

# BPCCRA AGM Saturday 12 April 2025 - 10.30am

## Canford Cliffs Village Hall

### MINUTES

1. **Notice of Meeting** Chair, Peter Schroeder opened the AGM at 10.30am, noting the usual housekeeping – fire escapes, roving mike and post meeting refreshments.
2. **Apologies for Absence** Chair announced apologies from Neil Duncan Jordan MP, Pamela Carvell, Jackie Heap, Lee Side, Steve & Chris Trefall.
3. **Guest Speakers** Chair introduced speakers noting the focus – the pros and cons of having a Town Council – plus welcomed the Chairs of Neighbour Associations
  - i) **John Challinor, Councillor (JC)** – in post for 6 years, John opened his comments by asking about the whats and whys of the role. The focus is on supporting the local area, on planning, community issues, etc. Councillors attend 10 full council meetings a year (76 council members), all starting at 7pm & running sometimes till midnight. A mix of items coming before them with 30-40 minutes of public statements & questions, some without a local basis (eg: Gaza, climate change, various national policies...). People are welcome to attend, plus watch on U-Tube Livestream. Cabinet and committee meetings are attended by particular members with (JC) attending planning – it meets 9-10 times a year with site visits common - and (GW) attending environmental & scrutiny meetings. Most councillors are on 1 committee.
  - ii) **Gavin Wright, Councillor (GW)** – in post for less than 1 year, Gavin went on to explain what his role entails. Parks, heaths, roads, cycle lanes, lighting, shelters etc., are in the forefront of his agenda together with CIL bids. There is a Ward Surgery every month offering the opportunity for people to drop in and consult. Double council tax, parking issues, yellow lines, potholes, are frequent topics. There is a limit to what councillors can do but the council website is an excellent way to put forward a concern. Damage to trees associated with planning applications has been a recent issue of concern. Gavin went on to stress that getting 2000 signatures ensures an issue is a full council agenda point.
  - iii) **Paul Hilliard, Mayor of Christchurch (PH)** – BPCCRA asked PH to speak on the consultation going on around changes in town and village councils. 2019 saw the establishment of a merged authority – BPC. At this time Christchurch Council was established. Hurn and Burton have had TCs since 1974. There is a Highcliffe & Walkford Parish Council providing allotments, sports pitches, pavilions and 2 nature reserves. Dorset has over 160 town and parish councils. 40K Christchurch residents paid £25 pa per property at the outset; it is now £75 pa. The council manages the old town hall, allotments, parks, cricket pitch, skate park, guide hut, etc. Some facilities are cost neutral – allotments – without an income the TC is limited. It has monthly policy and other meetings with full council meetings every 6 weeks. Itinerant, with 6 staff, it has no home currently so is looking for offices, but this carries costs. A precept £40-£75 raise in contributions allowed it to take over a children's park after a resident's poll, plus employ a Community Safety Officer at £40K a year. The Council will buy Waitrose Car Park from the council and rent it back – a cost neutral endeavour. In the 2023 elections only 17 out of 19 councillor places were filled because of the lack of remuneration. A Co-Option Policy was established with 8 applicants. This revealed that people did not stand at the election time as they had no knowledge of the elections at the time. The TC has seen major successes – The Christchurch Food Festival, the VE Day Event (proposed by Poole) but lack of budgets means Christchurch is working with other organizations to platform these events. £20k is available annually to plug gaps. The tourism website was shut down in March but local businesses stepped in with the TC saving the 'Come to Christchurch' site and promoting free events. Christchurch is twinned with Christchurch, NZ, Saint-Lo, France and Aalen, Germany. These relationships encourage exchanges – language, dance, tradition, heritage. (JC) commented that in Poole several parishes have councils focusing local priorities, manging parks, events, monitoring planning, with the current Community Governance Review (overseen by BPC)

exploring 6 new parish councils in Bournemouth & Poole. Eg: Broadstone, Boscombe, Southbourne. The key factor is cost over which (JC) suggested, there is no control. He is against the current proposals and suggested people need to push back by challenging on bureaucratic grounds rather than financial as the latter will be ignored. The 'managing heritage argument' for these councils in Poole does not hold as this is assured by the Charter Trustees. Established in 2019 following local government reorganization, the Trustees ensure the continuation of civic historic and ceremonial traditions – Mayor and Sheriff selection, the securing and maintenance of historic property etc. Regional devolution will soon occur with the result that a TC will be yet another layer with yet more costs. Chair read out a currently circulating leaflet on this, noting the consultation continues until midday on June 22.

**iv) Q&A Topics from the floor:**

- a. Light pollution in Poole Harbour – light levels are excessive. (GW) advised to approach Poole Harbour Commissioners
- b. Canford Cliffs & Branksome Chine & Beach – current state of neglect raised as a serious detriment to essential tourism. (GW) noted some work has been done at B Chine but CIL needs to be involved together with the seafront team. Leaves and tree debris is an issue...(GW) will progress; email the council. Chair commented on the support the association gives to community projects eg: Pinecliff Gardens
- c. 'Degrading' of Poole was raised – since the establishment of BPC, Poole has lost 'status.' (Attendees engaged in this issue with notable interest). The Mayor of Poole is no longer the first person to meet dignitaries; the Civic Centre is being sold off so the Mayor has no facilities (has to change into his robes in his car). its identity is being eroded; it hosts minimal events. Suggestion from floor that a TC might bring valuable & enjoyable events back to Poole. For 12 months there has been no CIL money raising all kinds of questions...(JC) responded by noting that the workload of the planning team delayed CIL with the Labour Government rejecting the council's housing proposal. The number proposed needs to be doubled; CIL bids have now been supported by the ward. He insisted that the costs of a TC would not be just c £70 pa but more likely we will see a precept of a few hundred pounds. The council can do more and residents need to insist, exercise their voice.
- d. The Beach Hut situation was raised by an attendee noting that his queries were answered by the commercial department of the council – it took 20 days and was not appropriate so is advice available on how to get speedier and correctly targeted responses?  
The Chair noted that the association(s) approaches pressure collectively, exists to support the needs/wishes of the membership and does get responses – not always useful, however. We can escalate when necessary.
- e. The historical longstanding perception of BPC's lack of transparency was raised. Is anything being done to challenge 'non-valid' ballot responses, for example? Are people who are putting forward opinions on various issues made aware of arguments which do or do not count? The whitewashing of the character of towns was noted with Swindon as an example....with the Chair intervening by suggesting the conversation was drifting away from the core purpose of the meeting. The questioner countered by saying the conversation did indeed align with the core topic being reviewed – Town Councils. The conversation continued around budget transparency – with SEND budgets and asylum seeker spending raised. (JC) noted even when councils are running deficits, certain legal requirements need to be met. The Chair suggested a freedom of information request might to the council might provide the numbers we need to know. Eg: the state of tourist numbers (up or down); planned numbers of asylum seekers in hotels, student numbers, etc.

The Q&A concluded with agreement that we need intensive focus on our local area; there was considerable support for the view that a TC might assist.

**4. Minutes of the 2024 AGM and Matters Arising** Accepted with no matters arising. Chair proposed John Sprackling as **Life President, BPC CRA**. Agreed by the meeting.

5. **Chairman's Report & Review, including Planning Matters** – The main events of the year are recoded in P&Cs. Chair thanked all retiring officers - Carol & Mike Parkin, Jackie Heap – and noted incoming officers. Andrea Charman – Secretary & V Chair; Annabel Stemp – Editor, Pines & Chines; Pamela Carvell – Membership Secretary; Stanley Peters – Treasurer, and John Gunton moving to Advertising Secretary. He then went on to Planning, starting with Beach Road Carpark which Roy Pointer is monitoring – awaiting information. John Harkness' Planning report noted a !0% decrease in planning requests, about 200 in total, 20% of which received objections, with 5 planning breaches. Site intensification is a noted feature with concerns around density, the character of the works and the materials, together with conservation issues. Should members have questions, they are invited to email [planning.BPCCRA@gmail.com](mailto:planning.BPCCRA@gmail.com)  
 Lastly, all volunteers were sincerely thanked while it was noted that the association is keen to enlist more volunteers thereby ensuring an effective succession plan. This includes wardens – the association needs to fill current gaps. The Chair will be contacting wardens individually.
6. **Treasurer's Report & Acceptance of the Accounts for 2024** The treasurer (SP) noted his report can be found on page 12 in Pines & Chines. Stanley thanked subscribers and asked for a couple of people who had subscribed for whom he has no record, were present. This illustrates the importance of digital sign-in to accuracy in record keeping.
7. **Pines & Chines Magazine: Report from Annabel Stemp & John Gunton** (AS) Annabel thanked (JG) John for his 20 years' service. She noted the feedback sheet at the back of the current edition while stressing that the publication is for the membership.
8. **Special Projects: Review by Vicky Moss** (VM) gave a short report on the Community Speed Watch project and the ongoing challenges of drivers who speed. Western Road and Branksome Park area regularly registers 50 mph. There are 11 regular volunteers and (VM) is in discussion with local police. A CIL bid has been submitted for Chester Road – not a first choice (VM), but the response from residents has been very positive. Should you see speeders, do report it. (VM) went on to note the continuing work on Branksome Chine (thanks to the Mark Kedgley group working from Penn Hill to the beach), inaccessible at the moment; plus Pinecliff Gardens, thanking volunteers (10-12 in PC Gardens) together with thanking the association for its generous funding. There are a lot more plants as a result but there are still challenges with new volunteers welcome! Tall men in particular for heavy jobs!
9. **Election of Officers** The Secretary (AC) proposed the re-election of Peter Schroeder, the current Chair for a further year, seconded by Roy Pointer (RP). Andrea Charman, Pamela Carvell, Annabel Stemp, Stanley Peters, were re-elected to their current positions, with John Gunton as Advertising Manager/Secretary and John Spackling, Honorary Life President (as noted above).
10. **AOB** A few points of interest were raised to include:
  - a) M & S maybe taking over Homebase Site. No data on this from Planning
  - b) VE Day, May 8 & a Dunkirk Exhibition at the Lighthouse, Poole

The meeting concluded at 11.55 am with the Chair thanking all participants.

### **Date of next open meeting at St Aldhelm's Church – June 11 @ 7.30pm**

Andrea Charman. Secretary

Date: April 15, 2025

Approved:  Date: April 16