

OPEN SESSION: There were several members of the public present, none of whom wished to speak.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Wednesday 27th September 2006 at 7.00pm

PRESENT: Cllr D E Cracknell (Town Mayor)
Cllr N J Chard
Cllr P Chambers
Cllr N R G Clarke
Cllr D R Cole
Cllr M F Daly
Cllr L C Ford
Cllr N W Light
Cllr W S Rippon-Swaine
Cllr Colonel T Scriven
Cllr Mrs V A Sullivan
Cllr B H Terry
Cllr M H Thierry

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr T R Simpson, Town Clerk
Mrs J L Stannard, Deputy Town Clerk
Mrs L A Wickens, P A to the Town Clerk

C/4594

ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Mrs Charlton.

C/4595

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Thierry, Ford and Cracknell declared personal interests in matters relating to the Furlong Car Park, in that they were District Council members and members of the Ringwood Town Centre Steering Group.

C/4596

ALLOTMENT COMPETITION 2006

Connie Hobbs of the Ringwood Gardening Club, who had been one of the judges of the competition, said that they had been very impressed with the overall standard of plots this year, and with the tremendous range of crops from vegetables and fruit to herbs and flowers. She congratulated the winners for their perseverance, particularly during the recent heat wave.

Cllr Light, Chairman of the Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee, presented the following awards:

Hightown Road: Winner – Mr & Mrs M Ard, Runner Up – Mr P Giles
Southampton Road: Winner – Mr A G Robinson, Runner Up – Mrs A G Brewer
Upper Kingston: Winner – Miss M Hopper, Runner Up – Mr & Mrs C Gulliver

Overall Winner: Mr A G Robinson

C/4597

PRESENTATION BY CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT ANN WAKEFIELD

Chief Superintendent Ann Wakefield explained that she was the Commander for the Western Operational Command Unit, which included the New Forest, Test Valley and Eastleigh and that Chief Inspector Phil Winchester was responsible for policing in the New Forest District.

She informed members of the Police Priorities (*see attached presentation Annex 'A'*) and explained why it was not possible for them to respond to all non-urgent calls.

It was noted that a new Neighbourhood Policing Model would be introduced in Hampshire in January 2007. As a result, all emergency cars would be removed from local offices and would be based at four stations throughout the Western area. However, cars would never be more than 15 minutes away from any area, as this was the target response time for 999 calls. Neighbourhood teams would be created, of which there would be six in the New Forest district. Each team would have a Sergeant, Police Constables (PCs) and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), numbers of which had yet to be determined. The role of these teams would be to deal with Grade 3 work, such as antisocial behaviour and criminal damage, and to provide a visible community patrol.

The Chief Superintendent explained that PCSOs were not Police Officers. They would provide a front line visible patrol, with a remit to spend 80% of their time either walking or riding around an area on a bicycle. They would be able to answer Grade 3 calls, but would not respond to emergencies. These officers would get to know local issues quickly and nip problems in the bud early on. They would also be able to issue Fixed Penalty Notices.

PCSOs are funded by the government's Neighbourhood Policing Fund. However, this only covers their salaries and there is a £6,000 shortfall per officer. At present, Hampshire Constabulary has underwritten this shortfall. However, Commanders are now seeking contributions from other agencies and are looking to set up Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with parish and town councils for the provision of PCSOs.

In response to a question from Cllr Ford, the Chief Superintendent confirmed that the number of PCs and PCSOs in the town would be set. If the Town Council agreed to enter into a SLA and fund one PCSO, this officer would be committed to patrol the Ringwood area only and would liaise closely with the Council.

Cllr Colonel Scriven gave Leigh Park as an example of an area having a Police 'office' in a central location, which was accessible to all. He asked if this could be a possibility in Ringwood. The Chief Superintendent replied that she would be delighted to have the opportunity to set this up, if a location could be provided.

Mr Wickens, a local resident involved with events, said that there was some confusion over the role of the Police with special events. The Chief Superintendent said that event management was the responsibility of the local authority and not the Police. She said that they were in the process of issuing guidance to District Councils. In addition, she felt there was a need to set up a safety advisory group that would look at events and involve organisers in the process.

Cllr Mrs Sullivan asked what effect police absenteeism had on the number of officers on duty. The Chief Superintendent replied that Hampshire Constabulary had one of the lowest absenteeism records in the country, so this had little effect. She explained that there was a system in place for borrowing staff from other forces for major incidents and events.

In response to a question about calls to the 101 telephone number, it was noted that this is a multi-agency number, not a police number, and should not be used for emergencies. It should

only be used to report issues such as abandoned vehicles, minor antisocial behaviour, noise nuisance etc.

District Cllr Heron was concerned that, as the number of 999 calls in Ringwood was low, cars would tend to move towards the areas where they were more likely to be needed. However, the Chief Superintendent assured him that they would always be able to meet their response time of 15 minutes to 999 calls and, as all cars were fitted with tracker devices, the Control Room closely monitored their locations.

In response to a question from the Town Clerk, it was noted that it would not be possible for the Town Council to fund more than one PCSO, who would be committed to only patrolling the town of Ringwood and would act as a community link. The Commander would wish to retain control of the other PCSOs so that they could be used elsewhere if necessary. It was also noted that joint funding, say with another parish council, would be a possibility.

Cllr Ford asked a question of Inspector Hutchings regarding the redeployment of a Speed Indicator Device (SID) in Gorley Road. She felt that the first deployment, near the Infant School, had been in the wrong location and asked if it would be possible to move it further down the road. The Inspector said that he would pass this information on to the Community Safety Partnership.

The Town Clerk said that the Council did not receive any feedback from the Crime Reduction Partnership. The Superintendent explained that this was a multi-agency partnership, whose role was to look at crime and disorder issues across the area. Cllr Clarke said that he was a member of this group and would ask for minutes to be sent to the Town Council in future.

The Mayor thanked Chief Superintendent Wakefield for a very interesting presentation and for answering questions with such clarity.

C/4598

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Cllr Thierry wished to thank all office staff for the time and energy they had put into this meeting, and in particular the Deputy Town Clerk for the production of the minutes.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Meeting held on 6th September 2006, having been circulated, were approved and signed as a correct record.

C/4599

COMMUNICATIONS TO BE RECEIVED

The Mayor reported the following:

- 1) On 19th August, the Deputy Town Mayor had attended a birthday party for Mrs Ella Dacombe on the occasion of her 100th birthday and presented her with a bouquet from the Town Council. A letter of thanks had been received from Mrs Dacombe.
- 2) The Race Director of the British Pedal Car Grand Prix had written to thank the Council for its support.

C/4600

QUESTIONS OF THE MAYOR

Cllr Ford asked if the Mayor was aware that two petitions had been organised, in favour and against the removal of the picnic bench from Anson Close. She presented the Mayor with a petition signed by over 30 young people asking that the bench be retained as it was a well used and much needed safe gathering place for them. The Mayor said that he was aware of

the petitions and noted that the Community Support Officers had been asked to include this area in their patrols.

Cllr Ford asked if the Mayor agreed that the Code of Conduct in relation to planning matters applied equally to Town Councillors as it did to District Councillors, in that members must not appear to have made up their minds prior to discussing the application at committee. The Mayor agreed with this statement.

Cllr Daly asked when the one-way system in Kings Arms Lane would be implemented. The Deputy Town Clerk replied that the Town Council had been asked to prioritise items in the Traffic Management Programme and had agreed that Bickerley Road and High Street/Market Square should be given the highest priority. This meant that King's Arms Lane would not be looked at until these reviews had been completed. However, she would raise the issue again at the next Transport Issues Liaison Meeting.

Cllr Daly said that he had witnessed a Traffic Warden allow a driver to park on double yellow lines in the High Street whilst they visited the bank. He asked why this was allowed. District Cllr Heron reported that a National Code of Conduct required that wardens wait 5 minutes prior to issuing tickets. However, he said that the District Council was looking into whether this could be overridden in congested areas such as the High Street. Cllr Colonel Scriven said that, if the Warden had witnessed the driver pulling up, he would have been within his rights to ask the driver to move on. Failure to heed the advice would be an offence that the Traffic Warden could deal with. Cllr Thierry reported that he had attended a meeting with the Leader of the District Council when dissatisfaction had been expressed with the standards of the traffic wardening. As a result of this, he said that the western and eastern service roads and Hightown Road were now being patrolled more regularly, with tickets being issued.

Cllr Colonel Scriven asked if it was the Mayor's intention to initiate either an internal or external review in respect of the procedure of the Town Council in authorising the allocation of £185,000 of developer's contributions on a project that was flawed from the start due to traffic congestion, noise and the likelihood of a significant reduction of quality of life for a number of residents in the Parsonage Barn Lane area. The Mayor replied that he had no intention of initiating a review. Cllr Thierry said that the District Council was the authority responsible for allocating developers contributions. He said that, although projects could be put forward by the Town Council for funding, the District Council could choose whether or not to support proposals.

Cllr Colonel Scriven said that a report on Employment Land, which was due to be considered by Cabinet on 4th October, was likely to have a significant impact on land to the south of the A31 and west of Nouale Lane. He asked if the Mayor could assure residents that every opportunity would be given to allow them to comment on proposals, which would be out for six weeks consultation from 27th October. The Mayor replied that residents would be given every opportunity to respond and that details would be in the press. It was further noted that the Healthcheck process would be used to consult with the public on major issues affecting the town.

Cllr Colonel Scriven was concerned about the discussions that had taken place at the District Council regarding the future of the land to the south west of the Furlong car park. He said that a report being presented to Cabinet on 4th October stated that retail only was the preferred option, providing that revenue raised could be used to address any resultant car parking issues and provide new community and social facilities. However, later in the same document it stated that the project would have to be properly assessed for viability in terms of generating a positive site value or at least covering all of the development costs.

He asked if the Mayor could confirm that the trees in the south west corner of the Furlong Car Park would be saved. The Mayor could not confirm this.

He asked if the Mayor could confirm that Ringwood would not be faced with decked parking. The Mayor could not confirm this.

He asked if the Mayor could confirm that small businesses in the High Street would not have to suffer more expensive chain stores. The Mayor could not confirm this.

Cllr Mrs Sullivan asked if the Mayor was aware of a General Survey 2006 being sent to residents by the District Council, which requested personal information. The Mayor was not aware of this survey but said that he would look into this and inform Cllr Mrs Sullivan of his findings.

Cllr Thierry asked if the Mayor was aware of the biased reporting by the Forest Journal of the Council meeting held on 6th September, with no reasons given why the Council rejected and voted against the motions. The Mayor replied that he had written to the newspaper's Editor and was awaiting a response.

C/4601

REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

County Councillor N Clarke submitted a report (*Annex 'B'*), which was circulated to members.

Cllr Mrs Sullivan expressed concern at the closure of some car parks in the New Forest. Cllr Clarke said that the car parks were the responsibility of the Forestry Commission and it was their duty to effectively manage access and safe provision. He reported that they were taking a limited number of low used car parks out of operation from the end of October until Easter to enable them to carry out maintenance.

District Councillors

Cllr Ford had attended:

- i) Ringwood Town Centre Steering Group – she was concerned at the possible expansion of the proposed development.
- ii) Commercial Services Joint Committee, in her role as Chairman of the Scrutiny Panel.
- iii) Dog Warden Seminar – a written report had been submitted to the Town Clerk.
- iv) Environment Review Panel – talking about the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act and the first stages to be taken by the District Council – a written report had been submitted to the Town Clerk.
- v) A joint meeting with the District and County Councils and the New Forest National Park Authority to talk about issues facing the district in relation to the environment, tourism and planning.
- vi) Crime and Disorder Review Panel on the subject of CCTV – she had reported back to Policy & Finance Committee on 20th September.
- vii) Blashford Lakes Study Centre – she said there had been some interesting developments here and encouraged members to visit.

Cllr Treleaven submitted a report (*Annex 'C'*). He added that members of the Planning Development Control Committee had attended their annual tour last week and had visited many sites in Ringwood. He said there was a need to balance the need for more housing and employment, whilst retaining the unique character of the town.

Cllr Heron reported that the District Council had hosted a meeting to discuss the Examination in Public (EiP) of the South East Plan and, following this, had asked for Central Hampshire and the New Forest to be put together to give joint representation and the Isle of Wight to be given its own time slot. Cllr Heron would be attending the first meeting of the EiP, which would be looking at the delivery of infrastructure.

Cllr Heron circulated a copy of the report on the Furlong site, which would be considered by Cabinet on 4th October (*Annex 'D'*). He was surprised to see that retail had been shown as the preferred option as, at the last meeting of the Steering Group, it had been agreed that no preference be identified. He would therefore be asking for this to be removed at Cabinet. His reason for attending this meeting was to begin consultation with the Town Council and said that he would welcome any input from the Council, particularly in relation to the options. He said that he would be recommending that a fourth option be included – to enhance the Visitor Information Centre and public toilets, with no additional development. He said that the public would be consulted after the feasibility work had been carried out to ensure that the options were deliverable.

Cllr Colonel Scriven was concerned about what would happen to the community facilities if retail proved to be the preferred option. He suggested that the other sites identified by the consultants working on the Town Centre Strategy Study be looked at as well. However, Cllr Heron said that the District Council did not want to duplicate work by the Town Council on the Town Plan. He said that the focus of the study would be narrow, and based on land in the ownership of the District Council, in the hope that something positive could be achieved for the town. He added that all members of the Steering Group were clear that they wished to see a positive community benefit arising from the development of this site or money being directly allocated for facilities on another site.

Cllr Terry said that residents needed to be kept informed so that any delay in the refurbishment of the toilets could be explained.

In support of Cllr Terry's statement, Cllr Colonel Scriven explained that he could not understand why it was not possible to refurbish the toilets and Information Centre and use the old cinema site for community facilities to include District and Town Council offices, a cinema/theatre and retail usage.

In response District Cllr Heron confirmed his earlier comment that he would welcome receipt of any additional options that the Town Council might wish to propose.

This amendment relating to the south/west corner of the Furlong will also be included in the copy of the minutes on the website.

Cllr Thierry said that the first consideration must be to fulfil the aspirations of the people of Ringwood in respect of a community hall. He was concerned that if the site was sold for retail, there was no guarantee that the money could be ring fenced for Ringwood.

Cllr Thierry reported that the District had nearly achieved its target recycling rate of 30% and that plans were in the pipeline to increase this even further, one of these being to increase the number of clear sacks distributed.

Cllr Thierry also referred to the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act, saying that the Town Council could choose to take on powers relating to litter, graffiti, flyposting and dog control.

The Town Clerk asked that the Ringwood Town Centre Steering Group keep the Town Council fully informed of progress. He also said that he had written to the Assistant Director of Commercial Services asking that the Town Council be involved in partnership arrangements relating to the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act. He had not yet received a response and would be following this up.

Cllr Clarke presented the minutes of the Planning, Town & Environment Committees held on 18th August and 15th September 2006 and noted that the recommendation to Policy & Finance Committee at Minute number P/4362 had been changed marginally at that meeting.

P/4359: Cllr Thierry said that he did not understand Cllr Chard's comments, as set out in Annex 'A', and sought clarification. Cllr Chard replied that he was representing concerns put to him by residents.

P/4365: Cllr Ford was concerned about the effect an alcohol free zone would have on special events in the town.

P/4366: Cllr Ford referred to her request made earlier in the meeting to Inspector Hutchings that the redeployment of a Speed Indicator Device in Gorley Road be positioned in a different location.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Planning, Town & Environment Committee held on 18th August and 15th September, including the recommendation at P/4351, be approved and adopted.

C/4603

RECREATION, LEISURE & OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE

Cllr Light presented the Minutes of the Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee held on 6th September 2006.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee held on 6th September 2006 be approved and adopted.

C/4604

POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Cllr Rippon-Swaine presented the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee held on 20th September 2006.

F/3983: Cllr Chambers indicated that he was a sceptic of the value of CCTV and said that there was no firm academic justification of it. He said he would like to see evidence of the benefits against the cost. Cllr Mrs Ford said that CCTV not only assisted in crime prevention, but helped residents to feel safe in the town. It had also identified other incidents, such as people being taken ill. She reported that the District Council was in the process of carrying out an evaluation of CCTV and would be consulting the Town Council as part of this review.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee held on 20th September 2006, including the recommendation at F/3981, be approved and adopted.

C/4605

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces	7.00 p.m.	Wednesday 4 th October
Planning, Town & Environment	2.05 p.m.	Friday 13 th October
Policy & Finance	7.00 p.m.	Wednesday 18 th October
FULL COUNCIL	7.00 p.m.	Wednesday 25 th October

There being no further business, the Mayor closed the meeting at 9.36pm.