



# Ringwood Town Council

## Annual Report 2025-2026

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SUPPORTING OUR MARKET TOWN TO THRIVE



FOCUS ON

CLLR RAE FREDERICK,  
TOWN MAYOR AND  
CHAIR OF RINGWOOD  
TOWN COUNCIL



# RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL 2025- 2026- MAYORS REPORT

My report is intended as an overview of what has happened during the year, rather than a blow-by-blow account of all the work that has taken place.

I will begin with Carvers Recreation Ground: back in July last year, the multi-use games area was completed with a grant we received from Veolia, providing free public access to sports courts for tennis, basketball, football and netball. It has proved to be a great success and is in regular use. The rugby club, for example, has used the courts for training and is planning walking rugby sessions for older residents.

You will also have seen the new trees and tree guards now in Carvers. This planting was made possible through a generous donation of trees from RACE, who have been working with the Council across the town. In addition, we secured funding from Veolia for pollinator planting, which RACE supplemented further.

As a result, wildflower turf has been laid in the area next to the multi-use games area and, as we move into summer, this should begin to flower and encourage pollinators to pass through. We also have bug hotels in this area, with more to come watch this space.

During the summer programme at Carvers, workshops were held for young people by a professional street artist, allowing them to explore and experiment with street art. Working together, they developed ideas and concepts which resulted in a mural design sprayed onto the skatepark wall. If you are at Carvers, do stop to take a look the results are incredible.

We have also secured planning permission for a potential new Grounds Facility at Carvers Recreation Ground. This is an important step toward replacing the deteriorating sheds currently on site, which are both an eyesore and no longer suitable for modern grounds maintenance work.



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For many years, the town's grounds equipment and staff have had to operate from several small, scattered buildings across Ringwood. The proposed new building would bring essential equipment and welfare facilities together in a single, purpose-built space. The new building would sit within the area already occupied by the existing sheds and yard, meaning no playing fields would be lost.

If the project is taken forward, residents will have opportunities to view the plans and ask questions.

You may also have noticed that the allotments at the cemetery have been removed. This is to enable the extension of the cemetery. Work to clear the site has begun, and a topographic survey has been commissioned to provide an accurate record of levels, boundaries and existing features, helping to inform the remediation and landscaping works.

The working party has produced a draft plan for the proposed memorial area, which will include a space for the scattering of ashes, provision for a new area for the interment of ashes, and additional space for traditional burials. Tree planting will take place along the cemetery boundaries, while the remaining areas will be laid to lawn. This will ensure the site remains attractive while the wider project is delivered in stages.

To alleviate concerns regarding the loss of allotments, new plots have been created at Crow Arch Lane. Where we once had a very long waiting list, we are now able to provide plots within a reasonable timeframe. We also took the opportunity this year to review and amend our allotment rules.

We have continued to strengthen engagement with local businesses by holding quarterly meetings in both Ringwood and Fordingbridge. Building on the success of these meetings, they have now moved to monthly sessions this year, held at different times of day to enable more people to attend.



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It is also part of our strategy this year to explore options for future youth work, and we have engaged with local schools and organisations to identify how this can best be achieved.

The Government announced in March that we will form part of Mid Hampshire Unitary Council, which will come into effect in 2028. At present, we have little information to share, but Ringwood Town Council will work closely with the relevant authorities to ensure the best possible outcomes for Ringwood.

I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge the passing of Edward Morant at the beginning of this year. Mr Morant was the Market Charter holder, and his connection with Ringwood and its historic market was clearly significant and greatly valued within the town.

He was aware of the planned celebrations on Sunday 12 July to mark the 800th anniversary of the Market Charter. There will be fun for all the family, including Morris dancers, a live auction and a petting zoo, to name but a few activities.

We have been fortunate to receive funding from Culture in Common, which will support an installation for the event that will remain with us afterwards.

Did you know that Ringwood has its own unique glove pattern? In the 19th century, Ringwood established a reputation for glove making, with its own traditional glove-making stitch. The installation will be made entirely of gloves, so I would like to make a huge plea: if you have any unwanted gloves, please consider donating them to the project. We need 800 gloves one for every year of the market.

On a personal note, I have greatly enjoyed my year serving as Town Mayor. It has been a privilege to represent Ringwood and meet so many members of our community.

Finally, I have a few thank yous.



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TOWN MAYOR AND  
CHAIR OF RINGWOOD  
TOWN COUNCIL



Firstly, to the wonderful volunteers who have joined us this evening to share what they do within the town we are incredibly fortunate to have you all and we are grateful for everything you contribute to our community.

To the officers of the Council, who carry out an enormous amount of unseen hard work. This has been particularly evident during a year that has seen a number of retirements and significant staff changes. Despite this period of transition, your adaptability and team spirit have ensured that both the Council and the town have continued to run smoothly.

I would also like to thank my fellow councillors for their ongoing support and commitment to serving Ringwood and its residents.

Thank you all for everything you do for the Council and for Ringwood.

Ringwood really is a very special place.



CLLR MARY DEBOOS,  
CHAIR OF COMMITTEE



FOCUS ON

# POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE 2025/2026- CHAIRS REPORT

Firstly, I would like to give huge thanks to our Town Clerk, Charmaine Bennett, for providing invaluable support as we have gone through the transition process following the retirement of Rory Fitzgerald at the end of April last year.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Michelle Gordon our new Finance Manager who has settled well into her role and to the team.

This year has seen significant change in our Council Officers and it is testament to them all that they have managed the budget so well during this time.

The Policy and Finance Committee members would not be able to manage the oversight without the diligence of every budget holder.

In addition to providing oversight of finances and policies the Committee also decides on recipients for Ringwood Town Council's Grant Aid scheme.

The budget for grants was only £2,000 and hence we had significantly more requests for funding than we could ever provide. This year we have, however, awarded grants to:

- Ringwood Men's Shed towards the cost of new premises.
- Ringwood Rotary to support the Christmas Eve festivities in the Market Place.
- St Peter and Paul Parish Church for The Bell Project.
- Helping Older People New Forest (HOPE) to support the ongoing delivery of its service.
- Forest Forge Theatre Company towards theatre and drama sessions.
- Ringwood Speedwatch for new equipment.
- Community Haircuts for equipment and supplies.
- Ellingham and Ringwood Cricket Club to assist with the costs associated with setting up junior cricket teams

All of which I feel, and I hope you agree, are worthy causes and within the town.



## FOCUS ON

CLLR MARY DEBOOS,  
CHAIR OF COMMITTEE



Below is a summary of the financials for the 2025/2026:

	Revised Budget	Actual (Draft)
Revenue Expenditure	£1,013,914	£1,025,982
Capital Expenditure	£269,257	£276,289
<u>Plus</u> transfers to earmarked reserves	£45,820	£131,908
Less Revenue Income	-£325,825	-£347,361
Less Capital Income (football dev project)	-£100,000	-£186,190
Less transfers from earmarked reserves	-£216,951	-£215,450
Net budget requirement	£686,215	£685,178
Funded by:		
Council Tax	£683,620	£683,620
Funded from General Reserve	£2,595	£1,558

You will see that the change versus the budget is very small and is due to a number of small items .

Finally, we are pleased to report that, following refurbishment, overseen by Cllr. Janet Georgiou, our premises at 92 Southampton Road have been rented out for most of the year which is reflected in our income. I would like to extend my thanks for Janet for all her hard work on this.



CLLR PHILIP DAY, CHAIR  
OF COMMITTEE



FOCUS ON

# PLANNING, TOWN AND ENVIRONMENT 2025/2026- CHAIRS REPORT

This will be my 7<sup>th</sup> annual report as Chair of this Committee and probably the last as I intend to step aside from that role following the Town Council's AGM later this month to make way for "new blood". This is therefore something of a retrospective view.

One of my first tasks seven years ago was to represent the Town Council at the Public Examination of the then proposed NFDC Local Plan. This included two "strategic sites" within the Parish proposed for housing and other development about which we had serious concerns.

We were, I am afraid, largely unsuccessful (not least in that our proposal to restrict the maximum numbers of dwellings on each site did not find favour with the Inspector) and both sites – at Moortown and Nouale Lane were included, not only for new housing but also employment sites.

Fast forward to today.

Taylor Wimpey has been granted outline permission for their proposed development at Nouale Lane (behind the Elm Tree Public House) and more recently, were allowed to reduce the percentage of "affordable housing" to 33% rather than 50% on the grounds of "viability".

No application for planning has been made for the "employment land" and to date, there is no sight of any "spade in the ground".

Crest Nicholson were granted a "hybrid" planning application for detailed consent for "Phase 1" of the part of the site at Moortown in their ownership and outline consent for the remainder. No application has come forward for the part of the site that is in the ownership of Hampshire County Council which is also scheduled for housing, nor the proposed "employment land".



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CLLR PHILIP DAY, CHAIR  
OF COMMITTEE



Crest Nicholson has sold part of the site (now referred to as “Phase 1A”) to Persimmon Homes (who would build houses as “Charles Church”) and so a further application is awaited and again, there is no sign of any “spade in the ground”.

If both these sites were actually developed (i.e. built out as per the existing consents), we would have a minimum of about 850 new dwellings in Ringwood.

That however is not enough to meet the Government’s target for building new houses in New Forest District Council’s area and so the new draft Local Plan envisages further housing south of Moortown Lane and in “Grey Belt” areas such as land adjoining Hampshire Hatches Lane, currently designated as Green Belt but also in close proximity to protected sites (RAMSAR and SSSIs).

Quite how and to what extent Local Government Reorganisation will play a part in all of this remains to be seen, but Town Councillors remain committed to protecting and preserving the character of Ringwood to the best of our ability.

In that regard, we do of course now have the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan but sadly, there have been a number of occasions when its policies have not been applied by NFDC’s planning committee and that is something that the Town Council is pursuing.

On a more mundane note, we continue to monitor and comment upon every single planning application within the Parish.

I have previously noted a trend towards applications to demolish conservatories (usually constructed without the need for a planning consent) and to replace with an extension. In the last year, we have noted an increasing trend towards applications to extend houses and/or to convert garages or outbuildings to provide “additional living accommodation” or “home working space” – many of these being retrospective.

In reality, a significant number of these applications are to provide “Airbnb” accommodation – a trend that we understand but do not entirely approve of!



## FOCUS ON

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OF COMMITTEE



Not surprisingly, given the cost of “upsizing” (stamp duty to name but one), more and more householders are choosing to extend their homes upwards, sideways and in all other directions rather than simply buy a bigger house.

There is little if anything that we at RTC can do about this but in consequence there is an ever-decreasing number of smaller homes (and bungalows) available for cash-strapped first-time buyers and older people looking to “downsize”.

Ringwood clearly remains a highly desirable place to live which is wonderful but not if the consequence is that young people born and bred here have no realistic chance of buying a house here without substantial help from the “Bank of Mum and Dad”.

Quite how Local Government re-organisation will impact the planning regime remains to be seen (other than it is highly unlikely that planning applications will be determined in Lyndhurst in future).

Finally, my thanks to Those of my fellow councillors who diligently consider all applications in advance of our meetings and let me have their initial thoughts and concerns, thereby concentrating minds and significantly shortening our meetings!

Members of the Public who attend meetings in person to both support and oppose applications – you are always most welcome!

Our Deputy Town Clerk Jo Hurd and Meetings Administrator Nicola Vodden whose advice and assistance is invaluable.



CLLR ANDREW BRIERS,  
CHAIR OF COMMITTEE



FOCUS ON

# RECREATION, LEISURE AND OPEN SPACES 2025/2026 – CHAIR'S REPORT

I am pleased to present the annual report of the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee for 2026.

Whilst there are many open spaces and facilities within the town provided by the Town Council, I would like to comment on the following.

## **Carvers & Carvers Clubhouse**

As mentioned last year, I am pleased to say that yet again, with the manager's hard work and enthusiasm, this facility still continues to deliver to the residents of Ringwood. Activities continue and are well attended by the families of Ringwood despite the ongoing economic difficulties both the council and residents are experiencing.

Under the leadership of Cllr Rae Fredrick, Cllr Mary DeBoos and members of the working party, we continue to develop an overall strategy for the enhancement of this open space.

We are pleased that Carvers Courts opened last July providing a Multi-Use Games Area for our residents. Thank you to those Councillors involved in this project. Other environmental enhancements such as tree and wildflower planting continue to improve this open space.

I'm also pleased to advise that Planning Permission has been granted for a new grounds facility building to provide modern facilities to the Council's ground staff. We look forward to the next step for this project.

As always, we will continue to source grant funding to further enhance the facilities and services, both at the clubhouse and Carvers in general.



CLLR ANDREW BRIERS,  
CHAIR OF COMMITTEE



## FOCUS ON

### Events

Events in Ringwood have continued such as the annual firework display, the Christmas market and light switch on. All of these events were very well attended, and these events will continue this year. This year we also look forward to the 800th Market Charter Anniversary on Sunday 12th July 2026.

It is thanks to the Events Manager and assistant, Events sub-committee, officers, the voluntary support of residents and associations such as the Carnival, Rotary Club, Round Table, Men's Shed and last but not least, the generous local sponsors that these events continue.

### General Items

I must again congratulate Ringwood Actions for Climate Emergency (RACE) and their supporters for their ongoing commitment and for all the projects they are involved in. I thank you for all of your efforts.

Last, but by no means least, I must mention and thank our office staff and grounds team (including those who have recently retired or moved to pastures new).

It is thanks to their hard work and ongoing commitment that our town and facilities are something to be very proud of. They continue to work hard on projects such as replacement play equipment, the Poulner Lakes access track, the cemetery development plan alongside Cllr Philip Day and the open space management policy with Cllr Mary Deboos.

I hope the residents of Ringwood will again recognise our efforts through 2025-26 and will support us in the year ahead. I would also like to thank the residents and voluntary groups of Ringwood who help with community projects, litter picking, reporting defects etc. Your help is much appreciated.

Finally, I would also like to thank members of the committee for their help and contributions throughout the last year.

That concludes the annual report from the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee.



CLLR JOHN HAYWOOD,  
CHAIR OF THE  
STAFFING COMMITTEE



FOCUS ON

# STAFFING COMMITTEE 2025/26

## CHAIR'S REPORT

The Staffing Committee normally meets twice-yearly and when required to handle business of a Human Resources nature relating to the town council's staff. Business can be of a quite technical nature – something that can be dry but is essential for the smooth running of the council and for the welfare of our staff.

Last year I reported that 2024-25 had been a year of celebrations and change – 2025-26 continued in the same vein.

July saw Charly Keith join us as Carvers Clubhouse and Events Manager, taking over from Charmaine Bennett in this role. Charmaine moved to take up her new role as Town Clerk, which after a handover allowed Chris Wilkins to retire. We thank Chris for his service and wish him well in his retirement.

In August, Ebony Hooper joined Charly's team as Carvers Clubhouse and Events Assistant.

In September Paul Ventham our Grounds Manager left us to take up a similar job elsewhere but with a much shorter commute for him. Thanks go to Paul for his decades of service and we wish him all the best in his new job. His replacement Tony Robinson joined us in October.

December saw our new Finance Manager Michelle Gordon join us.

March was the month that we celebrated 20 years of service from Lisa Spencer. We thank her for her long service long service to the council and the people of Ringwood.

On behalf of the Staffing Committee I'd like to welcome all new joiners and send thanks to leavers for their service to the people of Ringwood.

I'd particularly like to thank Chris Wilkins and Rory Fitzgerald for making themselves available to help the council after their retirement.

# CONTACT US

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### **Office Hours**

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday: 9:00am -  
4:00pm  
Closed Tuesdays