

HENGISTBURY RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING WEDNESDAY 2nd FEBRUARY 2022.
Venue: St.Nicholas Church Hall, Broadway, Southbourne, BH6 4EP, 7.30pm

Committee:	
Chairman	Avril Ogden
Vice Chair	Vacant
Treasurer	Brian Miller (Absent)
Secretary	Avril Ogden
Membership Secretary	Avril Ogden
Henra IT and Website	External
Meet & Greet	Hilary Baker
Socials - In House	Avril Ogden
Socials - External	Avril Ogden
Programme & Newsletters	Avril Ogden
General Committee	Deborah Bergson
Hon President	Tony Yates (Absent)

Apologies received from :
None

The following is a transcript of the evening, prepared by Avril Ogden from the voice recording made on the evening.

Welcome to you all and firstly a Happy New Year to you. I hope you can all hear me OK? As you know from the last few meetings, I've been having trouble getting a new microphone system to work properly. Hopefully we'll be OK tonight. We're also going to try something a bit different because one thing I'm finding when I'm doing the minutes from the voice recording is that the people in the audience that are speaking, their voices are not being picked up by the voice recorder especially whilst we're all wearing masks as well. So we're going to try with the old system as well. We've had a quick play around with it tonight to see if it works and it does but time will tell. We're going to use the old system as well so that when the audience want to speak, if you can hold on for a moment and David will come round and stick a microphone in front of you and hopefully, it will be loud enough for it to be picked up by the voice recorder.

Anyway, this is only our fourth meeting since March 2020 so thank you for keeping the support going.

A few notices for you and a quick run-down on the format for tonight and future meetings. I'll be as quick as I can and I'll read from my notes here so I don't forget anything.

Mindful that the pandemic is still with us, for the foreseeable future, face coverings must be worn at all meetings. In addition, I have bought a stock of hand sanitizer and there is a bottle by the entrance.

As existing members will be aware, when I took over as Chair in Sept 2018, I introduced Signing-In sheets and everyone attending meetings is asked to make sure they sign in. This is especially important at present and if anyone is unfortunate enough to get Covid-19 or one of the variants, please let me know so I can email everyone who is at the meeting tonight so they are aware of the situation.

For any brand new members tonight but also a reminder for everyone, the usual format for our meetings is the general introduction by myself followed by a report from our local Police Community Support Officer, then our Speaker, then the Councillors, then Any Other Business & any final notices. There will be time for Questions & Answers after each item.

In the absence of a Secretary to take minutes, I have a voice-activated recorder and I will produce the Minutes from this and these will eventually go up on the website. Especially whilst we are all wearing face masks, please make sure you speak clearly so what is said can be heard by everyone.

If any of you have looked at the Minutes from the past few meetings which are now up on the website, you will notice that there are quite a few gaps regarding what was discussed, especially regarding questions put to our speakers. This is because, the audience members didn't speak loudly enough and the tape didn't pick up what was said. Also, when several people speak at the same time as has happened quite a bit, it's virtually impossible for me to decipher exactly what was said.

Recording our meetings is also very useful as a record in case of any disputes about what was said.

A reminder that there is a Comments/Question Box on the table here if there is anyone who doesn't like to speak out at these meetings, they can put a message on the forms, a polite one of course! Also, it is an opportunity for you to let me know of any projects within the Henra-designated area that might be grateful for some funding as we are now starting to look at how best to distribute some of our funds.

I'd like to thank the members who came early tonight to help with the setting up of the chairs & also for the members who are helping to get everyone signed in.

There are now membership application forms again at both St.Katharine's Church and also in the foyer here at St.Nicholas Church. Interestingly, both leaflet holders that I'd purchased have disappeared so I've had to buy more. It seems even the Churches aren't safe from thieves !

So now, our first speaker is our PCSO. Take your mask off if you need to. Sorry, I didn't recognize you with your mask on. For those of you who don't know her, our PCSO is Annette Long.

POLICE PCSO Annette Long

It's nice to see you all again. There are just a few things that I'm aware of that have been happening lately. (Unfortunately the tape just wasn't picking up what Annette was saying as she speaks much too quietly)

There was a short discussion about cars being parked in the slip road outside the Broadway shops which are being sold by a local trader. The main problem is that people using the shops are unable to find a parking space. The situation can get quite volatile between the car vendors and the Police. Even though there is a time limit on parking there, the Police are unable to really do much when the cars are taxed. The situation is being monitored.

SPEAKER

So now on to our speaker for this evening. I am pleased to welcome Graham Farrant, the Chief Executive of BCP Council who is going to let us know what he's been up to since he took up his post in 2019. There will be time for questions at the end.

So please welcome Graham

Note from Avril - I have transcribed Graham's talk in full as best I can as it was so informative and interesting.

Good evening everybody. It is genuinely good to be standing in front of members of the community for the first time in about two years. When I first took over, I did as many talks as I could to community groups and then Covid hit and life changed. So now I'll tell you a bit about what's been going on and I'll answer as many questions as I can or leave them for the Councillors to pick up.

We've been through some very strange times and for the Council especially, we've had to do some emergency planning and working also with the Police. One of the things I say often to my colleagues is "we trained for something like this". "We're trained for emergency planning, we're trained to take control." We have never trained for an incident that lasted two years though. We're trained for a serious fire, a plane crash or something similar and then within 24 hours, you're into a recovery situation and there we were in February 2020 and now we're in February 2022 and we're still not fully in recovery so it's been a really strange time for all of us.

I was talking today to a cross-government group about what it's going to be like living with Covid. So, as you may know, on March 24th all current restrictions go away - no self-isolation even if you have covid, that rule will all go, no face masks, nothing. I think there are going to be people in society who are going to say that they're so used to being on their own and locked up and not catching it that they're too scared to go out, don't want to go out and socialize and there's going to be a real impact on our communities. As we go through the next few months, we mustn't think it's over and we know that mental health issues aren't over. I know that across all public services at the moment, that's the Council, Police, Health, Ambulance, Mental Health, we've seen an increase in demand, about 20% on most services, including things like Planning.

So not just the Responses but also things where people are changing their lives like getting extensions on their houses. Over the past two years, there's been about a 20% increase on planning applications. So every service is under more demand and of course, there have been fewer people to handle things with so many working from

home now. Do you remember when you were sanitizing everything before you touched it because in the beginning we just didn't know if it was going to be transmitted by touching anything. Then, when we had all the people on the beach and whether it could be transmitted when we were outside. I don't think there's been any cases of external transmission like that. Not through general social interaction. So we're learning a lot about it but it's also changing a lot as a disease.

The Council is also changing - we're enforcing the rules. Health and Trading Standards people were going round making sure people were keeping their distance, also supporting as many people in the community as possible. We had around 2000 volunteers to help with things like helping people who needed their shopping done and we co-ordinated the volunteers. We also had to provide extra services, like extra signage in the town.

There was a huge amount of work that was done that distracted us from the big job that we had and what we needed to do as an organization. Here I ask for a bit of sympathy from you as you probably don't realize, the formation of the new Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council was the most complicated bit of local Government re-organization in the country for 40 years. The reason for that was if you look at what they did in Cornwall, their County Council just sucked up the district councils so everything that Cornwall Council did, they just carried on doing. I think their Council is just about 80% of our spend and about 20% of district services. In Bedfordshire they just cut their county in half so they just split their services into two. Graham cited examples of other Councils, mostly just reforming by sucking up the districts. In the rest of Dorset, they kept the Dorset County Council and sucked up the districts.

What did we do in BCP? We merged Bournemouth Unitary Council covering County and District services, Poole Unitary covering County and District, Christchurch District and Dorset County. So we had three sets of County level services. Nobody else has done that in the last 40 years. So it's quite a big task and it's not surprising that we're not fully on the other side of that then whilst we're doing that, we then had the biggest pandemic that any of us have seen in our lifetimes with the biggest impact on communities. It's been a really interesting and quite challenging three years, the last couple of years particularly so but I think we've made good strides, I think we're getting there.

It will be interesting to get your responses as to whether the services are better or worse or no different. No different is fine, better is also fine, worse - tell me about it and lets get some feedback and we can talk about this later.

I'm doing this on one basis, that this doesn't get into the Bournemouth Echo tomorrow morning (*Laughter*) Last time I did one of these talks, I spoke about our planning service and next day's headline was "Council Chief Executive slams Planning Service" which was not what I tried to do. The paper effectively blamed the planners.

To be of any value to you, I need to be perfectly honest about what's good and what's bad. I'm working on the basis that if there are any Echo reporters here, please declare now. (*Laughter*) So I'll trust you not to speak to the Echo. (*Laughter*)

So next - just a little bit of history, the Politics of the Council was probably not what was quite expected after the first elections so I think that the expectation was that a Conservative majority Council set up in May 2019 and just to let you know that the Council was actually formed on 1st April, the elections were then held in May afterwards. That's the first time that's ever been done that way round. What they normally do is to hold the elections for the Councillors in May and then the following April, they bring the Council into being. So those Councillors are running the Council for eleven months, they agree what their priorities should be, what the strategies should be. We did it the other way round.

They did it by bringing the Councillors into place, then bringing me into the job in April then all the Councillors went away and then the elections five weeks later. Then we had the elections and then they had to agree their strategy, policies etc. I am a political post, if you like. Absolutely A-political, I have to be. But everybody said that wasn't the political balance they expected as the result of the local elections.

If you'd taken the old Councillors, it would have been something like 60 Conservative and 16 others but it was actually 36 Conservatives and 40 others so the others formed an alliance and took control of the Council and held it for the first 18 months or so. Then a Conservative take-over in October 2020 then in October 2021 it went to a Conservative majority which I have to say makes decision-making a lot easier because if you are a no-overall control council, it depends on who votes which way on the night, for the budget and everything else. It's much easier when you have a majority administration. Politically, it doesn't matter which party, others of you might have a different view on that, I'm sure they do. If you have a single party, you get clearer direction and that's what we have now.

What the administration is doing now is looking back at why we did local government reorganization. It's about creating a single voice for the place, it was about recognizing that the place is the same size as Bristol. Look at our population, 400,000, as big as Southampton and Portsmouth put together. So we are at a really significant scale where we should be able to do things, to aspire to influence Government, and that's what we're putting in place.

So we now have something called the Big Plan and we are talking about how do we make this a world class place. I always say, look at the beach, the sand, 13 miles of south-facing golden sand, there's nowhere else in the country that has that. That is a world class beach. Look just behind it though. Does that look world class? Not in all places. So that's the aspiration. So how do we take that and really build on the fantastic asset we've got. The original talk was of a coastal city region by the sea. Bournemouth town centre feels like a city to me. It's got 18- and 20-storey buildings, it's got a city vibe, a city feel with its entertainment, it's got three universities, the suburbs don't need to be part of the city centre. So we can look at the area differently, it doesn't have to be a single place. So that gives us some real advantages.

So what do we want Christchurch to be? What do we want Poole to be? What do we want Southbourne to be? How do we value Hengistbury as a place in its' own right? And that's what we're trying to do, to get that real feel about a place that's Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole but comprises different locations. There's 19 High Streets, so we know they're all different, so we're really thinking about that plan much more. Then we've got a corporate strategy - what is the Council going to do, what are our targets and what do we want to achieve?

The summer response in 2020 was a bit shaky Do you remember 2020? I think it was about 24th June, the temperature hit about 80 degrees in old money, there were 8 million people being paid to stay at home (*at this point Graham's phone rang, he told us it was his wife reminding him to book a gym class! - Laughter from audience*) So 8 million people were paid to stay at home, what do they do, they come to the beach, the only trouble was that the pubs were shut, the restaurants were shut, the entertainment was shut, most of the toilets were shut because we were all worried about social distancing and all that, and the off-licence was open and the beach was open. So there was that combination and I think it was something like 300,000 people came down for the day.

Although it's not been admitted publicly, I know that on the trains, the gates were open at Waterloo, the gates were open at Bournemouth, there were no ticket inspectors moving down the trains because the trains were too crowded. So 700 people got off the train every half hour at Bournemouth and walked straight on to the beach. They were not wearing masks. We know that, it's what we saw, we've got it on CCTV. The best thing was that there was stuff going round on Social Media in London saying come to Bournemouth. What were South West Trains doing, how did they respond to that? They said the trains were crowded, let's put more on! So they did and we had to respond to that and you all saw some of the behaviour. Dreadful behaviour in this country. Most people would usually have gone off to Malaga or wherever and some of them would take it out over there.

Some people were defecating, I came across the phrase "fly-parking". Do you know what fly-parking is? Drive down, see a double yellow line and park on it. £35 is the fine. So if you come for the day in Bournemouth and there's four of you, it just costs you just over £7 each to park. And if you park on the double yellow lines, you can get even closer to the beach than if you're in a car park! It could only cost you £20 in the car park.

What surprised me was that neither Bournemouth nor Poole, only Christchurch, had only ever had the need for a tow-away contractor because they hadn't had that sort of behaviour. We didn't have signage saying that if you parked in the wrong place you might get towed away so this summer, all of that has been in place. We've made sure people know that, we've got the signs up, we've chosen some cars to tow away and when they get towed, they're up by the airport so they've got to get from wherever they were on the beach and get to the airport and then pay a hefty sum to get the car back. And when people know that that's what we do then they don't behave quite so badly.

We had BBQs being used that summer and the disposable BBQs, what did they do, buried them on the beach. So the following morning, a child goes on the sand and they're still glowing hot. In one of the Dorset beaches, it was found that carrier bags full of waste had been buried on the beach. What happens when the tide comes in, the carrier bag all comes up. There's been some really, really poor behaviour. This summer, the Council have put £3 million extra to look after the beaches and the town centre and I think it has paid off. We put in an extra 400 of the really large continental bins. They look a bit ugly but they were effective. In one weekend in June 2020 we picked up about 110 tons of rubbish from the beach and the parks and another 100 tons over most of the summer. Most people, when they see a bin, they will use it so we put 320 bins along the sea front. We've taken about two thirds away for the winter and we'll put them back again for the summer. Most

peoples' behaviour generally is good if you provide the facilities so we had a much better response this last summer and hopefully this will continue next summer as well.

What's changed dramatically is our approach to the green environment so we're all now looking at energy reduction, electric cars - there's a real push on this in the past 18 months or so. The Council has responded with trying to create a green future fund for next year where we can actually put some capital investment into that green energy and that's changing the flavour of the way the Council think as well. We don't have all the answers yet. We have committed to being carbon neutral by 2030 as a Council and to make the whole place carbon neutral by 2050 and we're trying to bring those dates forward because we know that there's a price to be paid if we continue to emit so much carbon dioxide.

Planning is still a focus. Last week we had another clearance on decisions where we told the planners to stop talking to people and just make decisions and help to try and clear the backlog. We're getting that down and in the first week we made 350 decisions, we normally make 100 decisions in a week. So it really did help to focus on that and get them through. So planning performance we think is beginning to improve. We know that there are a lot of people who want to invest, perhaps extending their home.

The three preceding Councils, Dorset County, Poole and Bournemouth all have services that required improvement and together we have made one big service, but not as good yet as it should be. We're really focusing on Childrens' Services, that's at the heart of the plan and we've put something like £18 million a year extra into Childrens' Services over the last two years. The other area is our Contact Centre where we have been struggling due to bigger demand since Covid, a lot of staff working from home and our contact for the public has not been good enough. We're just agreeing with the budget to put over £1 million to improving that to improve capacity so you can get through on the phone. More and more, of course, is that we're trying to get people to use the website wherever they can. I want the Council to be digitally enabled so that everyone who can, goes on the website then those that can't get space for a bigger service because there'll be fewer people using the phone. That's what we're trying to achieve. It doesn't always work.

So this year, in Poole, if you were affected registering for your green bin, changing over to the Bournemouth system, everybody in Poole had to re-register to create a new account. Some people had difficulty with this and then they rang which, of course, was blocking the phones and then you couldn't get through on the phone because there were 1000-2000 people phoning to try and get their green bin service. So we can see that there's been some trials and tribulations around that but I think we're making some improvements on that now.

So that's a summary of what we've been trying to do, lots of issues going on. We know about Hengistbury Head and the outdoor centre there. There are plans, as you know, for rebuilding the café and I'll be happy to take questions on that. I would like your opinion about some of the services. I always judge a place on its' street cleansing and I think our streets are pretty clean. I always have a drive around, many years ago I ran a street cleansing contract so I look for litter and actually I don't find a lot of it around here. You might have a few potholes around here but most of your roads are in very good condition. My mother-in-law formerly lived in Birmingham, I know the Birmingham roads and my car suspension does not like the Birmingham roads. The roads here are in much better condition. In East London where my father lived, the roads are in much worse condition. Are they good enough, that's another issue.

One other thing I'd say to you about media coverage, always take it with a pinch of salt, always ask what the fundamental question was. Coverage of the Council is an interesting one, isn't it. You very rarely get a story that says the Council has done something right. And yet, I've got 5000 people who every day come in to do their public service, they get paid reasonably well, they get a good pension. Most of them are in local government not for the money but to provide a public service. Very few of them come in to try and scupper that, or mess it up. The vast majority come in to do their best with the systems we've got to provide a service to you. By paying your Council tax, that pays their salaries but actually, I think most of them do try to do a good job but we do sometimes get some that don't do it right. Let me know of those cases because I'm interested to drive people to make the right decision every time they make a decision.

Questions & Answers follow:

The first question - unfortunately could not be heard by the tape recorder - about a building but unable to decipher exactly which building was being referred to.

Next question *from someone, an avid swimmer, has been reading a report as regards to the sewage and what the Council are going to do about it.*

Answer - All of our beaches have got blue flags, the sea is of the highest standard. The problem with our

sewage system is that some of it, pre-mid 60s or so, is combined sewerage so you get your rain water and your sewage all goes down the same pipes which means that when we have a storm, you've got two choices really, you have to provide an overflow outlet or you let it back up through your toilet waste, sink and everything else, so what they did in the Victorian era onwards was they just built big storm outlets that just dumps it at sea, or wherever. That's the biggest problem we've got actually, high volumes of rain coming down into the combined sewerage.

I'm an environmental health officer, so I should know these dates, but since the late-60s there were separate rain water systems from sewerage systems so where you get a rain water outlet, that's fine but those old buildings, that's what causes most of the problem. So with the sewage system, we have to find ways of treating that as quick as we can. (*Graham referred here to a broadcast but I was unable to decipher who the speaker had been*) On Monday afternoon but I haven't really listened to it but I think it was just an unfortunate way of trying to express herself. I think what she was trying to say was that unless the water has been chemically purified, you can't guarantee it's clean and the sea has not been chemically purified. I think that's what she was trying to say but she just did it in a slightly clumsy way. I don't want BCP beaches to be associated with "you can't swim because there's sewage". That's a real dilemma for us but the Councillors are on to the water quality, we keep an eye on it regularly and we do everything we can to improve the standard. So that's a really long-winded answer for you!

Next question - (again couldn't decipher all the question) *I read in the Echo this morning that there were around 70 different road works in the area.....*

Answer - We try and do most of our road works outside of the summer period.....

(*too much background noise from audience*)Two or three years ago, we were the third most congested place in the country. There were a lot of people using relatively minor roads. I expect you know the story about the by-pass, it gets to Westbourne and stops because Poole Council decided that they didn't want to do what was planned so they built housing across it. That doesn't help us at all. Too many of you are driving too short distances. The average journey in the conurbation is about 2 kilometres, that's about a 25-30 minute walk so the average person is driving pretty short distances but that's another challenge for us as there isn't enough public transport,we're trying to improve cycling. We've got the electric scooters which some people have made use of, that's taken off the Beryl Bike system. We've just got to find some other ways. Having said that, of course, I've driven here tonight. (Laughter)

Next Question - ?? (*may possibly have been about potential City Status, judging by the answer below*)

Answer - We have 50% more older people here than is the national average. Where we've got to is we asked the Bournemouth Chartered Trustees - it's a mechanism we use to keep the Mayoralties, so we have a Mayor of Bournemouth, a Mayor of Poole by setting up Chartered Trustees for the former Bournemouth Council area. We asked all the Councillors that have a patch within the Bournemouth area, also the Poole area and Christchurch area, do you want to participate and Bournemouth was the only one who voted yes. So we submitted a bid for City Status for Bournemouth. I estimate that the Queen will allocate around four or maybe five, at least one of which will be one of the British Territories, so the chances of getting it for us is probably fairly slim. I have to say that Bournemouth always feels like a City Centre to me.

What does City status give us? Absolutely nothing. No funds, other than a reputation. Looking at investment coming in, being a City would help us to get some of the external investment. My feeling on that is that the Bournemouth International Centre needs to be replaced. It's forty years old, it's made of brick, backs on to the beach and it's just not the best conference centre now. We'd need a couple of hundred million pounds. What I would do is to drop the flyover, open up the pier approach, rebuild the BIC and look at the Pavilion. We could do something really quite special then. We've got the Winter Gardens which many of you will remember it being a really important site in Bournemouth. So City status would help us to get all that going. Investment would help us to do all that. I don't think City status would make any difference to your lives here whatsoever.....The Government recognizes it as a city anyway because "transforming cities" fund we're getting anyway, even though we're not a city. I just think it would help our external image. My last home was Chelmsford and that's a City but it didn't make any difference other than they felt bigger on the international stage.

Question - *Have you got an update on the beach complex. We were told that the Bistro would be knocked down in January*

Answer - This section has just switched itself off on my computer but my glamorous assistant, (*indicating Eddie Coope*) will update you. (Laughter)

Eddie Coope gave an update - the Bistro is due for demolition and there will be a temporary Pop-Up for food

over the summer period. Once the planning permission goes through, the time scale is the Autumn this year for rebuilding to start

Next *There was quite a lot of talking amongst the audience - tape didn't pick up what was said*

There was then some general discussion about the absence of department stores in Bournemouth centre.

Further talk about the BIC, what was there and what should be there.

To have an international conference centre, does that have to be the same as an entertainments arena? Or could we put that somewhere else? So my argument about the conference centre is that the reason people know it's the Bournemouth conference centre is it's by the beach. There's a new one just been built up in Blackpool that is near the beach but otherwise there is no conference centre of any note anywhere in the country right by the beach so I wouldn't rebuild the conference centre somewhere else. I would have the conference centre roughly where it is now.

But I'm not so sure about an entertainments centre. You don't go to a concert because the concert hall is by the beach so we could look at whether we should separate those two and build a big entertainment centre somewhere different. We've looked at what is the catchment area for entertainment down here. People would come here from Southampton, people from Portsmouth probably wouldn't. So we've been looking at what might we build. It takes quite a while to get all that together and also, because of Covid, are people going to go to conferences any more. Generally we don't know. Two years ago I would have said yes, there's an absolutely valid market, and there's always been a market for conferencing but right now, I've not been to a conference. I've done some conferences on line and that's been really good but there's a local Government conference every year in Harrogate or Bournemouth or somewhere but I don't feel inclined to go this year. I'd dial in and listen to some sessions. We have to look at what would work

Someone then mentioned Russell Cotes Museum

Russell Cotes is fantastic, it's not that big and more than half the exhibits aren't on show. There's a fantastic museum in Poole. They've just been granted £2½ million to make it even better but we've got a store room that's full of stuff you can't see. We've got Russell Cotes, Highcliffe Castle, Upton House. What we don't do is say why don't you visit the other two, so anyway that's the type of thing we're looking at. So, there's something to do but it's quite hard to find it, we have to make it more obvious.

Someone again then mentioned about outside dining, cycling, dog-walking etc

General discussion

Graham then confirmed that he thinks we do need to think about the promenade. Things like if you're a cyclist and there's a group of people who won't let you pass. Equally, if you're a walker and encounter a group of cyclists. So we do need to achieve some harmony.

If you read the Cabinet papers, one thing that's coming through in the next month or two, you will see that we're putting together a seafront strategy whereby we're trying to get a feeling for the zones of the beach. It's not 13 miles all the same. Bournemouth by the Pier - family zone. Going towards Sandbanks there are some sports zones. Actually the leadership in the Council now wanted things like more beach restaurants, building some more outside summertime eating and where they've already done that, it's been really successful.

One of the contentious things is the beach BBQs - if we could stop people disposing of disposable ones in the sand, then providing the free electric BBQ is an answer. They've not been badly vandalised, one got damaged quite early on but generally, they haven't been. They haven't been very heavily used though. So we're trying different things.

Tobias Ellwood is always talking about trying to double the width of the promenade so his big idea is between the piers to double it then put more facilities down there. We're looking at anything we can do.

Too many people in audience then started talking at once.

One day I'm going to run all the way along the promenade and back again and I've measured it and it's exactly a half marathon

Again too many people talking at once including commenting on the new Highway Code regulations.

Question about the lighting on Tuckton Bridge on one side and not the other.

This is a point that has been raised before at our meetings and Eddie Coope commented again about this and that it's under review but can't do anything until the Spring as it's necessary to hire a barge to get under the bridge.

More discussion about using the promenade, lack of grass cutting which were detracting from the prime qualities of our area. Graham then talked about some of the various parks in the area and how beautifully they were maintained. There was also discussion about the various retail areas and how, mainly due to Covid, people had changed their shopping habits and generally visitors were buying what they needed on line before they arrived and therefore not shopping here.

Discussion about rough sleepers and what the Council and the Police were doing. When Covid hit, the Council tried to get everyone inside but seven absolutely refused.

Discussion about car parking and the charges

We had to stop Q&As at this point otherwise we could have been there all night.

Graham concluded by saying he hoped to be invited back in a couple of years time.

WARD COUNCILLORS

Before I hand over to our Councillors, I just want to quickly bring you all up to date on the current situation regarding various Planning Applications. These are as of yesterday when I checked the BCP website.

The Beach House Café on Mudeford Sandbank - Application granted

Installation of 5G Mast on the grass verge outside the Post Office - BCP Council refused this application but the applicant has gone to appeal. As far as I know, there's nothing else we can do about that at the moment.

There were two new applications that had been put in just before our last meeting in December :

Firstly for a 9m high mast and antennas at the Coastguard Station on the Head

Secondly, and interestingly, an application for an Iron Age Roundhouse at the Visitor Centre.

Solent Beach development and rebuilding of the Bistro on the Beach - I noticed yesterday that there were some additional reports shown on the Planning website which were put there in January but I haven't had time to read them yet.

The removal of the Southbourne Crossroads Car Park to build yet more blocks of flats - no decision on this yet but interestingly there are over 600 objections now showing on the Planning website.

St.Nicholas Church, where we are at the moment, applied for permission to re-roof part of the Church roof - now granted

Finally some good news - at long last the application has been granted for the Charles Rolls Memorial near the Hiker café.

You may or may not wish to ask our Councillors about these.

Just in case there is anyone here who doesn't know who our local Ward Councillors are, I'd like to introduce you to Malcolm Davies and Eddie Coope.

Please make sure you speak clearly when asking any questions so the tape picks everything up.

Question about the 5G mast, speaker said he had written to us about it but didn't know who he wrote to.

Eddie - answered but tape couldn't pick up what he said.

Again too many people talking at the same time

No further questions but Cllr. Eddie Coope mentioned that at our last meeting people were asking for an update regarding Broadwaters. The latest is that there is an application in to purchase the site so "watch this space". It's not McCarthy & Stone!

The other thing is that the Hungry Hiker car park will partly be closed off from 13th to 16th February. Eddie has complained as it means that it will be closed for part of half term.

Any Other Business

1) Thank you to everyone who has purchased tickets in the BH Coastal Lottery via the Henra page. There have been quite a number of you who have won free tickets and quite a number who have won some money. It might be of interest to you to know that in the 2 years the lottery has been running, nobody has yet won the weekly prize of £25,000 and I don't believe anyone has won a £2000 prize yet either. I think there have only been a couple of £250 prizes. So why shouldn't a Henra member win one of the big prizes?

As you are aware, 50% of all the ticket sales comes back to Henra and we will shortly be looking at ways to offer some financial support to organizations within our area. Currently, there is a special draw to win a £1000 Sainsburys Gift Card. This ends on 26th February & is additional to the usual weekly draws. If you have already purchased tickets for the weekly draws, you will automatically be entered into this extra draw.

Another reminder for you, if anyone has an organization or project that you would like us to consider to give some funds to, please let me know and make a note and place in our Comments box.

2) I would just like to say, yet again, how disappointed I was last year when I asked for volunteers to oversee various things. - my request was sent out to around 1000 emails and I only received two responses.

I did mention this again at our last meeting and I have to say that if you want Henra to continue, it is now imperative that people step forward and get involved. The future of Henra is now in doubt as I just cannot continue to do everything myself.

3) There would usually be two meetings in February but due to the Omicron variant, I decided it was wise to cancel our Annual Dinner which had been arranged for later this month. If things improve, I will look at arranging something for later in the year.

4) Yesterday, I received a message from Howard Nichols who was booked to speak at our next meeting in March. The topic was going to be The Mysterious Life of Walter Henry. I was looking forward to this as I also had a relative who survived the sinking of the Titanic. Unfortunately, Howard has had to withdraw from giving talks due to some health issues, for the foreseeable future.

I will be looking to find a replacement speaker and will put a message up on our website as soon as I have arranged something. Barring any changes in the Government regulations regarding meetings, the March meeting will definitely be going ahead but it will be a different speaker.

5) I was wondering what you all thought of the brochures over the past three years. Having increased them from 8 pages, up to 20, then 32 and my latest effort was 40 pages. Are you happy with the general format and content? If there is anything you would particularly like to see in the brochure, please let me know.

Does anyone have any further questions or comments?

Thank you to those of you who will help to put the chairs away. Please make sure that the red ones are put up on the stage here otherwise I get my knuckles rapped.

So get home safely everyone and see you in March. Don't forget to keep checking the Members' Area of our website for notices.

Meeting Closed at...9.10pm Members Present...51