

WEST CHRISTCHURCH RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

www.wcresidents.co.uk

Committee Meeting Minutes

Hall on the Hill: 3rd August 2016 at 7.30 pm

In these minutes: ACRA=Affiliation of Christchurch Residents Associations; ARC=Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (previously known as HCT=Herpetological Conservation Trust); CBC=Christchurch Borough Council; CED=Christchurch and East Dorset; CQC=Care Quality Commission; DCC=Dorset County Council; DPCC=Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner; DWP=Dorset Waste Partnership; EDDC=East Dorset District Council; FOSCH=Friends of St Catherine's Hill; HENRA=Hengistbury Head RA; NE=Natural England; PC=Parish Council; RA=Residents Association; SBW=Sembcorp Bournemouth Water; SSSI=Site of Special Scientific Interest (Town Common and St Catherine's Hill for example); TPO=Tree Preservation Order; WCRA=West Christchurch RA; WW=Wessex Water

1. **Present:** Chairman Jim Biggin; David Barnett; Sue Fotheringham; Malcolm Green;
2. **Apologies for absence:** Maureen Biggin;
3. **Minutes of last meeting:** The minutes of July 2016 were approved
4. **Treasurer's Report:** David Barnett reported excess expenditure over income of £284.80 with assets of £7,855.46. David Barnett outlined how "negative interest" might work and the likely impact upon WCRA
5. **Membership:** Sue Fotheringham reported that whilst collections were down on last year this was not yet a cause for concern.
6. **Reorganisation of Local Government:** Jim Biggin reported on his meeting with David McIntosh CBC CEO at which it was confirmed that:
 - 6.1. The public consultation is still scheduled for August-September. The committee did not see this timetable as entirely satisfactory, partly because no time was built in to review either the financial review or the consultation questionnaire and partly because it is the peak holiday period. The creation of a representative statistical sample of 20,000 Dorset residents was noted as was the expectation that stakeholders such as RA would submit their own independent views and comments. The logistics of creating the database of 20,000 residents and then mailing them was not understood particularly within the timeframe envisaged
 - 6.2. The financial review is complete but needs a narrative before it can be put into the public domain. The committee questioned why the narrative had not been written as the model was developed, particularly that part dealing with the assumptions that had been made.
 - 6.3. The review only considers three unitary authorities being Bournemouth and Poole merged plus: (1) nobody else; (2) Christchurch; (3) Christchurch and East Dorset. In each case the remaining authorities are merged to form a separate unitary shire authority. The committee indicated that it expected the report to be slanted towards option (2).
 - 6.4. The current budget gaps across Dorset amount in total to £80 million and the review works on the basis that about £50 million of that gap will be closed by 2019-20 whilst the remaining £30 million will be found from savings made by creating the new unitary authorities. The committee took leave to express doubts that this scenario would come to fruition in quite the manner apparently envisaged.

- 6.5. The equalisation of Council Tax within band would be spread over 20 years resulting in the lowest payers seeing their tax increase by around 110% whilst the higher rates increased by around 60%. The committee expressed concern about such increases falling on the lower income groups who already subsidise higher income tax payers under the regressive structure of Council Tax.
- 6.6. The 60% increase in higher rates of tax represents an income sacrifice by the authorities, who could legally have increased the tax by a larger amount.
- 6.7. The future of the business rate retention scheme remains unclear
- 6.8. The cost of conversion to the new structures has been estimated. The committee expressed some doubt as to the accuracy of such estimates which are notoriously difficult to quantify. They also create the classic "J-Curve" in which initial financial outlay creates a deficit which is gradually eaten back over time by future savings flowing from that outlay. The whole timing and management of that process is not clear at this stage
7. **ACRA:** nothing to report
8. **DCC and local buses:** It was noted that Cllr Margaret Phipps, Cllr Sue Spittle and Jim Biggin had met DCC Leader Cllr Robert Gould on 26th July. Jim Biggin confirmed that minutes had been posted to the website www.wcresidents.co.uk. He indicated that he believed DCC Officers had cancelled the subsidies for routes 24 and 111 simply because they were up for renewal and without consulting any local representatives. The new unsubsidised More-Bus route timetable has been placed on the website
9. **Refuse on the Quomps:** it was noted that immediately after the appearance of our July Newsletter CBC had executed a quick volte-face and the waste bins are to be replaced.
10. **Hall on the Hill:** Malcolm Green reported Wi-Fi is now working; a new security system is being investigated; the purchase of defibrillators remains in hand following Nisa's agreement to contribute to the funding.
11. **Planning Issues:** Malcolm Green reported: a dispute over the placement of windows at **2 Huntingdon Gardens** had been resolved in favour of the applicant; an issue with Natural England over boundary changes at **64 Hurn Way** is unresolved; a large scale redevelopment proposed at **80 Hillside Drive** is to be called-in by Cllr Sue Spittle; a new resident of **Apple Grove** has started a carpet business from home with HGV arriving at all hours – Cllr Fred Neale is dealing with this
12. **Friends of St Catherine's Hill:** Sue Fotheringham outlined her somewhat unusual and character building first meeting as our new representative
13. **Local roads:** David Barnett reported a successful outcome – the weeds have been sprayed by DCC
14. **September Meeting:** the committee decided not to fix a date for this meeting yet but to await developments on the local authority reorganisation front
15. The meeting closed at 9.15pm.