



Highcliffe Residents' Association Community Interest Company

QUARTERLY MEMBERS' MEETING 10th December 2018 at 7.00pm at St Mark's Church Hall

MINUTES

1. Present:

HRA CIC Chairman Ian Hartnell

HRA CIC Directors Rob Austin and Richard Reader (minute-taker)

HRA Executive Committee members Ben Lock (Social Media), Willie McNeill (Planning), Mary Reader (Communications), and Guy Gillett (Membership)

Councillor Nick Geary

about 70 other HRA members and residents.

2. Apologies for absence

Councillors Lesley Dedman, Trish. Jamieson and Sally Derham Wilkes, had sent apologies because of conflicting engagements or holiday; as had HRA Directors Sue Taylor and Jacqui Waddock, and HRA Officers Andy Clayton (Website) and Paul Taylor (Treasurer), and several other HRA members.

3. Update on Current Issues and Recent HRA Activities

4.1 Local Plan Consultation

Willie McNeill said that the consultation had now ended. He had registered some objections, but for the most part the coverage of our area did not appear highly contentious – unlike the case for some other districts.

4.2 Jesmond Avenue development application

Willie said that CBC has served an enforcement notice about the illegal hoardings, but that the developer has appealed, so the matter rests with the Inspectors in Bristol. CBC had that day emailed out a letter inviting written submissions from those concerned. Willie said that he would put details on the HRA website, and urged everyone to write in with their views. The number of submissions received does carry weight - and although he would make a submission on behalf of HRA, that would count only as one submission, just the same as any letter by a member of the public.

4.3 Zig Zag Path

Ian said that the pilings are going in, and would make a much more solid job of the path than previously. Bob Hutchings said that the contractors were ahead of their planned timetable, which augured well for the re-opening of the Zig Zag path on or near 19 April 2019 (Good Friday).

Bob had asked CBC if there would be an official opening ceremony, but they had advised that they were unable to organise one because the Councillors are “in purdah” in the run-up to the next local elections (meaning that they cannot participate in public events, as such participation might be seen as influencing the vote). However, residents can organise an opening ceremony independently of the Council. Members present indicated strong support for such an event.

4.4 High Street Pavements

Ian observed that Bournemouth Water have lifted some pavements and replaced them with tarmac – which is unsightly and may not be legal. HRA would write to them.

The area just outside Mitchells and Capstan Security was due to be re-surfaced by Hoburne. It is their land, so they can choose the surfacing. [It has now been resurfaced in tarmac – Note by sec.]. Members would have preferred pavements.

In discussion, members stressed how bad the pavements are in some places. One lady with a mobility scooter is no longer able to go to the village. Ian referred to the letter from Lesley Dedman (see Minutes of QMM on 10 September) advising that the County experts had measured the unevenness, and had found it within the allowable standards. He supposed that the substrata had not been adequately compacted prior to the laying of the pavements, with the result that vehicles mounting the kerbs cause compression and unevenness. Technically the pavements could no doubt be re-laid, but this would be expensive. Members of the audience referred to a vote some years ago at an HRA meeting, which had produced a significant majority in favour of tarmac.

Ian expressed the hope that the BCP Unitary Authority might be more helpful, and that the new Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council might have more influence in such matters.

4.5 Council Taxes following the Creation of the Unitary Authority

Ian reminded members of the background, in that Christchurch residents pay higher rates of Council Tax than Bournemouth and Poole residents, and that the expectation is that it will take some 6 or 7 years for the tax rates to be harmonised. This is because of the legal cap on the allowable percentage rise in any Council taxes, so it will take that long for Bournemouth and Poole tax rates to come up to the Christchurch level. The alternative option, namely to reduce the tax level for Christchurch residents, would result in financial problems for the new authority. HRA has argued that for Christchurch residents to pay more than other parts of the new authority while receiving the same services is discriminatory.

HRA has written to the relevant Minister and to Cllr Ray Nottage (who has a leading role in the Shadow Unitary Authority team), but have received unsatisfactory replies. As Christchurch representatives on the Shadow Authority are in a small minority, it

seems unlikely that there will be any change.

4.6 Involvement in Highcliffe Action Team

Mary reported on developments with the Highcliffe Action Team (HAT), led by Jane Dean PR and Mandy Payne from CBC, which had spear-headed the move for improved Christmas decorations in the High Street. At least 40 businesses had contributed £100 each to the new decorations, and the results are excellent. Good publicity had also been achieved in the New Milton Advertiser. Mary urged residents to support our local businesses; and urged businesses in turn to be more consistent in their opening hours, to avoid wasted journeys. She said that there was the intention to progress the Christmas festivities further in December 2019, perhaps with a Gift Fair. She will continue to represent HRA at HAT meetings, and to support the work of the team.

4.7 "Highcliffe in Bloom" activity

Susan Smith, the Chair of this activity, said that the name of the Group had now been confirmed as "Highcliffe and Walkford in Bloom", to show the precise area covered. The group had organised pavement weeding and tidying activities in the High Street by some 12 volunteers on each of the last two Sunday mornings, and the street was looking much better in consequence. [There was spontaneous applause – note by sec.].

Susan said that this work would be continued, continuing further to the East in the Lymington Road in the first instance. They would also seek to install barrier baskets for flowers near the traffic lights, as well as other baskets at lower levels than currently on lamp-posts, as the high baskets are not much noticed.

The Group is now run by a Committee of 5, including a Vice-Chair and a Treasurer. They are looking for sponsorship, and may hold fund-raising events, as money will be needed to purchase the new plant troughs and other display containers which will make such a difference. The Group is next meeting on 16 January at 7.00pm, and Susan will send Mary details for the HRA website, so that other interested people can join in.

Ian thanked Susan for all her work, which is most encouraging.

4.8 Beach Litter-pick

Richard said that he was in touch with the Beach Litter pick organisers, and would aim to inform HRA members of these events so that they can take part.

One member observed that HAT, Highcliffe & Walkford in Bloom, and the Beach Litter-pick are all activities designed to improve the Village in various ways. He hoped that HRA could both promote and (where appropriate) co-ordinate these efforts for maximum effect. Another member added Café Scientifique to this list of community activities, and gave Mary details for inclusion on the HRA's website.

5. Community Governance Review

Ian said that he had taken this item late in the meeting because Cllr Lesley Dedman had hoped that she might be able to get here if her mayoral engagement ended early enough. Clearly that had not been the case, so Ian invited Highcliffe resident Bob

Hutchings (who has been closely involved with discussions on this issue) to update members on progress.

Bob said that he had read the paper about the creation of Parish Councils, due to be discussed the next day by the Borough Council, and had several concerns and questions.

It was proposed to transfer the allotments and some open spaces to the care of the Parish Council, although the BCP unitary authority would manage them on the Parish Council's behalf for the first year. The Wortley Road car park would not be transferred, as that is an income-generating asset. It was not proposed to transfer any cash reserves to the Parish Council, which would make operations extremely difficult, especially before the proposed modest precept started to bring in a little revenue.

It was noted that if BCP runs an activity such as the Christmas decorations, the costs come out of the BCP's Council Tax; whereas if the Parish Council runs it, then the PC has to charge an extra precept to cover the costs. Care will therefore be needed, as local residents will not welcome precepts containing avoidable expenditures!

As from 1st January, a shadow Parish Council will be in existence to manage Parish affairs until the May elections. The shadow membership will comprise all existing Ward Councillors, but Bob hoped that they might co-opt a few residents to help with continuity.

Ian thanked Bob for his explanations, and said that we look forward to the creation of our PC. He noted that an information meeting for anyone possibly interested in becoming a Parish Councillor will be held in Druitt Hall on 12 February from 7.30 to 9.30pm, and urged all interested residents to attend. This had been very helpfully organised by the Joint Committee of Christchurch Residents' Associations.

6. Questions from Members to HRA Officers and Borough/County Councillors

A member asked if anything was known about the future of The Galleon public house, which had been closed for some time. No-one present had any information.

Another member said that Montagu Road becomes a car park throughout the Summer, to the detriment of residents, and that attempts to request some single yellow lines along the road had not achieved anything. Could HRA help? Ian said that he knew from experience that it is difficult to create new parking restrictions, in part because of the cost. The new Unitary Authority will become responsible for all matters to do with roads and parking, and an approach to that body, once created, should be considered.

7. Communications with Members

Ian said Mary was doing a great job with her regular communications to members, and praised in particular the recent Newsletter. However, the hand-delivery by Committee members of the printed copies to those HRA members for whom we don't have an email address was much too time-consuming to be done regularly.

Ian asked for any ideas to deal with this, and several members urged the re-creation of the former Road Warden scheme (albeit without the need to collect subscription monies, as that had concerned some former Wardens). Mary urged all willing potential Road Wardens to let the Welcome Desk have their names at the end of the meeting [and many members did come forward – note by Sec.].

Other ideas included:

- Ask people without internet to use a friend's computer, or the Library facilities, to check the HRA website every now and then
- Email the whole HRA membership (where we have an internet address) to ask for further volunteers as Road Wardens
- See if Highcliffe School could help (but Mary said that she was in regular contact with the School about HRA matters, and did not envisage that they would have the resources to help in this case).

Ian welcomed the expressions of support, and would develop the ideas further at the HRA Executive Committee.

One member asked for thanks to be recorded to the person providing very clear Minutes of QMMs for the HRA website, as these had been most helpful. [Many thanks! – note by sec.]

8. Any other business

None.

9. Closure and Date of next Members' Meeting

Closing the meeting at about 9.00pm, Ian thanked all present for their participation, and Councillor Nick Geary for his support. He wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

The next Members' Meeting will take place at 7.00pm on 11 March, again in St. Mark's Hall.