



Ringwood Town Council

Annual Report 2019

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ANNUAL REPORTS FOR TOWN ASSEMBLY 15th May 2019

Introduction by the Town Mayor Cllr Tony Ring

My report is a personal reflection of the year rather than a listing of statistics □ not because I haven't done anything but because the real work of the council is carried out by working parties and committees whose Chairmen will report in detail in a few minutes.

For me I have to say that on 30 May after just 18 months service as a co-opted councillor I was rather surprised but greatly flattered to be elected Mayor by my peers and my sincere thanks now go to the Town Clerk, all Town Council officers and staff and my fellow councillors for their guidance, assistance and support throughout my year in office.

As a member of all council permanent committees, several working parties, the Events team and Ringwood representative in the wider world I am pleasantly satisfied with the successes we have enjoyed working with various partners to regain full use of the Bickerley, improve Fridays Cross with the repainted sign and working clock and install the wonderful Memorial Lantern and to create such widely enjoyed events such as the monumental (some would say terrifying) Bonfire and spectacular fireworks display, the Christmas fayre and lately relaunch of the Wednesday market.

As I said committee chairmen will report their respective activities later in detail but it is right that I note, congratulate and thank all involved in the huge volume of work and seemingly endless meetings carried out in management and control of our finances and resources, in considering and lobbying for the best outcomes for our town in planning, development, sport and leisure facilities and in dealing with day to day matters as they arise.

We have strived with some success to ensure that appropriate green open space areas are incorporated in housing developments such as at Crow Lane and that industrial development such as at the Wellworthy site impact as little as possible on the town and though they provide very welcome increased employment opportunities and a larger overall housing stock we have and will continue to argue for better traffic management, pedestrian and cycle facilities, infrastructure support and most important for a greater share of housing availability at prices young and perhaps not so well off can afford.

Delay in action by third parties is of course frustrating but after our relentless pressure work will soon start on repairs and an upgrade to the Human Sundial and Market Place, we are working with HCC on plans for pedestrian and cycle routeing through the town, we are hopeful of progress on issues around the old cinema, social club and other eyesore buildings in the town and are working with Highways England to mitigate the impact of work to improve the A31 due to start in March 2021.

For myself I have enjoyed the privilege of representing Ringwood at many formal functions spread from the spacious grandeur of Winchester Cathedral through the more cosy but no less environment of the Chain Library at Wimborne Minster down to a muddy field at Frogham and I am proud to have been involved in the many less formal events which have brought the town population together in vast numbers to celebrate and enjoy a community spirit second to none.

My repeated thanks to all my colleagues and to the people of Ringwood for their magnificent support.

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.

1) Responding to Planning Applications in the Ringwood Parish

The following Table summarises the Applications determined this year, together with the eventual decisions taken by the NFDC or NFNPA Planning Authorities with respect to these Applications :-

Local Planning Authority	Number Applicants rec'd	We & NFDC or NFNPA Officers both recommended permission, so granted	We & NFDC or NFNPA Officers both recommended refusal, so refused	We said grant, NFDC or NFNPA Officers said refuse	We said refuse, NFDC or NFNPA Officers said grant	Went to Planning Committee to resolve	Appeals against NFDC or NFNPA decision
NFDC	* 141	94	13	7	17	1	10
NatPark	14	8	1	2	3	1	1

*

10 Applications were left to Officers where technical expertise was required □ all were granted.

72% of the Applications determined were granted. Of those refused, many were judged to be incompatible with the local character of the area, as described by our Local Distinctiveness SPD.

The majority (79%) of our Recommendations were in line with those of NFDC Planning Officers, but there were 2 Applications where Officers' view was not accepted by our Committee. These went to the NFDC and NFNPA Committees, but we did not succeed in convincing their Members to overturn their Officers recommendations.

One recurring reason for our recommending refusals concerned the lack of parking spaces on site □ both residential and commercial. We argued that the Parking Standards were not being adhered to, which would lead to increased on-road parking and exacerbating congestion. In many of these cases, Officers did not agree and granted the applications. These differences in interpretation need clarification from NFDC Officers regarding their own parking standards.

Of the 11 Planning Applications refused by NFDC or NFNPA Planning which Applicants took to Appeal, 10 were refused and 1 granted. Certain Applications for new houses were refused because of inadequate mitigation measures for possible habitat destruction and phosphate contamination of the River Avon. Clarification of this new requirement is needed.

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 rather than

felling.

There were Applications for an additional 24 residential dwellings, of which 14 were approved, 10 refused. An extra 24 at the Linden/Crow Lane site await a decision.

2) Licensing - No applications were put forward for our consideration this year.

3) The new Local Plan for the period 2016-36

The NFDC submitted their final version of the proposed Local Plan for strategic sites (meaning greater than 100 dwellings) to the appointed HM Inspectors, who are expected to deliver their judgement as to its 'soundness' in the Autumn. This Plan proposes two strategic sites in Ringwood - at least 280 dwellings plus employment on the Lynes Farm site behind the Elm Tree, and 470 dwellings on the north side of Moortown Lane, which is in the Green Belt.

In view of the reduction of some 400 dwellings compared with the original proposed Plan, we did not pursue an independent traffic assessment, as it would be unlikely to succeed in overturning the NFDC Assessment in view of the interpretation of National Planning Policy of 'congestion'

However, in the final pre-submission consultation period, we did emphasise:-

- Our welcome of the new Policy 16: housing type, size and choice, which puts a much greater emphasis on the provision of smaller 1 and 2 bedroom homes, affordable rental homes and affordable home ownership. The Town Council has long been concerned about the lack of affordable housing available in the Town for local young people, and has made many representations to the District Council to this effect.

- The need to specify maximum numbers and densities of dwellings on each site, to assist good building design and sufficient open space

- The western boundary of the Moortown Lane site parallel to Christchurch Rd is too close to the rear elevations of existing dwellings, and a swathe of greenspace beside this boundary will be required to avoid overlooking or domination of these dwellings.

- Whilst welcoming the proposed new road link to the A31 through the Lynes Farm site, the design of the housing development there needs to respect the amenity of the new residents there. The volume of traffic from a wider area will use this road to avoid the Town Centre.

- Serious doubts remain about the capacity of the local drainage/sewerage infrastructure to cope with the demands of housing development on the scale proposed. There is also a need for a new Flood Risk Assessment for the wider area south and east of the town.

- The mandatory requirement to provide alternative natural green spaces (SANGS) has only been achieved by extending into an area of Green Belt south of Moortown Lane. This land is already in use as open space. The requirement should be met in full on the site proposed for housing.

- The proposed use of this Green Belt as a reserve site for a new school is in conflict with paras. 145 and 146 of National Policy, which state that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt; although there are a few exceptions, a school is not one of them. Furthermore, our intention to develop and

improve use of this land for sports and recreation strongly suggests that a new school may well render any Town Council scheme unviable.

- On the Lynes Farm site, some of the built form would better be relocated from the south of the site to the north east, thereby protecting the important views outlined in the Local Distinctiveness SPD and making the SANGS area more accessible to a greater number of residents.

- Whilst the importance of well-designed landscapes (trees, hedgerows and planting schemes etc) is acknowledged, future planning permissions should include more enforceable conditions to prevent the loss of these features in the longer term.

Part 2 of the new Local Plan concerning smaller sites and detailed development policies is now commencing, and the new Town Council will be consulted on the new proposals later in the year.

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 - are privately owned. There are still no achievable plans by these site owners in place. We do trust that the current problems relating to the renovation of Ringwood Social Club site are speedily resolved.

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

HE is now committed to the A31 widening project, and is commencing detailed design for construction work to start in 2021. The West Street exit from the Town will be closed sometime before that, as will the A31 access to the Fish Inn. A traffic management plan for the 78 week total construction period has been published. HE anticipates there will only be full A31 closures during a limited number of night times, made during the 6 month period when there will be a two-lane contraflow system on the eastbound A31 carriageway whilst the westbound is closed.

Of the proposals we made for inclusion in the design, the following will be enacted:-

- 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 certain local needs
- i funding from HE for certain access improvements to the Town Centre (see below)

Proposals we made that have either been rejected or very unlikely to be included are:

- 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

HCC Highways submitted proposals for available HE funding, following a consultation with our Town Council and NFDC, for improvements strictly confined to pedestrian and cycle accesses, and not (as we hoped) to environmental and amenity enhancements to our Market Place. £380,000 has been awarded for the following improvements, all of which

must be completed in the coming year:-

- i West Street □ increased paved area as a gateway feature, with reduced road width.
- i Strides Lane □ enhanced footway and pedestrian access marking Avon Valley Path route.
- i Market Place to the Furlong. Reverse traffic direction along Meeting House Lane in order that vehicles may exit Market Place rather than enter. Pedestrian safety paramount here.
- i Furlong car park to Pedlars Walk and Furlong Shopping Centres □ enhanced pedestrian crossings with raised tables and line markings to make drivers more aware of pedestrians.
- i B3347 entrance to the Town □ gateway features and planting, to mark as the Town entrance.
- i Gravel Lane crossings adjacent to A31 □ improved paving and drainage.
- i Cycle stands - additional bays in the Town Centre

7) Highway matters

We have continued to pursue many road safety and maintenance matters with HCC Highways:-

a) Christchurch Rd - pedestrian crossing. Developers' contributions from Lidl are partly to be used for informal crossings each side of the adjacent roundabout, but HCC work is yet to start. The lack of any pedestrian/cycle crossing deters business people, residents and their schoolchildren on the west side of Ringwood from walking or cycling to the Town centre.

b) Pedestrian and cycle routes □ the construction of the final link of the Castleman Trailway under Crow Arch Lane bridge, and an off-road route from Forest Gate Business Park to Hightown Rd, are awaited.

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

8) Flood alleviation

The recent Crow Stream improvements to flow capacity have helped relieve much of the flooding problems previously experienced, thanks to the work of both HCC Highways and local residents, ably led by local resident Peter Street. We still await HCC re-establishing the larger drainage system along Moortown Lane to the River Avon floodplain, and to complete remedial works to the drainage systems down Crow Hill.

9) Neighbourhood Plan

Council has yet to decide whether to commit expensive resources to pursue the lengthy task of creating a Plan. If one was completed and adopted as a publicly approved statement of how our Town should develop, it would have a formal planning status, provided it did not contradict National and Local Planning Policy.

10) Town Centre Improvements

Developers Contributions will be used to renovate the human sundial and surrounding area in the Market Place, and HCC input to the work is still awaited.

Ringwood Society suggestions for improving the environmental quality of certain Conservation Area sites have been partially implemented with the Fridays Cross signage, and the hedge planting along Mansfield Road adjacent to the BT site should follow.

Improvements to the patio area in Lynes Lane and to the rear of the buildings facing the Furlong car park remain long term objectives.

Council did not apply for funding via NFDC from the Government □Funding for High Streets□scheme, largely because Council did not have a formally agreed Project Plan for the Town Centre.

11) 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. Progress with Enforcement decisions sometimes seems lengthy and even inconsistent, and we will ask NFDC to work with us to address our concerns.

12) Business Community Involvement

Regrettably, local businesses seem unwilling to form a business partnership in Ringwood, which limits any joint working with Council aimed at improving the economic well-being of our Town.

13) Personnel

Our Committee 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 in progressing our recommendations. Your Chairman would like to thank his fellow Committee Members and Student Advisers for their constructive observations and guidance in promoting the best planning outcomes for our Town. It has been a challenging and engaging 4 years!

Councillor Chris Treleaven, Chairman 2018-9.

Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee

Report by the Chairman Cllr Andy Briers

May 2018 - April 2019

Thank you Mr Mayor

I am pleased to present the annual report of the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee 2019.

I'm pleased to say that as has been mentioned in my previous reports, 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 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:

Carvers & Carvers Clubhouse

I mentioned last year that with the manager's hard work, experience, drive and enthusiasm this facility has gone from strength to strength and am pleased to say this continues. We are currently advertising for more staff to make this facility even better. We have seen its reputation grow over the last year with many clubs and organisations using the building. More recently we have seen the pancake race and Easter egg hunt held there and these proved extremely popular. We will of course continue to source grant funding to further enhance the facilities and services, both at the clubhouse and Carvers in general. However, would hope that more volunteers and organisations will come forward to use Clubhouse.

Additionally, we have also seen a major refurbishment and renewal project at the playground within Carvers and hope these new play items are being enjoyed by the local residents.

Long Lane

We and Ringwood Town Football Club have now received a feasibility study into the redevelopment of the facilities at Long Lane and this currently being taken to the next stage. As we are all no doubt aware, projects like this take a long time in the making but we look forward to the results of this and possible re-development of the site as a multi sports facility with new clubhouse.

General Items

The committee as always gives its thanks to Mr Atack and members of Ringwood Garden Club for judging the annual allotment competition. The winning allotment holders were awarded prizes at Full Council last October.

Events in Ringwood continue with the Ringwood Events team, supported by the newly appointed Events Co-ordinator and Town Council Officers putting on bigger

and better events such as fireworks, Remembrance Day and the Christmas light switch on and market. It is again thanks to the events team, officers, the voluntary support of local residents and associations such as the Rotary Club, and last but not least, the generous local sponsors that these events continue.

As has been recently reported the boardwalk in Pocket Park has now become unrepairable. This replacement project will now be accelerated as soon as is practicable.

We have also continued to look at the management of the trees owned by the Council. Trees are such an important feature of the town and its environment and I feel we can be proud of adopting a new policy designed to safeguard and manage these safely and sensitively.

We are currently in the process of organising tenders for the replacement of the Christmas lights owned and maintained by Ringwood Town Council. The existing ones have been removed and we will have new ones installed around the town for next Christmas.

I must also mention and thank our office staff and grounds team. It is thanks to their hard work and ongoing commitment that our town and facilities are something to be proud of.

As mentioned last year, our social media site continues to grow and would encourage residents to visit our website and social media sites for information on the town and its facilities.

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 2018-19 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.

Finally, 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 pleased to present the report for the Policy and Finance Committee for the municipal year 2018/19, previous year's figures are provided for comparison.

	2018/19	2017/18
	£	£
Precept	485,196	468,223
Income excluding investments income & CIL	255,910	211,832
Investment Income	1,508	1,074
Community Infrastructure Levy	6,854	9,459
Total Income	749,468	£ 690,588
Revenue Expenditure	696,888	609,203
Capital Expenditure	55,980	17,305
Total Expenditure	752,868	£ 626,508
Net Movement in Funds	£ -3,400	£ 64,080

Revenue Expenditure broken down by Committee is:

Policy & Finance	414,652	366,429
Recreation Leisure & Open Space	262,886	226,318
Planning	19,349	16,456
Total Balances held at bank	£ 185,636	£ 496,892
Investments with CCLA	£ 350,000	

Town Council Loans:

Public Loans Board (Fixed rate 3.4% over 25 years)	£ -217,048	£ -230,130
Loan for land purchase (Fixed rate 3.03% over 25 years)	£ -171,706	£ -177,130

One figure that, when we decided to create the position of Town Mayor, we assured residents that we would always report was the Mayors allowance; this was subject, within the budget, to an inflationary increase from one thousand pounds to one thousand and twenty pounds. It turns out this was a slightly pointless exercise as there was no expenditure against the Town Mayors allowance.

As anyone would expect staff costs continue to grow not only due to national pay awards but we have also taken on an additional post of Events Co-ordinator and our contribution to historic pension costs has also risen.

Other factors that cause costs to increase, such as putting on events and the increased opening hours of Carvers Club House, are offset through the growth of income generated by this Council and on this point I feel that it is worth bringing your attention back to the headline figures. These show a precept of just shy of half a million pounds but perhaps more importantly further income generation of two hundred and fifty thousand pounds.

In part this income is derived from prudent investment and sound financial management; it is vital that we continue not only to maintain those assets but to build on the towns investment to ensure that we, and those Councillors that follow us, can continue to provide the services to our residents at the current, inflation plus, costs.