



RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

PROTOCOL FOR APPOINTMENT OF STUDENT ADVISORS IN ASSOCIATION WITH RINGWOOD SCHOOL

1. The Town Council believes it should embrace all sections of the community in its decision-making processes. To achieve this it has already implemented extensive consultation arrangements that involve the public on specific schemes and through questionnaires. In addition it has public participation arrangements that enable the public to speak on general issues prior to each meeting and during meetings on Agenda items. However these arrangements tend to provide an opportunity for the public to attend meetings or be involved on single issues and not on the overall decision-making processes of the Council. It is rare for young people to take advantage of the opportunities provided under these arrangements.
2. Councillors have also noted that for a variety of reasons, membership of the Council tends to comprise of the older generation. It appears that family and career requirements make it difficult for younger generations to give the level of commitment necessary to properly fulfil the role of a Town Councillor. This often means that the views of those young children and teenagers living at home are not put directly to the Council.
3. Notwithstanding the extensive networking by existing Councillors within the town and the community and the existing public involvement arrangements, Town Councillors recognise that as their own children have grown up, it becomes more and more difficult for them to be aware of the needs, requirements and aspirations of the younger generation. This can lead to claims of the Council being “out of touch” and not providing the services required.
4. The Town Council therefore looked at a number of options which would bring young people’s views into debates on a continuing basis prior to decisions being taken.
5. The easiest solution would have been to appoint a Youth Council serviced by the Town Council or indeed separately but comprising solely of young people. At best, this could only have been an advisory committee and would make recommendations to the Council. Its members would not, therefore, have been able to make direct presentations to Councillors or as a matter of course be present when final decisions are taken. The need to carry out further formal consultation before decisions are made would mean lengthening the decision-making process and the extra meetings would have required additional resource input from the Council and divert funding from service provision.
6. As an alternative the Council looked at co-opting young people as persons with a special interest to each of the Council’s committees. However, this was rejected on two counts. Firstly, if any of the students are under 18 they would be disqualified from being a Member since under the provisions of Sections 101 and 102 and also Section 79 of the Local Government Act 1972, persons under the age of 18 are not eligible for

membership of the Town Council. Secondly, persons co-opted to membership of a committee, as opposed to those co-opted to Council as a full member of the Council as a result of a casual vacancy, are not entitled to vote at decision-making committees of the Council. Therefore, any students over the age of 18 and co-opted to a decision-making committee would not be able to vote on any issue coming before that meeting. The Council believes that it would be difficult to persuade young people that having been co-opted to a committee they would not have equal rights with Councillors. Co-option with no right to vote would undermine the general principles of trying to involve young people in the Council's affairs. The Council believes it would certainly de-motivate the young people and therefore was not a route that it wished to follow.

7. Having rejected advisory Committees made up of young people and co-option to existing Committees the Council looked at other options. Its culture provides for officers to advise Councillors and Committee before decisions are taken. Decisions are not taken without regard to Officers advice. Councillors rely heavily on Officers, at all levels and others to give advice appropriate to their knowledge and experience.
8. For the past two years the Town Council has been working with students of Ringwood (Secondary) School on an ad hoc basis on accreditation for Fairtrade status and the Market Town Healthcheck for preparation of a Town Plan. The students role in these exercises was to give a young persons perspective on the issues. Councillors had been impressed with the level of knowledge, commitment and enthusiasm shown by the students on that work. It therefore became a sensible and natural progression for the Council to consider formalising the existing arrangement throughout the Council's decision making structures.
9. After careful thought about the issues, the Council decided that as there is no age bar or other restrictions affecting its ability to appoint advisors, this role would be more appropriate. It is specifically designed to enable young people to represent the views of the younger generation and provide their professional and knowledgeable input in exactly the same manner as Council officers. Importantly this arrangement will enable students to be present at the meetings at which decisions are taken, the timeframe for decision-making is not extended and there is little or no additional resource requirement placed upon the Town Council.
10. Some Councillors needed re-assurance that the roles were advisory, not decision making. Equally for existing staff it was important to define the role as one of putting a young person's viewpoint rather than the pure professional view provided by existing officers.
11. In order to implement its proposals the Council has decided to appoint two Student Advisors to each of its four main programme committees. The basis of the appointments are as follows:-
 - i) The appointment of the eight Student Advisors would be handled on behalf of the Town Council by Ringwood (Secondary) School (Ringwood School). Students apply for the posts and the school interviews, selects and nominates Students for formal appointment by the Town Council. Generally it is expected that the Town Council will simply ratify such appointments.

- ii) In the first instance, the appointments were for the period of 1 October 2007 to 31 July 2008 i.e. the end of the academic school year. In May 2008 and following a review of the benefits obtained during the pilot period the Council agreed to the annual appointment of Student Advisors to Committees as a permanent feature of its decision making processes.
- iii) On the review in May 2008 and for the purpose of clarity the Council confirmed that there should be no age limit for the appointment of Student Advisors subject to the School recognising that those nominated should be capable of undertaking the student advisors full role.
- iv) In order to ensure a proper balance of views of residents a new requirement was introduced in May 2008 about residential qualifications of advisors. This states that at the time of appointment, at least six student advisors are resident within the town boundary and the remaining two be appointed from any students attending the school irrespective of their place of residence and also that non-resident students should only advise a Committee along with a resident.
- v) Whilst the students are appointed by Ringwood School, they will be expected to represent the views of all young people in Ringwood, including those who have not reached an age to attend Ringwood School and also those who have left the school. The students will also be required to represent the views of former students who are currently resident outside the town.
- vi) The students' role will be as advisors to the committee in the same way as any other specialist and professional is appointed to advise Members. They are encouraged to give their views in the same way as Town Council officers or any other person appointed to assist Members coming to reasoned conclusions and decisions.
- vii) As advisors the students will not always have to leave when confidential matters are discussed. However, there will be some occasions when students will be requested to leave particularly, when certain staffing and perhaps other confidential items are discussed. This is no different from the practice adopted for the Council's staff.
- viii) Student Advisors will receive copies of agenda, minutes and reports in exactly the same way as Councillors and other officers.
- ix) The students will be expected to discuss issues with other young people but they must also comply with the same confidentiality rules as applied to officers and Councillors. When the new National Code of Conduct for Officers is brought into force, this will also apply to Student Advisors.
- x) Student Advisors will be provided with a copy of the Council's Members' Handbook for their personal use.
- xi) Whilst Student Advisors will not be remunerated, the Town Council will be meeting travel costs to enable them to attend meetings.

- xii) Details of Student Advisors will be published on the Council's website. However, the Students home addresses and telephone numbers will not be disclosed without the consent of the students and their parents.
12. For ease of reference and a more detailed explanation of the process leading up to the selection of Student Advisors, the following documents are appended to this Protocol:-

Appendix 1 – Extract from Minutes of the Town Council's Policy & Finance Committee held on 17 May 2006.

Appendix 2 – Copy of the Town Clerk's report to Policy & Finance Committee held on 30 May 2007.

Appendix 3 – Extract from the Minutes of Policy & Finance Committee held on 30 May 2007.

Appendix 4 – Copy of email dated 25 July 2007 to Assistant Head Teacher, Ringwood School, setting out formal invitation to School to appoint Student Advisors.

Appendix 5 – Copy of Press Release number 14/07 issued by the Town Council on 31 July 2007.

Appendix 6 – Extract from Ringwood School's website together with a letter sent to all Year 12 and Year 13 students inviting those students to apply for posts as Student Advisors.

Appendix 7 – Extract from the autumn half-term 2007 Ringwood School News celebrating the appointment of Students.

September 2007 (updated Jan 2010)

Ref: P&F 21.05.13 F/4268

Terry Simpson
Town Clerk
Ringwood Town Council
Greenways
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APPENDIX 1**Extract from Policy & Finance Committee on 17 May 2006****F/3935****STUDENT / ELDERLY ADVISORS**

The Town Clerk suggested to members that, as a further way of engaging with the community, the Council could take the initiative and invite interested persons to advise committees on agenda items. Advisors would not be co-opted as members of a committee but would be able to contribute to the discussion, with final decisions still being made by members. The Town Clerk felt that such a scheme could generate goodwill in the town and would be a learning experience for both members and advisors. However, before any investigations were carried out on such an arrangement, he sought members' views on an initiative of this type. There was some concern as to how such a scheme would be operated and it was agreed that the Town Clerk should bring a report to a future meeting outlining the suggested scheme in more detail.

RECOMMENDED: That the Town Clerk prepare a report outlining in detail a scheme to appoint advisors to all or some of the Council's committees.

Appendix 2

POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE – 30 MAY 2007

STUDENT/YOUNG PEOPLE ADVISORS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members of the old Council will recall that in May 2006, the Town Clerk reported on a possible initiative to further involve the community in the Council's business. A copy of minute number F/3935 of the Policy & Finance Committee held on 17 May 2006, is attached as an Appendix to this report.
- 1.2 Unfortunately, owing to other pressures, it has not been possible to bring further details to the Town Council until this meeting. Paragraph 2 below outlines a possible way forward for Members' consideration.

2. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

- 2.1 Over the past few years, the Town Council has moved steadily to a position where there is more formal involvement of members of the public in the Council's decision-making process. Councillors have always had informal contact with residents but increasingly the Government and indeed the public are looking for a much more formal arrangement, which enables the public to be consulted and involved in the decision-making before local authorities make those decisions.
- 2.2 In general terms, the majority of Councillors throughout the country and indeed in Ringwood are in the 50+ age group. There are, however, a number of Councillors younger than this but these are in the minority. This is not surprising as the younger adults usually have very heavy family and professional commitments, which mean that they do not have the time to carry out Council duties.
- 2.3 One group which is totally under represented is the under 20 age group. However, over the past two years particularly, the Town Council has worked more closely with young people. It has young people on both the Fairtrade Working Party and the Youth and Community Focus Group for the Town Plan. As those young people have become more confident, they have made significant contributions in both of these areas and the Council has benefited from their involvement.
- 2.4 The conventional route for involvement of young people is by the establishment of Youth Councils. The difficulty with this type of Council is that they are made up solely of young people who have purely an advisory role. Those Youth Councils tend to be advised by Council officers and they themselves simply make recommendations through to the conventional decision-making body on which the young people are not represented. Inevitably this reduces the benefits of the young people's involvement as they are not present when the final decisions are made. In addition, it calls for the creation of another body which will need to be serviced, provided with reports and given appropriate administrative support. This has significant resource implications.
- 2.5 A crucial element of involvement of any group of persons is the ability to be involved when decisions are taken. The persons concerned do not necessarily need to feel that they have made the decision but that they have

been involved in the decision-making process and their views have been considered. A more direct approach would be to put young people into a position of giving their advice and perspective on issues considered by Councillors at the decision-making Committees. In order to achieve this it would be possible to treat the young people as specialist advisors and invite them to attend Committee meetings as young people advisors. They would receive the same agendas and papers as Councillors (except confidential items). The only additional cost to the Council will be the cost of printing and any payment that the Town Council might wish to make towards their expenses in attending meetings.

- 2.6 The benefit of this arrangement is that the young people have direct access to and are involved in a decision-making process. Councillors receive their advice direct and they hear the reasons for decisions taken. Importantly, however, they will not be asked to vote on any proposal and their involvement will be as advisors and not decision-makers, which latter function will continue to properly rest with Councillors.
- 2.7 The proposal for the involvement of young people in the Council's Committee structure has been discussed briefly with the Headteacher of Ringwood School. She is excited about the proposal and would be happy to facilitate this further link-up between the Council and the School. There are issues which would need to be determined, particularly with regard to the arrangements for the appointment of any advisors and the number of those advisors. For example, it might be better for two young people to be appointed to each Committee since this will be less daunting to the individuals themselves if they attend together rather than on their own. There is also the question of appointment of those young people. Traditionally, the Council would appoint its own advisors. In the case of young people, a decision would need to be taken as to whether they are nominated by the School and appointed by the Council or whether they are directly appointed by the School.
- 2.8 Clearly there are advantages to the Town Council in the involvement of more members of the community in the decision-making process. In so far as the involvement of young people is concerned, the continuing improvement in working arrangements between the Council and Ringwood School gives the opportunity to take advantage of the knowledge and views of young people. However, it will be important for any arrangements to have the total support of the School as well as the Council.

3. **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 In view of the comments at paragraph 2 above, it is suggested that it would be appropriate for further discussions to be undertaken with the School prior to any final decisions being taken and it is **RECOMMENDED** that a small Working Party of say two Councillors, together with the Town Clerk, be appointed to meet with the Headteacher of Ringwood School to discuss the possible appointment of young people advisors to each of the Council's Committees.

For further information, please contact:

Terry Simpson
Town Clerk
Tel: 01425 473883

Extract from Policy & Finance Committee Minutes on 30 May 2007

F/4114

STUDENT ADVISORS

Members considered the Town Clerk's report (Annex 'C'), which recommended that young people be invited to attend Committee meetings as specialist advisors, to enable them to become more involved in the decision-making process and allow Members to hear their views.

RECOMMENDED: That Cllr Heron and Cllr Ford be appointed to meet with the Town Clerk and the Headteacher of Ringwood School to discuss the possible appointment of young people advisors to each of the Council's Committees.

Subject: FW: Student Advisors

From: Town Council
Sent: 25 July 2007 12:46
To: 'Margaret Olive'
Cc: 'office@ringwood.hants.sch.uk'; Christine Ford; Jeremy Heron
Subject: Student Advisors

Dear Margaret,

We were very pleased to meet with you on Thursday and for the very positive response to the Town Council's initiative to try to involve students of the School in Council business.

As you know, Councillors Mrs Ford and Jeremy Heron were asked to meet with you to discuss the arrangements, which were generally set out in the report previously copied to you. They will now report back to Council in September when I expect that the arrangements we discussed will be agreed so that students can be appointed to attend meetings from 1 October.

In terms of operational details, we would expect to move the appointments forward on the following basis:-

- 1) Two students would be appointed as student advisors to each of our four main committees which are Policy & Finance; Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces; Planning, Town & Environment; and Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee. In addition, the student advisors would be encouraged to attend Council meetings as members of the public, although physically they would not normally take any part in proceedings at those meetings. Attached is a copy of the programme of meetings for the current municipal year through to May 2008, together with a further copy of the Terms of Reference of each committee. The programme of meetings beyond May 2008 will be fixed in the spring of that year.
- 2) The School will be responsible for interviewing and selecting the eight students who will take part in this initiative. Members of the Town Council will subsequently meet with the selected students to give a general overview of the work we are doing and our expectations of the involvement of the students in the Council's affairs. The Town Council will expect students to be appointed for the whole of the period from October through to July 2008 and clearly that will mean that the students will need to have a commitment to be involved. I would emphasise that the Town Council understands that the students may not be able to make every meeting, indeed there are occasions when Councillors have to apologise for non-attendance. However, we would expect students to attend most of the meetings of the committee to which they have been appointed.
- 3) Whilst the students will be appointed by the School they will be expected to represent the views of all the young people of Ringwood, including those who have not reached an age to attend the School and also those who left the School. They will also need to represent the views of students who attend the School but are resident outside the town.
- 4) The students will not be formal co-opted members of the committee and will not have voting rights. However, they will act in the capacity of advisors to the committee in the same way as any other specialist is appointed to advise Members. They will, therefore, be encouraged to give their views on proposals in the same way as Town Council officers or other professional staff appointed to assist Members coming to reasoned conclusions and decisions.
- 5) As advisors to a committee, the students will not always have to leave when confidential matters are discussed. However, there will be some occasions when we will need to ask the students to leave. I hope that they will understand the position especially as some staff also have to leave meetings when confidential items are discussed.
- 6) Student advisors will receive copies of agendas, minutes and reports in exactly the same way as Councillors and for this purpose, we will of course need to have an address to which we can send the papers.
- 7) Whilst the Council expects the students to discuss issues with other young people, any information received of a confidential nature must not be disclosed. As advisors, they will

generally be expected to abide by the same rules of conduct as Council staff. A new national Code is being prepared and for the moment we would normally apply to staff the same Code of Conduct as applies to Councillors and copies of that will be made available as part of the Handbook.

- 8) Whilst the Town Council would not ordinarily remunerate student advisors we would want to make sure that the students could get to the meetings and home from meetings safely. If this necessitates the use of a taxi then the cost would be met by the Town Council. We will discuss this with each student as necessary.
- We will provide all student advisors with a copy of our Members' Handbook, which is an A4 loose leaf folder containing various rules, protocols and documents relating to the administration of the Town Council.
- 10) In recognition of the work that the students will be undertaking, the Town Council will present each one with a Certificate of Appointment as an advisor and which we hope will be of use to them in future years and indeed as recognition of the work that they have put into the community within the town.

I hope I have covered all of the main points of our discussion and indeed of the arrangements that we will need to put in place. I believe that the Town Council is probably one of the first, if not the first, Town Council to involve students in its affairs in such a detailed manner and in particular at committee meetings which make decisions. The Town Council believes that this is good for the community and it will help Councillors to understand the needs and aspirations of young people and will lead to better decision-making. I am currently working on a short press release to issue in the next week about the arrangement and intend to follow that up at the end of September with another one with a photograph of the students meeting the Council and formally launching the initiative. I will let you have a copy of the draft of the first press release as it will need to emphasise our partnership working and will, therefore, need to have some quotes from both the Town Council and the School to reflect our respective thoughts on the arrangement.

ours sincerely,

Terry Simpson



Ringwood Town Council

TOWN CLERK GONE MAD?

“He’s mad, very mad – or perhaps visionary” said Cllr Jeremy Heron, Chairman of Ringwood Town Council’s Policy Committee. “First he persuaded us to let the public speak at all of our meetings – heresy to some – and now he has got us to agree to appoint two young students as Youth Advisors to every one of our Committees to tell us what the young people really want! But whether mad or visionary I think we have made a good decision. The students will effectively be young officers and like other officers, they advise us and we will consider that advice before decisions are made.”

“Visionary” mused Cllr Mrs Ford, the other Town Councillor appointed to oversee implementation of the scheme. “Most Councillors are now of an age where our children have grown up and left home. We don’t therefore have the same everyday contact with young people as we do with the older generation. We recognise that and are simply doing something about it. Our former Mayor Cllr Danny Cracknell has long urged us to listen to young people and hopefully this is a step in that direction. The students will represent all young people resident in the area and not just those who attend Ringwood School.”

Margaret Olive, Assistant Head of Ringwood School has welcomed the initiative. “Over the past couple of years the Town Council has been asking students to attend various meetings such as their Fairtrade Working Party, the Festival Committee and also their Town Plan Focus Groups. Clearly Councillors feel that young people have something to contribute and the School is delighted that it will be appointing, not just nominating, two young people to each of the Town Council’s programme Committees. The eight students will be appointed from September through to next July and will receive all of the same papers as Councillors and will speak at Committees in exactly the same way as the Town Council’s own Officers. The scheme fits in with the new broad based teaching curriculum adopted at the School and we are very proud to be involved in this partnership initiative. We think we are probably one of the first, if not the first School, that has been given such a major role in Town Council business, which surely shows that the Town Council believe that young people have a valuable contribution to make to the wellbeing of the town”.

Further information please contact:

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14/07

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Third prize for "Global Dawning"



Over six months of planning and hard work paid off as the school's "Global Dawning" float was awarded 3rd prize in the topical, humorous and feature category at the Ringwood Carnival. Through her endless amount of enthusiasm, CTA in Expressive Arts, Mrs Lax, organised the group of students and staff involved with putting the float together. She said: "It was a fantastic day and all the students really enjoyed themselves. The atmosphere was tremendous and

Beyond The Classroom • Student Voice

Information	Global Interactions	Active Minds	World With Words	Creativity	Numerical Networking	Horizons	Beyond The Classroom
PTA	Languages	HSC	English	Technology	Business	Enterprise/WRE	Student Voice
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"Ringwood Town Council is probably one of the first, if not the first, Town Council to involve students in its affairs in such a detailed manner and in particular at committee meetings which make decisions. The Town Council believes that this is good for the community and it will help Councillors to understand the needs and aspirations of young people and will lead to better decision-making. We will, therefore, want to try to put Ringwood more on the map again."
(Terry Simpson, Clerk to the Council)

Student Voice

There is an opportunity for 8 students to represent all the young people in Ringwood as Student Advisors on the four main Town Council Committees. Two students would be appointed as student advisors to each of our four main committees which are:

- Policy & Finance;
- Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces; Planning;
- Town & Environment;
- Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee.

In addition, the student advisors would be encouraged to attend Full Council meetings as members of the public.

The School will be responsible for interviewing and selecting the eight students who will take part in this initiative. Members of the Town Council will subsequently meet with the selected students to give a general overview of the work we are doing and our expectations of the involvement of the students in the Council's affairs. The Town Council will expect students to be appointed for the whole of the period from October through to July 2008 and clearly that will mean that the students will need to have a commitment to be involved. I would emphasise that the Town Council understands that the students may not be able to make every meeting; indeed there are occasions when Councillors have to apologise for non-attendance. However, we would expect students to attend most of the meetings of the committee to which they have been appointed.





Ringwood in the News

All the latest news from
Ringwood School
~Specialist Language College~



Autumn half term 2007

In this edition...

Pirates, community projects,
cricket, sailing and more!



Students join council to share their views

Students will get to have their say on the future of Ringwood as part of a pioneering initiative by the Town Council to allow young people to sit as advisors on its committees.

Two Sixth Form students will be joining each of four committees: Harriet King and Amy Lowry Carter will be sitting on the Planning, Town and Environment Committee, Rachel Giles and James Fullick will be sitting on the Policy and Finance Committee, Corrina Groves and Ryan Montgomery will be sitting on the Town Plan Coordinating Committee, and Charlotte Fleming and Beth Scrivens will be sitting on the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee.

Town Clerk, Terry Simpson, said: "This is all new ground. But it is vital to have the youth of Ringwood have their say on matters and policies which could ultimately shape the future.

"I believe that the Town Council is probably one of the first, if not the first, Town Council to involve students in its affairs in such a detailed manner and in particular at committee meetings which make decisions. The Town Council believes that this is good for the community and it will help Councillors to understand the needs and aspirations of young people and lead to better decision-making."

As advisors to the council, the students will be expected to attend committee



meetings and represent the views of all young people in Ringwood, including those who have not reached school age and those who have left. Ryan Montgomery said: "I believe it is a fantastic opportunity to put both my views as well as those of my peers to the Town Council. I feel that often the views of young people are overlooked and wish to prove that young people can, in fact, make a positive contribution to the development of the community as well as a positive contribution to society as a whole." ■