

ACRA Informal Meeting with CBC-EDDC Directorate 29th November 2013

CBC-EDDC were represented by David McIntosh, Neil Farmer and David Barnes

ACRA were represented by Mike Collard (ACRA Chairman) and Jim Biggin (ACRA Secretary)

The Amalgamation of CBC and EDDC Administrations

This project remains on schedule and on budget and continues to contribute cost savings as planned.

The Approach by Purbeck District Council (PDC)

The feasibility study demonstrated that the inclusion of PDC into the CBC-EDDC amalgamated administration would be both feasible and cost effective for all parties. At this point PDC withdrew from negotiations because they felt that the timing was wrong for them.

CBC-EDDC does not believe that the exercise was a complete waste because a number of insights have been gained that will benefit CBC-EDDC in the future.

The Potential Rationalisation of CBC and EDDC Head Offices

The project based upon using Wimborne as a hub continues with no major hold-ups. The plan by DCC to adopt a distributed method of service delivery based upon local hubs linked to co-ordination centres fits well with the CBC-EDDC approach. However, the interest from other County agencies in sharing buildings increases the complexity of development and could slightly prolong the time taken for implementation.

Some development of the internal areas at the Christchurch office will be necessary.

Budgets 2012-13, 2014-15 and 2015-16

Thanks to actions taken in previous years these budgets currently look to be in reasonably good shape, subject to any changes in Central Government requirements prior to April 2014. CBC-EDDC are working on the basis that a further £50,000 to £60,000 of savings *over and above savings already identified* will be required in the five years to March 2018

It was also noted that The Dorset Waste Partnership (DWP) will require an increase in contributions from 2016-17. This is due to all partners being required to contribute to the cost of financing capital investment; meeting increasing fuel costs; increasing landfill taxes; and general inflation.

The efficiencies DWP are making are derived from the reduced costs of taking waste to landfill and the value in the separated out recycled materials. The DWP greatly reduces the level of increased costs whilst massively increasing recycling rates.

It is pleasing to note that our local recycling rate is now standing at 61% with non-recyclables down 42% - exactly what ACRA predicted when it was fighting to stop DCC building a huge multi-million pound waste disposal plant at Hurn.

Local Nature Partnership (LNP)

Dorset now has a draft strategy. Once that has been adopted the Partnership will start working with relevant agencies to investigate how it can be implemented. At the moment, the key questions related to funding remain unanswered and it is difficult to see much happening until those issues are resolved.

City Deal

Councillor Ray Nottage has met with senior civil servants and the Minister as part of a City Deal deputation to discuss local proposals. It is not clear quite how their ideas have been received and that is likely to remain the situation until sometime next year

Superfast Broadband

BT Openreach remains on target to have most of the Christchurch infrastructure in place by March 2014. It was stressed the BT target is related to availability; take-up by end-users will be a matter for providers, such as Sky and Virgin, and could be price sensitive. Thus the majority of premises in Christchurch will have the opportunity to purchase superfast broadband packages by the spring of 2014.

Further state aided work including the area around Bournemouth Airport will be completed by the summer of 2016. Full details can be obtained by logging on to <http://www.dorsetforyou.com/superfast>.

Changes to NHS Funding and Local Authorities

The Government's stated intention of bringing together certain aspects of healthcare – particularly those related to preventative medicine – and Local Authority responsibilities currently remains little more than that and further developments are awaited.

The Changing Role of Local Authorities

At various points during the afternoon and then finally at the end we discussed the way in which Local Authorities are being manoeuvred by a variety of external factors into changing their traditional role. They are increasingly being expected to manage higher risk ventures and to put a higher priority on generating financial returns than in times past.

This calls for a changing skill set that may require external recruitment to complement existing skills and teach new ones. The relationship with residents will have to change as the need to generate revenue is balanced against people's resistance to change and what they may see as not being in their own particular interests.

The need to discuss and explain matters with residents will grow in importance and will require careful management

Jim Biggin

November 2013