



Highcliffe Residents Association CIC

Quarterly Members' Meeting

MINUTES

9 March 2020 at 7.15pm in The Old School, 254 Lymington Road

Present:

- HRA Chairman Ian Hartnell
- HRA Directors Ben Lock & Richard Reader
- HRA Exec. Cte. members Tina Butcher, Kathryn Hartnell, Mary Reader & David Underhill
- BCP Councillors Nigel Brooks, Nick Geary & Paul Hilliard
- HWPC Chairman Bob Hutchings & Vice-Chair Andy Martin
- about 35 other HRA members.

Apologies:

- HRA Directors/Exec. Cte. members Judie Burman, Andy Clayton, Guy Gillett, & Joan Rose
- BCP Councillor Lesley Dedman
- HRA members Celia Forsberg & Susan Smith

1. Welcome and Introduction

Chairman Ian Hartnell opened the meeting by welcoming members to The Old School, and thanking them for attending despite the weather and the coronavirus epidemic.

2. Minutes of Meeting of 6 January 2020

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

3. Financial and Legal Status of HRA CIC

Ian said that the building of The Old School was gifted by DCC to HRA CIC in 2012 under several restrictive covenants, and with a sitting tenant (the Rainbow Nursery CIC) leasing much of the building. The tenant had recently gone into liquidation, and the HRA Directors had identified a significant backlog of safety issues and building repairs which had to be attended to before the building could be used by other organisations. These had been dealt with from existing resources, but grants would have to be obtained to cover further refurbishments. However, before grants could be sought, several issues required resolution.

The first is the issue of the “overage” clause in the transfer document covering the gift of the building from DCC to HRA CIC. This requires that if the building is disposed of by a sale or a lease in excess of 7 years, then the proceeds of that disposal would be required to be paid to DCC (or now to BCP, who have taken over DCC’s assets in this respect). The aim of such a clause was to prevent Council assets being used to enable some other organisation to make profits. However, a consequence of the clause is that HRA has no beneficial ownership in the capital of the building, and that all HRA funds being used to improve the value of the building were potentially going to benefit the Council, rather than the Highcliffe community (to whom the building was originally given many years ago), in the event of any disposal. HRA needed assurance from BCP – ideally that the overage

would be capped at a sum related to the original value of the building, or failing that, then confirmation that repayment that the mortgage that HRA had taken out on the building (with DCC consent) would be accepted as a first charge on any profit in the event of a disposal. Without such an assurance, it would be difficult to apply for grants; and indeed, if the mortgage issue cannot be resolved, then HRA will go insolvent. The issue had been put to BCP, but no response yet. Local Councillors had been involved, and, Sir Christopher Chope MP had raised the matter with the CEO of BCP.

The second issue is that HRA needs help in the tasks of managing the Association and its building. The amount of work exceeds the capacity of the existing volunteers, several of whom are having to withdraw shortly on grounds of age and health. Members were invited to come forward to help with a range of identified tasks.

The third issue relates to HRA's ownership of The Old School – did members want this to continue, and if so could they suggest additional uses for it that would help bring in the money needed to cover running costs. Members were invited to complete forms and sticky notes to express their views. Parts of the building were already being used by Men's Sheds, the Parish Council, a Carers & Toddlers group, Pilates, and Zumba: but more hirers would be required to bring in the income needed. The Halls are now available for hire - preferably on regular bookings in the first instance, as once-off bookings raise issues of access until a better system for key management can be created.

4. Updates on local Councils

Cllr Bob Hutchings reported on a very busy period for the Parish Council in recent months, as reported on the HWPC website, in occasional articles in The Echo, and at meetings of the Parish Council itself, to which observers were always welcome. He added that he welcomed attendance at HRA QMMs, as these gave residents the opportunity to raise matters of concern to them, that HWPC could subsequently pursue – e.g. the issue of large puddles on the clifftop path.

Cllr Nigel Brooks reported on good progress in creating a Neighbourhood Plan, and invited all members to complete the questionnaire that had been placed on seats. He hoped that an initial draft of the Plan would be sent to BCP in the Autumn, prior to the creation of a final version for submission to all residents in a referendum.

Cllr. Paul Hilliard said that everyone would soon be receiving communications from BCP about the Council Tax bills, Refuse and garden waste collections, and BCP News generally. It was confirmed that garden waste collections would continue to occur in all 12 months of the year for those who had paid for the service.

Cllrs Andy Martin and Nigel Brooks outlined the HWPC initiative to revitalise Highcliffe High Street, which would cover traffic, safety, pavements, viability and sustainability. Experienced consultants had been engaged to help draw up a report to be sent to BCP.

Chairman Ian expressed huge thanks to all local Councillors, and said that the actions being taken vindicated the decision to create a Parish Council for Highcliffe and Walkford.

5. Questions from HRA Members

Mrs Snooks had submitted in advance a question about future plans for the Civic Offices and nearby areas of Christchurch town centre. Cllr Brooks confirmed that BCP will be rationalising its office buildings, and focussing most staff at the Bournemouth building

following refurbishment. There will also be outlying offices to facilitate contact with residents, but the large Council office buildings in Christchurch and Poole will be freed up for alternative uses. However, this was unlikely to be before a further 3 or 4 years, as the major refurbishment of Bournemouth Town Hall had to happen first.

6. Updates on HRA CIC and Current Issues

6.1. Local Planning Issues

HRA Planning Officer David Underhill confirmed that a list of all material local planning applications was kept up to date on the HRA website, and that he was not aware of any new controversial issues. He noted that a pre-application had been made by HRA for work on The Old School, so that consultations with the planning dept. could start.

6.2 Renovation of Clifftop Shelters

Mary Reader said that she had received several emails about the delay in restoring seating in one of the shelters. She had raised this with BCP, and been assured that the seating had been ordered, but that it was taking longer than expected as it had to be specially made. She expressed concern about recent vandalism at Cliffhanger Café, and reports of problems with young people on the clifftop late at night.

6.3 Removal of Weeds and Leaves from Streets; Overhanging Vegetation

Bob Hutchings said that there is still a lot of rubbish on pavements, and that in several areas there had been massive encroachment by plants growing in from the side. BCP had bought pavement-sweeping machines, but these would work only where there was a clear width of 1.6 meters or more. HWPC was looking for ways to remove the in-growing vegetation so that the BCP sweepers could get round.

Nigel Brooks referred to the Great British Spring Clean from 23 March to 13 April (a national initiative by Keep Britain Tidy). There were not many activities in the BCP area according to the website. However, HWPC were seeking opportunities to engage local businesses in cleaning up their frontages where appropriate. BCP would assist clean-up activities with litter-pickers and rings for collection bags. A member encouraged residents to do some local clearing on their own; Nigel confirmed that this could be done in 30mph areas, but urged everyone to be very aware of safety issues.

A member complained of several areas where hedgerows and shrubs were overhanging the pavements and causing problems of access for pedestrians and mobility scooters, and visibility for turning traffic. Nigel Brooks advised all residents to report such issues on the BCP website, so that BCP can pursue them with the proprietors.

6.4 Dirty Road Signs

Mary Reader said that she had not had an answer as to when these signs would be cleaned. Cllr Paul Hilliard said the dirty signs can be reported to BCP via the website facility, and that he had found this successful.

6.5 Plastic-free Highcliffe

Mary Reader reported on this initiative, which is being pursued by the Highcliffe Action Team. She had been invited to join a committee to represent HRA, and also Highcliffe Food and Arts Festival, which is engaging an additional contractor ("Junk O Saurus") to sort and recycle HFAF rubbish. This is in addition to contracting BCP to clean and clear the streets.

6.6 Highcliffe and Walkford in Bloom

Paul Drodge reported on current activities to make Highcliffe cleaner and prettier. More money and volunteers would always be welcome. Unfortunately, the planned coffee-morning on 7th April at Rothesay Lodge had been cancelled because of the Coronavirus. The group does now have a website, and will be holding a general meeting in May at which everyone will be welcome to come and give their views. Mary Reader reported that she had been able to arrange for the “Bloom” group to take part in the Waitrose Green Token scheme, to help raise some money.

6.7 Café Scientifique

Derek Chant reported on the success of this social/educational group in getting people to come – numbers had gone up from 30 to about 100. He was very grateful to HRA for assisting with publicity. The next meeting would be on 19th March, on cyber-security, at 5.00pm for 6.00pm at the Castle Kitchen.

6.8 Beach Clean

Mary Reader thanked Paul Hilliard for the successful work by himself and colleagues in organising these events, which HRA was happy to support. She had listed future dates on the HRA website and in the Newsletter.

6.9 Highcliffe Action Team

Mary Reader said that HAT’s Christmas festivities last year had been very successful, and that a bigger and better event was being planned for 2020. However it now seemed unlikely that the planned music festival will take place this year.

6.10 Dog-Fouling and Litter on the Rec.

Mary Reader said that BCP were not keen on providing more litter bins or signage, as they wanted people to get used to taking their litter home. However, the existing bins sometimes overflow and smell, and Mary hoped that HWPC would be able to succeed in its request to take over responsibility for the whole of the Rec., so that something could be done. She also noted that the BCP Dog Warden had undertaken to spend more time at the Rec. in view of the reports of inconsiderate dog-owners there.

7. Communications with Members

Mary Reader thanked all the volunteer organisers and deliverers of the HRA Newsletter to those members who cannot receive it by email, and hoped that members found it useful. She noted that Joan Rose had taken over responsibility for keeping the HRA Facebook page updated, and hoped that this would help attract younger members. Ian Hartnell urged all members with an email address to ensure that HRA has it, to facilitate communications.

8. Urgent Business

8.1 Heavy Lorries

A member expressed concern about the many very heavy lorries that go down Stanley Road, not recognising that it is a cul-de-sac, and have great problems in turning around. Better “No Through Road” signage should be erected. It was noted that the general problem of heavy lorries in the High street was part of the HWPC’s current High Street project.

8.2 Unadopted Roads

Similar problems were reported in some unadopted roads, and members asked when such roads in a new development would be adopted, They were advised to consult the

developer. If extra signage was needed for an unadopted road, then it was believed that the developer/owners could arrange to get them in place.

9. Date of next Quarterly Members' Meeting

The next meeting will be held on the revised date of 8th June 2020

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