

## Town Mayor's Report 2010

### Cllr Christine Ford

I have been honoured and delighted to carry out my civic duties this year, being privileged to represent the town council and citizens of Ringwood in the course of over 80 engagements. It has been a happy year and one in which I have learned a great deal about Ringwood people and our neighbouring communities. My husband Michael was able to accompany me on many of them and the Mayor's Cadet Flt Sgt Kieran Bull on others. Thank you Deputy Mayor Cllr Brian Terry and Jacquie for deputising for me on the occasions when I had a clash of duties.

It has been a joy to visit groups and charities, 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 every one of them, and urge you to visit their stalls on Festival Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> July. These wonderful people help to make our town the way it is – a very large village with a very large heart and community spirit.

The town has strengthened its relationship with Ringwood School, especially through the fairtrade links and Student Adviser roles. This scheme, adopted a couple of years ago, has become a true beacon of civic administration – a national first indeed – the Town Clerk, Terry Simpson, will be attending conference later in the year to give a presentation to other authorities on how Ringwood devised the protocol and how it works. 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) is coming to fruition at the Danny Cracknell Pocket Park. Some residents' alarm over the methods the landscapers have used to clear some of the undergrowth and self set trees will, I am confident, prove unfounded, when the area has regenerated by next year. At the other end of the Bickerley a new tranquil nature reserve, dedicated to the late Raymond Brown, a much missed benefactor of Ringwood, is under preparation.

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 care and dedication in maintaining our open spaces, parks and playing fields.

Now to the built part of Ringwood, and very important news. A joint press release has been issued by Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council, and ourselves, regarding the project to combine our offices in a new purpose built building in the south west corner of the Furlong Car Park. This is very different from the plan put before us a couple of years ago. It will be cost efficient, provide all council services under one roof, incorporate visitor information and, at last, new toilets. Subject to planning permission work should start in the spring of next year.

The enhancement of Southampton Road from Friday's Cross to Mansfield Road and its approach from the town car park, is progressing well. Work is expected to start in the autumn and be finished by Christmas. This was another desire arising from the town plan in order to brighten up and make more appealing this part of the town.

A project to restore the Jubilee Lamp and its surroundings is ably led by Cllr Jeremy Heron. Cllr Nigel Clarke is heading a Committee comprising people who are in the process of reviving the former twinning links with Pont Audemer. We are again in contact with their mayor who indicates that they are willing for this to happen.

There have been several very special firsts for Ringwood:-

- Continuing our innovative Student Advisers policy;
- Appointment of a Mayor's Cadet;
- Dare I say it – the appointment of a female mayor!; and
- I am delighted to announce that Ringwood now has the authority to appoint an honorary freeman. On the 16<sup>th</sup> June it will be confirmed that in recognition of his long service as Councillor, and the

special contribution he has made to our sporting activities, particularly at Bisterne, Cllr Neville Chard will be asked to accept the honour of becoming Ringwood's first ever honorary freeman.

Finally 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 PA, 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 Ringwood.