

ACRA Informal Meeting with CBC Directorate 20th October 2011

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

ACRA were represented by John Pendrill (ACRA Chairman) and Jim Biggin (ACRA Secretary)

New CBC-EDDC Shared Service Administrative Arrangements

CBC has developed a four year integration plan. Those two foundation stones that underpin most other activity, IT and Finance, were early candidates. The new IT structure is now in place whilst the Finance systems will come into force from the start of the next Financial Year.

Business Rates

Under new Central Government plans local councils will collect business rates as before but, subject to pending Central Government consultation and enabling legislation to fix the actual percentages, about 95% of these monies will then be transferred back to them rather than being used to cross-subsidise other local authorities. Dorset will retain about 80% and will pass the balance of around 15% on to Borough and District Councils. There will thus still be the potential for areas such as Christchurch and East Dorset to cross-subsidise West Dorset for example.

One effect of the new arrangement is to pass risk onto local authorities. The loss of a large local employer will result in a loss of local income. Equally, gaining a new local employer will increase local income.

Council Tax Benefits

There is a move by Central Government to allow local councils to determine their own level of benefits rather than following the previous centralised "one rate fits all" policy. Vulnerable groups such as the elderly are to be protected and the change will be accompanied by a 10% reduction in Central Government funding. This inevitably means that benefits payable to non-vulnerable groups will be squeezed or other services will have to be reduced to make up the income deficit.

Welfare Reform Act

The Welfare Reform Act will introduce the new Universal Credit system that will have to be put in place during 2012 ready for implementation in 2013

Localism Act

The Bill is currently before the House of Lords and should receive the Royal Assent later this year. Its impact upon local affairs remains unclear.

Local Housing

The provision of low cost and social housing is still a local requirement. Some sixteen year olds are being accommodated in bed and breakfast having been discovered sleeping rough.

Mudford Wood Community Centre

This is being transferred over to the management of local people under a 25 year lease with quinquennial reviews

Waste Collection

The new waste collection systems have been approved and will be brought into effect during 2012. They are based upon the trial recycling systems that have operated in St Catherine's Hill for some years.

The standard system will use wheelie-bins and plastic containers. For locations where this proves to be completely impractical alternative arrangements will be made. It is important to stress that such exceptions will be rare and will only be adopted as a last resort.

Food waste will be collected weekly and converted to usable energy. As an optional extra service to the householder, garden waste will also be collected by CBC but at an additional cost of £35 per annum to the householder

Dry recyclable waste will be collected fortnightly with the householder responsible for separating paper, cardboard, tins and recyclable plastic into a wheelie-bin and glass into a box

Non-recyclable waste will be collected fortnightly

Thanks were offered to West Christchurch Residents Association for their help in progressing all of this.

It was noted that a new local recycling centre will be needed in Dorset, probably in 2014-15, and is likely to be sited at Blandford.

Improvements to the B3073

As part of their planning application to extend their business park Bournemouth Airport have indicated a willingness to fund some redevelopment of the B3073-A347 interchange at Parley Cross, the Chapel Gate roundabout and the A338 Blackwater Junction. Further details will emerge in time.

Druitt Hall

There was agreement that with many other, better appointed, local halls available the need for Druitt Hall is questionable. If the existing building was demolished it would be possible to significantly improve the entrance to Druitt Gardens and to create a high quality amenity for both local people and visitors to Christchurch

Jim Biggin - October 2011