



Ringwood Town Council

Annual Report 2018

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Introduction by the Town Mayor Cllr Tim Ward

MAYORS ANNUAL REPORT MAY 2018

I am very happy to be able to begin my report on an optimistic note; we have at last seen some repairs and reinstatements in the town centre and more are promised, particularly, attention to defects we have identified which might pose a danger during the Pedal Car G P, in Meeting House Lane for instance. Whilst we understand the money for these repairs and general maintenance comes from an ever decreasing pot, we must keep up the pressure so that we're not forgotten.

We have been promised that The Bickerley will be returned to us in time for the Carnival, although I'm surprised that the company doing the final remedial work hasn't taken advantage of the recent good weather. September is not far off.

The High Street seems to be bucking the national trend with most empty shops quickly re-occupied and I hope we will soon have confirmation of a buyer for the derelict area which includes the old cinema. Whoever redevelops this site will, I'm sure, wish to save and restore the iconic front part of the building which was the old Town Hall.

We face many challenges, both short and long term, such as our sincere wish to find a way to provide housing for local young people, which occupies a great deal of our time, but it seems that whoever we talk to, whatever direction we turn, we encounter insurmountable obstacles. It would seem that a proper solution can only be found by Government, and I don't mean schemes such as Help to Buy or Shared Ownership which only increase developers' profits and trap people in debt.

An immediate problem which will impact on most, if not all, is the imminent closure of Christchurch Road. It is to be hoped that Highways will put in measures to prevent HGVs using the back roads, because just one on Crow Arch Lane, for instance, would cause grid lock.

The final buildings on the old Wellworthy site are due to be completed in the next 12 months and we've complained repeatedly about the lack of parking on this development. I voiced our objection to the latest application for a gym before NFDC Planning Committee, for this reason, and I believe found some sympathy from Members, until the Head of Planning told them they could not go against County Officers and went on to say that if the Christchurch Road was affected, as we forecast, he would introduce parking restrictions on that road. So it is likely that tax payer's money will be spent to address a problem created within the industrial estate, due to an acknowledged under provision of adequate parking and move the problem on for others to deal with.

In a few years time we will have to deal with the A31 project and its effect on the Town. Despite several meetings and repeated questions, we have been given no clear picture of the details, although I suspect many, if not all have been decided. For instance, West Street; the attitude of certain officers convinces me that the decision has been made to close it completely, with no removable barrier for

emergencies. Are we kept in the dark because we might find such decisions unacceptable?

Meanwhile we carry on, using the limited powers and influence that we have, to try to do the best for the Town. I think most residents appreciate our efforts and readily join with us in the wonderful display of community spirit such as we witnessed at the street party. If Cllr Day has another idea for an event I shall encourage him to go into a darkened room until it passes.

Thank you all, Councillors, Officers and staff for working so well together as an efficient, harmonious team, you've made my job of Mayor easy and I'm sure the next incumbent will find it just as enjoyable.

Tim Ward

Town Mayor

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 2017-18.

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 Applications	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	158	77	15	8	17	6	8
NatPark	20	18	1	1	0	0	0

NB □ 4 we left to Officers on technical grounds. 31 Applications await Officer Recommendation, or Appeal outcomes.

Of the Applications determined, 77% were granted. Of those refused, most were for extensions to existing properties being considered incompatible with the local character of the area or loss of neighbours amenity.

There were Applications for an additional 142 residential dwellings, of which 122 were approved (including 113 at the Crow Lane site), and 7 refused and 13 awaiting decision.

Whilst the majority (75%) of our Recommendations were in line with those made by Planning Officers, there were a number where a different view was taken. There were 6 Applications where Officers' view was not accepted by our Committee, and the differences had to be resolved at NFDC Planning Committee, at which your Councillors made our case to their Members. Whilst we did not succeed with 3 of these, our recommendations were accepted in the other 3 cases, including the Clock at Fridays Cross. However, one of the Committee agreed decisions was overturned at Appeal.

Of the Planning Applications refused which Applicants subsequently took to Appeal and were decided this year, one was refused and three granted. Four Appeal

decisions are awaited.

It is worth noting that your Committee has objected to several of the proposed commercial units on the old Wellworthy site as being too large for the setting and/or have insufficient car parking provided on site. We have yet to convince NFDC Planning of these problems in every case.

With regard to the 30 Applications for tree works, our recommendations were in general similar to those of the Tree Officer, in particular where we argued for pruning where possible, rather than felling.

2) Licensing - One applications was made, which was accepted.

3) Local Plan Review

The NFDC final proposed submission Local Plan for strategic sites (meaning greater than 100 dwellings) has been delayed by many months, due to extra tests Government required. This should be published in June this year for a 6 week consultation, before submitting it to the Inspector.

The last site assessment we saw for this Plan for large sites for housing in Ringwood now proposes 250 dwellings plus employment land on the Lynes Farm site behind the Elm Tree, and 400 dwellings on the north side of Moortown Lane, which is in the Green Belt.

In our response last year to the initial NFDC proposals for 1150 dwellings (may be now reduced to 650), your Council opposed building on the Green Belt for three main reasons:-

a) we argued 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 which justifies compromising the green Belt. NFDC recently told us that the reason for the now more modest expansion is not inward-migration, but because of the existing population becoming older and living longer.

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 maintain that, with a few extra junction modifications, the extra traffic can be accommodated safely. If there is a reduction of 500 in the number of dwellings proposed, we will re-assess the need for our own Traffic Assessment .

c) The extensive Moortown Lane sites are categorised nationally as premier land quality for agriculture, and should only be allocated for built development as a last resort.

The southern half of this proposed development may not now be allocated

4) Homes that local people can afford

Both our Council and many local people have expressed their considerable concern

about the lack of enough 1 and 2 bedroom properties available to buy at prices that enable local young people to get a foot on the property ladder. The shortage of homes which young people who work in the town can afford to rent or buy also contributes greatly to local commuter traffic; congesting our roads and adding to our parking problems. This issue has been highlighted by the very few such properties in the Linden Homes development at Crow Lane, in spite of NFDC planning documents - and their waiting list - demonstrating such a need.

We have been pressing NFDC on these issues and will continue to do so. They have assured us that they fully share our concerns and have stated:-

- i That their emerging draft Local Plan will include smarter more flexible policies which should ensure that larger developments will, in future, include a higher proportion of 1 and 2 bedroom homes, and homes for sale at discounted prices as well as homes available for rent than has been the case until now; and
- i That their housing waiting list is not just for people who want to rent but is also for people who are eligible to buy on shared equity or shared ownership terms; it can therefore be a route to home ownership.

Your Council will continue to explore ways to help ease these local housing pressures.

5) Local Sites of particular interest

The two sites in our Town Centre which 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, there are still no achievable plans by the site owners to come forward. Your Council will support appropriate applications to resolve these issues

The Crow Lane/ Crow Arch Lane site is now well under construction with only details to be approved to complete the whole site. Our Committee's successfully insisted on a safe Construction

Traffic Management Plan, which is now in operation and in general being followed.

6) Highways England (HE) – A31 project to widen the westbound carriageway to 3 lanes.

HE have met with our Council representatives and those of HCC and NFDC to explain their evolving design proposals on a number of occasions, following the public consultation last summer.

The project has a delayed implementation period, now planned for 2021.

Whilst welcoming the overall concept of the scheme, our representatives have made serious proposals for inclusion in the design, including:-

- i emergency access through West St to A31
- i closing or re-arranging access to the petrol station
- i extending the petrol station lay-by to the Verwood turn off, to limit vehicle lane crossing

- i speed restriction at least in the lane merging areas
- i improvements to the street scape and accesses to the Market Place
- i trunk road noise reduction in the vicinity of the Church and Market Place/West St.
- i improved signage and lane management from Picket Post
- i re-modelling traffic flow predictions from new Local Plan housing expansion
- i traffic management plan during construction period meeting local needs

HE has made no commitments on any of these proposals other than they will be considered.

7) Highway matters.

During the year, a number of road safety and maintenance 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.

b) Butlers Lane/Tesco Express area - the need for a wheel-chair friendly pedestrian access to the nearby postbox and road crossing. Thanks to our own staff, this important link has now been completed by a local contractor and under the budget HCC originally wanted if they did it.

c) Kings Arms Lane □ lighting. Our Council are still awaits HCC and SSE to improve the lighting along this Lane, particularly at the western end approaching the Bickerley.

8) Flood alleviation

The Bickerley Green flooding problem - Wessex Water claim that their measures this year are proving sufficiently satisfactory for the Green to be returned to public use by the time of our Carnival.

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 local resident Peter Street. However, we still await HCC re-establishing the larger drain capacity along Moortown Lane to the River Avon floodplain, and to complete remedial works to the drainage systems down Crow Hill.

9) Town Centre Improvements

The renovation of the human sundial and surrounding area in the Market Place is starting to go ahead.

The Ringwood Society suggestions for improving the environmental quality of certain sites within our Conservation Area is partially being implemented including the Fridays Cross signage and possibly the hedge planting along Mansfield Road adjacent to the BT site.

Improvements to the patio area in Lions Court and to the rear of the buildings

facing the Furlong car park/bus stop area remain long term objectives.

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 works with unsightly tarmac.

Our Officers are currently working with NFDC and HCC Officers in preparing schemes of improved access for pedestrians and cyclists to reach and enjoy the Market Place, to be submitted to Highways England for funding, related to the above-mentioned A31 project.

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 and NPA Enforcement are regularly made and monitored for compliance where necessary, although Government grant cuts to NFDC are limiting their ability to respond quickly to alleged breaches.

11) Business Community Involvement

Regrettably there has been no progress in local businesses forming a business partnership in Ringwood, which limits our Council in any joint working aimed at improving the economic well-being and employment in our Town.

12) Personnel

Our Committee continue to pay particular tribute with much appreciation and thanks to our two Officers □Jo Hurd and Nicola Vodden □ for their dedicated, effective and professional work on our behalf. Moreover, they make sure things actually get done! Your Chairman would also like to thank his fellow Committee Members and Student Advisers for continuing their constructive observations and guidance in making recommendations to promote the best planning outcomes for our Town.

Councillor Chris Treleaven, Chairman 2017-8
May 2018

Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee

Report by the Chairman Cllr Andy Briers

May 2017-April 2018

Thank you Mr Mayor

I am pleased to present the annual report of the recreation, leisure and open spaces committee 2018□

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 fireworks, The Christmas Market etc. with these events being provided by Ringwood Events Committee and latterly the Ringwood Events Team and Ringwood Town Council. 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

We have appointed a new manager for the facility and with Charmaine's hard work, experience, drive and enthusiasm believe the Town Council now has a clear vision with regards to this facility. Additionally, a new member of staff has recently been appointed to assist Charmaine in the running of the facility. Whilst in its early stages, and undergoing a rebranding exercise, it is a credit to Charmaine that has seen its popularity grow in the last few months, both in welcoming the young people of Ringwood into the facility, but also in providing outside organisations, clubs etc. to use the facility. 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.

The additional lighting has been installed since the last annual report and this provides safe access to the facility in the darker months.

The Skate Park

The Skate Park has continued to be a success, with a Skate Event planned for next month.

Long Lane

We and Ringwood Town Football Club have now commissioned a feasibility study into the redevelopment of the facilities at Long Lane and this currently being undertaken by outside consultants. We are looking forward to the results of this and possible re-develop of the site as a multi sports facility with new clubhouse.

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 Ringwood Events Team, Ringwood Town Council officers, the voluntary support of local residents, and not least generous local sponsors, that these events continue. This month saw a fabulous street party to celebrate the royal wedding and the FA Cup final.

Last year we reported that the loss of the Bickerley Green meant the movement of the Carnival Fair to Carvers Playing Field. However, this year we are pleased to report the Carnival Fair will return to the Bickerley Green.

Our grounds team have increased their capacity due to the previous purchases of new equipment, and their ongoing commitment to providing new working methods and cost saving initiatives are much appreciated.

We have recently received tenders for new play equipment in the various play areas owned and maintained by Ringwood Town Council. This is currently undergoing a tender review and, subject to this review, it is hoped new play equipment will be installed in the near future.

Our social media site is continuing to grow in popularity and has been very effective in getting the message out about subjects concerning the town and its facilities. 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 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 2017-18 and will support us in the year ahead. I would also like to thank the residents of Ringwood who help with litter picking, reporting defects etc. Your help is much appreciated.

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.

Policy and Finance Committee Report by the Chairman Cllr Jeremy Heron

Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr Mayor, Fellow Councillors,

I am please find below the report for the Policy and Finance Committee for the municipal year 2017/18, the previous years figures are provided for comparison and full accounts are provided within the minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee held on 16th May.

You will note as you work your way through the figures that in line with Mr Micawber our result in happiness in that our income exceeded expenditure by just over sixty-four thousand pounds; this is reflected in a reduction in the loans owed by this Council and an increase in the balances held at bank.

	2017/18	2016/17
	£	£
Precept	468,223	462,991
Income excluding investments income & CIL	211,832	243,138
Investment Income	1,074	1,369
Community Infrastructure Levy	9,459	17,288
Total Income	£ 690,588	£ 724,786
Revenue Expenditure	609,203	625,261
Capital Expenditure	17,305	30,092
Total Expenditure	£ 626,508	£ 655,353
Net Movement in Funds	£ 64,080	£ 69,433

Revenue Expenditure broken down by Committee is:

Policy & Finance	366,429	354,757
Recreation Leisure & Open Space	226,318	253,541
Planning	16,456	16,963

Total Balances held at bank	£ 496,892	£ 443,381
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Town Council Loans:

Public Loans Board (Fixed rate 3.4% over 25 years)	£ -230,130	£ -242,778
Loan for land purchase (Fixed rate 3.03% over 25 years)	£ -177,130	£ -182,393

It is interesting to note that our liquid funds exceed our loans by over eighty-nine and a half thousand pounds. Given the returns that we are making on our

investments we should look at our predicted cash flow profile for the coming year and decide if we are making best use of resources.

One other figure that, when we decided to create the position of Town Mayor, we assure the residence that we would always report was the Mayors allowance; this has remained unchanged at one thousand pounds.

Now some say that Policy and Finance is not the most exciting of committee, not me of course, but it is true that our role is more that of an enabler rather than a direct provider of services; we leave that sort of thing to the glory hunters such as Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces.

There is however one area in which we deliver a direct service and that is the awarding of Grants. Recent years have seen changes with this process; as larger organisations are seeing their funding reduced they have had to look at alternatives and many have alighted on multiple applications to town and parish councils thus raising significant funds through a number of awards. Ringwood Town Council has looked to resist this; it is not that we do not think that the applicants are carrying out worthwhile works it is that the town councils grant scheme is designed to support small organisation and predominantly those with a single layer of administration located and operating in Ringwood.

Even with such restrictions I am pleased to say that we awarded four thousand three hundred and seventy-three pounds worth of grants to ten organisations. Whist no one should ever have favourites I must say that mine, this year, must be Crow WI; an award of five hundred pounds towards their new kitchen.

Last year I did not finish my speech with my usual line, this year I am please that, once again, I can; 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.