

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Wednesday 25th November 2020 at 7.00pm

The meeting took place in a virtual environment using “Zoom” video conferencing technology and members of the public and press were given the opportunity to observe or participate in the meeting.

PRESENT: Cllr Tony Ring, Town Mayor
Cllr Philip Day, Deputy Mayor
Cllr Andy Briers
Cllr Gareth Deboos
Cllr Hilary Edge (*from 7.34pm*)
Cllr Rae Frederick
Cllr Jeremy Heron
Cllr Peter Kelleher
Cllr Darren Loose
Cllr Gloria O’Reilly
Cllr Steve Rippon-Swaine
Cllr Glenys Turner (*from 7.20pm*)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Chris Wilkins, Town Clerk
Mrs Jo Hurd, Deputy Town Clerk

ABSENT: Cllr John Haywood

**C/6512
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no members of public present.

**C/6513
APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Town Clerk reported that apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Haywood.

**C/6514
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none declared at this time.

**C/6515
MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Meeting held on 28th October 2020, having been circulated, be approved and signed as a correct record.

**C/6516
RECREATION, LEISURE AND OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE**

Cllr Briers presented the minutes of the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 4th November 2020.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 4th November 2020 be received.

**C/6517
PLANNING, TOWN & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

Cllr Day presented the minutes of the Planning, Town & Environment Committee meeting held on 6th November 2020.

He reported that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, following its final session with consultants, would be recommending that the Council proceed with a Neighbourhood Plan – a report would be presented to the Committee and then Council in January.

It was noted that Highways England had questioned the need for signage on the A31 to advise drivers about the closure of the West Street junction with the A31. This was required to avoid rat running down Hightown Hill and congestion in the town centre and the case would be put to Highways England again.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Planning, Town & Environment Committee meeting held on 6th November 2020 be received.

**C/6518
POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Cllr Heron presented the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee meeting held on 18th November 2020.

He reported that the NFDC Cabinet would be setting the Council Tax Base for 2021/22 at its next meeting. It was proposed that the Tax Base for Ringwood be 5404.3, which was a rise of 0.79% from this year, resulting in an increase of approximately £4,100. In addition, NFDC had set aside funds to support towns and parishes during the pandemic, and a one-off grant was proposed of £1.50 on the 2021/22 Tax Base, providing a grant of £8,106 to the Town Council if approved by Cabinet. With these increases, Cllr Heron estimated that the draft budget for 2021/22 would be within £1,400 of the original figure without the need to raise the Precept.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee meeting held on 18th November 2020 be received, and the recommendation therein (at F/5853) be approved.

**C/6519
FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT**

Members considered a recommendation from Policy and Finance Committee to approve the updated Financial Risk Assessment (*F/5854 refers*).

RESOLVED: That the updated Financial Risk Assessment be approved.

ACTION R Fitzgerald

**C/6520
SPORTS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AT LONG LANE**

The Town Clerk reported that the Steering Group had met on 13th November and received a short presentation from the architects on their initial thoughts on project design and scope,

and a detailed analysis of project costs. They had been cautious about costs provided as there was a great deal of uncertainty about several issues, which could not be resolved until a number of site surveys and investigations had been carried out. It was expected that costings would change significantly, and this would affect the scope of the project. The next stage is to arrange for these site surveys to be undertaken.

The Steering Group had also discussed the issue of VAT which was a highly complex technical matter. Due to complexity the Town Clerk had sought advice from the Society of Local Council Clerk's VAT specialist, who had been unable to provide advice as sports projects are such a specialist area. The Football Foundation had recommended a specialist adviser, and this would come at significant cost. However, it was critical to get this right from the outset before signing any contracts.

Cllr Turner joined the meeting at 7.20pm.

It was expected that the Football Foundation would release an initial sum to cover early costs, but other parties may also need to contribute at this stage. It was noted that there was no financial commitment to the Council as yet.

It was noted that the architects were providing ballpark figures and that the whole project would be subject to competitive tendering to ensure best value.

The Town Clerk said that a Communication Strategy is now required to ensure that everyone is clear about what can be reported to all stakeholders and the wider community.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk's verbal report be noted.

Cllr Edge joined the meeting at 7.34pm.

C/6521

GRANT AID AWARDS

It was noted that two Grant Aid awards had been made; £750 to Transition Ringwood towards the costs associated with wildflower planting events; and £1,000 to Men's Shed Ringwood towards the costs of setting up a workshop.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

C/6522

CHOICE OF VIDEO CONFERENCING TECHNOLOGY FOR COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Town Clerk reminded Members that the Police, who had previously attended Council meetings on a quarterly basis, were no longer able to attend these meetings as Hampshire Constabulary has a policy that Zoom must not be used for official business. He had therefore looked at switching from Zoom to Microsoft Teams. However, the trial meeting had not been as successful as hoped and there had been a number of technical difficulties in joining and participating, a lack of functionality had been noted and there was general unfamiliarity with this platform. As the Council's ICT support company could only offer limited advice, the next step would be for the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk to contact each Member individually to troubleshoot any issues and he questioned whether this was worth pursuing.

As the Police were unable to attend, Inspector Minnock had provided an update, as follows:



“The Ringwood Neighbourhood Team has been very busy this autumn and since your last meeting.

Operation Bump is a district priority into the increased commission of burglary in the Ringwood area. This has been widely commented on in our Facebook pages and I know how much concern and anxiety this has caused in the community. I want you to know we have been working tirelessly to prevent acquisitive crime and bring those responsible to justice. The local team have worked additional hours, changed their duties to match the offending (often at short notice) whilst managing the ongoing demand in a changing pandemic environment. We have also committed significant specialist resources to the issue including, proactive road policing units, dog units and the police helicopter. This has led to significant arrests and stolen property recovered. These investigations continue. We are also working with partners to identify other opportunities to make it harder for criminals. As always I continue to ask you to promote the reporting of offences as there are still occasions when this is not being done. I would also like to thank the community for their increased reporting of suspicious incidents which my team follow up.

Other activities include a positive drugs warrant where the resident has been dealt with for possession of class B drugs. With more reporting by the community we will continue to take opportunities to execute warrants and disrupt the drug activity in Ringwood. We have also had 2 separate weeks of national action including Hate crime awareness week and Op Sceptre which relates to knife crime. We have also attended and participated in various remembrance services in the area.

I also enjoyed my first street meets with the NFDC and thank those that attended to discuss their concerns and issues. There will be some police activity coming soon with regards to some of these areas in the coming weeks. We will advertise this activity nearer the time. I intend to offer further street meets in the new year. I am also open to suggestions from the council on how the team and I can continue to update and communicate with the community.”

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that she had invited the Hampshire Police and Crime Commissioner to attend a future meeting. This had not yet been arranged as it was hoped he could attend at the same time as the local Inspector. However, as this was not currently possible, Members agreed that the invitation should be extended once again. It was understood he would be able to participate using Zoom.

Members agreed that the Street Meets provided positive engagement with the community but asked that more notice be given for future dates.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the switch to an alternative platform for meetings be not pursued at the current time, but that discussions continue about other ways to engage with the Police.
- 2) That Inspector Minnock’s report be noted, and that he be asked to give more notice of future Street Meets.
- 3) That the Hampshire Police and Crime Commissioner be invited to attend a future meeting.

ACTION C Wilkins / J Hurd

C/6523

COMMUNICATIONS TO BE RECEIVED

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Chairman’s initials

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The Town Mayor reported the following:

- 1) The limited Remembrance services had been successful, and a strict adherence to social distancing was observed.
- 2) All the towns voluntary organisations continued to function during the pandemic for the benefit of the community.
- 3) Plans were in place for Covid safe Christmas events.

**C/6524
REPORTS FROM TOWN COUNCILLORS AND STUDENT ADVISORS**

Cllr Day reported that Members had been disappointed by the reaction of NFDC’s Planning Committee to representation made by Cllr Frederick on planning application 20/10938 (110 Christchurch Road). Members had met informally and made some suggestions to improve future engagement with NFDC officers.

He thanked everyone involved in the Remembrance services, particularly Jay Cox of Ringwood TV for filming the events. A 30ft Christmas tree was now in place in Market Square and would be decorated by the end of the week. The switch-on would be filmed and shared on the Council’s website and social media. There had been a good response to the Christmas window competition, and various events will be publicised to bring Christmas spirit to the town.

**C/6525
REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS**

District Councillor Rippon-Swaine reported that consultation on the Draft Waste Strategy was ongoing until 10th December and he encouraged people to respond.

Members expressed disappointment that the District Councillors for Ringwood North (and the County Councillor) rarely attended these meetings, in fact one had not attended a meeting since his election. It was agreed that they should be invited to attend future meetings to support the Council on relevant issues.

**C/6526
FORTHCOMING MEETINGS**

Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces	7.00pm	Wednesday 2 nd December 2020
Planning, Town & Environment	10.00am	Friday 4 th December 2020
Policy & Finance	7.00pm	Wednesday 9 th December 2020
Full Council	7.00pm	Wednesday 16 th December 2020

There being no further business, the Town Mayor closed the meeting at 20.17pm.

APPROVED
16th December 2020

TOWN MAYOR