

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Wednesday 26th June 2024 at 7pm at Ringwood Gateway, The Furlong, Ringwood

PRESENT: Cllr Rae Frederick (Chairman)
Cllr Philip Day (Deputy Chair)
Cllr Andrew Briers
Cllr Luke Dadford
Cllr Gareth DeBoos
Cllr Mary DeBoos
Cllr John Haywood
Cllr James Swyer
Cllr Michael Thierry
Cllr Glenys Turner

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs Jo Hurd, Deputy Town Clerk
District Cllr Jeremy Heron
District Cllr Nigel Linford

ABSENT: Cllr Ingrid De Bruyn
Cllr Janet Georgiou
Cllr Peter Kelleher
Cllr Becci Windsor
District Cllr Steve Rippon-Swaine

C/7173 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present.

C/7174 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs Georgiou, Kelleher and Windsor, and District Councillor Steve Rippon-Swaine.

C/7175 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

C/7176 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the annual meeting held on 29th May 2024, having been circulated, be approved and signed as a correct record.

C/7177 RECREATION, LEISURE AND OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE

Cllr Briers presented the minutes of the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee meetings held on 29th May and 5th June 2024.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee meetings held on 29th May and 5th June 2024 be received.

C/7178

PLANNING, TOWN & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

CLr Day presented the minutes of the Planning, Town & Environment Committee meetings held on 29th May and 7th June 2024.

He updated on the following:

P/6303 – the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan Referendum would take place on 4th July. New Forest District Council had now advised that it will not be possible to hand out information “in the vicinity” of the polling stations.

P/6308 – there was still no confirmation of when the planning applications for land off Moortown Lane would be considered by the NFDC Planning Committee. The application for development off Snails Lane was expected by NFDC end June/beginning July.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Planning, Town and Environment Committee meetings held on 29th May and 7th June 2024 be received.

C/7179

POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

CLr M DeBoos presented the minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee meetings held on 29th May and 19th June 2024.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee meetings held on 29th May and 19th June 2024 be received, with the exception of F/6318 which would be considered later on the agenda.

C/7180

COMMUNICATIONS TASK & FINISH GROUP

CLr Swyer presented the notes of the Communications Task and Finish Group meetings on 4th June (*Annex A*) and 18th June 2024 (*Annex B*).

It was noted that a report with recommendations would be brought to the next Council meeting.

RESOLVED: That the notes of the Communications Task and Finish Group meetings on 4th June and 18th June 2024 be received.

C/7181

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2023/24

Members considered a recommendation from Policy & Finance Committee (*F/6318 refers*) to approve the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24 part 3 (*Annex C*), Section 1 - The Annual Governance Statement and Section 2 - The accounting statements for 2023/24. It was also necessary to consider whether there was any conflict of interest with the external auditor BDO LLP.

It was noted that the internal audit report had been very positive, and thanks were extended to the Finance Manager and Town Clerk in particular.

- RESOLVED:** 1) That the Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 be approved.
2) That the Accounting Statements 2023/24 be approved.
3) That it be confirmed there is no conflict of interest with BDO LLP, the external auditor.

ACTION R Fitzgerald

**C/7182
SPORTS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AT LONG LANE**

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that electrical works are expected to be carried out in early July, after which the contractors will return to site for about a month to finish off and carry out necessary testing. The formal handover will follow, and this is currently expected to be in early August in time for the new football season.

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

**C/7183
COMMUNICATIONS TO BE RECEIVED**

The Town Mayor reported the following:

- i) The D-Day commemorative events had been very successful, in particular, the remembrance service in the War Memorial Gardens with the lighting of the beacon.
- ii) Children from Ringwood C of E Infant School had recently marched through town with placards in support of the environment, and were welcomed by the Town Mayor and Cllr Windsor at Gateway. Their passion and dedication had been inspiring and she intended to extend an invitation to them to come along to a Council meeting.
- iii) She had attended a football match at Long Lane and had been very impressed with the new all-weather pitch.
- iv) She had delivered flowers to a couple celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary.
- v) At the invitation of Ringwood Bowls Club, together with Cllr Dadford, Council staff and representatives of the rugby club, she had participated in a bowls tournament. It had been great fun and Cllr Dadford was awarded a second-place trophy.

**C/7184
REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS**

County and District Councillors had nothing to report during this pre-election period, although Cllr Thierry commented on the difficulties being experienced by people completing applications for the blue badge scheme.

**C/7185
REPORTS FROM TOWN COUNCILLORS**

Cllr Day said it had been a pleasure to support the Town Mayor at D-Day commemorative events and he congratulated her on the moving tribute given at the War Memorial Gardens. He had also attended the opening of Fred Olsen Travel Agents in Market Place, who were keen to support community activities in town.

Cllr G DeBoos congratulated all those involved in creating the commemorative beacon.

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**C/7186
FORTHCOMING MEETINGS**

The following meeting dates were noted:

Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces	7.00pm	Wednesday 3 rd July 2024
Planning, Town & Environment	10.00am	Friday 5 th July 2024
Policy & Finance	7.00pm	Wednesday 24 th July 2024
Annual Council meeting	7.00pm	Wednesday 31 st July 2024

**C/7187
EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED: That, in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public were excluded because publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted (*Confidential minutes - Annex D*).

**C/7188
LEGAL MATTERS**

The Deputy Town Clerk reported on developments in the Football Club project.

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

There being no further business, the Town Mayor closed the meeting at 7.23pm.

APPROVED
31st July 2024

TOWN MAYOR

Communications Plan Task & Finish Group

Notes of meeting held on Tuesday 4 June 2024 at 2pm in Teams

Present: Cllr Mary DeBoos
Cllr Rae Frederick
Cllr Janet Georgiou

In attendance: Christopher Wilkins – Town Clerk
Jo Hurd – Deputy Town Clerk
Charmaine Bennett – Clubhouse & Events Manager

Absent: Cllr James Swyer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Swyer. It was noted that Cllr Turner had stood down from the Group at the Annual Meeting in May.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No disclosable pecuniary interests were declared.

3. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The notes of the meeting held on 7 May 2024 were approved.

4. PROGRESS REVIEW

Some communication plans for individual projects had been completed, following agreement of a template.

It was noted that all were working documents and would be updated over time.

General Council or Committee Business (Town Clerk) – it was felt this was mainly useful in identifying typical triggers and the template was not appropriate. CW agreed to redraft this.

Memorial Wall (Cllr Swyer) – it was noted that the template did not identify when/who/where, but this would follow when the project was further advanced, and the same applies for all projects.

Carvers Recreation Ground (Cllr Frederick) – some changes were discussed and agreed at the meeting. An additional trigger was identified for when the first funding application is submitted, as it is important to keep residents who participated in previous public consultation informed.

There will be different key messages for different audiences – may want to communicate different messages to hirers and residents, for example.

Thriving Market Place (Cllr Georgiou) – we want people to continue to engage with the process and understand that we are working to deliver what they said they wanted during previous consultation as part of the RNP work.

In general terms, it was agreed there is a need to more actively inform people of what we have been doing and to show that we are delivering what people have told us they want, in particular on the Carvers Masterplan, Thriving Market Place and Neighbourhood Plan. As some projects take such a long time to come to fruition, it is important to update on progress.

A greater appreciation of the Council's work should feature in most plans. Need to take the opportunity as often as possible to let residents know what we are doing for them and encourage them to engage. It was hoped that an indirect consequence of this would be that people have a more positive view of the Council.

ACTION AGREED:

- All to update plans to reflect comments made at the meeting and circulate to other members of the group for comment.

5. COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Normal communication channels include Facebook, Council websites, Information/Update boards at Council events, press releases and use of R&F News. For some projects, there will be an opportunity for a face-to-face element.

ACTION AGREED:

All to consider what communication channels are appropriate and include information in each plan.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

12 noon on Tuesday 18 June and 1.30pm on Tuesday 16 July 2024 in Teams, with the intention of taking a report to Council on 31st July.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 3.05pm.

RECEIVED
29 May 2024

APPROVED

TOWN MAYOR

WORKING PARTY CHAIRMAN

Communications Plan Task & Finish Group

Notes of meeting held on Tuesday 18 June 2024 at 12noon in Teams

Present: Cllr James Swyer
Cllr Mary DeBoos
Cllr Janet Georgiou

In attendance: Christopher Wilkins – Town Clerk
Jo Hurd – Deputy Town Clerk

Absent: Cllr Rae Frederick
Charmaine Bennett – Clubhouse & Events Manager

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Frederick and Charmaine Bennett.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No disclosable pecuniary interests were declared.

3. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The notes of the meeting held on 4 June 2024 were approved.

4. PROGRESS REVIEW

Following the last meeting, communication plans for individual projects had been updated. The next step will be to await triggers for each project, after which further detail can be added.

5. COMMUNICATION RESOURCES

It was felt important that a designated member of staff take responsibility for each communication plan, and that all communication should be managed through the Council office. However, it would be incumbent on Councillors to assist in developing the key messages in communication plans, which would inform communications.

Officers would be required to create engaging content and there may well be some training/upskilling requirements to enable this, as well as finding the time.

It was agreed that a corporate identity should be designed to ensure that all communications are immediately identifiable with the Council. Templates could then be created, which would ultimately save time and make it easier to add content and create various types of communication.

ACTION AGREED: That Cllr Swyer prepare a draft report for the July meeting of Full Council to inform all Members of the proposed communications plan and of their role in effective public engagement. Final report to be agreed at the next meeting of this Group.

6. COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Although not on the agenda, there was some discussion about a Council Newsletter. It was suggested this should be a regular feature (such as quarterly), with a full page included in the Ringwood & Fordingbridge News and copies made available at Gateway and other key locations, such as Greyfriars and the Library. It should also be included on the Council website and advertised on social media.

An email subscription was suggested, although it was agreed this should be tested first for people interested in Council events.

It was noted from a recent training session that people need to see things 7 times before they take it in, so sustained and volume messaging (and using various channels) is key.

The use of posters and banners are an important channel to consider (e.g. Carnival).

7. STUDENT ADVISOR SCHEME

Although not on the agenda, it was noted that the Terms of Reference of this Group include the following:

To advise the Town Council and its relevant committees on the future of the Council's Student Advisor Scheme and alternative options for engaging with teenage residents.

Engagement with young people has always been a challenge but it was felt the Scheme had failed as the content of Council meetings was not always relevant to students.

It was suggested that councillors could go in to the school, perhaps once a term, to speak to students about elements of Council business that would engage them, or where a young person's view was needed, for example, if triggered by individual project communication plans.

It was noted that young people would be much more likely to engage through a group activity, so there would need to be a clear plan for any school visits.

It was hoped that, over time, a relationship would develop that would enable young people to feel comfortable putting questions to councillors and raising issues of interest.

The information gazebo at events should also include young person friendly content.

ACTION AGREED: All to consider before the next meeting so that a recommendation to Full Council on the way forward for youth engagement can be discussed and agreed.

8. REPORTING TO THE COUNCIL

See items 5 and 7 above.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

1.30pm, Tuesday 16 July 2024 in Teams.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 1.10pm.

RECEIVED
29 May 2024

APPROVED

TOWN MAYOR

WORKING PARTY CHAIRMAN

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24 Form 3

To be completed by Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other Smaller Authorities*:

- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure exceeded £25,000 but did not exceed £6.5 million; or
- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less but that:
 - are unable to certify themselves as exempt (fee payable); or
 - have requested a limited assurance review (fee payable)

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24

1. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 **must** complete Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return at the end of each financial year in accordance with *Proper Practices*.
2. **The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is made up of three parts, pages 3 to 6:**
 - The **Annual Internal Audit Report** must be completed by the authority's internal auditor.
 - **Sections 1 and 2** must be completed and approved by the authority.
 - **Section 3** is completed by the external auditor and will be returned to the authority.
3. The authority **must** approve Section 1, Annual Governance Statement, before approving Section 2, Accounting Statements, and both **must** be approved and published on the authority website/webpage **before 1 July 2024**.
4. An authority with either gross income or gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 or an authority with neither income nor expenditure exceeding £25,000, but which is unable to certify itself as exempt, or is requesting a limited assurance review, **must** return to the external auditor by email or post (not both) **no later than 30 June 2024**. Reminder letters will incur a charge of £40 +VAT:
 - the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Sections 1 and 2, together with
 - a bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2024
 - an explanation of any significant year on year variances in the accounting statements
 - notification of the commencement date of the period for the exercise of public rights
 - Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24

Unless requested, do not send any additional documents to your external auditor. Your external auditor will ask for any additional documents needed.

Once the external auditor has completed the limited assurance review and is able to give an opinion, the Annual Governance and Accountability **Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate** will be returned to the authority by email or post.

Publication Requirements

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on the authority website/webpage:

Before 1 July 2024 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited;
- **Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2023/24**, approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2023/24**, approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2024 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of conclusion of audit
- **Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate**
- **Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR** including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review. It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return constitutes the annual return referred to in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Throughout, the words 'external auditor' have the same meaning as the words 'local auditor' in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

*for a complete list of bodies that may be smaller authorities refer to schedule 2 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023/24

- The authority **must** comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of this AGAR. *Proper Practices* are found in the *Practitioners' Guide** which is updated from time to time and contains everything needed to prepare successfully for the financial year-end and the subsequent work by the external auditor.
- Make sure that the AGAR is complete (no highlighted boxes left empty) and is properly signed and dated. Any amendments must be approved by the authority and properly initialled.
- The authority **should** receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report before approving the Annual Governance Statement and the accounts.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the AGAR for completeness before returning it to the external auditor by email or post (not both) no later than 30 June 2024.
- The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) must be approved on the same day or before the Accounting Statements (Section 2) and evidenced by the agenda or minute references.
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) must certify the accounts (Section 2) before they are presented to the authority for approval. The authority must in this order; consider, approve and sign the accounts.
- The RFO is required to commence the public rights period as soon as practical after the date of the AGAR approval.
- **You must inform your external auditor about any change of Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer or Chair, and provide relevant authority owned generic email addresses and telephone numbers.**
- Make sure that the copy of the bank reconciliation to be sent to your external auditor with the AGAR covers all the bank accounts. If the authority holds any short-term investments, note their value on the bank reconciliation. The external auditor must be able to agree the bank reconciliation to Box 8 on the accounting statements (**Section 2, page 5**). An explanation **must** be provided of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8. More help on bank reconciliation is available in the *Practitioners' Guide**.
- Explain fully significant variances in the accounting statements on **page 5**. Do not just send a copy of the detailed accounting records instead of this explanation. The external auditor wants to know that you understand the reasons for all variances. Include complete numerical and narrative analysis to support the full variance.
- If the bank reconciliation is incomplete or variances not **fully** explained then additional costs may be incurred.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and that the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2023) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2024).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, **must** set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights of 30 consecutive working days which **must** include the first ten working days of July.
- The authority **must** publish on the authority website/webpage the information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, including the period for the exercise of public rights and the name and address of the external auditor **before 1 July 2024**.

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Yes	No
All sections	Have all highlighted boxes have been completed?		
	Has all additional information requested, including the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights , been provided for the external auditor?		
Internal Audit Report	Have all highlighted boxes been completed by the internal auditor and explanations provided?		
Section 1	For any statement to which the response is 'no', has an explanation been published?		
Section 2	Has the Responsible Financial Officer signed the accounting statements before presentation to the authority for approval?		
	Has the authority's approval of the accounting statements been confirmed by the signature of the Chair of the approval meeting?		
	Has an explanation of significant variations been published where required?		
	Has the bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2024 been reconciled to Box 8?		
	Has an explanation of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8 been provided?		
Sections 1 and 2	Trust funds – have all disclosures been made if the authority as a body corporate is a sole managing trustee? NB: do not send trust accounting statements unless requested.		

***Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices**, can be downloaded from www.nalc.gov.uk or from www.ada.org.uk

Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24

Ringwood Town Council

www.ringwood.gov.uk PUBLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

During the financial year ended 31 March 2024, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2023/24 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	✓		
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2022/23, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2022/23 AGAR tick "not covered")			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (during the 2023-24 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2022-23 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2022/23 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	✓		
O. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	✓		

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken: 29/04/24 - 05/06/24 /MM/YYYY
 Name of person who carried out the internal audit: EMILY KAREN ROSS AL AUDITOR

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit: [Signature] Date: 05/06/2024

***If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).**
****Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).**

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

We acknowledge as the members of:

Ringwood Town Council
ENTER NAME OF AUTHORITY

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024, that:

	Agreed			'Yes' means that this authority
	Yes	No*		
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓			<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓			<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓			<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓			<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓			<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓			<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓			<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓			<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A	<i>has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.</i>
	✓			

***Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.**

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

DD/MM/YYYY

and recorded as minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair	SIGNATURE REQUIRED
Clerk	SIGNATURE REQUIRED

www.ringwood.gov.uk ENTER PUBLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 for

Ringwood Town Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2023 £	31 March 2024 £	
1. Balances brought forward	618,049	634,461	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	553,949	610,429	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	1,217,530	2,328,089	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	425,748	467,469	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	31,546	46,436	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	1,297,773	2,419,884	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	634,461	639,190	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	537,023	699,968	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	3,721,632	6,629,881	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	308,383	785,654	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)	✓			The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)	✓			The figures in the accounting statements above exclude any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2024 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date DD/MM/YYYY

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

DD/MM/YYYY

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2023/24

In respect of

Ringwood Town Council
ENTER NAME OF AUTHORITY

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02 as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/> .

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2024; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor’s limited assurance opinion 2023/24

(Except for the matters reported below)* on the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met. (*delete as appropriate).

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

3 External auditor certificate 2023/24

We certify/do not certify* that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2024.

*We do not certify completion because:

External Auditor Name

ENTER NAME OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

External Auditor Signature

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

DD/MM/YYYY