

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Wednesday 29th July 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 by pre-registering.

PRESENT: Cllr Tony Ring, Town Mayor
Cllr Philip Day, Deputy Mayor
Cllr Andy Briers
Cllr Gareth DeBoos
Cllr Hilary Edge
Cllr Rae Frederick
Cllr John Haywood
Cllr Jeremy Heron
Cllr Peter Kelleher
Cllr Darren Loose
Cllr Gloria O’Reilly
Cllr Steve Rippon-Swaine (*from 7.11pm*)
Cllr Glenys Turner

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Chris Wilkins, Town Clerk
Mrs Jo Hurd, Deputy Town Clerk
Cllr Michael Thierry
Cllr Tarling, Chair, NFNPA South West Quadrant

ABSENT: All members were present.

C/6466

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A resident of Poulner addressed the Council about her concern that there is a lack of provision of facilities for children and teenagers in the town, particularly on the Poulner side. She said it was a shame that the Council had taken the decision to remove the rope swings from its land in Kingfisher Way, but understood these had been put up without permission and had been taken down for health and safety reasons, and possible damage to trees. She said that children are now on school holidays and, with many clubs cancelled, there is little for them to do, and she felt that young people were low down on the list of priorities.

The Town Mayor thanked the resident for raising the concerns and said that the Council would look into the issues raised.

Cllr Stephen Tarling of Sway Parish Council was in attendance to observe the meeting. He had recently been elected Chair of NFNPA South West Quadrant and was interested to get a feel for issues in all the towns and parishes in the Quadrant.

C/6467

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

All members were present.

**C/6468
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Heron indicated that he would need to declare an interest if the Grounds Department van was to be discussed (F/5819 of the Policy & Finance minutes dated 15th July 2020 refers).

**C/6469
MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Meetings held on 25th June 2020, having been circulated, be approved and signed as a correct record.

**C/6470
RECREATION, LEISURE AND OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE**

Cllr Briers presented the minutes of the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 1st July 2020.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 1st July 2020 be received.

Cllr Rippon-Swaine joined the meeting at 7.11pm.

**C/6471
PLANNING, TOWN & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

Cllr Day presented the minutes of the Planning, Town & Environment Committee meeting held on 3rd July 2020.

P/5717 – A number of councillors had attended a briefing from NFDC planning officers on planning application 18/11606 (land off Snails Lane). Further information had been requested from the applicant and it was anticipated that consideration of this application would be deferred to a future date to be determined.

P/5719 – Cllr Day wished to thank members of the Ringwood & Fordingbridge Footpath Society for their help in cutting back various Rights of Way following the news that HCC had been unable to award a contract for the work this year.

P/5720 – It was noted that work was due to begin at the end of August on the long-awaited pedestrian crossings in Christchurch Road, and would be complete by the beginning of November.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Planning, Town & Environment Committee meeting held on 3rd July 2020 be received.

**C/6472
POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Cllr Heron presented the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee meeting held on 15th July 2020.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee meeting held on 15th July 2020 be received



- 2) That the revised budget, as detailed in F/5818, be approved.

C/6473

DISTRICT COUNCIL QUESTIONNAIRE

Members considered a response to an NFDC community engagement questionnaire about the impact of Covid-19 on the community.

RESOLVED: That the Council's response be based on the following points made during the meeting:

1. What has been the impact of Covid-19 on your community and the services you provide?

The closure of education, social and leisure facilities has impacted the community at large, with particular effect on the young and elderly. The closure of Gateway Offices, VIC and Registrar. Traveller incursions due to closure of other possible sites. Social distancing in High Street.

2. How have you responded to the impact?

Councillors and staff have worked remotely to maintain basic services. Online meetings to maintain Council business. Council and individuals supported voluntary Ringwood Coronavirus Assistance group. Council supported businesses by providing Be Alert packs.

3. What do you understand to be the key issues now for your community?

The economy in general – need to keep an eye on potential business failures. Wednesday Market has been most vibrant in the last few weeks following its relaunch earlier in the year. Reopening of leisure facilities is required to reduce antisocial behaviour.

4. As lockdown eases how are your community's requirements changing?

Pressure from High Street traders for acknowledgement of issues, such as queues outside banks on narrow pavements. Under provision of children's play facilities and youth services has been highlighted. Mindful of the fact that the virus still poses a risk to the community.

5. Are there any risks or issues that you can foresee arising?

Risk of a second wave – risk of diminishing public awareness – onus to maintain and ensure public awareness is at an appropriate level.

Risk of business failure.

More people will look to stay home and holiday in this country, particularly around the New Forest – risk of additional visitors to the locality (wild camping, BBQs, fires etc), congestion on A31 and rat-running through town. VIC will not re-open this year.

Scope for signage to warn of risks.

If there is a second wave and restrictions are re-imposed locally – there is a risk that there will not be a sufficient number of volunteers to support voluntary organisations as many will have returned to work/university.

6. What are your plans to respond to these risks or issues?

To continue to monitor closely both the local and national situation and maintain contact with voluntary organisations to ensure their continuation. Be careful to manage finances to maintain healthy level of reserves to address future issues which might arise.

7. Is there anything you have learnt due to the impact of Covid-19?

Fragility of care services - need to enhance provision.

Need to inform to prevent panic buying, for example.

RCA uncovered some needs not apparent before to various support organisations.

Council made a wise investment in ICT facilities to enable staff to work remotely – the way the Council operates and meetings are conducted can and will change.

8. What support do you or your community need to recover from Covid-19?

Ready access to information and improved understanding of issues, such as social distancing requirement in High Street.

ACTION C Wilkins

C/6474

RE-OPENING HIGH STREETS SAFELY FUND

Members considered the Town Clerk's report (*Annex A*) about proposals for inclusion in NFDC's Action Plan for use of its share of the Re-opening of High Streets Safely Fund.

The Council had already requested that the permanent closure of the West Street/A31 junction be brought forward. However, it was proposed that the temporary closure be included in NFDC's Action Plan as this could be put in place fairly quickly and would have the benefit of reducing the volume of traffic by stopping rat running and therefore making the High Street safer for pedestrians. This was agreed, although the Council should continue to press HCC to advance the permanent closure.

Members stressed the importance of signage in order to support this scheme, and the need to inform drivers as far back as Picket Post on the A31.

County Cllr Thierry said that he had asked HCC officers to look at the temporary closure of the West Street/A31 junction. However, he felt that there was not as much pedestrian movement in the High Street as anticipated and this might not be necessary. Members were not in agreement on this point, as there were often queues along the pavements and pedestrians had to walk in the road to maintain social distancing.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That NFDC be asked to include the temporary closure of the West Street/A31 junction in its Action plan, including appropriate signage to advise drivers of the closure as far back as the Picket Post junction on the A31.
- 2) That no further measures be requested at this time.
- 3) That the Council continue to press HCC to bring forward the permanent closure of the West Street/A31 junction and the reversal of Meeting House Lane.

ACTION C Wilkins

C/6475

RINGWOOD FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The Town Clerk updated members on the inaugural meeting of the Project Group. It had been a positive discussion with all interested parties to try to identify the key issues in order to get the project moving forward as quickly as possible. He had expressed concern to ensure, if the project proceeds as a joint project by the Town Council and AFC Bournemouth Community Sports Trust as is proposed, that the interests of the Football Club and the community can be protected.

Future use of the 10-acre field was considered and, as the current lease has only a few years to run, early discussions with the freeholders may be necessary.

Cllr Heron declared a personal interest as the landowners are friends.

It was noted that the Community Sports Trust is separate to Bournemouth Football Club and the Club's league position would not have an impact on the project.

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

ACTION C Wilkins

C/6476

COMMUNICATIONS TO BE RECEIVED

The Town Mayor reported the following:

- 1) He thanked all the volunteers who have helped during the Covid-19 pandemic, and also Town Council staff. He had written to many of the unsung heroes including Greyfriars, who had delivered lunches provided by Cook over a period of 14 weeks, and Ringwood Surplus Store who had helped to put together the Be Alert packs for local businesses.
- 2) He thanked members of Ringwood Men's Shed, who had carried out weeding around the town centre.
- 3) A special meeting of the Twinning Association had been arranged to discuss the group's continuation.
- 4) A VJ Service was being organised for Saturday 15th August.
- 5) Churches Together hoped to hold a drive-in service in the Furlong Car Park on 23rd August.

C/6477

REPORTS FROM TOWN COUNCILLORS AND STUDENT ADVISORS

Cllr Day reported that the Events Team would be meeting at the beginning of September to review the Fireworks and Christmas events.

Cllr Turner said that she continued to receive complaints about the removal of barriers from the footpath joining Castleman Way.

Cllr Kelleher said that he looked forward to working with the community on the provision of play facilities. He was liaising with the owners of the shops at Butlers Lane to provide cycle parking.

Cllr Haywood updated on Ringwood Coronavirus Assistance. The group was continuing to wind down; delivery of prescriptions had stopped as pharmacies now have capacity to deliver, and the shopping service was reducing, although they were continuing to help about 20 individuals. A need for some permanent assistance had been identified and they were looking to hand over to Community First New Forest. RCA would then effectively be dormant but would remain ready to return if needed. In total, 517 prescriptions and over 450 loads of shopping had been delivered.

Cllr Frederick said that it had been a privilege to work with Cllr Haywood and Cllr Deboos on RCA.

Cllr Edge congratulated RACE for the trees and wildflowers at Poulner Lakes, which looked fantastic. She also thanked Poulner Pickers for collecting litter every week, and said there was great community spirit.



Cllr Deboos was pleased that so many people had been willing to help make RCA such a success.

**C/6478
REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS**

County Councillor Thierry reported that HCC had taken over traffic management in town centres. There were now two sets of enforcement officers working in Ringwood (NFDC in car parks and HCC on-road). Following the recent libraries review, Ringwood Library would remain open, but opening times may change. A number plate recognition scheme would be introduced at the Household Waste and Recycling Centres from 1st August, and HCC was under pressure to increase the number of vehicles allowed in at any one time. He had awarded a grant of £2,000 to assist in the establishment of Ringwood Men’s Shed.

District Councillor Heron reported that NFDC would be bringing forward a phased re-opening of its leisure centres, and Ringwood would be one of the first. A new telephone system would be in operation from the beginning of August. He was pleased that NFDC had maintained its services during the pandemic with up to 400 officers operating remotely at any one time.

District Councillor Rippon-Swaine reported that Ringwood Health & Leisure would be re-opening on Monday 3rd August, with the swimming pool re-opening approximately 2 weeks later. There would be an appointment system in operation, with bookings being taken by app, online, in centre or by phone.

**C/6479
FORTHCOMING MEETINGS**

Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces	7.00pm	Wednesday 2 nd September 2020
Planning, Town & Environment	10.00am	Friday 7 th August & 4 th Sept’ 2020
Policy & Finance	7.00pm	Wednesday 23 rd September 2020
Full Council	7.00pm	Wednesday 30 th September 2020

There being no further business, the Town Mayor closed the meeting at 8.54pm.

APPROVED
30th September 2020

TOWN MAYOR