



Ringwood Town Council

Annual Report 2017

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Introduction by the Town Mayor
Cllr Michael Thierry
(25th May 2016 □ 25th January 2017)

**Mayor's Report -
May 2016 to Spring 2017**

Cllr Michael Thierry

The Ringwood Mayoral Year follows a well worn path. Invitation and events have become annual fixtures in the Mayoral programme. It is pleasing that various groups in this town do want to have the presence of Mayor at their special occasions. The Town Mayor has many opportunities to promote the town and it is interesting to observe that invitations come from a mix of Ringwood activities.

Over the years the role of Town Mayor has grown and developed with each succeeding occupant of the position.

The main Ringwood events, Fanfare for Spring, The Churches Funday, Christmas Eve Community Carolling Singing and the major event of Ringwood Carnival draw many people into the town, affording the Town Mayor the occasion to greet people from far distance who have come into Ringwood for special events. The Mayor's Chain allows the holder to engage with the public in a very special way.

When you become Mayor you are not given a book of rules and regulations, the chain is put around your neck and 'off you go'. For me the most important thing that any Mayor does is simply say 'Thank you'. Two words which are never lost.

Michael Thierry

Cllr Tim Ward
(25th January 2017 □ 31st May 2017)

It has been an interesting few months as Mayor. I have attended a wide variety of functions from junior school fun day to retirement home birthday party, church service to country park celebration. People seem to genuinely appreciate a visit from 'The Chain' and it is a rewarding experience for whoever has the honour to wear it. The welcome and good wishes I've received are both reassuring and humbling.

Unfortunately, there is a downside to being recognized, which is when you have to deal with the complaints about the state of things in the town and try to explain that we, the Town Council, have very limited powers and rely on NFDC and the County Council to carry out most of the works. We do, however, monitor and examine proposals, a prime example being the working methods of the Linden development. Cllrs. Treleaven and Briers along with the Deputy Town Clerk, Jo Hurd are to be applauded for their excellent work to ensure that due care is taken on the site and surrounding roads at the start of the development. We must continue to be vigilant as the prevailing attitude of those on whom we depend seems to be to 'sort it out as we go along'. Serious concerns have already been raised by us about the impact of this and future developments on traffic, schools, doctors and sewage treatment, and they have not, yet, been properly addressed. Some residents have voiced the suspicion that "if the planners don't have to live with it they ignore it", I hope they will be proved wrong.

Councillors are sincere in their desire to look after the Town and that is a sentiment shared by the officers and staff of the Gateway on who's knowledge and expertise we depend. It is also shared by the independent societies and organizations in the town, who's input we welcome, but it is not always in evidence when outside agencies are brought in and the condition of the Town Centre gives cause for serious concern.

We see white paint identifying the many defects around the town and witness a succession of people, over many months, looking at and noting, even photographing these areas, until the paint has faded and the whole process starts over again. If a reinstatement is eventually carried out the standard of work is appalling. Take a look at the kerb outside YoYo, or the pavement outside the Old Bank House to see glaring examples. The cost in wasted man hours must be enormous and all the while this farce goes on the High St., is deteriorating. We have, however, just received a schedule of works addressing many of the problems we see, some may even have been rectified between the writing of this and our meeting, but they are due to be carried out over the coming months, several being the responsibility of the new contractors when they start in August.

It is to be hoped that, with the new regime, we will see a big improvement, but if our Town should continue to suffer from a similar, woeful attitude we may reconsider the possibility of a small works team to look after minor repairs. Our ground staff already display the care and pride in the Town we wish for as they look after our parks and flower beds etc., and it might only need one extra member to allow them to take on some small works and make a big improvement to our environment, especially if most of the work was carried out during the quieter winter months. Could the funds for this extra person not be found in the savings from the terrible waste highlighted above?

We congratulate our new County Councillor, I'm sure we can rely on him to shout long and loud on our behalf about these and other issues, and if I have the honour to continue as Mayor I will do the same.

Policy and 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 2016/17

The precept for 2016/17 was £462,991 against expenditure of £625,261 plus capital expenditure of £30,092. Income amounted to £223,507 plus receipts towards capital expenditure of £21,000 and this gave a net expenditure of £410,846. There has also been a further income of £17,288 arising from grants, the disposal of some assets and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The Councils expenditure was funded through the precept along with a transfer to reserves of £69,433.

The transitional grant from NFDC which I have mentioned in the reports, since 2013/14, has come to an end and this would be an appropriate time to remind Members and the electorate that this grant, initially of £40,341, was put in place to negate the loss of income arising through the changes in Council Tax; an effect that central government had failed to foresee.

Included within the above income was that which is derived from investments. Regrettably, despite our best efforts, returns remain low at £1,369. however, this is up on the previous year by £51.

A new line for this report is that we have a bad debt that has been written off, the amount was £155.86 and related to one of the commercial lets.

Our variance between revised budget and out-turn in year was a net under spend of £44,878. Although higher than one would like to see it this can, on the whole, be explained by one off events such as the vacancy arising from the Town Clerk's resignation.

Revenue expenditure broken down into committees was:

Policy & Finance	£ 354,757.
Recreation, Leisure & Open Space	£ 253,541.
Planning, Town & Environment	£ 16,963.

The town councils bank balance has risen over the last twelve months although reserves remain slightly below the prudent level for a Council with our turnover. Against that we continue to hold a number of appreciating assets which could be realised to increase our cash holdings.

Total Balance @ 31/03/16	£ 356,844.
Total Balance @ 31/03/17	£ 443,381.
Public Loans Board (Fixed rate 3.4% over 25 Years) [Balance at 31/03/2016 £-255,007.]	£-242,778.
Loan for land purchase (Fixed rate 3.03% over 25 Years) [Balance at 31/03/2016 £-187,500.]	£-182,393.

Reporting on the Mayors allowance, as we agreed that we would when the title was created; expenditure was £917. against a budget of £1,000. This budget use to have a further £100. as a contingency reserve but that has been removed.

Draft final accounts, for the year ending 31st March 2017 were presented at the Policy and Finance meeting held on Wednesday 17th May 2017 and are available with the minutes of that meeting they are also available on the Town Councils web site.

It would be wrong not to mention, in this report, any capital schemes delivered by Ringwood Town Council. 2016/17 saw us finalising the purchase of 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. I hope that we will, in the not too distant future, see Long Lane developed further to provide for additional formal recreation an issue which, I feel, will become increasingly important as the next Local Plan emerges.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr Mayor and fellow Councillors I usually finish my report by saying that "I trust that you will agree with me that this Council has had both a busy and productive year" however I do not feel that it would be appropriate for me to say that this evening; I think that, to a certain extent, we stalled last year all be in for a variety of reasons however I am optimistic that we will do better in the coming year.

Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee

Report by the Chairman Cllr Andy Briers

May 2016-April 2017

Thank you Mr Mayor

I am pleased to present the annual report of the recreation, leisure and open spaces committee 2017□

It has been another fantastic year in the town with ongoing projects and facilities undertaken and provided by the Town Council for the benefit of local residents.

In the last report from this committee we had supported, in various ways, events such as Armed Forces Day, The Christmas Market etc. with these events being provided by Ringwood Events Committee. I will talk a little bit more about this later in the report. But as has been reported by so many chairmen over the years, it is a credit to this town that so many people are willing and able to support these events.

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

The Place

As we are all aware, this facility has had its teething problems, as is well documented, but we believe the Town Council now has a clear vision with regards to this facility and hope to develop all sections of youth work for all ages of our young people. It is a credit to the hard work of our youth work staff and also ground staff which has seen its popularity grow in the last few months. With this hard work we are hoping to encourage use from external service providers to further develop this facility. Our Youth Coordinator, Jenny Critchlow, would be happy to hear from anyone who would like to get involved. We will of course continue to source grant funding to further enhance the facilities and services, but 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.

We are looking to further improve the area with the installation of additional lighting and it is hoped that this work will commence in the near future.

As you are all aware, the cafe has now reopened and is providing refreshments and food on a regular basis, as well as allowing access to The Place for all of our residents.

The Skate Park

The Skate park opened at the end of April last year and has become an instant success. We have all seen this facility is used by people of all ages and is in constant use.

Long Lane

As reported last year, we purchased an additional land at Long Lane which 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. We are aware that there are a large amount of local football teams playing there every week with regular training sessions by adults. The town council has now formed a working party with regards to this area and it is hoped to further develop this site in the coming years as a multi sports facility and provide a central club house.

General Items

As always, 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.

With the loss of the Ringwood Events Committee, it is hoped that with the voluntary support of local residents, and input from the Town Council, that these events can continue. Whilst this is in the early stages, with the ongoing support of previous members of this committee, it is hoped that it can provide the fantastic events such as the fireworks display and Christmas lights we have all enjoyed previously.

The ongoing temporary loss of Bickerley Green has meant the movement of the Carnival Fair to Carvers Playing Field to ensure that this remains a key activity in the town. When these remedial works are completed 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 again 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.

Our grounds team have increased their capacity due to the previous purchases of new equipment, such as this year's new work vehicle, and their ongoing commitment to providing new working methods and cost-saving initiatives are much appreciated.

We have recently reviewed what we are concentrating on with regards to projects as has recently been reported. These include items previously mentioned and others such as children's play equipment, Ringwood churchyard and marketplace, the Riverside walk etc. We have recently set up a Working Party with regards to the churchyard and marketplace and this has been well supported by local people and this will further enhance this historic area of the town.

Our social media site is growing in popularity and has been very effective in getting the message out about subjects concerning the town. The site is used to promote local events in the town and further afield which might be of interest to our residents, and residents are welcome to promote local events on this.

As a committee and as a council we will be looking at feasibility studies for Long Lane 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 2016-17 and will support us in the year ahead.

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.

Planning, Town and 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 2016-17. 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 .

Local Planning Authority	Number Applies rec'd	We & NFDC or NPA Officers both recommended permission, so granted	We & NFDC or NPA Officers both recommended refusal, so refused	We said grant, NFDC or NPA Officers said refuse	We said refuse, NFDC or NPA Officers said grant	Went to Planning Committee to resolve	Appeals against NFDC/ NPA decision
NFDC	181	98	25	8	16	5	4
NFNPA	20	17	0	1	0	0	0

NB □ 4 Applications withdrawn and 5 we left to Officers on technical grounds. Also, 27 Applications □ mostly from our May 2017 Meeting - await Officer Recommendation)

Approximately half of the applications we received were for extensions and modifications to existing dwellings. Of these, 14 were refused, mostly for the proposals being incompatible with the local character of the area. There were Applications for an additional 86 residential dwellings, of which 72 were approved (including 62 at the Crow Lane site), and 14 refused or withdrawn.

Whilst the majority (70%) of Recommendations made by the Committee were in line with those made by Planning Officers, there were a number where a different view was taken. There were 5 Applications where these differences had to be resolved at NFDC Planning Committee, at which our Councillors made their case to NFDC Committee Members. Whilst we did not succeed with 3 of these, our recommendations were accepted in full, or extra requirements of ours were attached to achieve acceptability in the other 2 cases.

Of the Planning Applications refused which Applicants subsequently took to Appeal and were decided this year, 4 were refused and one granted. Two Appeal decisions are awaited.

2) Tree Works

We considered 32 Applications for tree works, and our recommendations were in general similar to those of the Tree Officer, in particular where we argued for pruning where possible, rather than felling when requested.

3) Licensing

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

4) Local Plan Review

As we reported last year, three large sites for housing development are proposed for the south of Ringwood □ 400 dwellings plus employment land on the Lynes Farm site behind the Elm Tree, and 750 dwellings on each side of Moortown Lane, both of which are in the Green Belt.

In our response earlier in the year to these initial NFDC proposals, your Council has opposed building on these Green Belt sites for three main reasons:-

- a) It is current Government policy to allow house building in the Green Belt only in exceptional circumstances, and we argue that having to build houses for occupation by those over 65 who wish to retire here from outside the area (the admittedly main reason for the required expansion) is not an exceptional circumstance.
- b) The existing infrastructure □ particularly the road network □ will not be able to cope with the considerable increase in traffic that would be generated. We have budgeted to employ our own Transport Consultants to challenge the NFDC consultants who are maintaining that, with a few extra road junction modifications, the extra traffic can be accommodated safely.
- c) The extensive Moortown Lane sites (unlike the other sites) are categorised nationally as premier land quality for agriculture, and should only be allocated for built development as a last resort. The northern half □ between Crow Arch Lane and Moortown Lane - has been assessed by NFDC as only moderately contributing to the purposes of Green Belt designation, whilst the southern half - Moortown Lane to just south of the football club area - as strongly doing so.

This September, NFDC will publish its formal District-wide plan for the allocation of these larger housing sites. There will be a 6 week statutory consultation period for all of us to submit our final observations, before the whole Plan goes before a Government appointed Inspector. There is a danger that if the submitted Plan does not include enough housing sites to meet the Government-set targets, either NFDC will have to negotiate the shortfall with neighbouring authorities (who of course have their own targets to meet) or the Government will impose sites upon the District.

We have submitted to NFDC the few possible brownfield sites for housing development, although their contribution to the total requirement is necessarily small. We also have considered the formal process of establishing a local Neighbourhood Plan, in order for the Town to have an effective influence in the evolution of the new Local Plan. However, the considerable expense and time resources necessary to conduct this exercise has yet to persuade us of the benefits of doing so until the housing sites issue is resolved. We will then judge whether to pursue a Neighbourhood Plan.

In any event, we will continue to argue the case of maximising the number of affordable homes, particularly for young people, in any allocation of new development sites.

5) A31

Highways England ☐ who control the A31 ☐ are about to consult the public on their proposed widening of the westbound carriageway to three lanes, intended to reduce the increasing congestion at the Town exits and on this trunk road.

6) Highway matters

During the year, a number of road safety matters have been pursued by our Council with HCC Highways, with varying degrees of success:-

a) Christchurch Rd - controlled crossing. Developers contributions from the Lidl site approval are partly to be used for two informal crossings each side of the new, adjacent roundabout. Our Council will continue to press for a formal controlled crossing in future, the lack of which along the whole length of this Road is a sufficient safety deterrent to residents (including schoolchildren) and business people on the west side of Ringwood walking or cycling to the Town centre.

It is good to see that the local circular bus route now includes a stop adjacent to the new Lidl store, which we requested at the Lidl planning application stage last year.

b) Christchurch Road ☐ parking and speeding. Residents in the Moorland Gate area have been finding increasing parking difficulties, evidentially due to overflow from the David Lloyd Club. NFDC are assisting this Club in increasing the parking capacity of their own car park to alleviate this problem. Residents alongside the end of the 30mph speed limit section of the Road have asked for greater restrictions on the road before the 50mph zone is reached, but HCC states that the present layout is satisfactory.

c) Butlers Lane/Tesco Express area ☐ local users are finding vehicle access and exiting, parking manoeuvring, and pedestrian movement increasingly hazardous in this small privately owned car park. Apparently, HCC want £4000 to hard surface a wheel-chair friendly pedestrian access to the nearby post box and road crossing. Our Council has included this safety improvement in the budget for next year.

d) Kings Arms Lane ☐ lighting. Negotiations by our Council are on-going with HCC to improve the lighting along this Lane, particularly at the western end approaching the Bickerley.

e) A338 Ringwood to Fordingbridge ☐ in view of the accident record along this road, the Mayors of Ringwood and Fordingbridge requested HCC Highways to review the adequacy of safety measures, particularly the speed limit. HCC informed them that, in their assessment, no further measures would improve safety, the onus being on driver behaviour to avoid accidents.

7) Flood alleviation

The Bickerley Green/Kingsbury Lane flood relief scheme has now been completed, but the Green itself is now prone to flooding. Wessex Water are attending to this problem, but meanwhile the Green is being allowed to re-establish itself naturally before public use can be resumed.

The recent Crow Stream improvements to flow capacity have helped relieve much of the flooding problems experienced in earlier years, thanks to the work of both HCC Highways and local residents, ably led by Peter Street. More work is still needed as is the assessment by HCC of re-establishing a larger drain capacity along Moortown Lane to the River Avon

floodplain. These measures would alleviate the existing and future flood risks of the Hightown/Crow Lane area.

8) Existing sites – progress

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. Regrettably no achievable plans by the site owners have yet come forward.

The detailed planning application from Linden Homes for 62 of the 175 dwellings etc already approved in Outline at Crow Lane/ Crow Arch Lane has been approved. Construction work will begin as soon as certain specified conditions are accepted by NFDC. One of these is a Construction Traffic Management Plan, the submitted version of which has been challenged by our Council in that insufficient on-site parking space has been allowed for construction vehicles, and that no route restrictions have been placed on construction HGVs reaching the site - a matter of considerable concern to residents of Hightown Hill and Hightown Road. As a recent result of our representations, the developer has now modified their Plan to take into account our objections.

9) Town Centre Improvements

We received Ringwood Society suggestions for improving the environmental quality of certain sites within our Conservation Area, including hedge planting along Mansfield Road adjacent to the BT site, the patio area in Lions Court, the rear of the buildings facing the Furlong car park/bus stop area and various street signages. We support these ideas and look forward to working with the Society to find possible grants for such improvements. Equally, our Town Mayor is achieving success in re-instating the original paving designs in our Town centre where various service organisations have patched over their road works with unsightly tarmac.

With receipts from our portion of new Developers Contributions slowly becoming available, your Council is drawing up a 'wish list' of publicly needed improvements to our road and footpath infrastructure.

10) Enforcement

Both individual Councillors and members of the public continue to take a vigilant approach to alterations to buildings which do not have planning permission and which compromise the valued and distinctive nature of our built heritage. Reports to and from NFDC Enforcement are regularly made and monitored for compliance where necessary.

11) Business Community

Regrettably, the recently formed Ringwood Business Partnership, set up to encourage both existing Town businesses and to attract new ventures, has yet to find local business people willing to play an active part in taking this Partnership forward.

In conclusion, our Committee would like to pay particular 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 continuing their constructive observations and guidance in making recommendations to promote the best planning outcomes for our Town.

Councillor Chris Treleaven, Chairman 2016-7 - May 2017