



RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

April 2013-May 2014

COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN'S ANNUAL REPORTS FOR TOWN ASSEMBLY 28 MAY 2014

TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT 2014

Good evening and welcome to my second and last Annual Town Assembly Report as Town Mayor; the third Town Assembly in the Gateway, where early last year we welcomed the NFDC front reception team into the arms of our Town Council. Lisa, Rebecca and Helen have absorbed us very well!

Last year I was able to report that the Town was building success on success. We had our new 'Fanfare for Spring' (more later), our hugely successful Pedal Car Grand Prix and our annual Carnival, surpassed by the Royal visit of the Duke of Gloucester to open our new Gateway building.

This year, I can report that there have been even more successes. The year started off with a very successful Mayor's Charity Golf Day that raised over £600 for my Charity, Talking News. At the same time, Ringwood School opened its new Conference Centre, adding another facility for use by the Town. Later, this Gateway building, having won a prestigious regional Award from national LABC, won another Award from NFDC 'Access for All' for providing excellent disabled persons access. During yet another highly successful Carnival, the newly-refurbished Jubilee Lamp in the Market Place was unveiled. The work, planned and commissioned by the Town Council, has successfully restored the Lamp to its original glory.

Towards the end of the year, one of the most momentous planning applications for the Town was consented by NFDC. The now-called Ringwood Arts Centre, wholly planned and commissioned by Greyfriars Community Centre and Ringwood Musical & Dramatic Society, presents a landmark decision for the expansion of the cultural and social entertainment of the Town. As I speak, a costed specification is being worked up for the search for capital to commence, some £4.5m. We wish them good fortune in their endeavours to have the project completed within 5 years. At the same time, a second successful 'Celebration of Ringwood' in the Parish Church was held in December; an event with volunteer and community groups of Ringwood taking part in a show with emphasis on 'Famous People of the New Forest'.

Unfortunately, amid these celebrations, the rains came in biblical proportions, and caused flooding in the Town never seen before in living memory. In order to ensure that we do our best to alleviate this threat again in the Hightown/Crow area, the Council, through two of its Members and members of A BetterRingwood, are seeking solutions in conjunction with HCC Officers. Funding is available, so once a management plan is agreed by all parties, to include HCC, NFNPA, Environment Agency and Natural England, it is possible to have the works completed before next winter.

As the floods receded, our Town Clerk of 11 years, Terry Simpson, also receded into a well-earned retirement again; having retired once before from NFDC. Terry had a hand in most of the Town's successes for which we heartily thank him. Our new Town Clerk, Steve Nash, arrived a week before Terry left and hit the ground running! We look forward to having a long and profitable association with Steve.

Last month, another momentous planning application for Ringwood was consented by NFDC – the RING 3/Linden Homes Crow Arch Lane site. We have not seen this amount of new housing in Ringwood for over 30 years. I personally believe that this is sorely needed to house our next generation. There are ongoing issues still to be finalised, but at least the principle of new housing in Ringwood has been established.

I have mentioned the first ever 'Fanfare for Spring' of last year. Ten days ago, we celebrated the second 'Fanfare for Spring'. With fine weather, this proved to be an explosion of

entertainment never before seen throughout the Town; over 500 artists played, sang and danced to thrill the crowds, who came in their hundreds to be entertained in Ringwood – the main car park was full to overflowing (a problem to be sorted sooner than later!). I want to congratulate Ringwood Rotary, led by Roger Bettle, in organising such a fantastic day for the Town. Their organisational ability over many months produced a spectacular display to promote Ringwood – our thanks to them all.

The next twelve months look like another exciting year for Ringwood.

We are aware that plans are being worked up by Furlong Developments, in conjunction with Marstons Brewery, to redevelop the land behind the Old Cinema and The Furlong to deliver some large retail/commercial properties. There are rumours that Waitrose would like to expand and the main Town car park will need extra spaces as there are days even now when it is full!

Most of this is not possible without the dedication of my fellow Councillors and the work they do, both within their committees and as Town Council representatives on outside organisations – I thank you.

Some of our events are possible due to, and I give thanks to, the sponsors within the Town, such as Raymond Brown, Ringwood Brewery and others, who, by their generosity assist in making certain events in the Town happen. I also want to thank our Am/Dram troupes, RMDS, Poulner Players and Forest Forge Theatre Co., for being here in Ringwood and giving the people of the Town, and miles around, such entertainment and such pleasure.

Last, but by no means least, I give my deep felt thanks to the former Town Clerk, Terry Simpson, and now to Steve Nash and his Staff for all their hard work in making this Council happen! Hard work, long hours and their loyalty has helped produce another marvellous year for Ringwood.

Cllr. Steve Rippon-Swaine FRICS DipGS

Town Mayor of Ringwood 2012 - 2014

RECREATION, LEISURE AND OPEN SPACES

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN – CLLR BRIAN TERRY

May 2013- April 2014

Once again the Council provided summer fun with the popular Table Top Circus sessions. The play scheme was held at Carvers Recreation Ground on two mornings a week during July and August and then moved to Toad Corner Play Area at Poulner for two weeks. As usual, there was no charge for any children attending at either venue.

There was also a separate event for teenagers in August, on exam results day, with a Skate Park competition and live music from local school bands.

The Allotment Competition was judged and we give our thanks to members of Ringwood Garden Club and former Councillor Norman Light. The judges commented on the impressive results despite the difficult weather conditions of the previous winter, the late spring and very hot summer. The winning allotment holders were awarded prizes at Full Council last September.

I am pleased to say that 2013 was the first year for some time in which the waiting list for an allotment was cleared, thanks to the introduction of mini plots and the policy of encouraging tenants to work the plot or risk losing it.

The Town Council has been in need of improved facilities for outdoor sport for many years and it was hoped that 2-3 hectares of land near Crow Lane could be obtained as part of the 'Ring 3' development, but sadly this has not proved possible. However, progress is being made with land acquisition in the Long Lane area (where the current football pitches are located) and we hope this will be finalised soon. We hope as part of this project that we will be able to provide an all-weather pitch for hire at the site, subject to funding being obtained from a variety of sources including Sport England.

The Committee also oversees operational matters such as maintenance, tree management and all the works carried out by the Groundstaff team. Unfortunately, the past year has seen unprecedented levels of vandalism on the Council's open spaces, in particular, at Carvers Recreation Ground. Dealing with vandalism costs the Council a great deal, as it is a waste of staff time and leads to increased insurance premiums. The Committee has, wherever possible, improved security of its property to try to counteract this and there are plans for a CCTV camera to be installed at Carvers shortly, thanks to some funding from McCarthy & Stone.

The Town Cemetery was expanded by removal of Leylandii and levelling of the ground in order to create space for up to 50 new burial plots. Further progress was made with plans for a Columbarium, which will be located close to the car park. It should now be possible to source a ready-made design, instead of a more costly bespoke design.

I would like to pay tribute to our Grounds Foreman, Clive Wentworth, who retired in March after many years dedicated service and having taken good care of the Council's facilities. He is very ably replaced by his brother and we welcome and wish all the best of luck to Kelvin, who has been promoted to the post of Foreman.

My thanks to Committee Members, to all our staff and to our two Student Advisors, Lisa Devine and Charlie Rogers, for your input to the Committee. I am looking forward to an exciting new year of new events and projects and would ask people to look out for our Christmas Lights event on the 6th December.

PLANNING, TOWN & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN – CLLR SOPHIE BURGESS-KENAR

I have pleasure in presenting the annual Planning, Town & Environment Committee Report for 2013/2014.

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

STATISTICS 1 APRIL 2013 – 31 MAR 2014

Summary April 2013 – Mar 2014	Applications Considered by Ringwood Town Council	2013- 2014	2012- 2013
Authority	Type of Application	No.	No.
New Forest District Council	Full	94	76
	Tree* - dealt with by NFNPA below	0	15
	Telecommunications	0	0
	Amendment	1	0
	Change of Use	1	3
	Outline	2	0
	Lawful Development Certificate	5	1
	Advertisement	12	12
	Renewal of Permission	3	2
	Variation	1	1
	Listed Building / Conservation Area Consent	10	11
	Demolition Determination	1	1
	Hampshire Co Council	2	
	Reserved Matters	2	
	Total Number	134	122
New Forest National Park Authority			
	Full	13	12
	Tree*	34	17
	Listed Building Consent	0	0
	Lawful Development Certificate	1	1
	Change of Use	1	
	Total Number	49	30
<i>Note: Figures include repeat applications if applicable</i>			
*Trees	During 2013 the NFDC and NFNPA Tree teams amalgamated and all Tree works applications are now dealt with by NFNPA.		

It has been another busy year for this committee, we have had several important applications brought before us, some of which quite controversial.

Linden Homes put in an Outline Application for 175 homes at our RING3 site at Crow, this caused quite a stir. We welcomed around 100 members of the public to our committee meeting in January, not an easy meeting to chair! Chris Elliot also came to that meeting which was extremely helpful as he was able to answer a lot of the questions. This application was then sent over to NFDC and myself, Cllr Steele & Cllr Wiseman went along in April to Appletree Court to represent the town, along with the Better Ringwood Group. This application was granted (with conditions) by the District Council in April. The Town Council will carefully monitor the progress of the development, as there were a number of concerns raised, and suggestions, such as routing traffic for the industrial units through Endeavour Business Park instead of Crow Lane, noting that the landowner in question is open to discussion.

We also received an application for the old council offices on Christchurch Road, this was brought to us several times before the application was withdrawn. The first application being for a convenience store, flats above and houses behind. This was refused. They then came back with just flats and three houses to the rear, this was granted. From what we understand, the sale fell through and the site is now being purchased by Churchill Retirement Living who propose to build 25 flats on the site. They have recently had a consultation at Greyfriars in order to inform the local people of their plans and we wait to see their application when it is submitted.

In our March meeting we had the pleasure of having Richard Bastow from Hampshire County Council (HCC) at our meeting in order to discuss our ongoing issues with flooding in the town, particularly around the RING3 site. A flood action working party has been formed which comprises of some of our councillors, local residents and a representative from HCC. I understand that they continue to work together in order to try and resolve some of the problems we are facing in the town.

In 2013, a delegation of Councillors went to London to meet with the transport Minister regarding the Council's campaign to improve the safety of the A31. This meeting was the culmination of a campaign, including a public petition and supported by the District Council, aimed at improving the safety of the A31 at Ringwood, with recommendations to reduce the speed on this section and make major improvements to the signage. The Minister seriously considered the possibility of a reduction in the speed limit, but after further consultation with the Highways Agency, this was not approved, although new improved signage will be implemented this summer.

Just recently we have had a new crossing put in at Christchurch Road near to Greyfriars, this will hopefully slow the traffic down in that area and we have also, at last, had a bus shelter built on Southampton Road. I know the need for this was great and I am very pleased to report that it is now in use. We even had a visit from a local man at one of our committee meetings to thank the town council and especially Cllr Ford for all their hard work.

Last year I mentioned that we had a visit from Julian Higgins, Policy and Communications team leader from HCC to discuss the Street Lighting Private Finance Initiative (PFI). I am pleased to report that works have commenced and there are new energy efficient lights shooting up all over the place!

I would like to thank, on behalf of the Committee, Jo Hurd and Claire Perrens for their continued hard work. I would also like to thank Cllr Steele for looking out for me for another year. I will be very sad to see Claire go, as she is leaving to take up a new job opportunity; I don't know what I will do without her sticky labels telling me what to do!

Our thanks to student advisors Emily Pollitt and Katy Perriman for their contributions to the meetings and we wish you all the very best with whatever you decide to do after a well earned summer off.

The Planning, Town & Environment Committee will continue to listen to the views and concerns of the local residents and represent them to the best of our ability.

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 2013/14. I am sure that you are getting tired of me saying this but as ever I have tried to keep the format similar to previous years for ease of comparison.

The precept for 2013/14 was £360,760 against expenditure of £617,533. Income amounted to £204,171 and this gave a net expenditure of £413,362. This expenditure was funded through the precept along with a net transfer from provisions and to reserves being £20,390 and £8,130 respectively. For those who have done some quick maths, the balancing figure is the transitional grant, from NFDC, of £40,341.

We look for improvement as we see signs of recovery within the economy however investment income for the year amounted to £1,278, down on last year by £2,492 and nowhere near the levels that we saw five years ago. I should also point out that we have less funds invested due, in part, to fact that we have still not disposed of the building plot but that its sale is part of the Councils financial strategy.

Variance between budget and out-turn and this year there is a net under spend of £5,767 against the original budget although at the time that we set that budget we had proposed looking at finding in year savings of £6,840 so we did slightly miss our target. Our thanks as always should go to the Council staff for their excellent work.

Net expenditure broken down into committees was:

Policy & Finance	£ 243,574
Recreation, Leisure & Open Space	£ 153,689
Planning, Town & Environment	£ 16,099

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 @ 31/03/13	£ 339,155
Total Balance @ 31/03/14	£ 303,678
Public Loans Board (Fixed rate 3.4% over 25 Years)	£-278,261

Reporting on the Mayors allowance, I would this year confirm that that there was no increase and that it remained at £1,000 further that after the overspend of last year, of £18.37, this year it has come in exactly on budget however I think that this may be due to the Mayor covering some of the expenditure from his own funds.

Accounts, for the year ending 31st March 2014 are due to be presented at the Policy and Finance meeting to be held on Wednesday 18th June 2014 and will then be available with the minutes of that meeting being presented to Full Council tonight, they will also be available on the Town Councils web site. Presentation of the accounts will be somewhat later this year than they have

been in the past and for that I apologise and would, in part, put this down to the changeover in accounting systems from Sage to Ageso; I trust that in future years we will be back on schedule.

Mr Mayor having dealt with last year it is my habit to mention some points connected with the current year and on this occasion there are no exceptions. No one can fail to notice that this year we have not been able to hold the precept and there are a number of factors attributable to this the primary one being shown in the final line of the first paragraph of my report, *transitional grant from NFDC £40,341*. Changes in the reimbursement of Council Tax Benefit, by central Government, have had a negative impact on the money that some Town and Parish Councils receive through their precept, to make an adjustment for this Government have made a transitional grant available to District Councils and New Forest District Council have passed this across however current policy is that this will be phased out over three years and, as a prudent council, we have had to make provision for this and for the possibilities of other changes that are being mooted and which, whilst out of our control, may have a significant impact on us.

The increase in our precept was a matter of real concern for Councillors and was not a decision that was taken lightly however on balance we concluded that the people of Ringwood were pleased with the way in which their Council carried out such tasks as maintain open spaces and the cemetery, supports local events which bring the town alive and fights when our town is threatened with inappropriate planning applications to name but a few of our functions. I am confident that we made the right choice.