

OPEN SESSION: There were no members of public present.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Wednesday 25th July 2007 at 7.00pm

PRESENT: Cllr B H Terry (Town Mayor)
Cllr N J Chard
Cllr N R G Clarke
Cllr D R Cole
Cllr L C Ford
Cllr J D Heron
Cllr W S Rippon-Swaine
Cllr Mrs J Terry
Cllr M J Urwin
Cllr A C Wiseman

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr T Simpson, Town Clerk
Mrs T Norris
District Councillor C Treleaven

C/4724 APOLOGIES

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Town Clerk reported that apologies for absence had been received from Cllr D Cracknell, Cllr M Daly and Cllr M Steele.

C/4725 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

C/4726 PRESENTATION BY TONY GRANT, ROYAL MAIL

Mr Tony Grant, Senior Operations Manager at Royal Mail had been invited to the meeting to give a brief overview of the proposed changes to operations in the town.

Mr Grant explained that four years ago the Royal Mail was in serious trouble and within two to three weeks from filing for bankruptcy. Under new leadership they now have to deal with open competition and face massive changes to their structure. The main difficulties they face include products and services which are not meeting customers' needs, a pricing structure which is not making money and the fact that Royal Mail are 40% less efficient than competitors as a result of under-funding on new technology. The Government have loaned £2.3bn to fund an improvement programme.

Proposals include the introduction of automation technology, which will reduce the need for manual input and increase efficiency. At present postmen/women deliver mail for 3 to 3½ hours out of their eight-hour day and the balance of their time is spent sorting mail manually. He confirmed that the provisional plan for Ringwood is to install two machines for batch sorting within the town.

Royal Mail is working to protect business customers by extracting the company's deliveries further up the pipeline at the Mail Centre and getting it to the delivery depot earlier. In overall terms they are working towards better delivery for companies and there are a number of new products available.

Despite adverse press, Royal Mail is talking to its employees about moving their hours and being sensitive if the changes affect their staff but in general they would like people to start later.

Cllr Heron confirmed his support for the Post Office but was concerned about the way it was heading. He raised a question about the post box at Castleman Way. Originally the box was designed for residential use but a number of businesses from the nearby Industrial Parks use the box for their mail and he had asked whether the box could be changed for a larger one. He had previously contacted the Post Office and their suggestion was to arrange for one business to act as a collection point, for which, Royal Mail would require payment of approximately £400 per annum. However, Cllr Heron felt that the disruption that the company would face would not be worth the facility offered.

Mr Grant explained that the difficulties he would have to overcome to get a box removed. However, he did promise to look at changing the post box in this location for a larger one. He will advise the Town Council of the outcome.

Cllr Rippon-Swaine raised the question of the postal strike and asked how Mr Grant felt it would develop.

Mr Grant advised that Royal Mail continue to have adult-to-adult discussions with all its staff. Disputes have escalated in the past because the company has taken a hard line. This time they are hoping to do it differently. Not everyone agrees with the strike and some employees continue to work through.

Cllr Ford pointed out that there is an increase in working from home and asked whether a timed delivery would involve an extra cost.

Mr Grant confirmed that there would be an extra cost but there are options such as special delivery and that they are changing their product portfolio in line with customer's requests.

Cllr Clarke felt that as the public have been accustomed to a low cost service they needed to be educated and a change in attitude is required.

Mr Grant confirmed that it would be a difficult switch to make, as up until three years ago, i.e. before competition, processes had not changed for over 100 years.

Cllr Chard advised that he finds it hard to accept the demise of the Post Office and thinks the Government should do more to support the service. He explained how rural areas would be more adversely affected than urban areas.

Mr Grant responded that they are committed to universal delivery to every property but are looking at collections in rural areas and monitoring the amount of mail posted. They may look at reducing collections in these areas to say once a day.

The Mayor thanked Mr Grant for attending the meeting and for providing this information to Councillors.

C/4727

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Meeting held on 27 June 2007, having been circulated, were approved and signed as a correct record.

C/4728

RECREATION, LEISURE & OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE

Cllr Chard presented the minutes of the Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 4 July 2007.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 4 July 2007 be received.

C/4729

TOWN PLAN CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

Cllr Terry presented the minutes of the Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee held on 16 July 2007. The Town Clerk pointed out that in minute number T/0081, first sentence of the third paragraph, Councillors are not precluded from putting forward any suggestions made to them for the Town Plan and that any information should be supplied to the Project Officer as soon as possible.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee held on 16 July 2007 be received.

C/4730

POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Cllr Heron presented the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee meeting held on 18 July 2007.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the public session of the Policy & Finance Committee meeting held on 18 July be received and the recommendations therein be approved.

C/4731

PLANNING, TOWN & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Cllr Clarke presented the minutes of the Planning, Town & Environment Committee meeting held on 20 July 2007.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Planning, Town & Environment Committee meeting held on 20 July be received.

C/4732

COUNCILLOR VACANCY

Following the resignation of Cllr Michael Thierry, the election to fill this vacancy will be held on Thursday 6 September. The Town Clerk advised that nomination papers were available from the office or could be downloaded from the District Council's website.

C/4733

HAPTC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Hampshire Association of Parish & Town Council's Annual General Meeting is to be held at INTECH, near Winchester on 13 October 2007. As the Council's appointed representative on this organisation, Cllr Steele will attend. However, a second Member has been invited and any Councillors who wish to attend should contact the Town Clerk.

RESOLVED: That Cllr Steele, together with one other Member be authorised to attend HAPTC's Annual General Meeting and that their reasonable travel expenses be paid.

C/4733

COMMUNICATIONS TO BE RECEIVED

The Town Mayor made the following announcements:

- i) A letter of thanks had been received from Ringwood Meeting House Association for the Town Council's help and support in organising the Jazz Concert on 7 July.

- ii) A letter had been received from Cllr David Kirk, Hampshire County Council, thanking the Town Clerk for raising various points prior to considering a way forward for the delivery of Connexions and related services, to young people across Hampshire. All issues had been considered when making decisions about the future service.
- iii) Hampshire Constabulary are holding a 'Street Meet' at Carvers Recreation Ground on Friday 27 July at 8pm. This will be a chance for residents to meet with local police and for young people to chat informally about the use of the Recreation Ground and any other community issues. A mail drop had been posted to all neighbouring properties.

The Town Clerk advised that Belinda's Drop-in Centre may relocate to Carvers Recreation Ground and use the tennis pavilion as their base. Further details will be made available at a later date.

Cllr Chard raised the question of lighting at Carvers. The Town Clerk confirmed that security lights might require planning consent and that other options were being investigated, i.e. street lighting.

C/4734

REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

County Councillor Clarke tabled his report for July 2007. Attached as *Annex 'A'*.

District Councillor Ford tabled her report for June/July 2007. Attached as *'Annex 'B'*.

District Councillor Rippon-Swaine reported that he had attended a Planning Development Control meeting where he had argued in support of an application, which had been recommended for approval by the Town Council but unfortunately the Committee have refused the application. He had also attended a briefing on the Licensing Act 2005.

District Councillor Treleaven tabled his report for July 2007. Attached as *Annex 'C'*. The Mayor raised a question about the consultation document for the possible development on the Furlong car park and whether the Town Council could have sight of the paper prior to publication. Cllr Treleaven confirmed that as soon as the paper was complete the Town Council could have a copy but no further input was permitted.

The Town Clerk asked whether the figures had been incorporated within the consultation paper, as suggested by the Town Council. In reply Cllr Treleaven advised that reference had been made to costs involved.

C/4735

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Planning, Town & Environment	2.05 pm	Friday 17 August
Town Plan Partnership Steering Group	6.00pm	Monday 3 September
Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces	7.00pm	Wednesday 5 September
Planning, Town & Environment	2.05pm	Friday 14 September
Town Plan Co-ordinating	4.00pm	Monday 17 September
Policy & Finance	7.00pm	Wednesday 19 September

C/4736

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED: That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it was advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded and they were instructed to withdraw.

C/4737

POLICY & FINANCE – 18 JULY 2007 – CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE NUMBERS F/4148-F/4151

The Chairman of the committee presented the confidential minutes of Policy & Finance Committee. With regard to the recommendation at minute number F/4151, Councillor Rippon-Swaine outlined the way forward being proposed by the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the confidential minutes of Policy & Finance Committee held on 18 July 2007 be received and recommendation approved.

There being no further business, the Town Mayor closed the meeting at 8.05pm.