

FRIARS CLIFF RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION MEETING MINUTES
5 September 2024, 7.00 pm at Highcliffe Sailing Club

- Present:** Steve Alves, Chairman
Peter Skeggs, Treasurer
Louise Heybourne, Environment Rep. & Secretary
Meg Ward, Membership Secretary
Kevan Ward, Website Manager
Cllr Paul Hilliard, CTC & BCP & Mayor of Christchurch
Cllr Stuart Perry, CTC
Cllr Lesley Dedman & Chair BCP Council
- Apologies :** Paul De Jonghe, Sara Luder, Sarah Webb
- Guests:** Cllr Andy Martin, Highcliffe & Walkford Parish & BCP Cabinet
Alan Cook, Chair Beach Hut Owners Association
Janet Ebbotson & Heather Dempsey, HRA
- Speaker:** Cllr Mike Cox BCP Deputy Leader & Cabinet finance member

INTRODUCTION: Welcome 50 residents and guests. Thank you to Commodore Jim for use of facilities and Trish for running refreshments.

PREVIOUS ACTIONS:

Concerns

- Winter Car Parks out of sync with on road parking due to BCP harmonization. On street parking has increased during winter.
- Tree Planting – had a commitment for tree stump removal and replanting BCP now have BCP Urban Forest strategy which may impact this commitment.

Finances

- Average subs collected is just over £5.
- In the current a/c £8,335. Savings a/c 10,247 earning 4% interest annually.
- Cutting costs of Forum Magazine has saved money.

Social

- Very successful social events again this year, summer solstice, chilli night
- Updates sent via email to residents, if you have not given the association an email address and wish to receive updates ensure you do.
- Next event Wine Tasting at Highcliffe Sailing Club on 29 October

UPDATES

Cllr Stuart Perry

- Community Grants scheme now offered to local organisation and can apply for up to £1,000.
- Recently partnered with Christchurch Community Partnership, Soup event in October for young people's projects on 21 October

- Corporate Plan 2024/27 out for consultation for Christchurch, survey closing Monday 9. Precept for Christchurch £700K set annually (allotments, parks, etc).

Cllr Lesley Dedman

- Tree Planting – BCP is a big organisation and the problem is maintenance of trees – A possibility for FCRA to take watering and checking trees?.
- Governance review, Highcliffe & Walkford Parish Council meeting next Wednesday inviting residents to join with other organisations trying to lobby BCP to get various issues sorted e.g. lavatories.

Cllr Paul Hilliard

- Groyne markers due to be replaced week after next along beach.
- Positive feedback for the summer along the beach ASB behaviour minimal, dogs good and rangers patrolling the area. **Residents did not see rangers.**
- BCP give each councillor a ward improvement fund, £4,000, presentation at 10 a.m. tomorrow at Christchurch library for any community group with an income of <£20,000, got to be registered charity and project has to be something couldn't afford otherwise, e.g. Scouts want to hold a concert, could use money to do publicity and hall hire. BCP website or at Library more info on criterion.
- All Saints Church rebuild had planning permission granted.
- Police Inspector – area comes under Highcliffe East (Highcliffe to Stanpit), crime levels and map available online. During May to July 9 reported crimes of all types, seems low but it is all about reporting. Residents need to report crime.
- Travellers – no crimes/incidents reported (residents aware there was!!) – need to report any police case numbers to Meg.
- New BCP Chief Operations Director approached about main concerns, i.e. road of 20 houses, all should have bins emptied. Grass cutting - updating schedule to inform when grass cutting is happening, most areas are 4 cuts a year. There is data on BCP website to say how performance is in each area, works in progress, please take a look and feedback.
- Mayors Charity Cricket Game, Sunday 10:30 at Mudeford Recreation ground.

Travellers incursion onto the Green

FCRA kept residents informed. Stuart Perry was liaising with BCP Chief Exec, local residents reported to the police and patrol cars arrived but stated “what do you expect us to do”. Some of the council paperwork was incorrect, but the police served notice to quit on Sunday. We now have an emergency contact for future instances.

We have had a “lessons learned” with local councillors, and Claire Seymour BCP’s ASB lead will be our guest in December.

After a “lessons learned session” we hope to improve the security of the green. The access gate is not good. Note Seafront Strategy in the council minutes mentions removal of barriers to improve community access.

Alan Cook, Chairman Friars Cliff Beach Hut Association.

State of toilet blocks along our coast discussed with Councillors, old infrastructure, maintenance must be costing a fortune. Seafront Strategy approved by Cabinet 19 July and talked about toilet improvements but is not an implementation plan.

Alan pulling together a lobby group (FCRA, Highcliffe Castle, Cliff Hanger, Haven House Inn, Beach Hut Café, Highcliffe Parish Council, Christchurch Town Council, Highcliffe Sailing Club, Christchurch Life Saving club, BaySUP) with a few more to contact.

Councillors are backing and we want to turn the strategy into an implementation plan.

Cllr Paul mentioned Jimmy's Coffee shower at Urban Reef, Southbourne which for last couple of years has been built and maintained by Jimmy's. Asked for show of hands from residents if we would want a Jimmys shower. Residents wanted to see photos before deciding.

Cllr Andy Martin (BCP Cabinet member for Communications & Customer Service) has been highlighting the lack of investment in Christchurch compared Bournemouth & Poole. The previous administration applied to the previous government for levelling up money to level up seafronts, to invest in different projects and gave £20m mainly in Bournemouth & Poole. No plans identified in Christchurch.

Highcliffe and Parish Council now have a £200,000 plan to improve the 2 footpaths from Cliff Hanger, and have £500,000 in the bank. Comment made that our parishes should be investing more in our infrastructure.

Guest Speaker - Cllr Michael Cox, Deputy Leader BCP

Originally from Bolton, Lancashire, eldest of 6. Qualified as Chartered Accountant set up practice in 1997 and lived in London until 2016. Family in Bournemouth so came down to Hurn in 2016. In 2001 stood in every general election, and against Boris Johnson in 2015. Elected to BCP 2019 and made lead for finance, lead for liberal democrats and then 3 towns alliance since 2023.

BCP Finances 2023 for 3 towns alliance complex but stable and had to make £38m of savings, i.e. cutting services when they took over. Took nothing from reserves until February 2024.

For 2024/25 they have balanced the budget and have a medium term financial plan for the following 3 years. Now just over a quarter into the year and submitted Q1 reports to Cabinet. There are elements of council expenditure such as Children's and Adult Services that BCP has little control over, their costs are huge and entirely demand led. Non-statutory services are cut first, projected to £4-5m overspend in current year. Public sector pay awards cost significantly more than expected and BCP might have to cut a further £11m from budget this year, not as much as last year.

BCP were placed in special measures after inspection and recommendations last year and put BCP on best value notice, this expired a week ago, so now out of special measures.

Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) is a statutory requirement for BCP to provide and there is not enough Government grant to cover provision (All councils have a deficit). BCP deficit last year was £64m and whole council reserves only £65m but government have given BCP a waiver which runs out in 2026.

Next year £64m SEND costs will be £100m and the council have to provide cash for overdraft and BCP is running out of cash. BCP wrote to Government in May to say they have no reserves, and are constantly speaking to MPs.

BCP will have Section 114 if central government do not give the council enough money. BCP was invited to go into a Safety Valve mechanism but government would not accept a 15-year plan to address this and would only accept a 5 year plan. BCP felt the council plan was sensible and realistic.

Residents mentioned there were thousands of people who hadn't paid council tax and Cllr Cox confirmed BCP is in pursuit of Council Tax recovery collection from non-paying constituents.

BCP has informed second home owners by letter that their council tax will be charged at twice the usual rate from April 2025, a saving of £6m for BCP.

Educational Healthcare Plan (EHCP) is an assessment made by councils within a certain statutory period, then council has to provide care. The Leader of Labour group on council cabinet member for education is going to look at this.

Question asked "who would vote for an increase above 4.99 % of council tax to fund better public services in the area" ? At present there is a limit to what a council can increase, i.e. 2.99 % and then add on 2% for adult social care.

Cycle Lanes, Road schemes, Art etc., can BCP explain funding and how schemes are funded. BCP only knows what funding has been allocated from government usually on Christmas Eve.

A special needs school, John Farmers was attached to Christchurch Hospital and was closed. Parkfield School by Hurn Airport has closed, the building is owned by government so it is a free school and BCP have asked Children's Services if can be looked at by government.

Tricuro, company which BCP own and provide nursing homes, day care and staff in adult social care sector are employed under private company terms and not in terms of local government pension scheme.

BCP's Property Portfolio cannot be sold to be used for services. If you call that expenditure transformation, you are transforming the service and services can be funded by capital, i.e. selling an asset.

The last administration tried to sell of Waitrose car park to a private equity company and CTC objected. Suggested CTC buy and rent back to Waitrose, which would provide BCP with cash funding and CTC with a valuable asset with a rent and is pretty much sorted.

Car parking money goes into general fund and gets spent. The three towns alliance has a program and allowed to do it.

Hengistbury Head is a Community Asset transfer and will be run by community on 30-50y lease.

Plans to adopt Parishing for the whole of BCP, similar to Christchurch parishes.

BCP will be increasing parking fees and want to bring in a residents card which will get discounts on parking.

FCRA Future/Strategy

Resident Survey – what future might look for us.

Asked re subscriptions, magazine, communication, social, website to ensure we can continue to give our residents the support they deserve.

Residents may have seen in the Forum about a vote at the AGM, we have moved on quicker so this will not be required, our recent survey has shown appetite for changes, we will present a plan in December.

Resident Feedback:

- Majority liked social events.
- Happy with scope and content of our meetings.
- Liked email communication. We do have 150 residents with no email details.
- Forum magazine – doing the right thing.
- Residents happy to pay more than £3, majority will pay £5.
- Road representatives distributing sub reminders - could we improve our method, do it online, DDR? Thinking of a hybrid system, 73% of residents said would be happy to pay online. Peter Skeggs informed us we were not able to do DDR with the bank, so need to review. A few residents do not have a computer, we can accommodate a hybrid online/cash system.
- Some responses really clear, but we did not word all questions well.
- Can we improve our newsletter?

Recognition for Local Residents Supporting the Community:

- John Whiffen, who maintains hedges in East Cliff Way.
- The Harris's who maintain the south end of Seaway Ave planting.
- Bure Lane –wooden posts painted and overgrown verges cut by Peter Southgate and neighbours.

- Travellers at Steamer Point were evicted by 5 pm on the Sunday, gates locked by local residents who then cleared the whole area (Brian Winkworth, Martyn Eagling, Steve Ashby, Bill & Gilly Burgess, Meg & Kevan Ward)
- Muddy path tidied by utilising dumped stones (Meg & Kevan Ward, Sarah Webb).

Cllr Paul Hilliard is requesting pictures for his article in Christchurch Eye, Taking Pride in Christchurch and he will be calling out Seaway, Brook Way and Bure Lane to encourage others.

Locking of car parks – culture has to change in BCP to let community take things on.

AOB

BCP Urban Forest Strategy

Very long-winded report which needs clarity for our area. Page 8 of 68 in Appendix 2 states our area as having a Tree Equity Score (TES) of 100, does this mean we will get ignored in new plans for planting even though we had agreement for new trees and removing stumps?

Safety at Sea

Danger to local swimmers, powered surfers etc, conversations via councillors with Seafront services etc on zoning and notices. Highcliffe Sailing Club and FCRA engaged with Christchurch Harbour Watch. Seafront Strategy have not yet scoped out in BCP, we need to push hard for safety improvements.

Slipway Fees – unmanned at Mundeford, no-one there to take any money for council. A suggestion From Mike Cox that the local community in future might take on.

MCA Site development - Cllr Paul Hilliard will ask why the delay in approving the application.

Recycling centre (Tip) - info on BCP website, open 7 days as previously was. The area to buy recycled items has gone.

Reporting incidents to Police – FCRA are happy to do if residents do not want to do this, or Cllr Stuart Perry.

Residents thank committee for all work they do.

Meeting Close: 21:10