



Ringwood Town Council

Annual Report 2025

(Presented to the Annual Town Assembly on 14th May 2025)

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TOWN ASSEMBLY 14th May 2025

Introduction by the Town Mayor Cllr Rae Frederick

Good evening, everyone,

It's a pleasure to welcome you all to our Annual Town Meeting — councillors, officers, residents, and friends. Thank you for taking the time to be here this evening to reflect on what we've achieved together and to look ahead to what's to come.

My report tonight is intended as a highlight reel of the past year, rather than a blow-by-blow account of everything the Council has done — not because I haven't done anything, but because the real work of the Town Council is done through its committees and working parties. Each of their chairmen will give full updates shortly.

When I first took on the role of Mayor, I'll admit — I was a little nervous. But I want to thank the Town Clerk, all our officers, and my fellow councillors for their guidance, assistance, and support throughout the year. You made the big job feel a lot less daunting.

Serving as Mayor of Ringwood has been an honour — and what a year it's been.

We began with the commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of D-Day, a deeply moving event where we lit the town beacon, now permanently sited in the War Memorial Garden. It will continue to be lit on special occasions — a lasting symbol of remembrance and community.

In May, we adopted the Carvers Masterplan after listening to residents and learning what you wanted for our recreation ground. There's plenty of exciting news to share about Carvers — more on that shortly.

In April, the Repair Café was launched — and what a triumph it's been. Month after month, Ringwood residents have brought in broken treasures for mending, saving heaps of waste from landfill. It's a brilliant example of practical community spirit in action.

In June, we had a memorable moment when a group of young eco-protesters marched through Ringwood, placards in hand, demanding the council take stronger action on environmental issues. Luckily for us, they were accompanied by their teachers and parents — so the revolution was both passionate and impeccably behaved! We have listened to them, and Ringwood is getting more eco-friendly.

Speaking of community spirit, I want to take a moment to thank our amazing volunteers. Ringwood is incredibly fortunate to have a network of volunteers who make things happen quietly, with little fanfare and a lot of heart. I salute their passion. But one group deserves special mention — the RACE to GREEN team. Their work is blooming all around town — at the Gateway, the Roundabout, in planters and hidden corners of green space. Their dedication brings colour and life to Ringwood in the most literal sense.

Looking ahead:

We were successful in securing funding from the Veolia Environmental Trust through the Landfill Communities Fund for a brand-new Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) at Carvers Recreation Ground. To be installed on the site of the existing tennis courts, this facility will support football, basketball, tennis, and netball — and will be free and open to the public. Work is due to begin in June or July 2025, and we aim to have it ready for the school summer holidays.

The grant also includes funding for pollinator-friendly planting, new trees and shrubs, and additional play equipment at the underused northern end of Carvers. If you visit now, you'll spot the new trees already planted outside the clubhouse and along the Carvers Lane path.

Hampshire is undergoing significant change with proposals for new unitary authorities aimed at improving efficiency. New Forest District Council is keen to keep the New Forest whole, with no boundary splits, and is proposing a rural unitary authority alongside Test Valley and Winchester. While no final decision has been made, we'll continue to work closely with District and County partners to secure the best outcomes for Ringwood.

2026 will mark 800 years since Ringwood was granted its Market Charter. That's a big birthday — and as a Council, we're beginning to explore how we might celebrate this historic milestone. We hope as many people as possible will get involved — it's a celebration that belongs to the whole town.

In closing:

Ringwood is a town with heart — and that heart beats strongest when we come together with purpose, care, and hope. As neighbours, as volunteers, and as proud residents of this wonderful town, you make Ringwood the place it is. My heartfelt thanks again to all my colleagues and to the people of Ringwood for their continued support.

Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee Annual Report by the Chairperson Cllr Andy Briers

May 2024 – May 2025

I am pleased to present the annual report of the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee for 2025.

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 Fredrick and members of the working party, we are continuing to develop an overall strategy for the enhancement of this open space. We are pleased that significant new funding has been secured for Multi-Use Games Area at Carvers Recreation Ground, as well as environmental enhancements such as solar panels and tree planting.

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

Long Lane

We, Ringwood Town Football Club and partners are continuing to progress the redevelopment of the facilities at Long Lane, as and the residents are no doubt aware, we are pleased to report that the new pavilion has been completed. Again, I would like to thank all those involved in the project, particularly the Town Clerk.

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. It is thanks to the Events Manager, 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.

I am also pleased to advise that the work to provide a new skate ramp at the North Poulner Play Area has started and we look forward to this new recreational facility. I give my thanks to a young Ringwood resident Finlay McCall and local organisations for all of their fundraising efforts.

Last, but by no means least, I must mention and thank our office staff and grounds team (including those who have recently retired). It is thanks to their hard work and ongoing commitment that our town and facilities are something to be very proud of.

I hope the residents of Ringwood have recognised our efforts through 2024-25 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.

Policy and Finance Committee

Annual Report by Chairperson Cllr Mary DeBoos

May 2024 – May 2025

It is a pleasure to present this report to the Town Assembly. Unfortunately, I cannot attend the meeting but am happy to reply to any questions that arise on my return.

Firstly, I would like to give huge thanks to Rory Fitzgerald our Finance Manager who retired at the end of April. He has throughout his time with Ringwood Town Council provided a great service and I have personally valued his support.

The management of each budget sits with our other Council Officers, all of whom pay great attention to delivering the maximum value they can at the same time as keeping a keen eye on the budget. As members of the Committee we would not be able to manage the oversight without the diligence of every budget holder.

As you might expect, the focus of the Committee is to advise on and monitor income and expenditure and hence the budget. It also:

- Oversees the Council's formal policies, Standing Orders, strategies and governance documents, including periodic reviews when deemed necessary. For this we are indebted to our Town Clerk for highlighting areas for review and bringing forward recommendations for the Committee to consider;
- Oversees all Council business of a legal nature;
- Manages the Council's Grant Aid scheme. This year we have awarded grants to:
 - Rotary Club of Ringwood towards the costs of the Christmas Eve
 - Carol event;
 - Forest Forge to support its participant programme drama and
 - theatre sessions;
 - Ringwood Veterans towards the costs of communications and IT;
 - Avon Valley Concerts towards the costs of classical music
 - concerts;
 - ERRFC towards the costs of green and energy efficient
 - equipment;
 - STARF towards the cost of its Financial Inclusion Advisor role
 - which supports families in crisis;
 - Youth Riders towards the costs of a gazebo and safety equipment;
 - FORIS (Friends of Ringwood Infants School) to purchase coloured
 - bibs for sports day;
 - Greening Ringwood towards the costs of making raised beds at
 - Greyfriars Garden;
 - Ringwood District Girl Guides towards the cost of replacement toilet
 - facilities;
 - Ringwood Round Table towards the cost of refurbishing Santa's
 - sleigh;

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

During the setting of the budget for 2025/2026 we felt the need to reduce our costs and as such the grant budget has been reduced to £2,000 from £5,200. Whilst we felt this was

necessary, we also believe that many new and small groups within the town can still benefit from modest grants.

So that takes me to the financials.

	Original Budget	Revised Budget
Revenue Expenditure	924,243	1,016,147
Capital Expenditure	235,000	341,865
Plus transfers to earmarked reserves	45,100	47,099
Less Revenue Income	-312,500	-282,062
Less Capital Income (grants)	-153,633	-276,041
Less transfers from earmarked reserves	-94,685	-166,710
Net budget requirement	643,525	680,298
Funded by:		
Council Tax	643,525	643,525
Plus transfer from the General Reserve	0	36,773

Our deficit against the original budget is almost entirely due to reduced income from cemetery receipts and lack of rental income from 92, Southampton Road. However, early indications (prior to completion of audit) are that the actual deficit to be funded from the General Reserve will be significantly less than the figure shown in the revised budget.

Included in our income for 2024/2025 have been successful grants for the development of Carvers Recreation Ground in line with our Masterplan for the site.

The Council is in a relatively strong financial position but is constrained in its ability to increase income whilst, like everyone, is struggling with the pressures of inflation.

Before we started the process of setting the 2025/2026 budget, we undertook a review of all our assets, expenditure and income to ascertain whether there are further opportunities to reduce spend, increase money in or to utilise our assets more effectively. As a result, we have:

- invested from our buildings reserve in the refurbishment of 92 Southampton Road to improve the rental income. I would like to thank Cllr Janet Georgiou and Chris Wilkins, our Town Clerk, for all their work to make this happen
- we have reviewed and increased our cemetery fees having done a thorough comparison with others in the area. Thank to Cllr Philip Day for his work on this.

We hope that these changes will have a positive impact on the budget for 2025/2026. We also look forward to seeing further funds.

Planning, Town and Environment Committee

Annual Report by the Chairperson Cllr Philip Day

May 2024 – May 2025

Headline News

This must of course be our success in having the **Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan** (“RNP”) formally adopted as “policy” having undergone Inspection (with very few modifications) and a referendum that saw a very substantial majority vote in favour.

My congratulations (again) to all the volunteers (far too many to mention by name) who gave up huge amounts of their time to bring the plan to its conclusion but special thanks to my fellow Councillors Mary DeBoos who took on the onerous task of overseeing the plan, Cllr John Haywood who chaired the Steering Group and of course our Deputy Clerk Jo Hurd who dealt with all the administrative aspects and provided sterling advice throughout. I am also particularly pleased to note that despite concerns voiced in the early stages about the time it would take to bring the plan together and the cost of the same, the final version was adopted in almost record time and well within the Town Council’s allocated budget.

There is however good news and not so good.....

The good:

The RNP is NOT a Town Council policy – it forms part of both New Forest District Council and the New Forest National Park Authority policies and must therefore be taken into account in determining relevant planning applications (including all new builds) falling within the Parish of Ringwood and from now on, 25% (as opposed to 15%) of CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) charged on developments within the Parish will be paid to RTC which will help fund our own capital projects.

The not so good:

NFDC are under huge pressure to approve housing developments and do not currently have the required 5 year “housing supply”.

The National Policy Planning Framework (recently revised by the Government) talks about “tilted balance” – in plain English, this means granting applications for “sustainable developments” even if they are not compliant with policies – the drive is to “build, build, build!”

We saw the effect of this when the Hybrid (part Outline and part Detailed) planning application for the strategic site at Moortown came forward very shortly after formal adoption of the plan. Despite our contention that the application failed to satisfy TEN different policies in the Local Plan (including the RNP), permission was granted.

The future of the Plan

The RNP remains under (our) continuous review and we are already considering amendments to clarify the status of so-called “study rooms”. We note that some developers appear to be in the habit of including “study rooms” in houses that are

proposed to be sold on the open market but not in “affordable” housing and our concern is that this is being used as a device to reduce the requirements for phosphate mitigation and parking provision (to name but two) as these are linked to the number of bedrooms that are proposed.

Local Plans – NFDC and NFNPA

Despite the forthcoming changes to Local Government organisation in Hampshire (the creation of a single strategic authority along with a series of Unitary authorities combining two, three or more of the existing Districts), both NFDC and the NFNPPA are pressing ahead with revisions to their Local Plans. This process is at an early stage but we have made representations about the various proposals.

Strategic Sites

Moortown

I have already mentioned that planning has been granted but another question relates to the parts of the site owned by Hampshire County Council earmarked for housing and employment. Quite how the forthcoming “devolution” will affect those parts remains to be seen.

Nouale Lane (land behind the Elm Tree)

We await (as I write) consideration of an application to amend the plans that have outline approval which includes a substantial reduction in the number of affordable dwellings. However, the outline consent was granted before the adoption of the RNP and again, it remains to be seen what effect that might have on the overall proposals. My thanks also to Cllr Janet Georgiou who has done a great deal of work with regard to flooding on this site and the changes in ground water that we have seen in recent times.

Snails Lane

Although outside the Parish, we are again supporting Ellingham, Harbridge and Ibsley Parish Council in their opposition to the new application – the original was refused consent some years ago. At the time of writing, we await a date for the NFDC Committee meeting.

Other important sites

The “Regal Cinema/Old Town Hall/Corn Exchange”

Call it what you will, this neglected building has blighted the Market Place for some 20 years. We are pleased that locally based company “Halo” has not only acquired the building but has engaged with RTC throughout the last several months to discuss the re-development proposals – if only other developers adopted the same attitude! Again, at the time of writing, we await a date for consideration of the latest proposals.

New House, Market Place/West Street

A proposal to add another storey to this building did not meet with our approval for a variety of reasons. The application was refused but on technical grounds relating to the need for a “flood risk sequential test!”

Planning applications generally

We continue to monitor every single planning and licensing application made in the Parish along with applications for works on trees subject to preservation orders or within the conservation area and submit our views to the relevant authorities. We see a continuing number of applications to convert conservatories into extensions and to enlarge sometimes quite small dwellings (in particular bungalows) into substantial dwellings – sometimes even going from one or two bedrooms to five.

Given the serious lack of smaller, cheaper homes (in the true sense of the word “affordable” as opposed to the technical meaning of, in effect “social housing”) in the locality, this is in some senses to be regretted but we well understand the desire of home-owners to extend their properties as this is usually a far cheaper option than selling up and moving.

Other work

The Committee also oversees a number of projects, including plans to enhance bus shelters. My thanks here to Cllr Glenys Turner for her work which will hopefully see a number of the bus shelters re-furbished in the not-too-distant future.

Thanks to:

Ringwood Society, whose expertise and views assist the Committee greatly;

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.

And finally:

Who knows where the future might lie following devolution – might our planning applications be considered in Southampton, Winchester or somewhere even further away? Might a new Mayor of the Strategic Authority change everything?

What I do know is that your Planning Town and Environment Committee will continue to do all that it can to protect our heritage and green spaces and encourage and promote sustainable development of both housing and employment sites to provide for local people, particularly those of the next generation and beyond.

Cllr Philip Day
May 2025

Staffing Committee

Report by the Chairperson Cllr John Haywood

May 2024 – May 2025

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.

This has been a year of celebrations and change – and so the committee has been busier than usual.

October saw us celebrating the long service of four members of staff – total service adding up to 108 years. The recipients of our long service awards were – Stephen Smith (42 years), Jo Hurd (23 years), Helen Short (23 years), Paul Ventham (20 years). We thank them for their long service to the council and the people of Ringwood.

In February Kelvin Wentworth, our Grounds Manager, retired. We also thank Kelvin for his long and dedicated service and wish him well in retirement. Congratulations go to Paul Ventham for his promotion and for successfully taking over from Kelvin as Grounds Manager.

The rest of 2025 has seen more change – our Finance Manager, Rory Fitzgerald, retired in April. Steps are being taken to replace him. We thank Rory for his dedicated service and wish him well in his retirement.

Finally, later in 2025 we are expecting to see the retirement of our Town Clerk, Chris Wilkins. Chris is staying with us to manage the hand-over to his successor, who is Charmaine Bennett, the current Clubhouse and Events Manager. Congratulations go to Charmaine on obtaining this important post, and I am sure I can speak for the whole committee when I say that we are looking forward to working with her in her new role. Thanks also go to Chris for the managed handover.

I believe that the fact that we have appointed internal candidates for two of our vacant posts this year shows that we are a mature organisation and a good place to work – offering our employees development opportunities to progress their careers right here in Ringwood. We have found it quite challenging to obtain suitable external candidates for some posts which makes it really important that we retain our staff and give them room to develop their careers where we can, so that we can continue to be a well-run council providing the services that Ringwood residents want us to provide.