

ACRA

Alliance of Christchurch Residents Associations

Minutes of the meeting on **Tuesday 8th December 2015 at 7.30pm**

- 1. Present:** Liz Evans (Christchurch Citizens); Rob Evans (Christchurch Citizens); Charles Clark (Friars Cliff); Mike Collard (SAMRA - Chairman); Debbie Stephens (SAMRA); Jim Biggin (West Christchurch – Secretary); David Barnett (WCRA);
- 2. Apologies for absence:** Highcliffe; Somerford; Winkton. Noted that Grange and Somerford are merging.
- 3. Acceptance of Minutes:** the minutes of September 2015 were accepted
- 4. Matters Arising:**
 - 4.1. Dorset Waste Partnership:** Cllr Margaret Phipps was thanked for her report on the current state of affairs and the progress made in bringing managerial control to DWP was appreciated
 - 4.2. CBC Officers Time Recording:** Mike Collard and Jim Biggin reported they had not discussed this with CBC Executive because other matters had rightly received a higher priority at their meeting. They advised that now was not the time to pursue this subject
 - 4.3. Dorset Alert:** the progress report received from Dorset Police was noted. Whilst progress is painfully slow there have been some small signs of improvement – which still leaves a long way to go
 - 4.4. Letter to NHS England:** Jim Biggin outlined his dealings first with NHS England and then with the Ministry of Health which had culminated in a verbose reply from the Ministry that could be summarised in a succinct vernacular phrase. It seemed pointless to pursue this further
 - 4.5. Grass Verges in Winkton:** the grass verges have been cut and future visits have been included in a regular maintenance schedule
- 5. Treasurer's Report:** ACRA funds amount to £102.43 following expenditure of £12.80 train fare for the Secretary to visit DCC in Dorchester
- 6. Hampshire CC and Roeshot Hill Gravel Excavation:** obtaining a situation report is proving difficult – HCC website not easy to use. Jim Biggin was asked to contact Dave Barnes to see if he had up to date information
- 7. Town Centre Plan:** the CCA meeting scheduled for Monday 14th December 2015 at 7.30pm in Druitt Hall was noted. ACRA delegates had a lukewarm view of the new plan, which appeared to show a strong resemblance to the previous plan. They still did not like plans to close the underpass and replace it with a pedestrian crossing.
- 8. Local Government Reorganisation:**
 - 8.1. Background:** Mike Collard and Jim Biggin outlined the drive initiated by Central Government to reduce Revenue Support Grant to zero by 2020

forcing Local Authorities to rely upon Council Tax, Business Rates, and other income to fund public services utilising a reduced cost base. With change inevitable a number of business models are being investigated.

8.2. Combined Authority: this structure comprises a number of independent Local Authorities assisted by the Local Enterprise Partnership acting together as a type of consortium in activities such as strategic transport and economic development. Utilising powers devolved from Central Government a pan-Dorset CA would be able to improve the transport infrastructure and to foster economic growth. CBC, EDDC and other Councils have already authorised the further exploration of this idea

8.3. Unitary Authorities: this structure involves a number of previously independent Local Authorities merging to form one new Authority. Two possible structures involving three such bodies are under consideration.

8.3.1. In the first part of DCC, CBC, EDDC, Bournemouth and Poole combine to form one Unitary leaving the Dorset rump to possibly form a second.

8.3.2. In the second all nine existing Councils combine to form a single Unitary.

8.3.3. CBC, EDDC and other Councils are being asked to authorise the Local Government Association assisted by the Local Partnerships to undertake a form of financial analysis which falls short of full due diligence to explore the financial implications of such structures.

8.4. ACRA Involvement in this process: once the various parts of the puzzle had been explained and understood delegates discussed how ACRA should be involved in a process of fundamental importance to all of our members.

8.4.1. It was noted from the set of principles discussed by the leaders and chief executives of all nine councils at a meeting of 12th October 2015 that "*public support/acceptance of whatever decisions are made*" is a key measure of success. (The full set of principles and associated method statements can be found at www.wcresidents.co.uk). It was felt that ACRA members have a vital part to play in that process.

8.4.2. From the discussion a number of conclusions were reached. ACRA accepts reorganisation is inevitable but is not at this stage committed to any particular solution; believes that each potential solution must be the subject of a full risk, cost and benefit analysis undertaken with all due diligence before any solution becomes the preferred solution; believes it is vital to include within the debate the cost and risks of conversion to any new structure as well as the functioning of that structure; is prepared to devote time and resources to assisting CBC in this venture in any practical way that it can

8.4.3. The meeting between Councillor Ray Nottage, David McIntosh, and ACRA representatives Mike Collard and Jim Biggin already arranged for the New Year was welcomed and they were authorised to meet further

with such Councillors, Officers and other informed individuals as they deemed necessary, involving other ACRA delegates as appropriate, and reporting back promptly to all ACRA delegates.

8.5. The ACRA Blog: Jim Biggin outlined the history of the blog which can be accessed from a link on www.wcresidents.co.uk . The cost of £92 had been met by WCRA. CCA, FCRA and SAMRA were each asked to make a voluntarily contribution of £23 towards the cost

9. Defibrillators: WCRA outlined how it was helping to fund a defibrillator for the outside of the Hall on the Hill. It asked other RA to consider funding such equipment in their area. They had been advised that each unit costs £1,200 capital cost and about £12 a year to run with consumables normally replaced by paramedics. SAMRA indicated that the equipment may possibly be obtained cheaper from The British Heart Foundation.

10. Marsh Lane School: WCRA confirmed that the plans for the new school are out for consultation. Details of the reference number and link to Dorset-for-You are at www.wcresidents.co.uk

11. Next Meeting: Tuesday 8th March 2016 at the Hall on the Hill, West Christchurch at 7.30pm.

Jim Biggin, Secretary

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