reader (Communications), Ben Lock (Social Media), Guy Gillett (Membership), Willie and Christine McNeill (Planning)
- County/Borough Councillor Lesley Dedman, and Highcliffe Ward Councillors: Nick Geary, Trish Jamieson, John Lofts and Vicki Hallam
- about 55 other HRA members and residents.

2. Apologies for absence

Cllrs Sally Derham-Wilkes and Colin Jamieson had sent apologies because of conflicting engagements, as had HRA Officer Andy Clayton (Website)

3. Welcome

HRA Chairman Rob Austin welcomed HRA members, local Councillors and other residents. He said that he had taken over as caretaker chairman about 3 years ago when several members of the Executive Committee had retired; he had been looking forward to handing over the chair once sufficient suitable people had joined the Committee. That moment had now arrived, and at the AGM in September Vice-Chair Ian Hartnell would be proposed as the new Chairman. Rob would continue as a Director of the HRA CIC, and would play a full part in its work, including especially matters connected with the Company's property at 256 Lymington Road.

To help members to get to know Ian, Rob then proposed to hand over the chairmanship of the remainder of the meeting to him.

Ian agreed to chair the meeting, and paid a strong tribute to Rob for having kept the HRA alive and well during recent years, often with only limited support. He was delighted that the Association would not be losing Rob's experience and expertise in local affairs.

4. Community Governance Review

Ian introduced Willie McNeill, who had served on a Community Council in Linlithgow for several years, and so had some direct experience of the functioning of a Parish Council type of organisation.

Willie outlined the current consultation process organised by Christchurch Borough Council to examine the value and feasibility of establishing one or more new Parish Councils in the Borough. At an earlier stage of the consultation, the HRA Executive had suggested that a Parish Council for Highcliffe and Walkford should be among the options considered, and this did now figure in the recommendations recently circulated by CBC for further consultation. The deadline for responses was 20th July.

In answer to members' questions about "What's in it for us, and how much will it cost?", Cllr. Lesley Dedman said that a Parish Council has a statutory right to be consulted on all planning applications; and can choose from quite a range of additional options for powers to act locally in defined respects. The cost of exercising those additional powers would depend on the choices made: but the advantage was that local priorities could help determine what gets done, whether it concerned cutting grass verges, cleaning road signs, or more significant issues. The value of local input at parish council level might be all the greater if the current plans for a Unitary Authority for the whole of Christchurch, Bournemouth and Poole come to fruition.

Ian said that he had been in touch with the Association of Parish and Town Councils in Dorset, and they would be happy to give HRA members a presentation on the scope; cost and value of Parish Councils in the near future, if members so wished. Members of the audience welcomed this proposal, and Ian agreed to arrange the meeting (subsequently set for Monday 2nd July at 7.00pm at The Old School, 256 Lymington Road).

5. Report on Support for Business Development in Highcliffe

Ian asked Mary Reader to introduce Mandy Payne, Economic Development Officer for Christchurch and East Dorset Councils. Mary said that she had attended meetings with Mandy as Chair of the Highcliffe Food Festival, which aimed (among other things) to help local businesses and to bring the Highcliffe community together. She welcomed Mandy's pro-active approach to engage with local businesses and to foster local economic development.

Mandy said that she was building on earlier efforts to promote business in Highcliffe, and had organised two meetings with local people to identify projects that could be taken forward within the budget that she had for this work. Six businesses had agreed to form a Highcliffe Action Team (HAT), and were working with potential sponsors to take a range of possible projects forward. They had invested in the "Love Highcliffe" campaign, using a local PR agency, and were considering marketing campaigns to support local businesses.

Mandy invited comments, and a range of issues were identified (not all of them within Mandy's remit):

- desirability of getting coach companies from (e.g.) the Midlands to organise trips to Highcliffe
- need to smarten the village up to keep visitors coming – deal with pot-holes,

unkempt roundabouts, weeds in kerbs, dirty road signs,

- need to try again to avoid large vehicles having to pass through the village
- reinstate free car parking before 10.00am
- need to review parking generally, including disabled spaces and provision for motor homes

Mandy said that she was keen to work with residents as well as businesses to keep the village looking clean and tidy, and was in touch with the group of volunteers who had assisted in recent years. She and her HAT group would be looking at other possibilities, including the possible creation of a Business Improvement District.

Ian thanked Mandy for her presentation, and welcomed her efforts to foster economic progress in the village.

6. Presentation about National Coastwatch

Ian welcomed Brian Roberts, Acting Station Manager, National Coastwatch, Hengistbury Head. Brian said that Coastwatch is a voluntary organisation created to help fill the gap resulting from the closure of many Coastguard Look-out Stations. Coastwatch now has 52 look-out stations, at which volunteers keep watch for anyone in difficulty at sea and notify the Coastguards if they spot anything. Some 450 incidents were recorded last year, of which 50% were first notified by Coastwatch. There are Coastwatch stations at The Needles and Peveril Head, and the intention is to create one at Hengistbury Head to fill the gap between them. They already have 70 people being trained, but will need 100 to provide full cover in daylight hours 364 days a year. It will cost some £30,000 to refurbish the existing building on Hengistbury Head, and then £5,000 - £6,000 p.a. to run it. All donations and offers of help will be welcome – further information can be obtained from a temporary station near the Bistro on the Beach at Southbourne.

7. Presentation on Beacons of Light

Rob Austin introduced Wilbert Smith from Christchurch Borough Council to talk about the Beacons of Light project. Wilbert said that this was a Remembrance Day event, in which activities take place across the Commonwealth to commemorate those who died defending our country, or were wounded, or supported the bereaved and wounded. Various events have been held in Christchurch in recent years, and in 2018 there will be an event, probably on Christchurch Quay (or in Priory Church if wet), comprising a solemn service, followed by a more relaxed thanksgiving involving Highcliffe Charity Players, some singers and a band. More information will be available at a number of Pop-up displays in several Christchurch locations (including the Library) from now until end-July.

Wilbert is visiting all Residents' Associations to find any families affected by the events of WW1 who are willing to share their stories in order to bring the event to life. He is also keen to have any volunteers to help organise the event nearer the time. Interested members can contact Wilbert directly or via the HRA.

8. Update on Current Issues

8.1 Zig-Zag Path

Ian asked Bob Hutchings to update members on progress. Bob said that the renewal of the path was currently the subject of a planning application, and urged all members to go on-line to register their support for it. The Task and Finish Group have provided a timetable for completion of the work, with the aim of completion by next Easter.

8.2 Jesmond Avenue

Rob Austin said that there had been no developments since the last Quarterly Meeting. The developer was considering putting in a planning application with a much lower housing density than the previous one. Rob said that the HRA needed to represent members' views, which ranged from opposition to any development, to support for a lower-density plan; but that several residents favoured a higher-density plan to provide affordable housing for local young people.

A member asked about the hoardings around the site, which did not have planning permission. Rob said that retrospective planning permission was being sought, and that he intended to object as an individual since the hording has served its purpose of protecting the public from the heavy machinery which had been used on the site. Paul Taylor asked if the meeting could take a vote to register a strong objection to the existence of the hoarding, but Rob pointed out that such a vote would be counted as just a single objection. To be effective, individual members should send in their own separate objections, giving their reasons for objecting.

8.3 Improving the appearance and tidiness of the Village centre

Members expressed concern about the state of the Village, including the growth of weeds by the roads and in front of shops, the need to cut verges, and the need to improve the planting on roundabouts. Mary Reader outlined contacts with Council officers on these points, and noted that both CBC and DCC were involved in different ways. She also pointed out that the Councils' Parks Depts. have had a 40% cut in Government support. She regretted the decision some years ago to pull out of the RHS Britain in Bloom competition, and hoped that the group of volunteers could be reinvigorated to help clean up the Village. If there were a Parish Council, it should be able to have a budget and to organise this sort of work. Cllr. Lesley Dedman said that Councillors had expressed residents' concerns to Council officers, but had been advised that the exceptional weather, with much rain followed by sun, had stimulated exceptional weed growth, and had washed away weedkiller.

8.4 Traffic accident outside Rainbow School, 256 Lymington Road

Sue Taylor described the accident the previous Saturday morning, when a vehicle had mounted the pavement, knocked over a lamp-post and the pedestrian traffic lights, and demolished the front fences and walls of several properties, including the Rainbow School. Police had cleared the roadway, but she had been told that no help would be available to deal with the dangerous debris in the front gardens until the following week. As it was unsafe to leave the debris as it was, especially with the pre-school children arriving early on Monday, she and her husband had been obliged to clear it up as best they could unaided. Cllr. Lesley Dedman asked for further details

so that she could make enquiries. Sue stressed the importance of restoring the pedestrian traffic lights as a matter of urgency.

8.5 Use of Cliff-top Car Park for visiting Coaches

Some members had expressed concern that coaches visiting Christchurch would in future be directed to the Highcliffe cliff-top car park to stay while empty. This would add to Highcliffe's traffic problems. Cllr. Trish Jamieson said that she had objected to this idea when it came to committee. However, a member pointed out that many of the coaches are from schools sending pupils out to study the cliffs at Highcliffe and Barton, and so need to park there.

8.6 Trees and hoardings on the A35

A member expressed concern lest the application to fell trees on the A35, which had been refused, could go to appeal or re-surface as part of some other project. Other members said that they would hate to see hoardings all along the A35 when work starts on the big Roeshott Hill development.

8.7 The Old Hoy

A member deplored the approval to demolish The Old Hoy, one of the oldest buildings in the village. However, it was noted that it had never been listed.

8.8 Police Station Site development in central Christchurch

Members expressed concern lest this development, which will remove some parking places and include more dwellings, will end up creating yet more traffic through Christchurch, which can already get log-jammed at busy times.

8.9 Café Opening Times

A member observed that the cafés in Highcliffe all seem to shut early on some days, so that there is nowhere for parents and children to go in the centre of the village.

9. Communications with Members

Members were generally happy with communications, especially via the Highcliffe Eye column. Rob Austin reported on current efforts to refurbish the HRA Notice Boards (except for the one near HSSC, which has to be scrapped).

A member asked if Highcliffe Comprehensive School could become more involved with HRA, with some of the older pupils taking part in some way. Mary Reader, who has frequent contacts with both Highcliffe schools, offered to contact the school, with particular reference to the current parishing consultation, and also to a possible competition for a logo for the HRA. Cllr. John Lofts said that he had been a Governor at the school for 30 years, and would be happy to assist.

10. Any other business

None

11. Closure

Closing the meeting at about 9.15pm, Ian thanked all present for their participation, and all the Councillors for their support. He said that the next Members' Meeting would take place at 7.00pm on 10 September, again in St. Mark's Hall, and starting

with the AGM.

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