

MINUTES OF THE TOWN PLAN CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

Held on Thursday 22nd December 2005 at 3.30pm

PRESENT: Cllr N J Chard
Cllr N G R Clarke
Cllr D E Cracknell
Cllr M F J Daly
Cllr B H Terry

IN ATTENDANCE: Terry Simpson, Town Clerk
Jo Stannard, Deputy Town Clerk
Ros Bowles, Project Officer

T/0001 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr N W Light.

T/0002 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

T/003 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Cllr Terry be elected Chairman of the Committee.

T/0004 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Town Clerk reported that Cllr Light was no longer able to commit time to this Committee. Cllr Ford had indicated she would be prepared to fill the vacancy.

RECOMMENDED: That Cllr Ford replace Cllr Light on the Committee.

T/0005 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Cllr Daly be elected Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

T/0006 DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE

The Town Clerk reported that the decision-making structure outlined in his report (*Annex 'A'*) differed from that recommended in the Market Towns Healthcheck Handbook, but allowed the Council to act as the "honest broker" and would ensure that all voices were heard. It was also proposed to add an additional topic group to cover youth issues and to include land use planning in the economy topic area.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That in order to ensure all sections of the community are fully involved in the Market Town Healthcheck and the preparation of the Town Plan, the overall structure outlined in Annex 'A' be approved.

- 2) That the structure provides for a Councillor to be Chairman of the Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee and that that Councillor also be appointed Chairman of the Town Plan Partnership Steering Group.
- 3) That five topic groups be appointed, namely economy; environment; social and community; children and young persons; and transport and accessibility.
- 4) That the principle of the remaining five members of the Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee taking the Chairmanship, and the lead role as Portfolio Holders, of each of the five topic areas be approved.
- 5) That the economy topic area be specifically charged with consulting on land use planning within the town and its hinterland.
- 6) That members of the Committee be appointed to lead in the following topic areas:

Economy	Cllr Clarke
Environment	Cllr Ford
Social and Community	Cllr Daly
Children and Young Persons	Cllr Cracknell
Transport and Accessibility	Cllr Chard

T/0007 PROJECT PLAN

Members considered the Project Officer's report (*Annex 'B'*). Cllr Clarke felt that the wording of paragraph 1.1 was inappropriate and that "Town Design Statement" should be replaced with "Area Action Plan". Members agreed that any document produced would need to reflect what the people of the town want and it was vital that this be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance. It was therefore agreed to delete the words "a Town Design Statement that will be included as" and insert the word "appropriate" in their place.

It was noted that the timetable would be flexible and that it had been necessary to extend this beyond the initial 12-month period. Members agreed that it was important to make the general public aware of the project and it was agreed that dissemination of information would be discussed at the next meeting of the Committee.

Cllr Clarke said that there was a need to establish the effect that residents of surrounding areas have on the town. He was also concerned about the substantial growth forecast for the Bournemouth/Poole/Christchurch area and the effect this would have on, for example, employment and transport. It was noted that a meeting had been arranged with East Dorset District Council to discuss cross-boundary working and that the result of this would be reported to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Project Officer reported that it was now necessary to invite volunteers representing different sections of the community to join the Partnership Steering Group. She therefore asked members to consider two possible candidates for each of their topic areas and, either approach them directly, or forward names to her to follow up.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the draft Project Plan and Timetable be accepted.
- 2) That paragraph 1.1 of the report be amended, as above.
- 3) That members consider possible candidates to join the Partnership Steering Group and forward names to the Project Officer.

**T/0008
TRAINING**

The Town Clerk suggested that members might feel the need for some additional training to support their new roles.

RESOLVED: That the Deputy Town Clerk investigate training courses on chairing community meetings.

**T/0009
URGENT BUSINESS**

The Town Clerk reported that the District Council was in the process of preparing an Employment Land Development Plan Document. This would be discussed by the Planning, Town and Environment Committee on 6th January 2006. In the meantime, the Town Clerk had written to the District Council asking that it fully consults with the Town Council before reaching any binding conclusions that affect the town.

RESOLVED: That this information be noted.

**T/0010
DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

RESOLVED: That the next meeting of the Committee be held at 10am on Thursday 19th January 2006.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 4.50pm.

TOWN PLAN CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE – 22 DECEMBER 2005

PROPOSED STRUCTURE OF DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As members are aware, the Countryside Agency's Healthcheck Handbook for Market Towns strongly suggests an operational structure for the Healthcheck that leads to the adoption of Action Plans.
- 1.2 Whilst accepting all of the basic principles in the Healthcheck, including the full involvement of the community, the Town Council has identified a significant weakness in the recommended approach. This weakness is the absence of an 'honest broker' that ensures that the views of all sections of the community are sought out, rather than allowing a situation to arise where particular sections of the community hold sway.
- 1.3 In order to ensure that a fully balanced approach is adopted, the Town Council has opted to undertake the role of 'honest broker' and also to act as primary funders of the project.
- 1.4 In all areas the Council's staff and in particular the Project Officer will support both the Committee and other arrangements established to deliver the healthcheck and the Town Plan.

2. DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURES

- 2.1 The Council has appointed a Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee to oversee the Healthcheck and the preparation of the Town Plan. This comprises of six Councillors and in legal terms would, apart from the Council or any duly authorised officers, be the only body that can make executive decisions that bind the Council.
- 2.2 Notwithstanding the legal constraint referred to at paragraph 2.1. it is possible to implement a structure that provides for a meaningful input from all sections of the community. Indeed, if the Partnership Committee approach recommended in the Healthcheck Handbook is adopted, that partnership body has no binding executive decision-making powers unless it can obtain funding support for any projects that need to be undertaken. In essence therefore, the approach proposed by the Town Council is not significantly different from the Handbook model in so far as decision-making is concerned but does have a major advantage in relation to ensuring equal representation of all groups.

- 2.3 In order to achieve this representation and a fully balanced Project Team, it is suggested that the structure implemented to deal with the project should be as shown in the attached Appendix.
- 2.4 The Appendix provides arrangements that will enable the Town Council to make the final decisions on major issues but for its Co-ordinating Committee to be responsible for the day-to-day management of the project. Feeding into that Co-ordinating Committee, there should be a Partnership Steering Group comprising all members of the Co-ordinating Committee together with say eight/nine representatives of the different interests in the community. These will range from representatives of the industrial and commercial sector, the schools, the Church organisations and sports and community groups. That Steering Group would take overall responsibility for organising the Healthcheck and the initial preparation of the formal documentation leading up to adoption of the Town Plan.
- 2.5 A partnership Steering Group will not provide in itself adequate means of consultation with the wider community.
- 2.6 This wider involvement will need to be achieved through the establishment of a number of working groups/focus groups. The Healthcheck Handbook divides the assessment of the vitality of an area into four separate categories viz. environment, economy, social and community, and transport and accessibility. It has been suggested that in addition to these four groupings, there should be a fifth relating to children and young persons. It is suggested that taking account of the Town Council's overall responsibilities, it would be appropriate for the Council to adopt a semi-cabinet style arrangement for dealing with this project. This will provide for one member of the Co-ordinating Committee to act as Chairman of that Committee and also the partnership's Steering Group. The role would be one of ensuring overall coordination of activities and chairing the two meetings. The remaining five members of the Committee could take specific responsibility for each of the project areas and effectively act as the Portfolio Holder for those areas and lead all discussions on them in the individual working or focus group meetings.
- 2.7 The working groups will be responsible for undertaking the major parts of the research and public consultation on all elements of the Healthcheck and the preparation of the Town Plan. Membership will need to be fluid and would not be pre-selected by the Town Council. The working group should comprise of persons within the town both as individuals and as persons representing specific community and other groups.
- 2.8 The five working party/focus groups should be encouraged to have in membership any individuals or representatives of

particular interests who can contribute towards the debate. In addition, these working groups should be encouraged to consult through press releases, press articles, direct contact mail shots and also specific events such as public meetings, training days or even through rent of a stall at the weekly market.

- 2.9 The work of all of the groups will to some extent overlap. The lead members will need to ensure that where there may be any overlap or conflict, the appropriate issues are brought to the Partnership Steering Group and then on, if necessary, to the Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee.

3. CONFLICTS

- 3.1 Within Ringwood, the Town Council has already identified a potential area of conflict with other local authorities. This relates largely to the District and County Council's public position that all growth for housing, industry/commerce and shopping should be severely constrained. The policies are not worded in exactly that manner but the effect of the policies are one of restraint.

- 3.2 One of the most critical issues that the Town Council must address and seek the views of the public on relates to this restrictive land use policy. None of the five topic areas referred to above specifically addresses this problem. It is therefore suggested that whilst the major areas of discussion for each of the five groups outlined above should remain as recommended in the Handbook, some adjustments should be made, particularly to the role of the economic and environment groups to provide a cohesive structure specifically tasked with consulting on this difficult area.

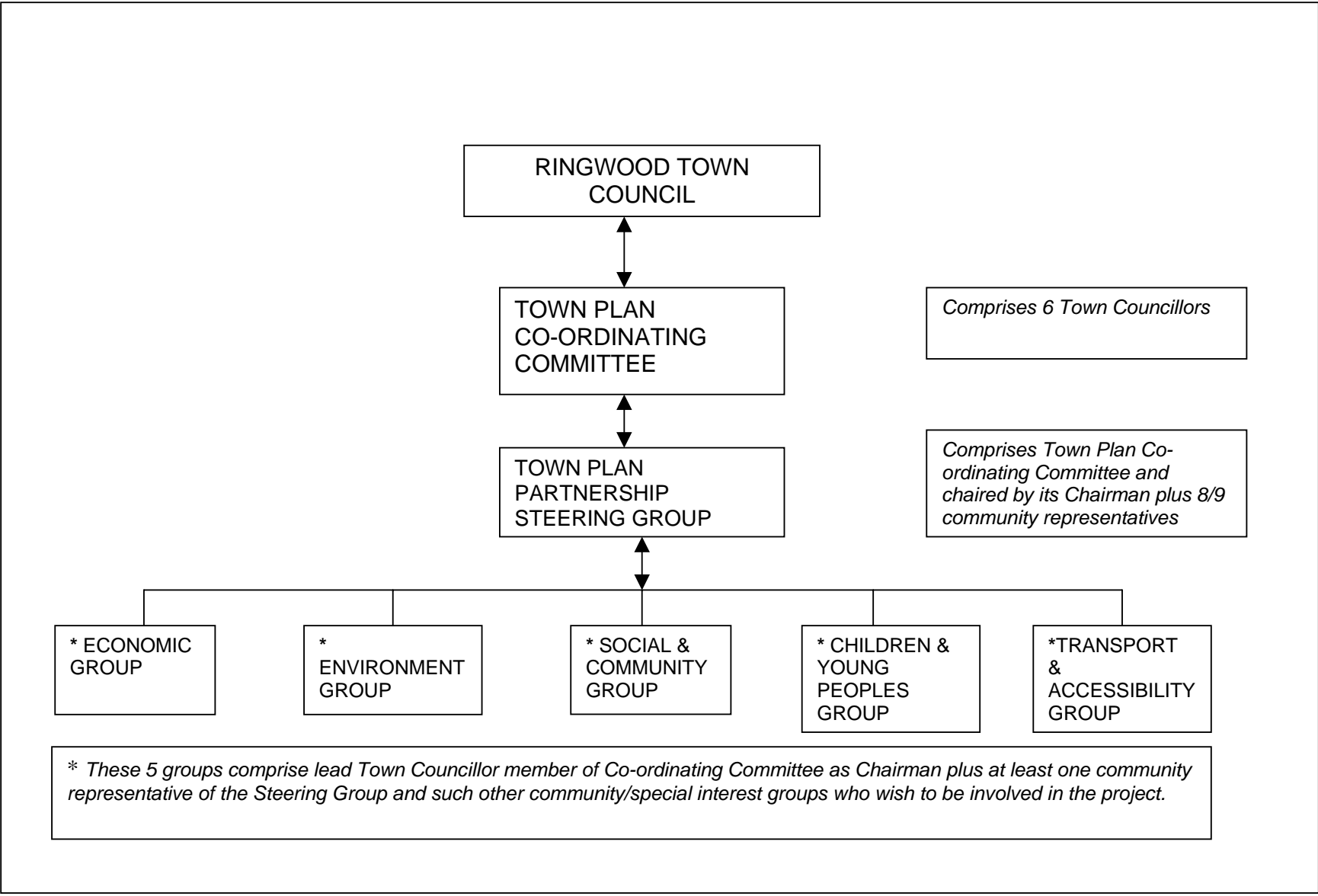
4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended: -
- 1) That in order to ensure that all sections of the community are fully involved in the Market Town Healthcheck and the preparation of the Town Plan, the overall structure outlined in this report be approved.
 - 2) That the structure provides for a Councillor to be Chairman of the Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee and that that Councillor also be appointed Chairman of the Town Plan Partnership Steering Group.
 - 3) That subject to consideration at the meeting as to the precise areas of operation of each topic group, five topic groups be appointed, namely economic; environment; social and community; children and young persons; and transport and accessibility.

- 4) That the principle of the remaining five members of the Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee taking the Chairmanship of, and the lead role as Portfolio Holders, of each of the five topic areas be approved.
- 5) That either the economic or environment topic area be specifically charged with consulting on land use planning within the town and its hinterland and;
- 6) That a member of the Committee be appointed to lead in each topic group area.

For further information, please contact:

Mr Terry Simpson
Town Clerk
Tel: 01425 473883



TOWN PLAN CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

PROJECT PLAN

Introduction

- 1.1 The Town Council has agreed to undertake a Market Towns Healthcheck leading up to the preparation of a Town Plan which will incorporate a Town Design Statement that will be included as supplementary planning guidance in the statutory Local Development Framework.
- 1.2 The Town Plan will be prepared in partnership with the community through a consultation process known as a Healthcheck – this process is known as Community Planning. The Government model for this process will be used and adjusted as necessary to fit Ringwood's aspirations. However, the worksheets from the Action for Market Towns Handbook will form the core documentation for the research and preparation of the Town Plan.
- 1.3 The benefits of the Healthcheck process include:-
- Creating a sense of community spirit
 - Clear and incontrovertible evidence of community needs and priorities
 - Business Plan for Town Council to adopt and action in partnership with residents, businesses and community organisations
 - Easier access to funding streams
 - Highlighting projects needing involvement from other agencies
 - Encouraging partnership working
 - Influencing and informing District Council's Community Strategy
 - Influencing and informing Local Development Framework
 - Enabling production of a Town Design Statement that can be included as Supplementary Planning Guidance in the Local Development Framework and will, therefore, influence (by providing clear evidence of community wishes) developers and local planning authorities, and ensure that new buildings respect and reflect local character whilst providing for community needs.
- 1.4 A Town Plan resulting from a Healthcheck can influence the following agencies:-
- Planning authorities
 - Police
 - Health
 - Transport
 - District and County Councils
 - Environmental
 - Sports and Leisure
 - Tourism

- 1.5 In addition to the above, the Healthcheck will help develop and maintain effective working relationships with all outside bodies providing services to the community. It shows that the Town is taking its future seriously
- 1.6 The Healthcheck/Town Plan cannot be done in isolation and needs to link in with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000 which places a duty on each District to produce a community plan – also known as the Community Strategy – to promote and improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their areas. The Act advises District authorities to form Local Strategic Partnerships to develop, manage and monitor the community strategy. In the New Forest, the LSP is known as the Changing Lives Partnership. The Partnership Vision for the New Forest is as follows:
- In 2025, the New Forest District will be a place where:
- All people have opportunities to enjoy safe and healthy lifestyles, develop as individuals and shape the communities in which they live
 - Businesses thrive within a local economy that harmonises with the special environment and provide everyone with sufficient resources to enjoy plenty of lifestyle choices
 - The natural and built environment provides opportunities for diversity of nature, the health, education and enjoyment of everyone whilst making a significant contribution towards the local economy
- 1.7 The Changing Lives Partnership is divided into Community Action Networks (CANs) – eleven in all with Environment subdivided into three sections:
- Children and Young People
 - Community Safety
 - Economy
 - Environment
 - Health
 - Housing
 - Leisure
 - Lifelong learning
 - Older People
 - Tourism
 - Transport
- 1.8 It is suggested that the Healthcheck topics and sections should be looked at hand in hand with the Community Strategy, key priorities and CAN topics. For the land use element of the Town Plan to be adopted as supplementary planning guidance and included in the Local Development Framework, it is clearly important that it conforms to the Changing Lives Partnership Vision (and ideally should enhance it) for the New Forest District.

2. FUTURE ACTION

An outline Project Timetable is attached as an Appendix. This provides for the following actions:-

- 2.1 Press release about the Council's initiative to produce a Town Plan, the appointment of the Project Officer to lead the initiative and the Love It, Hate It, I Wish survey.
- 2.2 Project Officer to get out and about and meet Community groups, schools etc.
- 2.3 Project Officer to prepare initial Project Plan and draft Budget.
- 2.4 Project Officer to start Love It, Hate It, I Wish survey – through supermarkets, local papers, newsletters, schools, website, community groups etc.
- 2.5 Project Officer to start to build the profile of the community where possible for the Snapshot and Worksheets.
- 2.6 Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee to meet as soon as possible after the full Council meeting on 30th November to discuss issues and way forward. The Project Plan to be amended and ratified. Budget for the Healthcheck to be produced. Constitution for Partnership Steering Group to be agreed. (Docs: [NFG Steering Group model constitution](#), [NFG Terms of reference for working group](#), [NFG Example of volunteer job description](#).)
- 2.7 Members of the Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee to take on responsibility for the specified areas of the Healthcheck (additional Children and Young People section to be added). (Docs. [NFG Terms of reference for working groups](#).)
- 2.8 Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee to invite volunteers representing sections of the community to join them to form the Partnership Steering Group. (10/12 people in total?)
- 2.9 Members of the Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee and Partnership Steering Group to familiarise themselves with the Community Strategy and Local Development Framework. (Docs. [Changing Lives](#), [The Community Strategy for the NF District 2004-2007](#); [Local Development Framework](#).)
- 2.10 Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee to and Partnership Steering Group to consider methods for involving all groups in the community. Do we do a Planning for Real exercise? Decide on timescale. (Docs. [NFG Involving your community and Youth Toolkit](#).)
- 2.11 If doing Planning for Real, Project Officer to liaise with schools and Jo Dixon of Community Action Hampshire. Decide on date for Open

Weekend either at a school or at Greyfriars Community Centre – where do people feel most comfortable?

- 2.12 Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee and Partnership Steering Group to continue building community profile with incoming results of Love It, Hate It, I Wish survey.
- 2.13 Information to be disseminated through the website. Love It, Hate It survey and Market Towns Healthcheck to be available plus survey forms for completion and return electronically throughout the process.
- 2.14 Decisions to be taken on use of external agencies for certain research, e.g. Bournemouth University and/or Brockenhurst College to see if they are interested in their students who are studying tourism to be involved in the South East Tourism survey.

For further information, contact Rosamund Bowles on ros.bowles@ringwood.gov.uk or on 01425 473883.

Action	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Press release about the Council's initiative to do a community Healthcheck, the appointment of the Project Officer and the Love It, Hate It, I Wish survey - local papers, newsletters, parish website.			X													
Project Officer to contact Community Groups, schools etc.	X	X	X	X	X											
Project Officer to draft Project Plan and budget		X														
Project Officer to start Love It, Hate It, I Wish survey - supermarkets, local papers, newsletters, schools, website,			X													
Project Officer to start to build the profile of the community where possible – complete snapshot and hard data available for worksheets		X	X	X												
Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee to meet to discuss and decide way forward. Project Plan to be amended and agreed. Budget for Healthcheck to be produced. Constitution of Partnership Steering Group to be agreed. Members to take on responsibility for specified areas of the Healthcheck.		X	X													
Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee to invite volunteers representing sections of the community to join them to form the Partnership Steering Group.			X	X	X											
Members of the Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee and Partnership Steering Group to familiarise themselves with the Community Strategy and Local Development Framework.			X	X												
Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee and Partnership Steering Group to consider and decide on methods for involving all groups in the community, e.g. do we do a 'Planning for Real exercise? Decide on timescale.			X	X												
If doing Planning for Real, Project Officer to liaise with schools and Jo Dixon of Community Action Hampshire. Book location for the Open Weekend.			X													
Information to be disseminated through the website. All survey forms and Market Towns Healthcheck to be available for completion and return electronically.			X	X												
Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee and Partnership Steering Group to continue building community profile with incoming results of Love It, Hate It survey				X	X											
Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee and Partnership Steering Group to analyse final results of survey. Create town vision.					X	X										
Planning for Real exercise over 6 weeks if agreed					X	X										

Action	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee and Partnership Steering Group to organise a community meeting/event and invite the Community Planning Officer and/or Market Towns Co-ordinator to make a presentation to the public. The meeting to be advertised to all community groups and residents. Volunteers for Focus Groups to be recruited at the meeting. Volunteer job descriptions to be available. Choose an interesting venue that is unique to Ringwood, e.g. brewery. Use some contentious finding from the survey to draw people in.					X	X										
Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee and Partnership Steering Group to prepare draft questionnaire based on issues that have arisen as a result of the Love It, Hate It survey, using the worksheets as a basis						X										
Decide methods and timescale for questionnaire						X										
Send draft questionnaire to CPO for feedback						X										
Meet Policy & Plans Team at NFDC for consultation and to agree framework to ensure that the Town Plan will be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance - i.e. are we going in the right direction with our community consultation?			X			X										
Planning for Real Open Weekend if agreed							X									
Print final questionnaire and circulate to the whole community.							X	X								
Collect and collate questionnaires								X	X	X						
Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee and Partnership Steering Group to analyse questionnaire returns								X	X	X						
Start to get maps and photographs needed for the Town Plan			X													
Identify actions needed to be taken from findings and prepare draft report and Town Plan.										X	X					
Actions = Projects. Decide on list of projects – initial & long term						X	X				X					
Circulate draft plan to all members of the Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee and Partnership Steering Group for proof reading and comment.												X				
Send to NFDC/HCC for 'reality check'													X			
Amendments made and report/plan presented to full Town Council for endorsement and acceptance.														X		
Any amendments made. Proof reading and printing.															X	
Official Launch of final report and Town Plan. CELEBRATION!																X
Place on Town Website																X