

HIGHCLIFFE CENTRE PARTNERSHIP

NOTES OF THE THIRD MEETING ON 1ST MAY 2014 TO DISCUSS HIGHCLIFFE SHOPPING CENTRE

Those Present: Cllr Lesley Dedman (DCC)
Cllr Myra Mawbey (Highcliffe Ward)
Richard Fereday HOSTA
Jane Fereday HOSTA
David Hopkins (Highcliffe Castle)
Richard Porter (Highcliffe Resident)
Adrian Thorne (Pettengells)
Malcolm Mawbey

Malcolm welcomed Richard Porter and David Hopkins

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Apologies had been received from Claire Bath, Connie Pearce, John Lofts, Eric Wood, Steve White. It was regretted that HRACIC would no longer be represented because of the priority of HRACIC's commitments.

2. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 3RD APRIL: the minutes were agreed.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1. Block Paving. Lesley had agreed (as the DCC Councillor) that she would monitor the condition of the pavements in the High Street.

3.2. Bank Closures. Malcolm had contacted the Nationwide and the Post Office; their responses had been circulated. Lesley stated that CBC was mounting a campaign against closure of the Nat West. Richard F said that he had no problems maintaining a float of change at present.

3.3 Publicity: Malcolm had contacted Steve White and would seek his advice about launching a website.

3.4. Community Payback. Malcolm was now following up the action and would discuss the way forward with Connie.

3.5. Cleanliness of Centre. Malcolm had thanked the officers on behalf of HCP.

3.6. Cobbs Holiday Park Sign. Malcolm had requested that the redundant sign should be removed and DCC had responded promptly.

3.7. All other matters arising were dealt with under the agenda headings

4. POTENTIAL INITIATIVES

4.1 Malcolm invited Richard Porter and David Hopkins to give their impressions of the High Street and what new initiatives were desirable; this then involved members in a series of wide-ranging discussions during the course of which Lesley had to leave at 7.15pm for another meeting.

4.2. Richard P offered to summarise his views in a note for the next meeting.

ACTION: Richard Porter

4.3 Customer Base. Richard F said that some HOSTA members considered that the main base was the tourists and were less concerned about attracting local residents. Members generally agreed that the centre should seek to attract local residents some of whom prefer to shop in Sainsburys and beyond in Christchurch. It was evident, with the local school oversubscribed, there were young families moving into the area; the play facilities at the Recreation Ground were widely used. However few families used the shops and Highcliffe's image remained as an area for the elderly. It was noted that the Premier Inn was well-booked.

4.4. Range of Premises. Richard P suggested that there was a gap in the niche markets which would attract customers. He mentioned the Horologist and the Fireplace Shop which brought in custom from a wider area. Some others were also establishing a wider reputation. Richard F commented on the increase in the number of beauty, tanning and tattooing parlours.

4.5. National Brands. It was agreed that a brand such as the national coffee shops would improve the footfall. The Nat West site (which has a parking area behind it) was suggested as a potential site which was relatively central. Lesley suggested that James Hassett should become involved (as CBC's focus for business growth) in trying to attract national brands. Richard P suggested that there could be benefit in traders stocking more up-market goods to attract customers and this was being tried successfully in New Milton.

4.6. Approach to Trading. Richard P felt that some traders should change their approach and give a more personal approach and build up a base of regular customers: he referred as an example to a florist knowing the dates of their customers' anniversaries and being proactive in preparing suitable bouquets. He referred to a butcher in another area who having advised the customer on their choice of meat cooked it to order. Some traders had not altered their trading approach and there was a need to move with the times; it was suggested that some could benefit from a mentoring by successful traders from other shopping areas and to encourage enthusiasm and passion. Jane stressed the need to attract customers into the shops and the benefit of using external displays.

4.7 Links with the Castle. David outlined plans for the future of the Castle with tourist trails and themed exhibitions; he mentioned the links between the Castle and Selfridge and the Kaiser. He wished to foster a closer relationship with the village. There was a possibility of a land train running between Mudeford Quay via Steamer Point to the Castle and then on via the shopping area in Highcliffe to the Cliff Top.

4.8. Shop Window Displays. Richard F asked whether some material from the Castle exhibition could be loaned to display in one of the empty shop windows. David agreed to supply some suitable items.

ACTION: David

Richard F suggested there was interest from HOSTA members to display items relating to the history of Highcliffe. Malcolm replied that he had contacts that might help and it was agreed to discuss this in more detail outside the meeting.

ACTION: Richard Fereday & Malcolm

4.9. Village Trail and Trader's Map. The roles of the two leaflets were discussed and whether they could be combined in one publication. . It was suggested that some visitors to the cliff top car park were unaware of Chewton Bunny. The content should be displayed on boards in the car parks with the actual leaflets being made available at selected outlets rather than from information boxes

which could result in littering. Myra would liaise with the Council on the provision of suitable displays in the car parks.

ACTION: Myra

4.10. Chewton Glen. Richard P suggested that Chewton Glen might be encouraged to have some sort of presence in the High Street.

4.11. Village Signs Richard P supported HOSTA's proposal (at a previous meeting) for signs to be erected at the entrances to the village. There was some discussion about whether Highcliffe was a town or a village and whether it should be "Highcliffe" or "Highcliffe-on-sea". However the proposal was supported in principle and it was suggested that the cliffs and beach together with the castle and church could feature in the design. Richard P would arrange for a scheme to be provided for discussion at the next meeting.

ACTION: Richard Porter

4.12. Street furniture. Richard F said that it must be accepted that the damaged fingers for the post at Sea Corner had been disposed of. The post was still in position and any replacement for the fingers would need to be made from cast iron. Adrian said that repainting the bollards by volunteers was beset by problems of having the appropriate insurance. Members commented on the bland boarding in front of the police station site and suggested that it should be decorated to give interest. A comparison was made with Penny Farthings Temperance Lodge site in Wharncliffe Road.

4.13. Financial Support. Richard P said that he would be willing to support financially a new business in Highcliffe including the training of young people; a fishmongers was one suggestion. He would expect some assistance from the Council regarding the level of business rates.

4.14. Resident Survey. Reviewing the discussion session members came to the view that it would be helpful to conduct a survey of residents' views on the shopping centre and its future. Malcolm undertook an action to draft a questionnaire for discussion at the next meeting.

ACTION: Malcolm

David Hopkins left the meeting at 7.30pm.

5. HANGING BASKETS

5.1 Details of the lamp-posts and bracket height were passed on to SEC. Alan Ottaway was asked to see if he could find another bracket to be mounted on the lamp-post by the Globe. As the brackets have not been lowered Malcolm will check to see when the task will be completed.

Action: Malcolm

5.2 Richard F stated that he and other traders would obtain additional baskets from Muddy Boots to go on the shop fronts.

6. PARKING

Off-Street

6.1 Transfer of Parking Tickets. Claire had passed on the request to CBC for the parking tickets purchased at the Castle or Cliff Top car parks with time left on them to be valid at Wortley Road Car Park. However, advice from officers was that this would lead to complications and contravene parking bylaws.

Wortley Road Car Park Signage. The signs had been designed and the task placed on the DCC paint shop. The task was now in a queue and a finish date was not yet available.

Wortley Road Car Park Charges. Richard F said that HOSTA had made a case to Jonathon Ross for the two hour charge to be 50p and that traders would participate in a scheme to refund customers the 50p charge for spends in excess of £2.

On-Street

Parking Restrictions. The request for the modified restrictions will be passed from DCC to CBC. Myra agreed to contact the Chairman of the CBC Sub-committee and discuss the request.

ACTION: Myra

Adrian suggested that more on-street parking should be provided in the Lymington Road; this would require DCC funding.

ACTION: Members to consider

7. TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

7.1 Malcolm read a communication from Dorset Highways in response to Lesley's request for information regarding formally re-routing HGV traffic from the Lymington Road to the Ringwood Road. The Officer did not support the proposal for the following reasons:

- It would mean rerouting HGVs from an A Class Road to a C Class one;
- The Ringwood Road has traffic calming;
- The Ringwood Road has a lowered speed limit;
- Support would be needed from HCC for putting additional traffic on their highway network;
- Consent would be needed from the adjacent communities;
- A large amount of funding would be necessary to introduce a Traffic Regulation Order and provide signage.

The officer would see if there is any data on HGV movements along the Lymington Road. Malcolm suggested that these facts were necessary before considering progressing further with the proposal.

7.2. Richard F suggested that the pavements should be widened.

ACTION: Members to consider

8. EMPTY SHOPS

8.1 Claire had circulated the information regarding empty premises and the relevant business rates to members.

8.2 Malcolm had written to the Head Offices of the three banks and would report back to the partnership when they have replied.

ACTION: Malcolm

9. EVENTS

9.1 Easter Egg Hunt. Richard F stated that the hunt had been successful with some 60 entrants.

9.2. Christchurch Food and Wine Festival. This will be held on 10-11th May

9.3. Highcliffe Castle. Members had been circulated with the 2014 programme

9.4. Rotary Fete. This is due to be held on Saturday 26th July

9.5. Guy Fawkes Firework Night It was suggested that an event might be held in Highcliffe if a suitable venue could be found. Covenants might preclude the use of the Recreational Ground. Myra agreed to follow-up. Adrian had contacts that might be interested in staging the event.

ACTION; Myra

9.6. Carnivals Highcliffe Christmas Carnival will be held on Saturday December 13th. Easter and summer events are being considered for next year but there are difficulties in closing the roads.

9.7. Hoburne Office Car Park. The car park in the centre of the shopping area was under-used at the weekends. Adrian agreed to approach the management to see if it could be available for staging events.

ACTION: Adrian

10. AOB

10.1. Richard F suggested that a further crossing was desirable between Sea Corner and the one adjacent to Bucehayes Close.

Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 5th June at 6.30pm suggested.