



RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

2010/11

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INTRODUCTION BY TOWN MAYOR

I have been honoured and delighted to carry out my civic duties for a second year, being privileged to represent the Town Council and citizens of Ringwood in the course of over 80 engagements. Although having lived in Ringwood for 33 years, it has been another year of enrichment for me, in which I have learned even more about Ringwood people and our neighbouring communities. This year's Mayor's Cadet, Corporal Nikki Guy from 2515 Squadron, Ringwood and Fordingbridge Air Training Corps accompanied me on several occasions. Thanks to Deputy Mayor Cllr Brian Terry and Deputy Mayoress Jacqui Terry for deputising for me on the occasions when I had a clash of duties.

It has been a joy to visit groups and charities, some old friends and some new, large and small, to learn more about their work. There are so many people giving their time and energy working for the benefit of others. I admire and thank everyone of them, and urge you to support them whenever you can. These wonderful people help to make our town the way it is – a very large village with a very big heart and community spirit.

The town has continued its special relationship with Ringwood School, especially through the Fairtrade links and Student Adviser roles. This scheme, adopted several years ago, has become a true beacon of civic administration – a national first indeed. The Town Clerk, Terry Simpson and I attended the NALC (Larger Councils) Conference in December in London to give a presentation to other authorities on how Ringwood devised the protocol and how it works. The presentation was very well received, followed by several further enquiries. The scheme has been of real benefit to both councillors and students, as it is of major importance that the young people of Ringwood have input on planning for the town's future. Your council hopes to adopt ideas put to them by the advisers helping to provide 'something to do' for our younger citizens.

There has been some exciting progress this year on enhancing the town, some ideas which had emerged from the Town Plan. Regarding the green environment, the popular desire for better access to the river (Millstream) has been completed at the Danny Cracknell Pocket Park. Some residents' alarm over methods the landscapers had used to clear some of the undergrowth and self set trees have been proved unfounded. At the other end of the Bickerley a new tranquil nature reserve, dedicated to the late Raymond Brown, a much missed benefactor of Ringwood has been funded and opened officially by the Brown Family. This is open to the public at certain times of the year when the danger of disturbance to wildlife has passed.

We have had many compliments about the cemetery and how well looked after it is. At this point I would like to thank Clive Wentworth (Head of Ground staff) and his team for all their continued care and dedication in maintaining our open spaces, parks and playing fields. From this year Clive and his staff will be planning, purchasing and planting the town's floral displays.

Now to the built part of Ringwood, and very important news. A press release is shortly to be issued by Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council, and ourselves, regarding the progress of the Gateway project, combining our offices in a new purpose designed building in the south west corner of the Furlong Car Park. It will be cost efficient, provide all council services and information under one roof, incorporating visitor information and, at last some new, smart, modern toilets. Work should hopefully start in June/July. There will be major disruption for some months, but it is an omelettes & broken eggs situation. We'll all have to be patient.

The enhancement of part of Southampton Road to Mansfield Road and its approach from the town car park has been completed. This was another desire arising from the town plan in order to brighten up and make more appealing this part of the town. Hopefully, people will re-discover the pleasures of the South end of the town – splendid though the Furlong is!

I am pleased to report that at the end of March I joined 6 members of the Ringwood/Pont-Audemer Twinning Committee for a visit to Pont-Audemer. We were royally entertained and, at a public meeting to suggest a revival of our twinning links with Pont-Audemer, several people indicated that they are willing for this to happen. The Committee is currently co-ordinating responses.

The Town:

- Continues its innovative Student Advisers policy;
- I hope the new Mayor will be willing to appoint a Mayor's Cadet or young representative of a youth organisation;
- Work has begun – after a long battle – on renovating the old cinema building; and;
- On the 16th June, last year, the Town Council was very pleased to ask Cllr Neville Chard to accept the honour of becoming Ringwood's first ever honorary freeman, which he graciously accepted.

My best wishes to the new Mayor, whomever will be chosen next week, hoping they have a truly happy year representing Ringwood. A major project for the near future is to make a real effort to help to provide a suitable and appropriate meeting place for our young citizens.

Finally, my thanks are due to Terry Simpson, Town Clerk, who keeps us on the straight and narrow and offers much sensible advice, Jo Stannard, his deputy, Sue Harford, my former PA, Christine Smith, Office Manager and my new PA, Mandy Oldfield, and all the other marvellous people in the Town Council 'family'. And of course, the team, my fellow councillors, who pull together against many obstacles, to make decisions which we believe in our hearts will be best for our lovely town of Ringwood.

Cllr Christine Ford
Town Mayor

11th May 2011

POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN – CLLR JEREMY HERON

Ladies and gentlemen, Madam Mayor and fellow Councillors I have pleasure in presenting the report of the Policy and Finance Committee for the municipal year 2010/11; as ever I have tried to keep the format similar to previous years for ease of comparison.

The precept for 2010/11 was £386,260 against expenditure of £498,617. Additional income amounting to £112,636 gave a net expenditure of £385,981. Net expenditure was funded through the precept and a transfer to reserves of £279.

This balanced budget was achieved against the backdrop of these exceptionally difficult financial times and an unprecedented period of low interest, resulting in investment income of £3,464, compared with just two years ago when it was £17,341. I hope that you support the Council's strategy of reducing expenditure and looking to find savings wherever possible whilst maintaining frontline services.

As always I like to report the variance between budget and out-turn and this year there is a net under spend of £23,019 (5.6%) against the revised budget; as always my thanks go to the Council staff for their excellent work.

Net expenditure broken down into committees was:

Policy & Finance	£208,320
Recreation, Leisure & Open Space	£186,280
Planning, Town & Environment	£14,430

The town councils bank balance remained healthy

Total Balance @ 31/03/10	£356,592
Total Balance @ 31/03/11	£374,891

The Council continue to support those organisations that show they provide services that are directly beneficial to the people of Ringwood and for 2010/11 grants totalling £4,556 were made to a diverse number of organisations such as Scouts, Crow Hill WI and even Ringwood Police.

Finally it would be wrong to end this report without mentioning the Gateway Project which will be the most significant expenditure this Council has been involved in for a number of years. In September 2010 the committee authorised an application for approval to borrow £385,000 over 30 years; at the same time it was agreed to spend £20,000 from reserves to cover the costs of fees associated with the project. Since then the Council has made a further request that up to £200,000 of developers' contributions be released to fund the works to the Piazza. These figures are significant, however the money is not being used, as would-be opponents of the scheme would say, for a grand new building for Councillors but more importantly to secure local access to those services provided by the Town, District and County Councils, including a Visitor Information Centre, and helping to safeguard the town's future.

RECREATION, LEISURE AND OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN – CLLR BRIAN TERRY

I am pleased to present my report as Chairman of the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee to the Annual Assembly. I hope you will join with me in congratulating Councillors, ground staff and office staff on the stirring work they have done for the Town. I am also pleased to report that all areas of Ringwood maintained by our ground staff are in excellent condition.

The introduction last year of smaller sized allotments continues to be successful and well maintained by the allotment holders, and in fact, there has been a marked improvement in the standard of all allotments. There is now an Upper Kingston Allotment Association and we wish them well with their recruitment.

The cemetery and closed churchyard at the Parish Church continues to be well looked after. The tombs and memorials in the churchyard need varying degrees of maintenance and permission from various parties were being sought so that the Town Council will be able to debate the best way forward.

The Raymond Brown Company has once again been supportive in its generosity in upgrading two areas of the town. First of all, a management project converted a corner of the War Memorial gardens creating a new plant and shrub area that had become unsightly. The second project is on The Bickerley, which was much more complex, creating a public viewing area with an educational board, public and vehicle entrances opening onto a natural habitat for animals and nesting birds. This is proving to be very popular.

When I became a councillor, approximately ten years ago, there was not a way of getting close to the Millstream and I am pleased to report this has been rectified with the refurbishment of the footbridge which is connected to a board walk, the entrance being through the Danny Cracknell Pocket Park. There have been delays in completing the work on the Park due to unforeseen circumstances but we are now seeing the benefits of first year planting of shrubs and flowers. I hope everyone will enjoy the exceptional views and pleasant surroundings.

The drop-in centre at Carvers continues to be a success and many thanks go to Mr and Mrs Critchlow for their leadership. After consultations with parents and guardians of the children that use Carvers play area the new slide is only weeks away from being installed. It is hoped the new slide with its longer ride and hump in the centre will give children many hours of pleasure.

This year has been an expensive period for additions and maintenance at the skate park, some £11,000 has been spent on additional pipes etc and refurbishment of the complete structure. I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their support in raising these funds. In future we hope to be in closer contact with the skate park users so that we are made aware of problems as they arise and any future requests for upgrading.

The consultations on Ash Grove play area have proved to be prolonged because of the requirement to provide equipment for wider age groups. I wish to thank Deputy Town Clerk, Mrs J Stannard, for her tenacity in dealing with all these matters.

My report would not be complete without thanking Hampshire County Councillor, Mr Steve Rippon-Swaine, for allocating grant funds to various projects in the Town.

PLANNING, TOWN & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN – CLLR MARK STEELE

I have pleasure in presenting the annual Ringwood Planning, Town & Environment Committee Report for 2010/2011.

During this year we have had the passing of a great councillor and advocate for Ringwood Town, Cllr Nigel Clarke. As you may be aware Cllr Nigel Clarke was the chairman for Ringwood Planning, Town & Environment Committee, and for many years his understanding and knowledge of complex planning issues has guided his fellow councillors to reach effective conclusions with confidence. This great man and friend will be missed.

Clearly there have been many difficult issues to deal with, and with my hand on heart I would like to thank all members of the Ringwood Planning, Town and Environment Committee and officers for their intrinsic commitment for the benefit of Ringwood Town. I specially mention Ringwood Town Deputy Clerk, Jo Stannard and Clare Perrens for their hard work behind the scenes.

The number of planning submissions this past year is noticeably lower than previous and detail as:

Summary May 2010 - April 2011	Applications Considered by Ringwood Town Council	2010-2011	Total 2009- 2010	Total 2008- 2009
Authority	Type of Application	No.		
New Forest District Council	Full	151		
	Tree	21		
	Telecommunications	3		
	Amendment	1		
	Change of Use	1		
	Outline	1		
	Lawful Use Certificate	1		
	Total Number	179	193	186
New Forest National Park				
Authority	Full	32		
	Tree	5		
	Total Number	37	47	36
<i>Note: Figures include repeat applications if applicable</i>				

There has however been a welcomed increase in future planning documents with local planning consultation, also the expressions, reflective thoughts and concerns of Ringwood residents at planning meetings, all carefully considered and detailed in our responses. Time and again committee members help to highlight any injustice as

well as promote and safeguard the benefits of planning proposals for Ringwood Town.

I mention our student advisors Miss Mary Melrose and Mr Robert Goldman, both of whom I offer have made noticeable contributions to debate and recognition of their work within the committee is duly noted and will be passed on to Ringwood School. Our hopes and best wishes to them both in their chosen future careers as well.

The future holds change in planning legislation; past and present autocratic plans with expressions often adopting and following a constrained taxonomy approach to planning, may possibly be replaced.

Within New Forest District Council major planning update, the Core Strategy has been adopted by the New Forest National Park Authority this past year. Following shortly into the Core Strategy this present year has include a major consultation event, the sites and development plan document, highlighted and included as part of Ringwood Town Council's response to the serious lack of provision and development of affordable local housing, so desperately needed in Ringwood.

All Ringwood Town, New Forest District and Hampshire County Councillors primary consideration should now immediately focus on how to better deliver the important provision and development of affordable local housing to our local vibrant safe community with economic security and growth. Urgently we need to change how planning influences and impacts on our local environment, at the moment we consider our environment as an added planning point. These planning principles can only be changed with local agreement and foresight.

Ringwood Town and Access plan adopted 2010 lays out future strategies to access local facilities and services, following local planning issues a very recent start has been made for Ringwood Local Distinctiveness supplementary planning document, as always we will expedite local Ringwood representation to the best of our ability.

The Planning, Town & Environment Committee will continue listening, and communicate the thoughts and representations of local people in the community where people live here in Ringwood, advocating local expressions of aspiration both individually and collectively.