



Highcliffe Residents Association CIC Quarterly Members' Meeting

MINUTES

6 January 2020 at 7.30pm in The Old School, Lymington Road

Present:

- HRA Chairman Ian Hartnell
- HRA Directors Guy Gillett, Ben Lock and Richard Reader
- HRA Executive Committee members Tina Butcher, Kathryn Hartnell, Judie Burman, Joan Rose, and David Underhill
- BPC Councillors Nigel Brooks, Nick Geary and Paul Hilliard
- HWPC Chairman Bob Hutchings and Vice-Chair Andy Martin
- about 60 other HRA members.

Apologies:

- HRA Executive Committee member Mary Reader
- HRA members Roger Lounds & Pat Stokes

1. Welcome and Introduction

The meeting commenced immediately following the reconvened AGM, and began at 7.35 pm. Chairman Ian Hartnell opened the meeting by welcoming members to The Old School, and gave a brief description of the history of the building, and the current status of the works already carried out to improve it. He thanked the volunteers who had worked hard to clear and decorate the building- especially Men's Shed – and also the Parish Council for the gift of 121 chairs for the Main Hall. He also talked about future plans for the use of Old School and gave some idea of those works still needing to be done. He said that 2020 marked the 75th anniversary of the foundation of HRA, and that this would be appropriately celebrated. The rooms in the Old School are available for hire at a rate of £10 per hour.

2. Minutes of Meeting of 9 September 2019

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true record of

proceedings.

3. Update on local Councils

In his role as BCP Councillor, Nigel Brooks gave a brief description of the tasks the BCP Council has set itself for the future as a new unitary body. The main area follows the announcement of the Climate and Ecological Emergency 2030 by the BCP Council. Councillors have been given 6 months to respond to a total of 153 areas from which to draw up a short list of priorities. There will be consultation with the public to examine these priorities. Nigel also talked about the BCP Council Corporate Strategy, in which there are 5 main areas – Sustainable Environment, Dynamic Places, Connected Communities, Brighter Futures and Fulfilled Lives. (More information is available at the following link: <https://live-bcpcouncil-bournemouth.cloud.contensis.com/About-BCP-Council/bcp-council-docs/BCP-Corporate-Strategy.pdf>).

Another area of concern to Christchurch residents is the termination of the contract with Dorset Waste Management on 31 March 2020. The BCP will then take over this service, and Nigel informed the meeting that Larry Austin, Director of Environment at BCP Council will be touring the region to explain the changes that this will involve. He will be visiting Highcliffe on 7 February 2020, and members are urged to look out for announcement of the time and venue of this meeting.

Paul Hilliard added that there is now an on-line service for the reporting of pot holes in the roads to the BCP Council. In his experience, these reports are acted upon, with repairs taking places within a few weeks. He also mentioned the efforts of our local BCP councillors in getting parity of Council Tax payments across the region by reducing the contribution of Christchurch residents to bring them close to the levels paid by Bournemouth and Poole residents.

Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council Chair, Bob Hutchings, informed the meeting that the extension to Nea Meadows car park will be ready from 7 January 2020. He thanked those people who attended the Parish Council public meeting on 9 December 2019, and said that a budget had been set with a 6% reduction in the precept.

Bob Hutchings went on also to thank those who attended the consultation meeting to discuss the Neighbourhood Plan on 13 December 2019. Nigel Brooks explained that 30 different interest groups had been invited to that meeting, and that the interest was so great that he had to turn

people away

for Health and Safety reasons. The results of this meeting are available on a dedicated website for those interested in the outcome. (<https://www.highcliffewalkfordplan.org.uk>)

In summary, the main areas of concern identified were: to encourage a greater diversity of housing; provision of safe cycling routes; the revitalisation of the shopping area on Lymington Road; green spaces; community facilities. There will be a questionnaire available in the Highcliffe Eye and Highcliffe Herald, which Nigel urged people to complete and return to him as there is a need for evidence of public consultation. The ideas will finally be formulated into a Neighbourhood Plan which then will be submitted to a public referendum. The existence of such a plan is vital for the appropriate development of the area, and is necessary for the Parish council to be able to refer to when making recommendations on planning matters.

4. Updates on HRA CIC and Current Issues

Local Planning Issues

The meeting was informed that the HWPC now has a dedicated Planning Officer (Willie McNeil) in an attempt to achieve a cohesive planning policy.

There was a short discussion about the plans to develop Jesmond Avenue, and HRA member and resident of Jesmond Avenue, Helen Donaldson, kindly agreed to share with the meeting the outcome of talks she had recently with the developer Chris Bulstrode. She said that he had passed over to her copies of revised plans he was about to submit for approval, and that he had agreed they could be shown at this meeting. A large plan was available for members to scrutinise at the meeting. The developer has reduced the number of dwellings from those originally proposed, and the green areas have been extended. Helen felt, as a resident living opposite to the development, that the new plans seemed much more acceptable than previous submissions. A member wondered if this developer could be asked to contribute to community facilities as in the case of other, albeit larger, developments. There was some discussion about the increased flow of traffic in the immediate vicinity of Jesmond Avenue, and about the preponderance of flats being built in Highcliffe. Nigel Brooks said that the HWPC are aware of the overdevelopment of Highcliffe in terms of flats, and that this was

something the PC are resisting where possible.

Renovation of Clifftop Shelters

Ian Hartnell reported that one of the shelters had already been vandalised, shortly after their renovation. Paul Hilliard said that the broken glass will be replaced with toughened Perspex, hopefully in the not too distant future by BCP Council.

Beacon Steps

Richard Reader reported that the once very steep steps down to the beach near Beacon Drive have now been modified and are much easier to use.

Removal of Weeds and Leaves from Streets

The gradual narrowing of paths due to the growth of weeds is of concern to members. Paul Hilliard was not optimistic that BCP Council would take action in the near future. HWPC is considering employing someone to carry out this work.

Dirty Road Signs

It is unclear who has responsibility for the cleaning of road signs. Bob Hutchings said that he has spoken to the BCP Council Chief Executive about this, but had received no response to date. The Parish Council are pursuing this issue.

Highcliffe street pavements

The dangerous condition of the pavements in the shopping area of Lymington Road in Highcliffe was the subject of a petition to which over 1000 names were attached some twelve months ago. This was submitted to Christchurch Borough Council, but there was no response. Nigel Brooks mentioned the concept of the complete reorganisation of the shopping area, but agreed that this was a long-term plan. He has discussed the problems with local retailers, who agreed that the removal of some of the parking bays would alleviate matters somewhat. Nigel feels that a transportation study is necessary as this is a main A road running through a busy shopping area. The Chief Executive of BCP Council has been apprised of the problems, and he has agreed to attend the AGM of the HWPC to allow himself to be questioned by residents on this subject. This is another problem with long term solutions, but Nigel Brooks assured the members that the Parish Council were 'on it'.

There was brief discussion of the Community Infrastructure Levy whereby developers have to contribute to communities local to their works. Nigel shared with the meeting that a sum of £9.3 million will come from Taylor Wimpey, and stated that some of this should come to the Highcliffe area.

There was further discussion with regards to parking, and who now has responsibility for controlling this issue after the local government reorganisation. It is not clear whether this will be a BCP Council matter, or that it will be devolved to the local Parish Council. Nigel Brooks explained that he felt that the senior officers at BCP Council were unaware of the situation in our area, (outdated and inappropriate parking arrangements), and so the Parish Council are encouraging communication with BCP Council to get the message across that Highcliffe deserves attention.

An HRA member reported that the clifftop path was full of puddles after rain had fallen, and needed work to avoid people having to walk on the muddy grass at the side.

Highcliffe and Walkford in Bloom

Susan Smith said that this group have been working throughout the area, particularly before the Christmas Lights Switch on, to clear paths and pavements of weeds. She invited all those interested in joining the group to come along to the monthly meetings, held on the third Wednesday of the month, usually at 2pm in The Globe. Ian Hartnell, Chair of HRA, thanked Susan for the hard work she and her team have put into tidying our streets.

5. News from the Castle (Item 8 on the agenda)

Katie Ingham, from Highcliffe Castle, gave a very comprehensive presentation on the activities and opportunities currently available. She said that 2019 had been a big year for the Castle with the opening of the East Wing. This has provided more space for activities, and it is more accessible with the provision of lifts. The hire of this new space is considerably cheaper than the original areas on the ground floor of the Castle, and is available at a rate of £20 per hour. She described the sources of funding to the Castle – via Council funding, Heritage Lottery Funding, donations, and the admissions fee. There are 10 members of staff and over 100 volunteers. Katie encouraged HRA members to become members of the Castle as membership offers more talks and private evenings for members.

The Castle is available for any group to hire, and currently there is a

Pilates class, yoga classes, and an over 60's fitness group using the facilities. She referred to talks and guided tours on the history of The Castle; the acquisition of original furniture from the V&A; the outreach to children and families; stained glass conservation workshops; the catering facilities and the nature reserve surrounding the Castle. The theatre shows have been especially popular in the past 12 months, with 'Gangster Granny' attracting an audience of more than 500 people.

Good links with local groups such as HRA and Highcliffe Action Team are important to the Castle, and they are hoping to join in local activities such as the Food Festival. They are also hoping to attract Coach Groups with companies such as Shearings to increase the tourism in our area.

Katie said that the volunteer team were always recruiting, and that the usual commitment was 3 hours per week. She offered HRA members a free guided tour of the Castle and asked that people email her first to arrange this. (katieingham@bcpcouncil.gov.uk)

Finally, in response to a question from a member, Katie asked that if anyone has concerns about the security around Highcliffe Castle that they should contact her direct, and she would take them up with the company employed in this regard.

6. Communications with Members

In Mary Reader's absence, Richard Reader reported that members' emails are always appreciated, and are directed to the appropriate officer of the HRA to respond accordingly. The quarterly newsletter is emailed to those members who have shared their email address with us, otherwise a paper copy is delivered to home addresses by volunteers. Mary writes a column for inclusion in the Highcliffe Eye explaining the activities of the HRA. Finally, Richard mentioned the Highcliffe Rotary Club's 'Active Highcliffe' presentation at Highcliffe Castle on 19 January 2020. Any local organisation is invited to take a table at this event to promote their work.

7. Urgent Business (Item 9 on the Agenda)

Ian Hartnell, Chair of the HRA, put out a call for volunteers to help the HRA in any way they could. He introduced Lesley Newman, who has offered to organise fund raising events during the coming year. She said that the first event would be a fish and chip quiz evening, dates and times to be confirmed.

Nigel Brooks asked the members to support the work of the Friends of Highcliffe Beaches and Cliffs Interest Group. There is particular concern that the coastline from Bournemouth is slowly being developed, and if we wish to preserve the special nature of our stretch of coastline, then we

need to lend our support to FOHBC.

Paul Hilliard took the opportunity to remind members about the beach clean which will be held on 12 January 2020 at Steamer Point, commencing at 1030. He also mentioned the Open Day at Christchurch Hospital on 17 January 2020, when the new MacMillan unit will be shown to the public.

Finally, Nigel Brooks, in answer to a question about the possible building of a board walk to join the beach path from the bottom of the zigzag path to the start of the wall at Steamer Point, explained that funding was earmarked from the old CBC monies for beach improvements. This work could begin in May of this year.

8. Date of next Quarterly Members' Meeting (Item 10 on the Agenda)

The next meeting will be held on 9 March 2020

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9.15pm.