

**Minutes of the Annual Town Assembly for the Town of Ringwood
held on Wednesday 13th May 2026 at 6:45pm
at Ringwood Gateway, The Furlong, Ringwood**

Present: Cllr Andy Briers
Cllr Luke Dadford
Cllr Philip Day (Deputy Town Mayor)
Cllr Gareth DeBoos
Cllr Mary DeBoos
Cllr Rae Frederick (Town Mayor)
Cllr Janet Georgiou
Cllr John Haywood
Cllr Peter Kelleher
Cllr James Swyer
Cllr Glenys Turner
Cllr Becci Windsor
District Cllr Jeremy Heron
District Cllr Steve Rippon-Swaine
Hampshire County Councillor Martin Eyre

plus approximately 80 members of the public

In Attendance: Charmaine Bennett – Town Clerk
Tony Robinson – Grounds Manager
Charly Keith – Clubhouse & Events Manager
Nicki Vodden – Office Manager

1. Welcome

The Town Clerk welcomed those present to the Annual Town Assembly.

2. To Approve the Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes of the Annual Town Assembly held on 14th May 2025 were approved.

3. Annual report on the work of the Town Council by the Town Mayor

The Town Mayor read her report (*included in the Annual Report 2026*).

4. Community feedback and open forum (questions from electors)

The Town Mayor invited all present to take the opportunity to raise concerns, ask questions and share views.

1) There was a comment acknowledging Cllr Day's work and efforts as Chair of the Planning, Town and Environment Committee, following his announcement and intention to step down from this position at the end of the month.

Comment by the Town Mayor:- Cllr Day had chaired the Committee wonderfully and she request that the Council's thanks be recorded.

2) A comment from the Council was requested in relation to the level of increase in the proportion of Council Tax required by Ringwood Town Council, to 8.6% for 2026/27, and an assurance that the Council will work hard to minimise future increases.

Response by Cllr M DeBoos, Chair of Policy and Finance Committee:- Budget discussions can be dynamic and the Council tried very hard to look at possible ways to manage the increase in precept. She advised the Council's precept is around £1 million, comprising of £300,000-350,000 in income and £650,000-£700,000 from the precept, and this provides for a whole range of facilities across town. She outlined that the increase was due to reserves being below the auditors recommended level; the Council being hit by the increase in Employers' National Insurance Contributions; and a significant staff turnover this year, requiring handover periods and changing the Town Clerk's post to full-time. The adjustment in precept was required to ensure future survival.

3) In relation to Local Government Re-organisation (LGR), and with reference to earlier correspondence from a resident to Councillors, he indicated his disappointment in the number of responses received. An assurance was requested that when authority is devolved, the Council will make early approaches and there will be efforts to establish better relationships, for example, when commenting on planning applications. It was suggested that working with other parish and town councils may achieve better outcomes.

Response by the Town Mayor:- The Council is a statutory consultee for planning applications in Ringwood. NFDC is the Planning Authority and makes the decisions. The Committee meets, debates, put observations forward and hopes that NFDC will listen. There are times this does not happen and it goes against the Council's views. Going forward the Council will work with the new bodies for good outcomes for the town. It was expected that there would be public consultation on decisions to be made.

4) There was another question in relation to division of assets under LGR and whether the Council would take on assets, such as the car park.

Response by the Town Mayor:- There is no detail about assets at this stage. The car park is NFDC's asset. It was felt it would be unlikely that it would be considered for transfer the Town Council.

Response by District Councillor Heron:- A shadow authority will be formed and it will oversee the handover of assets. He did not wish to see assets of NFDC to be disposed of to other areas where there is no call for the funds.

5) There was a comment about a hole in the pavement on Gorley Road (opposite Tesco's), which has been there for months. There is no indication who is responsible for it, nor when it will be filled in. The Council was asked to put pressure on those concerned to deal with it.

Response by the Town Mayor:- Hampshire Highways (HH) (HCC) undertook some investigative work relating to flooding in that area and it's understood that an underground pipe has collapsed. Remedial work is required, before it can be filled in and fencing has been erected. HH will be coming back to deal with it and this issue would be raising with the newly elected Hampshire County Councillor.

Whilst the Town Council is not directly responsible for issues of this nature, residents can approach the Town Councillors about such matters and they can report concerns or signpost to the correct authority.

6) There was a comment in relation to parking on double yellow lines in the High Street which was dangerous and causes issues for those with mobility aids and pushchairs. As the main car park is free in the evening, there is no need for this.

Response by the Town Mayor:- She indicated that the Council can work with Hampshire Highways and the County Councillor and take forward the issue raised.

7) There was a comment on the 'reinstatement of potholes', in that they are filled to a poor standard and this is not value for money for the Council.

Response by the Town Mayor:- Councillors report potholes on Hampshire County Council website and she encouraged residents to report issues also.

Response by District Councillor Heron:- When there is a serious issue with a pothole and the conditions are not suitable to properly repair it, Hampshire Highways will arrange a temporary repair and return at a later date.

Response by Hampshire County Councillor:- An update will be obtained for all the roads in Ringwood once access is provided to the Hampshire website.

8) There was a comment celebrating all of the events that take place in Ringwood and an enquiry as to whether there was an inclusive way of letting people know about them, with a promotional noticeboard for community groups to use as a central point for advertising.

Response by the Town Mayor:- The need for a central source of information relating to events was acknowledged.

5. Close of the Annual Town Assembly

The Town Mayor said it was wonderful to see so many people at the Annual Town Assembly and closed the meeting at 7:20pm.

Following the meeting:-

Guest Speaker: Mary Baldwin '800 years of Ringwood's Market'

Those gathered received a talk on the history of the Charter Market, accompanied by a slideshow.

Presentation of Community Awards

The Town Mayor presented two awards for Outstanding Community Service to:-

1) Ringwood Good Neighbours

The Community Award was accepted by a representative of Ringwood Good Neighbours and individual certificates were to be provided separately. The wording on the scroll reads:-

"We, Ringwood Town Council, desire to acknowledge your commitment to providing transport to hospitals, surgeries, etc. for parishioners in need. Your service is provided without fanfare – your volunteers quietly and efficiently help those in need to attend medical appointments. We loudly applaud and sincerely thank you for providing this service."

2) Greyfriars Minibus Service

The Community Award was accepted by a representative of Greyfriars Minibus Service. The wording on the scroll reads:-

“We, Ringwood Town Council, desire to acknowledge your commitment to providing transport for elderly, isolated and infirm parishioners to Greyfriars, local shops and other places. We loudly applaud and sincerely thank you for providing this service.”