

ACRA

Alliance of Christchurch Residents Associations

Minutes of the meeting on **Tuesday 14th June 2016 at 7.30pm**

- 1. Present:** Sue Bungey (Christchurch Citizens); Charles Clarke (Friars Cliff); Gillian Clarke (Friars Cliff); Debbie Stephens (SAMRA); Jim Biggin (West Christchurch – Secretary); David Barnett (WCRA); Sam Bragg (Winkton); Cheryl Pountain (Winkton)
- 2. Apologies for absence:** Colin Dewsnap (Christchurch Citizens); Highcliffe; Somerford
- 3. Acceptance of Minutes:** the minutes of March 2016 were accepted
- 4. Matters Arising:**
 - 4.1.** Further to minute 7.1 Mike Collard had now resigned his position with SAMRA and will be leaving the Christchurch area imminently. Jim Biggin took the Chair for this meeting
 - 4.2.** Further to minute 6 it was noted that whilst Christchurch Citizens had now contributed £23 to the ACRA blog, payment from Friars Cliff and SAMRA was outstanding
- 5. Treasurer's Report:** ACRA funds amount to £102.43. Jim Biggin confirmed he saw no need to visit DCC in Dorchester for the moment
- 6. Election of Martyn Underhill as Dorset PCC:** Jim Biggin was asked to contact Martyn Underhill to see if he would attend a meeting with ACRA delegates to discuss his plans for the next four years
- 7. Local Government Reorganisation:**
 - 7.1.** The presentation by Dave Barnes of CBC on Thursday 21st April at the Hall on the Hill was very much appreciated. It was noted that Winkton RA have arranged a further presentation on Wednesday 15th June
 - 7.2.** Jim Biggin outlined the information passed to himself and Colin Dewsnap by CBC Chief Executive David McIntosh on 26th May and discussed that evening at a special ACRA meeting. In further discussion, now that members have had time to consult with others, the points of greatest significance were felt to be:
 - 7.2.1.** The open preference expressed by Central Government for two Unitary Authorities subsidiary to the new Combined Authority. This appeared to be a significant change of position since the autumn of 2015
 - 7.2.2.** The level of debt being carried by many Dorset Councils and the impact that could have upon negotiations. It was speculated that Councils (a) might be allowed access to the Bond Markets as a means of raising funds and (b) might be asked to manage a new form of local taxation to replace Council Tax and Business Rates
 - 7.2.3.** Central Government's stipulation that the new arrangements must not require any initial funding from Central Government and

must over time generate a real return in cash terms to Central Government funds

7.3. Jim Biggin confirmed that following the special ACRA meeting of 26th May he had:

7.3.1. Responded to the DCC public consultation regarding the new Combined Authority on behalf of ACRA. He had particularly requested more and better information on how the new authority would be policed

7.3.2. Used that feedback with other input from members to produce the ACRA paper submitted to all CBC Councillors "*Non-Financial Aspects of Local Government Reorganisation*" which can be read on the website www.wcresidents.co.uk

7.4. It was noted that the "*high level financial analysis*" had still not been produced. In the light of developments outlined above, the real worth of this paper is now being questioned by retired professionals who are increasingly suspicious that it will do little more than tick a box on some Central Government list of requirements. However, it is felt that the following difficult issues must be addressed, if not by this paper then by some other means:

7.4.1. The differing levels of Council Tax that exist between Christchurch, Poole and Bournemouth for the same band property (Poole Band D £1,518 pa; Christchurch Band D £1,714 pa)

7.4.2. The administrative arrangements for handling the debts of Poole and Bournemouth (Poole £86.5 million; Bournemouth £98.5 million) that avoid Christchurch residents servicing those debts

7.4.3. The stated pension fund deficits of both Poole and Bournemouth and how those are going to be funded in future. David Barnett and Jim Biggin outlined the difference between a debt and an actuarially calculated deficit and described the role of Pension Fund Trustees

7.4.4. The balance sheet asset values of certain properties held by Dorset Authorities when compared with their potentially lower true market value

7.5. There was further discussion on public consultation. Jim Biggin was asked to arrange an emergency ACRA meeting for all committee members of all ACRA member RAs (thought to be about 25 people) before the end of June (subsequently arranged for 29th June, 7.30pm, Hall on the Hill)

8. Removal of waste bins on the Quomps: this was discussed and the view of most present was that the scheme had been a dangerous failure in that the spread of litter presented a health hazard; the unkempt area was no longer attractive to tourists or locals; it is unlikely to have saved any money. Jim Biggin undertook to inform Councillor Margaret Phipps. Member RAs were asked to add their voice to the concerns being expressed

- 9. Highcliffe Beach Huts:** it was noted that the proposed “retreat” beach huts to be built by CBC at Highcliffe had attracted considerable adverse comment in the national and local media. SAMRA reported that questions they had posed to Highcliffe ward councillors have not been answered. CCA indicated they had written to Natural England and Christopher Chope MP. An opposition group has been formed by local residents and developments can be tracked at www.fohbac.org.uk Member RAs were asked to support the objections if they felt that to be appropriate. (Jim Biggin subsequently distributed the CBC FAQ sheet on this subject)
- 10. Roeshot Quarry:** noted that the petition had secured 1,133 signatures. The original has been sent to Hampshire CC with copies to DCC and CBC. The link for consultation and objections is:
<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/mineralsandwaste/application-details.htm?id=17204>
- 11. Next Meeting (special meeting):** Wednesday 29th June 2016 at the Hall on the Hill, West Christchurch at 7.30pm.

Jim Biggin, Secretary

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