



# Ringwood Town Council

Annual Report 2016

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**COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN'S ANNUAL REPORTS  
FOR TOWN ASSEMBLY 25th MAY 2016**

**The  
Town Mayor of Ringwood**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

Every Town Mayor's Annual Report should begin with a sincere expression of thanks. Not wishing to single out any one person for mention I would request the Town Clerk to convey the grateful thanks of this Council for the very hard endeavours put in by all members of staff and please to emphasis acknowledgement of their devotion to duty for the betterment of the town.

I also pay credit to all members of this Council. Your commitment to the work of the Council exhibits the finest example to be found in any Councillors. Throughout the year Councillors have worked very effectively on behalf of their constituents. This time last year we were welcoming new Councillors onto the Council, those Councillors have proved their worth and justified the faith placed in them by the people who supported their membership of the Council. They are no longer new Councillors. I would like to commend the attendance and contribution of Ringwood's Town Council Student Advisors. They and what they have said has been greatly valued.

Staff and Councillors give confidence to the people of the town that the onward progress of Ringwood Town Council is maintained.

The past year has been a busy one for the Council. Notable and praise-worthy events have continued to ensure that Ringwood remains at the very top of the Social and Community Events league. Fanfair for Spring, Armed Forces Day, Churches Together Family Fun Day, Ringwood Carnival, Bonfire Night, Christmas Fun Day, Special Markets and the Christmas Eve Carol Singing have show-cased the Town in a marvellous way. The people of Ringwood certainly know how to celebrate and commemorate. We must again extend immense thanks to all the volunteers who bring to fruition the events they plan.

The Chairman of the various Town Council committees will give their reports and I am sure will mention the two special occasions held on Carvers, the opening of The Place youth venue and the refurbished and enhanced skate park. The Planning Committee has been exercised when deliberating local plans, there will be much to consider in the months to come. The public can be assured that Chairman, Vice-Chairman and members of the three committees have been diligent in the execution of their duties, and I thank them. Perhaps the high spot of Ringwood Town Council was the holding of a Council Meeting in the open-air, something which folk still mention when I talk to them.

Members may be interested to know that as your Town Mayor in the Mayoral year I attended 65 official engagements, meeting Ringwood people of all ages, from youngsters at Pre-School to residents having reached 100 years and beyond. With the Mayoress we were pleased to share in church services as well as making a visit to Ringwood Brewery. I was able to spend time in the opening of some new Ringwood businesses. It was enjoyable celebrating the WI birthday with Crowe WI and on a number of occasions with members of the Ringwood Branch of the Royal British Legion, and being a member of the audience at various concerts.

I have spent the entire Mayoral allowances and more in supporting local Ringwood activities. I estimate that on official functions I spent 130 hours which is approaching four working weeks. I have counted being Town Mayor of Ringwood one of the highlights of my life, it has been a privilege and an immense honour.

I conclude by repeating my very sincere thanks to all.

Cllr Michael Thierry  
**Town Mayor of Ringwood**  
**Wednesday, 25th May, 2016**

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## POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

### REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN CLLR JEREMY HERON

Ladies and gentlemen, Town Mayor and fellow Councillors I have pleasure in presenting the report of the Policy and Finance Committee for the municipal year 2015/16. Year on year I say this however I have tried to keep the format similar to previous years for ease of comparison.

The precept for 2015/16 was £468,593 against expenditure of £641,837 plus capital expenditure of £743,715. Income amounted to £237,445 plus receipts towards capital expenditure of £658,766 and this gave a net expenditure of £489,343. This expenditure was funded through the precept along with a transfer from reserves of £20,749. The income figure includes the transitional grant from NFDC which dropped from £29,983 to £19,989 and in this final year reduces further to £9,995.

Investment income for the year remains low, at £1,317.80, down again on the previous year but then I feel that it will be some considerable time before that changes. Whilst investment returns remain low the Council continues to hold the asset of the building plot and it would currently appear to be prudent to retain this as one hopes that that, at list, is appreciating.

Variance between budget and out-turn and this year there is a net under spend of £29,686 against the original budget.

Revenue expenditure broken down into committees was:

Policy & Finance	£ 372,879.
Recreation, Leisure & Open Space	£ 254,483.
Planning, Town & Environment	£ 14,475.

The town councils bank balance remained healthy although slightly reduced as we have not concluded the sale of the plot to the rear of Greenways.

Total Balance @ 31/03/15	£ 377,593
Total Balance @ 31/03/16	£ 356,844
Public Loans Board (Fixed rate 3.4% over 25 Years) [Balance at end of last year £-266,830]	£-255,007
Loan for land purchase (Fixed rate 3.03% over 25 Years)	£-187,500.

Reporting on the Mayors allowance, as we agreed that we would when the title was created, expenditure was £1,040 which exactly equates to the budget although there is a further £100 held as an emergency contingency and this was not spent.

Draft accounts, for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 were presented at the Policy and Finance meeting to be held on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2016 and are available with the minutes of that meeting they will also be available on the Town Councils web site.

It would be wrong not to mention, in this report, the capital schemes that were delivered by Ringwood Town Council. The first, and one that I was delighted to see brought to fruition, was the Youth Building which this town has long aspired to provide; the scheme was delivered through the generosity and support of Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council and fund raising by young people organised through Ringwood School. This scheme had a gross cost of £532,302.

Our second capital expenditure was to purchase additional land adjoining the sports ground at Long Lane and thus securing that area not only for current sports men and women but for future generations.

The final capital project was the long overdue rebuilding of the skate park at Carvers, this project was led by the towns youth who, quite rightly I feel, felt that we had been dragging our heels on this issue. This project has now been completed at a cost of £156,388.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr Mayor and fellow Councillors I trust that you will agree with me that this Council has had both a busy and productive year.

## **RECREATION, LEISURE AND OPEN SPACES**

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN CLLR ANDY BRIERS

May 2015-April 2016

It has been a fantastic year in the town for the completion of new projects organised by the Town Council for the benefit of local residents and these include The Place, The Skate Park and the Purchase of Land at Long Lane, all of which came at a total cost of £930,000 and I will talk a little more about each of these in a moment.

In the last report from this Committee we had supported Armed Forces Day which was very successful but this has now been handed over to Ringwood Events Committee along with another very successful event, The Christmas Lights. It is a measure of the vibrancy of this town that so many people are willing and able to support more events and really put Ringwood on the map as a Town to visit.

This summer we hope to make more use of The Place at Carvers Playing Field with the introduction of holiday activities and sports for young people aged 13-19 years old. The official opening was performed by the Leader of Hampshire County Council, Councillor Roy Perry who was able to apply significant funding towards the project. We have obtained some external grant funding for sports coaches and equipment as well as providing our own Youth Work staff to support young people. It is our hope that more volunteers and organisations will come forward to use The Place and work in partnership with us to ensure young people have a range of activities provided for them which will improve health, well-being and life skills. Our Youth Coordinator, Jenny Critchlow, would be happy to hear from anyone who would like to get involved. As part of the future plan for the facility we have established a Charitable Organisation called Ringwood Youth Club who will provide direction and policy for the new facility.

The Skate Park opened at the end of April with some spectacular displays of skill and agility from young people who came from miles around to test out the new facility. At a cost of £150,000 it is one of the best skate parks in the area and receives regular visits from skateboard tourists. Young people raised £5000 toward the project and have established a 'Maintenance Crew' who will help look after the park for the future. They have also committed to arrange annual 'Skate Jams' which will raise funds to go towards the future maintenance of the Park. That's an example of Partnership at its best and is a credit to the young people who have been involved in the project.

The land we recently purchased at Long Lane at a cost of £240,000 will help us provide much needed green space for our residents well into the future and will help us re-develop the site as a multi sports facility. It is already home to local football teams with as many as 240 young people playing there every week and regular training sessions by adults. It is the hope of the Council that other local sports clubs will make use of the site in the future which will help us attract grant funding from a variety of sources and provide a facility to be proud of for our residents. Working with local clubs we hope to develop this site in the coming years as a multi sports facility and provide a central club house.

The Annual Allotment Competition was judged and we give our thanks to members of Ringwood Garden Club. The winning allotment holders were awarded prizes at Full Council last September.

The temporary loss of Bickerley Green has meant some movement of traditional activities like the Carnival Fair and Armed Forces Day but will see them moved to Carvers Playing Field to ensure they remain a key activity in the town. When these works are completed the events will return and we expect to see improvements to the drainage of the site and that the grass quickly re-establishes itself. Wessex Water have been very helpful and generous in providing resources and funding to facilitate this move which we are all very grateful for, as it will ensure the continuation of local community events.

We have found smarter ways of working for our grounds team which has increased their capacity by reducing the time they spend on certain activities using new equipment. That includes the purchase of a new tractor which is more reliable, can carry better loads and needs less maintenance. Other equipment has been purchased to help us fulfil our contractual obligations to schools and organisations and we have increased the number of contracts we have in the last year.

Our staff have organised Continental Markets and tried to support the Wednesday Market by recruiting new stall holders. The continental markets not only provide a new activity in the town for residents to make use of, they also provide revenue which can be used to support some of our other activities. We are currently looking at the viability of having more regular markets and would welcome input from residents and local business about this idea.

Our social media site seems to be growing in popularity and has been very effective in getting the message out about issues relating to the A338 or A31 which we hope has saved some residents from the long queues. The site is used to promote local events in the town and further afield which might be of interest to our residents, including: School Fetes, Armed Forces Day, Queens Birthday, Brand New Forest Expo and more.

New and unique events this year will include Clean for the Queen and the Queen's Birthday Celebration. While the Town Council has been organising both events it is only through the generosity of local businesses and community groups that the event has been made possible. The town will be decorated with flags and banners and we will provide seating for up to 2000 people on the High Street, with the Market Place providing fair rides, street entertainment and stage entertainment. While Churches Together will be providing soft drinks and cakes the idea is that people bring their own picnic, although local food outlets will be more than happy to sell their wares.

As a Committee and as a Council we will be looking at feasibility studies for Longlane to determine just how much we can provide on the site, we are looking at ways to enhance Carvers Playing Field and looking at providing more markets. We hope we have created opportunities for people to contact us and raise any issues or ideas they might have and it is through those contacts that we can improve our services. I hope the residents of Ringwood have recognised our efforts through 2015-16 and will support us in the year ahead.

## PLANNING, TOWN & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

### REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN – CLLR CHRIS TRELEAVEN

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Planning, Town and Environment Committee for the year 2015-6. The work undertaken this year is summarised here in our Terms of Reference:-

#### 1) Responding to Planning Applications in the Ringwood Parish

The following Table summarises the Applications considered this year, together with the eventual decisions taken by the District Council Planning Authority with respect to these Applications .

	Number rec'd	Our Committee & NFDC/NPA Officers both recommended permission, therefore granted	Our Committee & NFDC/NPA Officers both recommended refusal, therefore refused	We said grant, NFDC/NPA Officers said refuse	We said refuse, NFDC/NPA Officers said grant	Went to NFDC/NPA Planning Committee to resolve	Appeals against NFDC/NPA decision
NFDC	177	117	22	5	9	7	5
NatPark	17	10	2	1	0	0	0

(NB – 28 Applications – mostly from our May 2016 Meeting- awaiting Officer Recommendation)

It is interesting to note that approximately half of the applications we received were for extensions and modifications to existing residential dwellings. There were Applications for an additional 20 residential dwellings, of which 5 were approved, 6 refused and 9 awaiting NFDC decision.

Whilst the great majority (94%) of Recommendations made by the Committee were in line with those made by NFDC Planning Officers, there were a number where a different view was taken. There were 7 Applications where these differences had to be resolved at NFDC Planning Committee, at which our Councillors made their case to Committee Members. Whilst we did not succeed with 3 of these, our recommendations were accepted in full for 2 of these and extra requirements of ours were attached to achieve acceptability in the other 2 cases.

#### 2) Tree Works

We considered 39 Applications for tree works, and our recommendations were identical to those of the Tree Officers in 27 of these (with 5 still outstanding). Of the 7 on which we differed, the Tree Officer effectively had the last word.

#### 3) Appeals

There were 5 Appeals by Applicants against the decisions of NFDC Planning, but we did not find any new evidence in these cases to amplify our original recommendations - a necessary condition of making a submission to the Inspector. Two Appeals were refused, two granted, one awaited.

#### 4) Licensing

Four new or revised applications were made, and with agreed amendments, these were accepted.

## 5) Consultations and responses

The current start to the (NFDC) Local Plan Review invited our assessment of the proposed “Sustainability Appraisal”, and the initial “Call for Sites”, particularly for the anticipated large increase in new housing site requirements for the District. In both cases, we made strong arguments that new housing developments must be accompanied at the same time with appropriate infrastructure – particularly roads and safe pedestrian and cycle access, as well as medical, educational and open space provision.

At the present time, the Government Bill for Housing and Planning is going through Parliament, and, in the rush to get this enacted, early consultation with (among others) Local Councils has taken place. In one crucial section, the Government is proposing that local Town/Parish Councils will no longer have the statutory right to be consulted on what are called “Technical Details” i.e. infrastructure, design and layout, affordable housing, traffic and transport management, local distinctiveness etc. – our role being confined to commenting only on the number and location of the proposed housing. This attempt to neutralise so-called “nimbyism” is at odds with the concept of “Localism” which has previously been claimed by the Government to be a key feature of the planning system. This contradiction has been pointed out by us (and by many others) in our response, as well as maintaining our advocacy of the ability of our Council to be consulted on and listened to on the vital matters now being referred to as “Technical Details”.

Highways England – who control the A31 – are about to consult with the Town on their proposed widening of the westbound carriageway to three lanes, intended to reduce the increasing congestion at the Town exits onto this trunk road. Whether or not to close the West Street exit on to the A31 will feature in the consultations, a possibility with important implications to our traffic movements in the Town Centre.

During the year, our Committee received presentations from the senior (National Park) Tree Officer, the senior Conservation Officer and the Head of NFDC Planning regarding the worthwhileness of our transport/parking objections in our Planning Application recommendations.

## 6) Flood alleviation

The Bickerley Green/Kingsbury Lane flood relief scheme being undertaken by Wessex Water has been temporarily halted by the Environment Agency because of the recent excessive height of the water table in that area. It is intended to re-start this important scheme in late Spring.

The recent Crow Stream improvements to flow capacity have helped relieve much of the flooding problems experienced in earlier years in the Crow Lane area. Our Council's thanks to Peter Street, Norman Light and Hallam Mills and his colleagues for their remedial work there has been publicly acknowledged. More drain clearance is needed and the County Highways Team have stated that the agreed work will be carried out by them this May. At the same time, the Team is looking into the engineering and financial feasibility of installing a larger drain capacity from Moortown Lane to the River Avon floodplain, to alleviate the existing and future flood risks of the Hightown/Crow Lane area of our Town.

## 7) Outstanding planning issues in Ringwood

Two sites in our Town Centre have concerned Ringwood residents for many years – the Bus Depot in West Street and the old Regal Cinema/Town Hall in the Market Place. Both these sites are privately owned. Although having been allocated in successive Local Plans for housing in the case of the Bus Depot, and for a mixed use entertainment/retail/commercial development at the Regal Cinema and surrounding

area, no achievable plans by the site owners have yet come forward. Your Council will support - indeed encourage – appropriate applications to resolve these issues.

A detailed planning application is awaited from Linden Homes/HCC regarding the 175 dwellings etc. already approved in Outline at Crow Lane/ Crow Arch Lane, and we are advised that this will soon be forthcoming. If successful, construction work is intended to commence in 2017.

The most important planning issue for the Town in the coming year and onwards is the expansion in housebuilding, likely to arise from the NFDC Local Plan Review. We may be asked to accommodate up to an extra 1000 dwellings in the next 20 years. (The current target is 420 for 2006-26, which is being achieved). Can the Town accommodate this increase without compromising the essential Market Town character of Ringwood? Where will the dwellings go – greenfield, Green Belt? Who are the houses for – local people? Affordable/shared equity? Young people/ ageing people? Will the necessary infrastructure be forthcoming? In particular, will the A31 - Christchurch Road distributor road proposal be resurrected?

There is much work ahead for your Committee with this Local Plan Review and our residents input to consultations on these matters is vital to receive! We have considered the formal process of establishing a local Neighbourhood Plan, but so far, the considerable expense and time resources necessary to conduct this exercise has yet to persuade us of the benefits over and above those of our customary method of responding. However, we are keeping this possibility open.

Our Committee would like to pay tribute with much appreciation and thanks to our two Officers – Jo Hurd and Nicola Vodden – not only for their continued professional contribution to our Committee work, but for making sure things actually get done! Your Chairman would also like to thank his fellow Committee Members for their constructive observations and guidance in making recommendations to promote the best planning outcomes for our Town.

Councillor Chris Treleaven, Chairman 2015-6  
May 2016