

OPEN SESSION: There were 13 members of public present who were interested in the affordable housing item on the agenda.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Wednesday 28th March 2018 at 7.00pm

PRESENT: Cllr Tim Ward, Town Mayor
Cllr Philip Day, Deputy Mayor
Cllr Andrew Briers
Cllr Hilary Edge (until 7.50pm)
Cllr Christine Ford
Cllr Jeremy Heron
Cllr Darren Loose
Cllr Gloria O'Reilly
Cllr Tony Ring
Cllr Steve Rippon-Swaine (from 7.10pm)
Cllr Christopher Treleaven
Cllr Angela Wiseman

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Chris Wilkins, Town Clerk
Nicola Vodden, Meetings Administrator
Katy Grubb, Student Advisor

C/6115 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Town Clerk reported that apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Murphy.

C/6116 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none declared at this time.

C/6117 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Meeting held on 28th February 2018, having been circulated, be approved and signed as a correct record.

C/6118 RECREATION, LEISURE AND OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE

Cllr Briers presented the minutes of the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 7th March 2018.

Cllr Treleaven indicated that he strongly opposed the resolution made in respect of speciality fairs and street markets (OS/5759) and questioned whether this important matter should have been a recommendation to the Full Council.

The Town Clerk explained that this item came forward as a point of clarification and to assist in the implementation of an earlier decision made by the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee (OS/5736 refers). It was intended to explore the restrictions present and the scope of the invitation to be extended to those interested in organising markets.

A substantive decision would be made when any proposal is brought before the Committee and Full Council would be asked to approve the recommendation before it would take effect.

Cllr Ward added that the decision did not preclude the use of the Market Place for markets, but there was a recognition of the substantial difficulties faced in doing so.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 7th March 2018 be received.

C/6119

PLANNING, TOWN & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Cllr Treleaven presented the minutes of the Planning, Town & Environment Committee meeting held on 16th March 2018.

The Town Clerk confirmed, in respect of the Human Sundial, that Hampshire Highways (HH) would include the works identified, as part of this project, with its own works in the Market Place, however this meant that timings were dependent upon HH's schedule.

In respect of the street lighting in King's Arms Lane, further complications had been identified following a recent site visit and discussion with SSE and additional information would be provided, by the Deputy Town Clerk, at the next meeting.

Regarding the crossings in Christchurch Road, it was reported that some progress had been made with one crossing and further information would be provided once it had been confirmed.

Cllr Day was concerned that these two items, which were important matters of public safety and had been ongoing for some time, were encountering further problems. He expressed his disappointment and frustration at how difficult it was to make any progress with the agencies involved.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Planning, Town & Environment Committee meeting held on 16th March 2018 be received.

C/6120

POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Cllr Heron presented the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee meeting held on 21st March 2018, indicating that all but one item had been resolved.

F/5546 Members considered the recommendation in respect of the annual financial risk assessment and agreed its approval.

RESOLVED: 1) That the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee meeting held on 21st March 2018 be received; and
2) That the annual financial risk assessment be approved.

Cllr Rippon-Swaine joined the meeting at 7.10pm.

C/6121

AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Town Clerk introduced the item of affordable housing for young people and provided an outline of the constraints within which the Town Council works, the limit of resources available and the limits of its power, as it is not the Planning Authority.

He explained that the report (*Annex A*) had arisen due to Members expressing concerns regarding the mismatch between house prices and levels of earnings. They were conscious of the effect on families and households with people having little choice but to move out of Ringwood, as they can't afford the cost of housing. Some people commute to work in Ringwood and this has a knock on effects on traffic and parking. Longer term there would be an impact on the demographic profile of the town and its economy.

He explained the options of 1) seeking to influence planning policy, through the District Council's Local Plan review, which would have to be based on formal evidence and subject to the deliverability test and 2) promoting housebuilding more directly and, although the Council is constrained, it could work with the wider community to promote and help residents form a Community Land Trust.

The National Planning Policy Framework is a document produced by the national government and all Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans must be set within the framework. The NPPF is being re-written and is to make provision for affordable housing. NFDC and NPNPA authorities are both updating their Local Plans. This was highlighted as an opportunity to influence policy now, by seeking to change the plans and how they relate to Ringwood.

He detailed the different definitions of affordable housing, which include traditional Council houses for rent, and subsidised rent or shared ownership houses – both with a registered Housing Association. Affordable housing not subsidised by the public authorities could include, for example, Community Land Trust schemes, or those built and sold at a discounted price of 30-40% cheaper than the market value, and restricted to those with local links, by covenant.

Cllr Treleaven added the Town Council is not the planning authority, as it is the District Council which decides in its Local Plan the number and location of houses required to be built. The Town Council does not allocate social housing either, as this too is a function of the District Council as the Housing Authority. The reason for discussing affordable housing now is to consider whether the Town Council should seek to influence the Local Plan, by specifying that it require certain types of housing be provided, for example, 1-2 bedroom properties. This would have to be shown as deliverable and evidence would be required to show that the demand for low cost housing predominates and is deliverable financially.

In addition, the new Housing and Planning Bill proposes to introduce a statutory requirement to include starter homes for young people on all larger developments, and the District Council may have to include this in its review of the Local Plan.

Members of the public were invited to comment and the following points were raised:-

- Residents children could not afford to buy houses, Linden Homes development was given as an example, few small suitable properties on site
- Children are living with parents longer and not moving into a home of their own
- House prices are too high for those working in the town to afford
- Residents feared there were no opportunities for youngsters to live in the town and they wanted to fight for this
- Negative experiences with sourcing affordable housing and the 'help to buy' scheme, with people not being considered for properties located in Dorset, as they have links to Hampshire, but people from Dorset can buy in Hampshire
- NFDC place people from elsewhere in Ringwood, but Ringwood people can't get placed in the town.

Cllr Rippon-Swaine commented that changes cannot be implemented after the Local Plan is put in place and it is important to influence its content now. The solution would be to build more homes, feeding into the housing market to keep house prices level as in the past. Cllr

Day put forward an example of a low cost self-build scheme which took shape over a number of years as something that was worth looking at, however acknowledged that this would take a great deal of commitment by those involved.

There was some discussion in respect of Sites P and Q, including the number and density of homes to be built and also the mitigation measures required for the plot behind the Elm Tree due to its susceptibility for flooding and access road. These matters will be addressed in the emerging new Local Plan to be published in the summer.

*Cllr Edge left the meeting at 7.50pm.
Cllr Ford and Cllr Rippon-Swaine left the meeting briefly.*

Members sympathised with the members of the public and indicated their intention to do whatever they could to improve the current situation. They agreed that they did not wish to obtain independent evidence as it had been generally accepted that there was a lack of starter homes for local people and wished to work with District Council planners to influence the policies to be put in place for future developments. For example, the two-storey policy may be looked at, along with increased density housing.

It was suggested that the public lobby Desmond Swayne MP and NFDC to show the strength of feeling and making views known. The consultation on the Local Plan was expected in July of this year and it would be widely publicised by the Town Council and local press and the public were urged to respond. The Town Council would prepare a formal response to the consultation but it was anticipated that a special public meeting would take place, specifically to discuss the issue and so that the public's view could be taken into consideration.

- RESOLVED:** 1) That officers investigate, with the District Council Housing Department, reports from local residents that they are unfairly disadvantaged when seeking 'affordable housing' (in the technical use of that term) as a result of differences in eligibility policies applied locally and in other districts, and report back their findings.
- 2) That the Town Council should work to reduce the cost of entry level housing, to enable local residents to get onto the housing ladder; this will require a call for greater numbers of that house type being built. The Town Council should further seek to influence the District Council, through constructive lobbying, in the development of the relevant policies in the emerging Local Plan. Where possible, the Town Council should identify existing or allocated sites where it would be appropriate to increase housing density.

ACTION C Wilkins/J Hurd

**C/6122
INTERNAL FINANCIAL CONTROLS**

The Town Clerk explained that, in discussion with the Responsible Finance Officer, it had been agreed that to be able to give clear answers in the annual governance statement, the Council must have reviewed the effectiveness of its internal financial controls. This document sought to identify areas where better reporting is required or that changes were needed.

- RESOLVED:** That the annual review of effectiveness of internal financial controls (Annex B) be approved.

ACTION R Fitzgerald/C Wilkins

C/6123
COMMUNICATIONS TO BE RECEIVED

The Town Mayor reported the following:

- 1) He had attended a meeting with Go New Forest regarding content for the Ringwood page of the website to include links with organisations in the town and to encourage joined up advertising.
- 2) He informed Members that work to the Mansfield Road/Southampton Road barrier was due to commence on 12th April.
- 3) He commented that the Manager at The Place was looking for volunteers over the Easter holidays and their presence would be greatly appreciated.
- 4) Wessex Water had confirmed that Carnival can be held on the Bickerley and it had accepted that a surveyor be appointed to oversee the additional works.

C/6124
REPORTS FROM TOWN COUNCILLORS AND STUDENT ADVISORS

Cllr Day

- 1) He had requested that HH provide additional signage on the A31 slip roads (leading to the A338/B3347 Mansfield Road roundabout) with the aim of reducing the number of motorists using the left hand lane when taking the 3rd exit and that the 'Keep Clear' markings on the main town roundabout be re-painted.
- 2) Residents from Southfield/Southfield Mews had requested some assistance in the positioning of a mirror on the opposite side of the Christchurch Road, as there were concerns with turning onto the road, particularly turning right, with an increasing amount of traffic.
- 3) The arrangements for the celebration of the Royal Wedding on 19th May were taking shape. He thanked those who had been involved and indicated that the next step was to raise the sponsorship required. He invited the Student Advisors to help with fundraising and stewarding on the day.

Cllr Ring

- 1) It had been suggested that the civic gift from the Twinning Association should be an English Oak, with a plaque and an item would be put before the Policy and Finance Committee, in due course.
- 2) The next Twinning Association event was on 20th April and was a Music and Comedy Evening, at the Meeting House. Tickets cost £10.

C/6125
REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

District Councillor Heron would be attending the monthly Cabinet meeting on 4th April, at which the Financial Monitoring report would be discussed.

District Councillor Ford attended the Environmental Scrutiny Panel on 8th March, the Licensing Panel on 9th March and the regular surgery (with Desmond Swayne MP) on 10th March.

District Councillor Rippon-Swaine had also attended the Environmental Scrutiny Panel and indicated that all matters were on-going and included items such as waste management strategy and the use of electric vehicles by NFDC.

**C/6126
FORTHCOMING MEETINGS**

The forthcoming meetings were noted.

Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces	7.00pm	Wednesday 4 th April 2018
Planning, Town & Environment	10.00am	Friday 6 th April 2018
Policy & Finance	7.00pm	Wednesday 18 th April 2018
Full Council	7.00pm	Wednesday 25 th April 2018

There being no further business, the Town Mayor closed the meeting at 8.40pm.

APPROVED
25th April 2018

TOWN MAYOR

PLANNING, TOWN & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE – 2 MARCH 2018 AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR LOCAL YOUNG PEOPLE

1. The Town Council has for many years been concerned about the lack of affordable housing (*see Appendix A for definition*) available in the town for local young people, and has expressed those concerns at appropriate times over the years when New Forest District Council (NFDC) has consulted on its Local Plan.
2. The New Forest District Local Plan: Part One is currently under review, and in its response to the initial consultation in September 2016, the Town Council made specific reference to the need for young and working age people to have at least equal access to affordable home ownership in the town, and requested that a significant proportion of affordable homes should be “starter homes” for those aged under 40, and for those waiting on the Housing Register who have demonstrable local connections.
3. In order to follow up on this, and to ascertain how NFDC is dealing with the issue of affordable housing in the emerging Local Plan, your officers and the Chairman of this Committee recently met with NFDC Planning Policy and Housing Development officers. It is clear that NFDC shares the Town Council’s concerns and much work has gone in to trying to address the issue, with a new affordability study having been carried out and an updated report on the Objectively Assessed Housing Need to update the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) produced in 2014.
4. The 2014 SHMA indicated a requirement for a high percentage of new dwellings to be 1 or 2 bed. However, this requirement has not been met on the Linden Homes site in Crow Lane and it was questioned how it could be met in future. NFDC has received advice from the Planning Inspectorate that a more prescriptive policy in this respect would be very difficult to get through inspection, as any constraint to development would be met with objection from developers and could fail the viability test.
5. If the Town Council wishes to challenge this view and recommend that a specific policy is included in the Local Plan to, for example, condition that a percentage of dwellings are 1 or 2 bed suitable for young people, this could be addressed in the final round of consultation on the Local Plan Review, which is expected in June/July this year. However, robust evidence would be required to support the need for such a policy, and to prove its viability in order to counter NFDC officers, planning consultants, developers and solicitors at the Public Enquiry conducted by the Planning Inspectorate.
6. In order to establish the need, and on the advice of NFDC, Action Hampshire were approached to provide a cost estimate to conduct a Housing Needs Survey (*see Appendix A for further information and options*). However, it should be noted that this method would only survey existing residents and would not take into account young people who work in the town and wish to live locally, or those with family connections who would like to return. It would also not establish whether there is a disproportionate need for smaller affordable dwellings compared to larger properties, such that a specific policy is required to address this. At a minimum cost of £10,000, it is suggested that a Housing Needs Survey is neither affordable nor wholly relevant.
7. There may be other options for obtaining the evidence required, but more work would be required to research this; to identify resource implications; and to ensure any evidence obtained would stand up to scrutiny.

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8. Some information is available from NFDC in terms of the number of small dwellings built in the town relative to the total built, and the number of people on the current Housing Register waiting list wishing to live in Ringwood, and the size of property they require. However, attempts over the years to obtain more specific information on the number of young people who are on the list and have a connection to the town have been unsuccessful. A survey of local estate agents could provide information on the number and percentage of 1 and 2 bedroom properties available for sale and sold, and the number and percentage of young people looking to buy.
9. Even if the Council was successful in bringing about a change in policy, resulting in a greater supply of 1 and 2 bedroom properties, it may still be that these properties would not be affordable for local young people.
10. Another option worthy of consideration is whether the Town Council might be more actively involved in providing a site specifically designed to provide low cost housing for local young people. This could be achieved either by purchasing a suitable site by raising a publicly funded loan, or re-designating land currently in the Town Council's ownership. This direct approach would be a considerable undertaking, both in terms of staff time and funding.
11. There is no budget to undertake a Housing Needs Survey, nor to employ resources to undertake research in-house. However, it should be noted that £3,000 is included in the 2018/19 budget to undertake a cost-benefit analysis of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan with independent expert advice, and £4,000 (revised from the original £7,000) is included for a Desktop Study to challenge the findings of NFDC's Traffic Assessment as part of the Local Plan Review.

It is RECOMMENDED that Members consider:

- 1) Whether the Town Council should seek to influence further the relevant policies in the emerging Local Plan and, if so, how;
- 2) Whether the Town Council should take further measures to increase the supply of genuinely affordable housing in Ringwood and, if so, what;
- 3) Establishing a Working Party to discuss the options in more detail.

For further information, please contact:

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01425 484720

or

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National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) definition of Affordable Housing

Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

Social rented housing is owned by local authorities and private registered providers (as defined in section 80 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008), for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with the Homes and Communities Agency.

Affordable rented housing is let by local authorities or private registered providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).

Intermediate housing is homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition above. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing.

Homes that do not meet the above definition of affordable housing, such as “low cost market” housing, may not be considered as affordable housing for planning purposes.

Housing Needs Survey – Action Hampshire

Action Hampshire carry out Housing Needs Surveys when Parish/Town Councils want information about the housing situation in their parish, and the types of accommodation needed. The survey can be tailored to ensure that questions are specific to the Parish/Town Council's requirements. The questionnaire is delivered to all households in the parish, and residents usually have around three weeks to respond to the survey. Once the data has been processed, a comprehensive report is provided. The process usually takes 3 months from beginning to end.

A sample questionnaire and report are available to view on request.

Advantages of Housing Need Surveys

Housing need surveys:

- i identify additional local housing need that is not currently being recognised by housing registers (*some households may not know how to register or be aware that they have to register to be eligible to bid for an affordable property*)
- i identify concealed housing need in the parish; these are people who are unable to afford to rent or buy a property in their area and are living within another household
- i identify households/individuals who have had to move out of the parish due to difficulties in finding a suitable home locally
- i give local people the opportunity to explain why they are in housing need
- i help the Parish/Town Council understand why there is a local housing need in the parish
- i help find out whether residents would support a small affordable housing scheme in the parish
- i raise awareness of this issue to the local community
- i can be used alongside the Housing Register as robust evidence by the local planning authority when determining planning applications

Option 1 – questionnaire delivered to all 6035 households in the parish, backed up by an online version - **£18,500**

Option 2 – online questionnaire only (with some paper copies available in key locations), with robust promotional strategy to encourage participation - **£10,000 (estimate)**

28th March 2018

Review of effectiveness of system of internal financial controls

1. Introduction and reason why decision required

Every town and parish council is required to undertake an annual review of the effectiveness of its system of internal financial controls (and confirm that it did so in the annual governance statement in its next annual return).

2. Background information, options, impact assessment and risks

The review must be undertaken in the current financial year in order that the relevant confirmation can be given in the next governance statement. No format for the review is specified.

This was not done sooner owing to pressure of work. In future years, it would be more appropriate for the review to be undertaken rather earlier in the year by the Policy & Finance Committee though (as with certain other critical governance formalities) it is likely to remain necessary for the statement of the outcome of the review to be formally approved at a meeting of the full council.

The review document circulated with this report:

- i Has been prepared by officers but had full regard to comments made by members on various occasions;
- i Is loosely based on a template provided by our outgoing external auditor;
- i Has been extensively tailored to fit this council's current circumstances; and
- i Is intended to reflect those circumstances honestly and objectively.

Members are invited to improve the review if satisfied that the foregoing objectives have been achieved or to propose any amendments judged necessary to meet them better.

3. Issues for decision and any recommendations

Whether to approve the attached annual review of the effectiveness of the council's system of internal financial controls. (RECOMMENDATION: Members are respectfully recommended to approve the review subject to any amendments deemed desirable.)

For further information, contact:

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Ringwood Town Council

Annual Review of Effectiveness of Internal Financial Controls

1. Internal Audit

a. Meeting the standards

Expected Standard	Evidence of Achievement to Date	Areas needing development in future
1. Scope of internal audit	Complete and unqualified annual returns. Comprehensive reports to members.	Appropriate letter of appointment of new auditor now required.
2. Independence	Internal Auditor has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i Direct access to Town Clerk, RFO, Chair of Policy & Finance Committee (P&F Cttee.) and Mayor i No other role within the Council 	Member involvement in appointment of new auditor now required
3. Competence	Quality of reports to members. Internal Auditors extensive involvement in providing audit services to other similar bodies.	Appropriate procurement and selection procedure for new auditor now required.
4. Relationships	RFO involved in audit process. Joint work of RFO, Town Clerk and P&F Cttee.in implementing recommended actions.	Maintain effective relationships with new auditor.
5. Audit Planning and reporting	Audits completed on time	Prompt procurement and selection of new

		auditor.
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b. Characteristics of Effectiveness

c. Characteristics of “effectiveness”	Evidence of Achievement to Date	Areas needing development in future
Internal audit work is planned	Completed satisfactorily to specification as to cost and scope and on time.	Alignment of scope and priorities to risk and member priorities.
Understanding the whole organisation its needs and objectives	Completion of thorough and competent audits and submission of comprehensive reports several years running.	Care with procurement, selection and instruction of new auditor.
Be seen as a catalyst for continuous improvement (compliance, assurance and change when required)	Quality of reports to members. Actions by officers and P&F Cttee in response to recommendations.	Maintain and develop reporting procedures.
Adds value and assists the organisation in achieving its objectives	Quality of reports to members. Actions by officers and P&F Cttee in response to recommendations.	Care with procurement, selection and instruction of new auditor.
Be forward looking	Internal audits have maintained awareness of new developments in the sector, risk management and corporate governance.	Scope of future audits.
Be challenging	Willingness of members and officers to consider and develop bespoke responses to recommendations.	Relationship with future auditor.
Ensure the right resources are available	Quality and comprehensiveness of reports to members.	Appropriate allocation of budget for internal audit plus member and officer time and

		attention.
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2. Control and member oversight of Council finances

a. Meeting the standards

Expected Standard	Evidence of Achievement to Date	Areas needing development in future
Annual Budgets	Suitably detailed and comprehensive budgets set on time for several years running.	Forward planning (outline projections for three years).
Precept	Increases kept within inflation with reserves being maintained at appropriate levels – no evidence of under or over-precepting.	None.
Budget Comparison	Consistent regular reporting to P&F Cttee of actual income and expenditure against budget	Establishment of clear basis of thresholds for reporting by exception.
Spending decisions and commitments	Conformity with budgets agreed by members. Appropriate delegation of routine decisions to officers. Key decisions recorded in minutes as made by members (with relevant powers specified).	Align Financial Regulations with effective practice.
Payments	Invoices processed and paid usually within 28 days of receipt. Member queries and challenges to comprehensive monthly reports to P&F	Improve resilience of payment processing arrangements.

	Cttee.	
Integrity	Income due accurately invoiced and collected. Receipts (especially cash) promptly banked. Effective separation of roles between officers. Monthly bank reconciliations completed.	Development of robust but workable arrangements for events.
Reserves	General and earmarked reserves generally maintained at appropriate levels	Review some older earmarked reserves. Develop tools for better planning for replacement of major assets.
Treasury Management	No loss of capital.	Improve reporting and authorisation procedures for large inter-account transfers. Explore opportunities for improved returns.

b. Characteristics of Effectiveness

c. Characteristics of “effectiveness”	Evidence of Achievement to Date	Areas needing development in future
Reports by officers to members (comprehensiveness, accuracy and adequacy of information content).	Quality of reports to P&F Cttee regularly submitted and minuted.	Management of large inter-account transfers. Reporting of treasury management. Financial reporting about “The Place”
Challenge by members	Discussions at P&F Cttee and requests for	Training for members who want it.

	clarifications and improvements to reports.	
Be seen as effective in preventing misuse of public money.	No evidence of misuse.	None.
Be seen as securing good value for money.	Consistent cost control over several years. Fair and effective procurement exercises. Frequent examples of significant savings on both revenue and capital items.	None.
Reliable forward planning.	Consistency from year to year of precept and reserve levels.	Development of three-year budget projections. Develop tools for better planning for replacement of major assets.

Reviewed and adopted by Ringwood Town Council:

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Town Mayor

28th March 2018