

**Minutes of the Annual Town Assembly for the Town of Ringwood
held on Wednesday 11th April 2007 at 7.30pm
at Greyfriars Hall, Ringwood**

Present: Cllr D E Cracknell – Chairman and Town Mayor
7 Councillors
Approximately 20 members of the public

In Attendance: Mr T R Simpson – Town Clerk
Mrs J Stannard – Deputy Town Clerk
Mrs L Wickens – Personal Assistant

1. To Approve the Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes of the Annual Town Assembly held on 10th May 2006 were approved.

2. Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were none.

3. To Receive the Annual Report of the Town Mayor

The Town Mayor presented his Annual Report, in which he thanked all his fellow Councillors for their support and said that, although they had their differences in meetings, all Councillors had the same aim of delivering good services to the people of Ringwood. He gave particular thanks to Norman Light, the Chairman of the Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee who would not be standing for re-election.

4. Presentation by Bob Chapman, Reserves Officer at Blashford Lakes

Mr Chapman gave a very interesting presentation on the work of Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, which manages Blashford Lakes Wildlife Reserve, in partnership with Wessex Water and Bournemouth & West Hants Water, who own the land and use the lakes for water storage.

He explained that the lakes are flooded gravel pits and support thousands of wildfowl, birds and insects. There is an education centre on site and groups of all ages are accommodated, from primary schools to the University of the 3rd Age. The lakes are very accessible and there are numerous disabled friendly surfaced paths, including a 1½ mile long marked trail. There are also bird watching hides and interpretation boards. The Trust is currently involved in a project to re-naturalise the Dockens Water corridor and will this year be opening up access to Ibsley Water, the largest of the lakes.

The Town Mayor thanked Mr Chapman for his very informative talk and encouraged residents to visit the site to see it for themselves.

5. To Receive the Reports of Committee Chairmen

The Committee Chairmen presented their reports.

Cllr Chambers, Chairman of the **Policy & Finance Committee**, reported on working towards Quality Council status and obtaining best value, scrutiny of the spending programme and improvements to cash management.

Cllr Chard presented the **Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee** Report, on behalf of its Chairman, Cllr Light. This included information on improvements, both planned and achieved, in the Council's playgrounds, open spaces and the Cemetery, the ongoing project to upgrade Pocket Park and the adjoining area to create a quiet tranquil area, and the provision of sports facilities at Long Lane.

One member of the public commented that Pocket Park looked wonderful following the recent tree work that had been carried out. However, one lady was saddened by the loss of trees and wildlife. She also said that the area was attracting groups of young people at night, which was causing a noise disturbance to local residents. The Town Clerk reported that the whole area would be landscaped during the summer and trees would be replaced. Also, the Police had been asked to increase the number of visits to the area.

Cllr Clarke, Chairman of the Planning, **Town & Environment Committee**, reported on the number and type of planning applications that the committee had commented on, which included a greater number of new build proposals on brownfield sites. He also referred to the wide ranging consultation documents, which the committee had responded to and commented specifically on the Local Development Framework and the South East Plan, both of which would set the framework for the future of planning in the town.

In response to a question on affordable housing, it was noted that only developments of over 15 dwellings had to provide an element of affordable housing. It was a well known fact that more affordable housing was needed in the town and the Town Council raised this with the District Council at every opportunity. The future of the Wellworthy site was discussed and it was noted that this was reserved for employment land in the Local Plan. However, the Town Plan was in favour of having the site redesignated as a mixed use site, which could then provide some affordable housing close to the town centre.

Cllr Terry, Chairman of the **Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee**, reported on public consultations that had taken place through the year and said that over 50 volunteers from the community were now involved in the project. The draft Town Plan would be published for consultation in the summer and he encouraged residents to get involved as this document would shape the future of the town.

6. The Receive the Accounts from the Parochial Charity

Mr John Steer presented the accounts for the Ringwood United Charities and APT James Memorial Trust for year ending 31st March 2007. He reported that maintenance work was ongoing to the building, which was built in 1858 and that two apartments were being refurbished. Therefore, only six of the eight apartments were currently occupied. Two payments had been made from the Poor's account and there had been no payments from the Apprenticeship of APT James Memorial Trust accounts. Having recently taken on the Clerk's position, Mr Steer wished to record his thanks to the previous Clerk, Mr Peter Crutcher, for his help and support.

The accounts were approved.

6. To Consider Any Other Item of Business by Permission of the Town Mayor

There were none.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.