



JUMPERS AND ST CATHERINE'S HILL RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

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Management Committee:

D Barnett; J Biggin; M Biggin; C Boatman; J Cooper;
S Fotheringham; M Green; L Oliver

David McIntosh
Chief Executive
Christchurch Borough Council

17th November 2017

By e-mail

Dear David

CBC Referendum

We are writing to you to register our concerns over the validity of the outcome of the referendum that was launched at last evenings council meeting.

The Famous Leaflet

In April 2017 a highly coloured circular prepared by an individual was sent to most households in Christchurch. The circular: (a) used the logo of Christchurch Council without their permission (b) used the logo of Bournemouth Council without their permission (c) contained factually inaccurate information which was used as a basis to instruct people to vote "no" in the referendum.

As reported in the Echo, the originator was obliged to withdraw the circular, but the damage had been done. Our enquiries at that time revealed that a considerable number of residents believed that CBC and BBC had written to them telling them to vote "no"

In the last two weeks we have obtained empirical evidence that some residents still remember the leaflet. One man I spoke to went to his bureau and produced a copy of it from his files. Thus, it is impossible to know what residual damage remains in the minds of some residents

The CBC Explanatory Leaflet

After a general piece of background, this leaflet contains a list of "reasons to vote no". We showed it to a retired financial services compliance officer. His conclusion was that if it was advertising a financial product the Financial Conduct Authority would insist on it being withdrawn. In particular:

The CBC Leaflet – the new Unitary will have fewer Councillors from Christchurch than from either Bournemouth or Poole

The leaflet fails to mention that CBC is part of DCC where is represented by 5 out of 46 Councillors. It gives the impression that this is something new created by the proposed new Unitary rather than a continuation of the status quo. As such it amounts to misrepresentation by omission.

The CBC Leaflet – we have control over local services

This is factually incorrect – consider the roads for example. Again, it amounts to misrepresentation

The CBC Leaflet – CBC Strongly Dispute the Forecast Savings

No evidence is provided to support this claim but since it comes under the CBC logo some residents will be inclined to believe it. This is misleading.

The CBC Leaflet – Better Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning in Dorset is a responsibility of Dorset LEP. No evidence is produced to show how CBC on its own is going to produce better results than the LEP. This is misleading.

CBC Leaflet – partnership with EDDC could be extended to other Councils

CBC fails to name these other Councils, which makes this claim misleading. We now know that EDDC and Purbeck have rejected the idea of joining with CBC in promoting option 2(c) so even the inferred statement that the existing arrangement with EDDC can continue is of doubtful validity.

The CBC Leaflet – Christchurch would retain its sense of place

Sense of place has nothing to do with the internal structure of the local Council. The misleading impression is created that the new Unitary will somehow alter the way local people interact with each other and their surroundings.

The Referendum Question

Residents are asked to vote “yes” or “no” to option 2(b). There is no explanation anywhere as to what a “no” vote means in terms of alternatives. Thus, it is impossible to weigh up the pros and cons of different paths because no other outcomes are explained.

In Conclusion

We are very concerned that our Council has placed itself in a position where it is issuing such questionable material. It obliges us as an organization to issue our own material refuting what CBC is saying. That is not something we like to do but in this instance, we feel we have no choice.

Yours sincerely

Jim Biggin

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Chairman