

# Ringwood Town Council

Ringwood Gateway, The Furlong, Ringwood, Hampshire BH24 1AT  
Tel: 01425 473883  
www.ringwood.gov.uk

## SUMMONS

Dear Member

11<sup>th</sup> December 2025

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Town Council at the Forest Suite, Ringwood Gateway on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2025 at 7.00pm.



Mrs C Bennett  
Town Clerk

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## AGENDA

### 1.\* PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There will be an opportunity for public participation for a period of up to 15 minutes at the start of the meeting

2. To receive Apologies for Absence

3. To receive Declarations of Interest

4. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2025

5. To receive Minutes of Committees and approve recommendations contained therein:  
Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces      DATE :- 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2025  
Planning, Town & Environment      DATE:- 5<sup>th</sup> December 2025  
Policy & Finance      DATE:- 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025

### 6. COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

To consider any changes to the composition of council committees, sub-committees, working parties or panels

### 7. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (LGR) – CONSULTATION RESPONSE

To consider the Town Clerk's report (*Report A*) and draft response to LGR consultation

### 8. NFDC ASSET REVIEW AND ENGAGEMENT

To consider the Town Clerk's report (*Report B*)

9.\* To receive such communications as the Town Mayor may desire to lay before the Council

**10.\*** To receive Reports from County and District Councillors

**11.\*** To Receive Reports from Ringwood Town Councillors

**12.** Forthcoming Meetings – to note the following dates:

Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces	7.00pm	Wednesday 7 <sup>th</sup> January 2026
Planning, Town & Environment	10.00am	Friday 9 <sup>th</sup> January 2026
Policy & Finance	7.00pm	Wednesday 21 <sup>st</sup> January 2026
Full Council	7.00pm	Wednesday 28 <sup>th</sup> January 2026

**13. COMMUNICATIONS**

Members to decide on items requiring publicity and to confirm a spokesperson if required.

**14. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

To consider exclusion of the press and public from the meeting, in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, section 1(2), to transact business for which publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of its confidential nature

**15. LEGAL MATTERS**

To receive a verbal report from the Town Clerk on legal matters

If you would like further information on any of the agenda items, please contact Mrs Charmaine Benentt, Town Clerk, on 01425 484720 or [charmaine.bennett@ringwood.gov.uk](mailto:charmaine.bennett@ringwood.gov.uk)

Council Members:

Chairman: Cllr Rae Frederick, Town Mayor  
Vice-Chairman: Cllr Philip Day, Deputy Mayor  
Cllr Andrew Briers  
Cllr Luke Dadford  
Cllr Ingrid De Bruyn  
Cllr Gareth DeBoos  
Cllr Mary DeBoos  
Cllr Janet Georgiou  
Cllr John Haywood  
Cllr Peter Kelleher  
Cllr James Swyer  
Cllr Michael Thierry  
Cllr Glenys Turner  
Cllr Becci Windsor

Officers:

Charmaine Bennett, Town Clerk  
Jo Hurd, Deputy Town Clerk

## FULL COUNCIL

17 December 2025

### Local Government Reorganisation consultation: Ringwood Town Council response

#### 1. Introduction and reason for report

1.1 At the last Full Council meeting, the Town Clerk was tasked with preparing a draft response to the Government's statutory consultation on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) affecting Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton. This report presents that draft response for refinement, amendment and, if agreed, approval for submission.

#### 2. Background

2.1 The Government has launched a consultation seeking views on several structural options for new unitary councils. These proposals affect the future delivery of all local authority services currently provided by both New Forest District Council and Hampshire County Council.

2.2 The consultation asks respondents to comment against a set of criteria, including:

- whether proposed councils are based on sensible geographies and economic areas
- their ability to deliver economic, social and public service outcomes
- whether the councils are the right size to be efficient, resilient and financially sustainable
- their ability to deliver high-quality public services
- whether proposals reflect local views and meet local needs
- the extent to which they would support devolution
- how they would enable strong community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment

2.3 Town and parish councils are recognised consultees in this process and are invited to submit their views.

2.4 Members may also submit their own individual responses to the consultation should they wish to do so. This report relates solely to agreeing the Council's corporate response.

#### 3. Draft Response

3.1 A draft consultation response is attached to this report. It sets out how the proposals may affect Ringwood in relation to:

- local identity and the coherence of the New Forest area
- geography and rural service patterns
- the role of town and parish councils in democratic representation
- service delivery and existing local operational responsibilities
- financial resilience and proportionality of scale
- neighbourhood governance and community engagement
- the implications of the separate Option 1A boundary proposal

#### 4. Completion of the Government Questionnaire

4.1 In addition to accepting written submissions, the Government has provided an online questionnaire consisting of scoring questions and statements linked to the statutory criteria. Once members have agreed the Council's written response, the Town Clerk will complete the online questionnaire on the Council's behalf, ensuring that the Council's agreed position is consistently reflected.

4.2 It is not proposed that members work through the questionnaire line-by-line during the meeting, as the written response captures the Council's reasoning in full and provides the basis for the scoring selections required by the online form.

#### 5. Publicity and Communication with Residents

- 5.1 Any external communication by the Council about the consultation should comply with the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity. This requires that all information issued by the Council is factual, objective and politically neutral.
- 5.2 The Council may publicise the existence of the consultation, explain how residents can respond, and state the Council's formally agreed corporate position. However, the Council must not use publicity to encourage or persuade residents to support any particular option or to adopt the Council's view.
- 5.3 Individual councillors may express personal opinions, but these should not be presented as the Council's position unless formally resolved.
- 5.4 If members approve a final consultation response, the Council will publish a short factual notice advising residents that the Government's consultation is open, how and where they can access the consultation materials, the deadline for responses, and that the Council has submitted its own corporate response (without promoting or advocating any outcome).

## **6. Recommendations**

Members are asked to:

- 6.1 Consider the attached draft consultation response.
- 6.2 Agree any amendments required and approve the final version for submission.
- 6.3 Confirm the resident communication described in section 5, ensuring compliance with the Publicity Code.

For further information, contact:

Charmaine Bennett, Town Clerk  
Direct Dial: 01425 484720  
Email: [Charmaine.bennett@ringwood.gov.uk](mailto:Charmaine.bennett@ringwood.gov.uk)



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## **Consultation Response – Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton Local Government Reorganisation**

Dear Consultation Team,

Ringwood Town Council welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Government's consultation on proposed local government reorganisation across Hampshire and the Solent. This response reflects the Council's formally agreed position following discussion at a properly convened meeting.

Ringwood is a rural market town of around 14,000 residents, situated on the western edge of the New Forest. The Town Council employs 25 staff delivering services including grounds maintenance, community facilities and youth provision, a town information office, cemeteries and allotments, and a full programme of community events. Fourteen elected town councillors provide the closest level of local democratic representation, working directly with residents and in regular partnership with police, statutory agencies, and voluntary organisations.

After reviewing the options, Ringwood Town Council supports Option 1 – the formation of five unitary councils, including a Mid-Hampshire unitary that keeps the New Forest whole and reflects the rural character and shared identity of our area.

### **1. Local identity, sensible geography and community coherence**

Ringwood's identity is bound to the New Forest: its rural landscape, its network of villages and small towns, its travel-to-work patterns, and its shared environmental, planning and service needs. The proposal for a Mid-Hampshire unitary council respects these ties and keeps the Forest together as a coherent community of place.

By contrast, several alternative options place rural New Forest communities within large, urban-led unitaries whose size and shape are driven primarily by population or financial considerations. Such structures do not reflect historical or present-day community identity, nor do they support ease or practicality of local service provision or decision-making. They risk creating a democratic deficit and reducing public engagement unless town and parish councils are explicitly empowered to bridge the gap.

### **2. Representation, local democracy and the role of town and parish councils**

Town and parish councils are essential to local governance. They are directly accessible, embedded in their communities, and able to articulate local needs in a way larger authorities cannot replicate.



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Feedback from parish councils across Hampshire has shown widespread concern that large unitaries, particularly those incorporating major cities, could marginalise rural voices and weaken long-standing local relationships. This aligns with our own concerns.

Any reorganisation must therefore formally embed town and parish councils within governance arrangements, including any proposed Local Area Committees. Without clear structures, defined responsibilities, and genuine authority, there is a risk such committees become parallel or “talking shop” structures - an outcome repeatedly cautioned against in parish engagement sessions across the county.

Neighbourhood governance must build on the existing statutory tier of town and parish councils, not bypass it.

### **3. Delivering high-quality public services aligned to rural needs**

Ringwood Town Council delivers a substantial range of local services that respond to rural priorities: management of green spaces, community facilities, public events, youth support, allotments and cemeteries, and close operational relationships with police and other partners.

A Mid-Hampshire unitary council, encompassing the New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester and East Hampshire, is the most proportionate structure for supporting these services. It reflects rural service patterns and maintains accessibility and responsiveness. A large city-centric unitary is less likely to preserve this alignment and may struggle to recognise rurality as a defining service driver.

### **4. Financial resilience, sustainability and strategic alignment**

Evidence supporting the five-unitary model indicates that it offers a financially sustainable balance of scale, service delivery and identity. Splitting rural and urban pressures into separate unitaries reduces the risk that the priorities of major cities - housing density, regeneration, transport corridors - dominate budgets and strategic decision-making.

A Mid-Hampshire rural unitary is therefore better positioned to sustain financially resilient services that reflect local need.

### **5. Community engagement, empowerment and neighbourhood governance**

The Government's intention to “rewire the relationship between town and parish councils and principal authorities” and to strengthen community voice is a welcome principle.

However, detailed proposals for neighbourhood empowerment have not yet been articulated. Town and parish councils should therefore be central to early design work on these arrangements. They offer clear democratic mandate, established community networks, and



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proven capability in delivering tangible local improvements. This should form the building block of any neighbourhood model.

Ringwood Town Council would welcome meaningful involvement in shaping these structures from the outset.

## 6. Boundary changes (Option 1A)

Ringwood Town Council does not support Option 1A. This option fragments the New Forest, separating several parishes into a Southampton/Eastleigh unitary and undermining the coherence of the Forest as a whole. It introduces boundary changes without a compelling public-service or community-identity justification and risks weakening rural representation in both resulting authorities.

## Conclusion

For the reasons above, Ringwood Town Council supports Option 1 as the option that best reflects our identity, geography, and service needs; strengthens local democracy; and maintains the integrity of the New Forest. We would welcome continued engagement with MHCLG as the proposals develop, particularly in relation to neighbourhood governance and the role of town and parish councils.

Yours faithfully,

Town Clerk & Proper Officer

For and on behalf of Ringwood Town Council

## FULL COUNCIL

17 December 2025

### NFDC Asset Review and Engagement

#### 1. Introduction and reason for report

- 1.1 To present Members with the list of New Forest District Council (NFDC) assets located within Ringwood, together with officer mapping against the criteria set out in NFDC's recent correspondence on their Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) review. The report invites Members to discuss which assets they would wish the Town Council to register with NFDC as "*of interest for potential transfer*", or to explore further.

#### 2. Background

- 2.1 NFDC have written to all Town and Parish Councils outlining work to review and optimise their property portfolio as part of the Strategic Asset Management Plan. This is an early-stage review, with no decisions yet taken, aimed at ensuring any future choices - whether by NFDC or by a future Unitary authority - are transparent and grounded in sound evidence.
- 2.2 The Council states that assets are being assessed in tranches and could, depending on evidence, be:
  - retained as they are,
  - adapted,
  - transferred or jointly managed, or
  - disposed of.
- 2.3 NFDC set out the broad retention criteria, noting that assets are most likely to remain with the Council if they:
  - are critical to operational or statutory service delivery,
  - generate net income, or
  - have a long-term lease or management agreement.
- 2.4 However, assets with *unique community value*, *strategic opportunity*, or *exceptional circumstances* may justify alternative approaches such as transfer or partnership models.
- 2.5 NFDC invite Town and Parish Councils to identify any assets they wish NFDC to:
  - "*specifically consider*", or
  - at minimum, "*record as of interest for potential transfer at a future stage*".

#### 3. Officer Work Completed

- 3.1 Officers have:
  - obtained the Ringwood-specific NFDC asset list;
  - mapped each asset against NFDC's stated principles;
  - added What3Words locations;
  - included a short description of current use and any known lease or management arrangements (e.g., whether NFDC, RTC or a third party holds responsibility-members might like to cross reference with the map of Town Council owned land on the website)).
- 3.2 This is presented in Appendix A. It is offered to facilitate informed discussion by Members and does not imply any recommendation at this stage.

#### 4. Issues for Member Discussion

- 4.1 *Long-term stewardship and safeguarding against future disposal*- When considering the asset list, members might like to consider the question: if a future Unitary authority were to dispose of, repurpose, or redevelop certain district-owned assets, what would that mean for Ringwood residents?
- 4.2 Given NFDC's explicit statement that the asset review is intended to assist either NFDC or the incoming Unitary authority in future decision-making, this long-term view is relevant.



4.3 Declaring an asset as “of interest” does **not** commit RTC to taking it on.

It simply registers our community’s interest and ensures future decision-makers are aware of local significance.

4.4 *Practicalities and realistic parameters for RTC acquiring major assets-* While NFDC’s invitation covers all assets, Members should be aware that some - particularly large, complex or high-value operational facilities- sit well beyond the practical and financial scope of RTC to acquire or run.

4.5 Large operational assets may carry costs far exceeding RTC’s annual budget and tax base and taking on such a facility would require a structural change in the Council’s financial model, staffing structure, and governance arrangements.

## 5. Immediate considerations for Members

5.1 Members are invited to consider:

- a. Which assets RTC wishes to register as “of interest”: This includes assets of high community value, those closely tied to RTC services, or those where future protection is a priority.
- b. Which assets require further information
- c. The principles guiding RTC’s approach. For example:
  - prioritising community benefit and safeguarding key spaces,
  - avoiding assets with unfunded or unknown liabilities,
  - seeking partnership or influence where full transfer is impractical.

## 6. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

1. Review the mapped asset list in Appendix A.
2. Agree which assets should be registered as “of interest for potential transfer”.
3. Confirm whether any additional information is required before submission.

For further information, contact:

Charmaine Bennett, Town Clerk  
 Direct Dial: 01425 484720  
 Email: [Charmaine.bennett@ringwood.gov.uk](mailto:Charmaine.bennett@ringwood.gov.uk)

Property Name	Street Name	Postcode	GEO X	GEO Y	Freehold Assets	Leasehold Assets	Building (B) Land Only (L) Land & Building (LB)	RTC notes	what3words
NFDC LAND (SHIRES CLOSE)	CHRISTCHURCH ROAD	BH24 3DJ	415305	104001	Y	LEASE OUT	L	Formers Nags Head Site (see number 22 on RTC map of land), leased from NFDC to RTC from 2006 at peppercorn. We maintain it and there is a PROW alongside	<a href="https://w3w.co/amps.copiers.initiated">https://w3w.co/amps.copiers.initiated</a>
LAND	OPEN SPACE - GRASS/TREES/PATHS ETC - RINGWOOD	BH24 3ED	415811	103893	Y - OCCUPIED BY NFDC			Land around Long Lane- checking which	
NFDC LAND	WREN CLOSE	BH24 3RD	416403	104660	Y	LEASE OUT	L	Forest Edge (number 9 on RTC map) we maintain it, leased to RTC in 2017	<a href="https://w3w.co/lanes.shut.yesterday">https://w3w.co/lanes.shut.yesterday</a>
NFDC LAND	KINGFISHER WAY	BH24 3LP	416093	106397	Y	LEASE OUT	L	Kingfisher Way Open Space - checking	<a href="https://w3w.co/covertly.corn.return">https://w3w.co/covertly.corn.return</a>
LAND	OPEN SPACE - GRASS/TREES/PATHS ETC - RINGWOOD - PLAYING FIELD, ASH GROVE, RINGWOOD	BH24 1XT	416284	105001	Y			We are not sure why Ash Grove appears twice	
NFDC LAND	MANSFIELD ROAD	BH24 1HF	414802	105461	Y	LEASE OUT	L	Dr Little Gardens (number 4 on RTC map)	
NFDC LAND	ANSON CLOSE	BH24 1XN	416426	106007	Y - OCCUPIED BY NFDC		L	As far as we are aware we do not maintain this area- checking	<a href="https://w3w.co/adjust.whimpered.daytime">https://w3w.co/adjust.whimpered.daytime</a>
PLAY AREA, ASH GROVE, RINGWOOD	ASH GROVE	BH241XT	416284	105001	Y	LEASE OUT	L	We have full responsibility as per lease - see 8 on RTC map	<a href="https://w3w.co/grinders.undercuts.kickers">https://w3w.co/grinders.undercuts.kickers</a>
RINGWOOD GATEWAY	THE FURLONG	BH24 1AT	414707	105351	Y - OCCUPIED BY NFDC (PART)	LEASE OUT (PART)	LB		<a href="https://w3w.co/rained.rainbow.fish">https://w3w.co/rained.rainbow.fish</a>
PUBLIC CONVENIENCES	THE FURLONG	BH24 1AT	414716	105353	Y - OCCUPIED BY NFDC		LB		<a href="https://w3w.co/highs.vocally.advantage">https://w3w.co/highs.vocally.advantage</a>
NFDC CAR PARK	THE FURLONG	BH24 1AT	414739	105423	Y - OCCUPIED BY NFDC		L	generate a net income	
NFDC CAR PARK BLYNK BONNIE	CHRISTCHURCH ROAD	BH24 1DN	414862	105058	Y - OCCUPIED BY NFDC		L	generate a net income	
THE MEETING HOUSE	22 MEETING HOUSE LANE	BH24 1EY	414730	105281	Y	LEASE OUT	LB	long-term lease or management agreement.	
NO.51 TO 33 QUAKER COURT AND 55 TO 57 BICKERLEY ROAD	BICKERLEY ROAD	BH24 1DU	414920	104926	Y	LEASE OUT	LB	critical to operational or statutory service delivery	
RINGWOOD DEPOT	WELLWORTHY WAY	BH24 3AL	415345	104417	N - OCCUPIED BY NFDC	LEASE IN	LB	critical to operational or statutory service delivery	
SIGHT LINE FOR RINGWOOD HEALTH & LEISURE CENTRE	PARSONAGE BARN LANE	BH24 1PX	415418	105541	Y - OCCUPIED BY NFDC		L	critical to operational or statutory service delivery	

NFDC LAND	HEADLANDS BUSINESS PARK, BLASHFORD	BH24 3PB	415188	106489	Y - OCCUPIED BY NFDC		L	generate net income and have a long-term lease or management agreement.	
STILLWATER CARAVAN PARK SHOP	NORTH POULNER ROAD	BH24 3JY	416101	106695	Y	LEASE OUT	LB	long-term lease or management agreement.	
RINGWOOD HEALTH AND LEISURE CENTRE	PARSONAGE BARN LANE	BH24 1PX	415385	105302	N	LEASE IN - LEASE OUT	LB	critical to operational or statutory service delivery	
STILLWATER CARAVAN PARK LAUNDRY,SHOWERS,HALL	NORTH POULNER ROAD	BH24 3JY	416101	106695	Y - OCCUPIED BY NFDC	PITCHES INDIVIDUALLY LICENSED	LB	long-term lease or management agreement.	
SERVICE YARD A & B MEETING HOUSE CENTRE	MEETING HOUSE LANE	BH24 1BZ	414768	105230	Y - OCCUPIED BY NFDC		L	critical to operational or statutory service delivery	
UNIT A1, PLATINUM JUBILEE BUSINESS PARK	HOPCLOVER WAY	BH24 3FW	415876	104592	Y	LEASE OUT	LB	generate net income and have a long-term lease or management agreement.	
UNIT A2, PLATINUM JUBILEE BUSINESS PARK	HOPCLOVER WAY	BH24 3FW	415893	104592	Y - OCCUPIED BY NFDC		LB	generate net income and have a long-term lease or management agreement.	
UNIT B1, PLATINUM JUBILEE BUSINESS PARK	HOPCLOVER WAY	BH24 3FW	415874	104642	Y	LEASE OUT	LB	generate net income and have a long-term lease or management agreement.	
UNIT B2, PLATINUM JUBILEE BUSINESS PARK	HOPCLOVER WAY	BH24 3FW	415893	104643	Y	LEASE OUT	LB	generate net income and have a long-term lease or management agreement.	
UNIT B3, PLATINUM JUBILEE BUSINESS PARK	HOPCLOVER WAY	BH24 3FW	415896	104660	Y	LEASE OUT	LB	generate net income and have a long-term lease or management agreement.	
UNIT B4, PLATINUM JUBILEE BUSINESS PARK	HOPCLOVER WAY	BH24 3FW	415884	104660	Y	LEASE OUT	LB	generate net income and have a long-term lease or management agreement.	
UNIT B5 , PLATINUM JUBILEE BUSINESS PARK	HOPCLOVER WAY	BH24 3FW	415872	104660	Y	LEASE OUT	LB	generate net income and have a long-term lease or management agreement.	
UNIT C1, PLATINUM JUBILEE BUSINESS PARK	HOPCLOVER WAY	BH24 3FW	415866	104713	Y	LEASE OUT	LB	generate net income and have a long-term lease or management agreement.	
UNIT C2, PLATINUM JUBILEE BUSINESS PARK	HOPCLOVER WAY	BH24 3FW	415877	104713	Y	LEASE OUT	LB	generate net income and have a long-term lease or management agreement.	
UNIT C3, PLATINUM JUBILEE BUSINESS PARK	HOPCLOVER WAY	BH24 3FW	415887	104713	Y - OCCUPIED BY NFDC		LB	generate net income and have a long-term lease or management agreement.	
UNIT C4, PLATINUM JUBILEE BUSINESS PARK	HOPCLOVER WAY	BH24 3FW	415897	104713	Y	LEASE OUT	LB	generate net income and have a long-term lease or management agreement.	
UNIT D1, PLATINUM JUBILEE BUSINESS PARK	HOPCLOVER WAY	BH24 3FW	415866	104753	Y	LEASE OUT	LB	generate net income and have a long-term lease or management agreement.	
UNIT D2, PLATINUM JUBILEE BUSINESS PARK	HOPCLOVER WAY	BH24 3FW	415876	104753	Y	LEASE OUT	LB	generate net income and have a long-term lease or management agreement.	
UNIT D3, PLATINUM JUBILEE BUSINESS PARK	HOPCLOVER WAY	BH24 3FW	415886	104752	Y	LEASE OUT	LB	generate net income and have a long-term lease or management agreement.	

UNIT D4, PLATINUM JUBILEE BUSINESS PARK	HOPCLOVER WAY	BH24 3FW	415897	104753	Y	LEASE OUT	LB	generate net income and have a long-term lease or management agreement.	
UNIT E1, PLATINUM JUBILEE BUSINESS PARK	HOPCLOVER WAY	BH24 3FW	415927	104750	Y	LEASE OUT	LB	generate net income and have a long-term lease or management agreement.	
UNIT F1, PLATINUM JUBILEE BUSINESS PARK	HOPCLOVER WAY	BH24 3FW	415932	104706	Y - OCCUPIED BY NFDC		LB	generate net income and have a long-term lease or management agreement.	
UNIT F2, PLATINUM JUBILEE BUSINESS PARK	HOPCLOVER WAY	BH24 3FW	415932	104687	Y - OCCUPIED BY NFDC		LB	generate net income and have a long-term lease or management agreement.	
UNIT G1/G2 PLATINUM JUBILEE BUSINESS PARK	HOPCLOVER WAY	BH24 3FW	415932	104648	Y	LEASE OUT	LB	generate net income and have a long-term lease or management agreement.	