



**RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**2012**

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## **TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT 2012**

**BY CLLR BRIAN TERRY**

Firstly I am pleased to welcome everyone to the first Annual Town Assembly of the Council to be held at the new Ringwood Gateway building. This is an historic occasion, as after many years of 'almost happening', we now have Town, District and County Council services for Ringwood all in one building. I am sure you will all agree that it is good to have this new, eco-friendly building conveniently located for residents in the heart of Town at The Furlong. At last, Ringwood can also boast public conveniences fit for the twenty-first century, now located to the side of Ringwood Gateway.

2012 is also an historic year due to the national and international events on the radar. I am thinking, of course, of Her Majesty the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, and the London Olympics. The red, white and blue bunting is already festooning the Town, ready for the weekend of 2-4<sup>th</sup> June.

The Ringwood Scouts and the Ellingham & Ringwood Rugby Club have teamed up, supported by the Town Council and local Councillors, to provide a memorable celebration in Ringwood on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> June. The event will be held on the Bickerley Green and will focus on the lighting of the Beacon as part of the National Chain, preceded by a firework display. There will also be a grand beer tent, a hog roast, cake & desserts and possibly music too.

It is an honour and privilege to represent Ringwood residents as the Town Mayor. The diary has been packed with varied requests - from attending key local events to opening new facilities, supporting charities and attending civic events in Hampshire and Dorset. My particular thanks to Deputy Mayor Cllr Steve Rippon-Swaine and my wife Jacqui Terry for their support and help, and not to forget my hard-working PA, Mandy Oldfield.

I would like to pay tribute to my fellow councillors for their contributions to the Town, and in particular to Cllr Richard Frampton. It has been necessary to greatly increase the security of the Town's open spaces, following illegal occupation by some unwelcome 'visitors' last summer. Thanks to Cllr Frampton's enthusiasm for 'getting stuck in', a number of defensive ditches have been created at very low cost to Ringwood Town Council. Our thanks also to our friends at Raymond Brown for help with securing the sports' fields.

Last but not least, my thanks to all the staff – office based or 'out in the field' for your dedication and hard work. I know it has been a particularly busy and difficult year, due to the relocation from the old offices in Southampton Road to Ringwood Gateway. Change is always difficult and your cheerful co-operation and fortitude are much appreciated!

## POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

### REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN – CLLR JEREMY HERON

Ladies and gentlemen, Mayor and fellow Councillors I have pleasure in presenting the report of the Policy and Finance Committee for the municipal year 2011/12; as ever I have tried to keep the format similar to previous years for ease of comparison.

The precept for 2011/12 was £388,570 against expenditure of £825,544. Income amounting to £464,754 gave a net expenditure of £360,790. Net expenditure was funded through the precept and a transfer to reserves of £33,090.

This balanced budget was achieved against the backdrop of these continuing difficult financial times and low interest, resulting in investment income of £3,183 (down £281 on last year).

As always I like to report the variance between budget and out-turn and this year there is a net under spend of £33,090 against the revised budget; my thanks go to the Council staff for their excellent work and in particular to Martin Townsend our Finance Manager.

Net expenditure broken down into committees was:

Policy & Finance	£170,046
Recreation, Leisure & Open Space	£180,023
Planning, Town & Environment	£10,721

The town councils bank balance remained healthy

Total Balance @ 31/03/11	£374,891
Total Balance @ 31/03/12	£439,877

And for the first time I also have to report a borrowing of £300,000

Which was taken out with the Public Loans Board at a fixed rate of 3.4% over twenty years.

Ringwood Town Council's capital expenditure in 2011/12 on the Gateway was £269,211. The Council will pay a further £130,000 during 2012/13. The total payment will be within the approved budget for this project of £450,000.

In addition to this the work, currently being undertaken in front of the building will cost in a further £220,000 and this will be met from developer's contributions.

The Councillors thought long and hard before entering into the loan however it was decided that, rather than sell the capital asset of old council building, it would be more prudent to take advantage of the low interest rates being offered and let the building; the money received in rent would then be off set against the interest charged. This makes good financial sense and offers future holders of office the maximum flexibility. One slight departure from this plan was that it was felt that we should sell the building plot top the rear of the office.

Whilst this report is produced to look back over the past year I cannot end without talking about the future and a project that I have long wish to see progressed and that is what we do for the young people of Ringwood, I will steal a former colleagues words when I say "That the youth may be 25% of the population but they are 100% of our future". I am very pleased to say that Ringwood Town Council has put thirteen thousand pounds into its budget for a youth worker and we are delighted to have Jenny Critchlow join our staff. Jenny is probably well know of number of people as she has for a

considerable number of years, along with her husband, run the Friday night drop in; the first ran from Belinda's in the High Street and when that closed it moved to the Old Tennis Pavilion.

I think the Town Council has developed a bug for building and I hope that we can raise sufficient support to take our next project forward and build a place that the young people of Ringwood can call their own.

## PLANNING, TOWN & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

### REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN – CLLR MARK STEELE

I have pleasure in presenting the annual Ringwood Planning, Town & Environment Committee Report for 2011/2012.

The number of planning submissions this past year are shown below:

#### STATISTICS 1 APRIL 2011 – 28 MAR 2012

<b>Summary April 2011 – Mar 2012</b>	<b>Applications Considered by Ringwood Town Council</b>	<b>2011- 2012</b>	<b>Total 2010- 2011</b>	<b>Total 2009- 2010</b>
<b>Authority</b>	<b>Type of Application</b>	<b>No.</b>		
New Forest District Council	Full	141		
	Tree	28		
	Telecommunications	3		
	Amendment	2		
	Change of Use	3		
	Outline	3		
	Lawful Development Certificate	1		
	Advertisement	7		
	Extension to Time Limit	3		
	Variation	2		
	Listed Building / Conservation Area Consent	6		
	Other	2		
	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>201</b>	179	193
New Forest National Park Authority				
	Full	25		
	Tree	6		
	Listed Building Consent	2		
	Change of Use	1		
	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>34</b>	37	47
<i>Note: Figures include repeat applications if applicable</i>				

The last annual 2010/2011 Ringwood planning report hinted to reforming and changes to planning.

The UK coalition government has admirably stuck to its guns in its reform of the planning regime in England, based on a “presumption in favour of sustainable development”. That anyone can fault this principle is mystifying, in as much as the alternatives are conservation without growth or growth without conservation, England’s communities need both.

The new National Planning Policy Framework issued by the government and came into force 6<sup>th</sup> April, retained what was good in the draft rules issued for consultation last year, such as a blissfully simplified framework from 1,300 pages to about 52 and the principle that development done right is desirable – indeed necessary if a growing population is to enjoy growing prosperity.

Affordable rural housing is essential to the vitality and sustainability of rural areas and crucial for less prosperous members of rural societies to thrive.

Yet emotive language about the threat of “concreting the countryside” and misconceptions about how much is actually built on – currently about 10 per cent – mean even those who desperately need affordable rural housing conform to the idea the countryside must be protected “for its own sake”.

A careful balance of needs to be struck between environmental and social sustainability in the government’s national planning policy guidelines and the present New Forest Core Strategy sites and development Document.

Greg Clark, the planning minister, has also used the consultation process to make improvements, such as a clearer requirement for local authorities to recycle Brownfield sites before developing green fields or to prioritise town centres over out-of-town sites for activities essential to thriving high streets.

All this is eminently sensible. But the new framework alone will not silence critics who range from those who fear all of England’s green and pleasant land being concreted over, to those who think that without the central targets set by the Labour government, and Nimbyist councils will slow down development even further.

Neither worry is realistic, but the way to lay them to rest is to prove that the new rules deliver on their promise. For that local councils must have not just the power and responsibility to promote sustainable development, but the incentive to do so.

One way this can be done is to forge a closer link between councils’ tax revenues and the development it authorises.

The government has made steps in this direction by letting local governments retain some council tax and business rates revenue created by new properties. It should move further, towards greater local control over local tax rates. Local authorities also need reassurance that when the population grows thanks to development, the funding will be available for public services to grow correspondingly. Such additional measures should alleviate the tensions that were always going to be inflamed by an effort to make England’s cities and countryside fit for healthy growth. That job is only beginning; but this reform gets it off to a good start.

I and the planning committee thank Ringwood Town Deputy Clerk, Jo Stannard and Clare Perrens for their continued hard work behind the scenes.

Our student advisors Alice Waters and Evelyn Robinson have made bright and informative contributions to debate and recognition of their work within the committee is noted and will be passed on to Ringwood School. Our hopes and best wishes to them both in their chosen future careers as well.

The Planning & Environment Committee will continue listening and communicate the thoughts and representations of local people in the community where people live here in Ringwood, advocating local expressions of aspiration both individually and collectively.

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

### **REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN – CLLR BRIAN TERRY**

This year has seen the completion of a number of exciting new recreation and leisure developments for the Town.

The old mound slide in Carvers Play Area was replaced in May 2011 with not one, but two brand-new slides. Following public consultation, the favoured design for a new slide – a double width ‘bump and glide’ metal slide – was ordered. Unfortunately, the wrong slide was delivered. As there would have been a delay providing the correct model, the Deputy Town Clerk managed to persuade the supplier to allow the Council to have both slides, at no extra cost. The slides were funded by the Council, a New Forest Community Planning Grant and developers’ contributions.

Ringwood Skate Park was completely refurbished in May. All the ramps were stripped back and repainted by a professional company at a cost of £5,000. Looking ahead, a working party is considering future maintenance and improvements to the Skate Park, with Cllr Burgess-Kennar taking on the role of ‘Champion’.

The Raymond Brown Nature Reserve was officially opened to the public via the kissing gate by Pola Brown on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011. The Reserve is located in an environmentally sensitive area of the Avon Valley. To protect ground-nesting birds in the spring and over-wintering birds, it is only open for public access for three months each summer.

For the fourth year running, the Council put on its popular Kids’ Capers on Carvers Recreation Ground. ‘The Table Top Circus’ sessions were provided on Monday and Thursday mornings from late July until early September – free of charge.

The five acre woodland known as Folly Farm adjacent to the slip road off the A31 has been used informally – and maintained - for many years by The Sheiling Trust, for its educational activities. In September, the Council formally transferred full management and usage rights to the Trust through a 25 year lease, whilst retaining full public access to the wood. A ‘Friends of Folly Farm’ advisory body has been established with representatives from the Trust, the Council, St. Leonards & St. Ives Parish Council and local schools.

The play area in Ash Grove (off Eastfield Lane) has been given a major facelift, with brand-new play equipment and a new layout. Local residents and schoolchildren were consulted at every stage of the project. The new Ash Grove Play area was officially opened on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2012. The project was made possible by a grant of £20,000 from The Veolia Environmental Trust through the Landfill Communities Fund, the release of £20,000 from Developers’ Contributions and funding from the Council of £20,000.

The Council aims to ensure that the maintenance of any new areas for recreation and leisure are provided for through careful budgetary control and planning. Whilst this often means projects take longer to deliver due to the need to ensure funds for maintenance are in place, it is vital that facilities provide good long-term value for money and remain safe and suitable for use.

The three allotments continue to remain popular, with a monitoring programme ensuring all allotments are consistently worked – or forfeited. This has helped to reduce the waiting list.

In the pipeline, we have plans to repaint the Walk of Art located at the underpass to Poulner and to provide a ‘Wall of Art’ for use by street artists at the Skate Park.

I would like to thank all Committee Members and office staff for their time and contribution to the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee. I would particularly like to recognize the

continuing dedication of our hard-working groundsmen, who are out in all weathers, maintaining the Cemetery, parks, sports' pitches and open spaces in the Town.

Our thanks go to the two Student Advisors, Richard Hayward and Amy Bower, for attending meetings and adding their comments on behalf of the younger residents of the Town. Richard, in particular, must be congratulated for consistently attending meetings, despite unfortunately suffering a broken leg.