

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Wednesday 28th September 2022 at 7.00pm at Ringwood Gateway, The Furlong, Ringwood.

PRESENT: Cllr Rae Frederick, Deputy Mayor
Cllr Andy Briers
Cllr Philip Day
Cllr Jeremy Heron
Cllr Darren Loose
Cllr Derek Scott
Cllr Glenys Turner

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

ABSENT: Cllr Gareth Deboos, Town Mayor
Cllr Hilary Edge
Cllr Peter Kelleher
Cllr John Haywood
Cllr Gloria O'Reilly
Cllr Steve Rippon-Swaine
Cllr Tony Ring

**C/6834
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were several members of the public present, but none who wished to speak.

**C/6835
APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs Deboos, Haywood, Kelleher, O'Reilly, Ring and Rippon-Swaine.

**C/6836
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none declared at this time.

**C/6837
ALLOTMENT COMPETITION 2022**

The Deputy Mayor thanked Mr Atack for the considerable amount of time he and his team from Ringwood Garden Club gave to judging the allotments. She said she had recently experienced an interesting and inspiring visit to the sites.

The Chairman of the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee announced the winners and presented awards, as follows:

Upper Kingston			
2 nd	Plot	UK22A	Mrs Shatwell
1 st	Plot	UK10	Mr and Mrs R Shields

Southampton Road

2nd Plot SR08 Mr Joy
1st Plot SR09 Mrs Taylor

Hightown Road

2nd Plot HR03 Mr Evans
1st Plot HR18 Mr Gubbins

Mini Plots

2nd Plot SR10D Mr and Mrs Sutton
1st Plot HRM12 J Burkin

Overall Winner

Plot UK10 Mr and Mrs R Shields

C/6838

POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER (PCC) UPDATE

The Deputy Mayor welcomed Mr Terry Norton, Deputy PCC for Hampshire, who gave a presentation on the role of the Office of the PCC (OPCC), referring to the Police and Crime Plan – More Police, Safer Streets (<https://www.hampshire-pcc.gov.uk/commissioner/police-crime-plan>). He stressed the importance of attending meetings such as this, engaging with communities who know the priorities for their areas.

Due to a recent uplift in officers; a net gain of 600 in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, the force now has greater capacity to deal with more medium and low level community crimes, and it had been announced this week that officers will now attend every report of a residential burglary.

Members referred to recent episodes of antisocial behaviour in the Bickerley area and on Carnival day, which had not been attended by local police. Visibility and action needed to be increased; some people had given up reporting crimes as it appeared that perpetrators could get away with it. There was a need to get the balance right to restore faith and focus on local priorities. That said, local officers were praised for addressing the recent issues in Gateway Square.

One of the issues raised previously by the Council was the wish to see the return of a designated police station in the town. Although the current command structure prevents this, the OPCC is keen to increase visibility, and this will be a consideration for the new Chief Constable taking charge next April.

Mr Norton acknowledged that 101 call waiting times were far higher than they should be. This was due to recruitment issues and was currently an area of focus. Work was in progress to make it easier to report crimes and, at the very least, to ensure residents receive a response to every report.

It was noted that officer deployment is dependent on data and that statistics were shared by the neighbourhood team on a quarterly basis at Full Council meetings (next report due in October), when local priorities could be discussed.

C/6839

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 27th July 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.



**C/6840
RECREATION, LEISURE AND OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE**

Cllr Briers presented the minutes of the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 7th September 2022.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 7th September 2022 be received.

**C/6841
PLANNING, TOWN AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

Cllr Day presented the minutes of the Planning, Town and Environment Committee meetings held on 5th August and 2nd September 2022.

P/6053 – He said it was regrettable that insufficient information was available at the meeting to make a decision on the placing of a memorial bench in Market Place, but expected this could be resolved at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Planning, Town and Environment Committee meetings held on 5th August and 2nd September 2022 be received.

**C/6842
STAFFING COMMITTEE**

Cllr Heron presented the minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on 14th September 2022.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on 14th September 2022 be received.

**C/6843
POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Cllr Heron presented the minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held on 21st September 2022.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held on 21st September 2022, with the exception of recommendations at F/6075 and F/6082, be received.

**C/6844
FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT**

Members considered a recommendation from Policy and Finance Committee to note the updated Financial Risk Assessment (*F/6082 refers*).

RESOLVED: That the updated Financial Risk Assessment be noted.

ACTION C Wilkins / R Fitzgerald
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**C/6845
EXTERNAL AUDIT 2021/22**

Members considered the Finance Manager's report (*Annex A*).

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RESOLVED: 1) That the findings of the external auditor be noted;
2) That the notice be published on the Council website for 14 days; and
3) That copies of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2021-22 be available, on request, for the sum of £2.00 per copy.

ACTION C Wilkins / R Fitzgerald

**C/6846
GRANT AID AWARDS**

It was noted that Grant Aid awards had been made to Crowe Hill Women’s Institute of £600 towards refurbishment of the hall, and Citizens Advice New Forest of £1,000 towards the cost of the service.

RESOLVED: That the Grant Aid awards be noted.

**C/6847
SAFER NEW FOREST SURVEY**

Members considered submitting a response to the survey (*Annex B*).

RESOLVED: That Councillors respond individually to the survey.

ACTION C Wilkins / R Fitzgerald

**C/6848
SPORTS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AT LONG LANE**

The Town Clerk was pleased to report that work has started on the artificial turf pitch, which was projected to be completed either by Christmas or early in the New Year, subject to weather conditions. Following this, work would begin on construction of the pavilion and car park. Legal work was ongoing, and the VAT exemption had now been waived, meaning that future rents would be subject to VAT.

Members thanked the Town Clerk, who had been the driving force behind the project.

RESOLVED: That the verbal report be noted.

ACTION C Wilkins / R Fitzgerald

**C/6849
COMMUNICATIONS TO BE RECEIVED**

The Deputy Town Mayor reported on the events that she and/or the Town Mayor and Mayor’s Consort had attended during August and September, including those to mark the passing of the late Queen Elizabeth II.

She reminded Members that this week was the Great Big Green Week and there were lots of events taking place around the town, including Community Litter Picks on Saturday 1st in Ringwood (starting at 10am in Gateway Square) and Sunday 2nd in Poulner (starting at 10am at Poulner Scout Hall), which she encouraged all to attend.

C/6850

REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

District Councillor Heron reported that two Ringwood applications would be considered by Planning Committee the following day (21/10668 – 2 Nursery Road and 21/11530 – Land adjoining 2A Highfield Road).

C/6851

REPORTS FROM TOWN COUNCILLORS

Cllr Turner said she would be attending the NFDC Planning Committee meeting to speak on behalf of the Town Council on application number 21/10668 – 2 Nursery Road.

Cllr Day praised the Town Clerk and all staff for the work they had done to mark the passing of the late Queen Elizabeth II, which had done the town proud. Thanks were also extended to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

Cllr Scott reported that the Ringwood & District Twinning Association was currently considering its purpose in order to inform future activities, and looking at its target audience for membership. He had attended the recent visit to Pont Audemer, where they had been very well looked after and said that better resource would be required to reciprocate on the return visit next year.

C/6852

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces	7.00pm	Wednesday 5 th October 2022
Planning, Town and Environment	10.00am	Friday 7 th October 2022
Policy & Finance	7.00pm	Wednesday 19 th October 2022
Full Council	7.00pm	Wednesday 26 th October 2022

C/6853

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 commercially sensitive nature (*Confidential Annex C*).

C/6854

LEGAL FEES

Members considered the Town Clerk's report (*Confidential Annex D*).

Cllr Day declared a pecuniary interest as his firm was providing legal advice to the Council, although he had been granted dispensation to vote on this subject.

It was noted that legal costs incurred by the Council had exhausted the original budget provision and Members were asked to review the provision and to consider the oversight and reporting process.

Cllr Day abstained from voting on these points.

RESOLVED: 1) That the budget be amended as agreed; and

2) That a standing item for confidential verbal reports from officers on the progress of litigation and expenditure against budget be included at each meeting of Policy and Finance Committee until further notice.

ACTION C Wilkins / R Fitzgerald

There being no further business, the Town Mayor closed the meeting at 8.33pm.

APPROVED
26th October 2022

TOWN MAYOR

REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL – 28th September 2022

NOTICE OF CONCLUSION OF AUDIT

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The external Auditors, PKF Littlejohn, have concluded their audit of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2022. The Council is now required to publish the findings of the audit along with the Annual Governance and accountability return for 2021/22.

2. CONCLUSION OF AUDIT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

- 2.1 It is pleasing to note that the external auditors have reported as follows:

”On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR 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.”

A copy of their certificate is included at with the AGAR at Appendix 1, section 3.

- 2.2 There are a number of final steps that we must now take to conclude the process. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234) set out what we must do at the conclusion of the review. In summary, we are required to:

- Prepare a “Notice of conclusion of audit” which details the rights of inspection, in line with the statutory requirements.
- Publish the “Notice” along with the certified AGAR (Sections 1, 2 & 3) before 30 September, which must include publication on the smaller authority’s website. Note that when the statute and regulations were amended in 2014 and 2015, they did not include a requirement for the length of time for which that the “Notice” must be published. The previous statute required 14 days; but it is now up to the authority to make this decision.
- Keep copies of the AGAR available for purchase by any person on payment of a reasonable sum
- Ensure that Sections 1, 2 and 3 of the published AGAR remain available for public access for a period of not less than 5 years from the date of publication.

- 2.3 A copy of the notice is attached for information, Appendix 2.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the Council note the findings of the external auditor.

- 3.2 The Town Council must also decide:

how long to publish the notice on the Council website (a minimum of 14 days is recommended) and

set a reasonable sum for the provision of copies of the Annual Governance and accountability return (the sum of £2.00 per copy was agreed in September 2021)

For further information please contact:

Rory Fitzgerald, Finance Manager or

Tel: 01425 484723

rory.fitzgerald@ringwood.gov.uk

For further information please contact:

Chris Wilkins, Town Clerk

Tel: 01425 484720

Chris.wilkins@ringwood.gov.uk

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2021/22

We acknowledge as the members of:

RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

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 2022, that:

	Agreed			
	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:

29/06/22

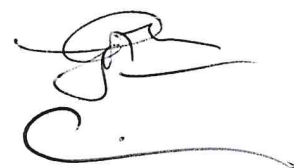
and recorded as minute reference:

C/6812

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

Chairman

Clerk



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Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2021/22 for

RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance	
	31 March 2021 £	31 March 2022 £		
			<i>Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures must agree to underlying financial records.</i>	
1. Balances brought forward	495,883	579,996	<i>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.</i>	
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	519,907	531,856	<i>Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.</i>	
3. (+) Total other receipts	248,619	295,346	<i>Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.</i>	
4. (-) Staff costs	349,513	383,644	<i>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.</i>	
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	31,546	31,546	<i>Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).</i>	
6. (-) All other payments	303,354	373,959	<i>Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).</i>	
7. (=) Balances carried forward	579,996	618,049	<i>Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).</i>	
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	597,221	639,322	<i>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.</i>	
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	3,701,166	3,695,684	<i>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.</i>	
10. Total borrowings	349,880	329,470	<i>The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).</i>	
11. (For Local Councils Only) Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)	Yes	No	N/A	<i>The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee for and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.</i>
	✓			<i>N.B. The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.</i>

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2022 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



Date

22/6/22

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

29/06/22

as recorded in minute reference:

C/6812

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



Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate 2021/22

In respect of **Ringwood Town Council – HA0126**

1 Respective responsibilities of the body and the auditor

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 2022; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor report 2021/22

On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR 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.

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

None

3 External auditor certificate 2021/22

We 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 2022.

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature

PKF Littlejohn LLP SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

22/09/2022

* Note: the NAO issued guidance applicable to external auditors' work on limited assurance reviews in Auditor Guidance Note AGN/02. The AGN is available from the NAO website (www.nao.org.uk)

Ringwood Town Council

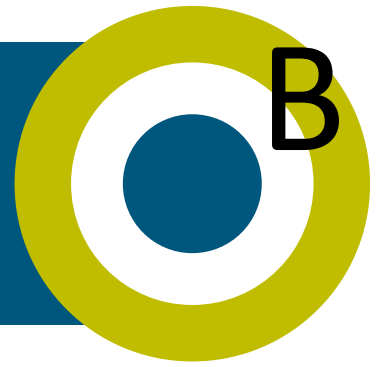
Notice of conclusion of audit

Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2022

Sections 20(2) and 25 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014

Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234)

	Notes
<p>1. The audit of accounts for Ringwood Town Council for the year ended 31 March 2022 has been completed and the accounts have been published.</p>	<p>This notice and Sections 1, 2 & 3 of the AGAR must be published by 30 September. This must include publication on the smaller authority's website. The smaller authority must decide how long to publish the Notice for; the AGAR and external auditor report must be publicly available for 5 years.</p>
<p>2. The Annual Governance & Accountability Return is available for inspection by any local government elector of the area of Ringwood Town Council on application to:</p>	
<p>(a) <u>Rory Fitzgerald, Responsible Finance Officer</u> <u>Ringwood Gateway, The Furlong,</u> <u>Ringwood BH24 1AT</u></p>	<p>(a) Insert: the name, position and address of the person to whom local government electors should apply to inspect the AGAR.</p>
<p>(b) <u>Monday to Friday</u> <u>09:30am to 16:30, (by appointment)</u></p>	<p>(b) Insert: the hours during which inspection rights may be exercised</p>
<p>3. Copies will be provided to any person on payment of £2.00 (c) for each copy of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return.</p>	<p>(c) Insert: a reasonable sum for copying costs</p>
<p>Announcement made by: (d) <u>Christopher Wilkins</u> <u>Town Clerk</u></p>	<p>(d) Insert: the name and position of person placing the notice</p>
<p>Date of announcement: (e) <u>29th September 2022</u></p>	<p>(e) Insert: the date of placing of the notice</p>



SURVEY

The New Forest is one of the safest places in the United Kingdom to live, work and visit. However some of us do suffer from crime and anti-social behaviour and the Safer New Forest partnership works hard to prevent and reduce any reported incidents.

This survey is being undertaken to check that we are working on the issues that are important to you.

Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used to compile an overall report.

Town / Parish Council

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1. What is going well in your town / parish?

i.e. partnership working, community engagement, voluntary services

2. What (if any) are your concerns for your town / parish regarding crime and anti-social behaviour?

3. If you have outlined concerns within question 2, what could improve your area?

i.e. town and parish, partnership working, other services

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

W safer.newforest.gov.uk **E** safernewforest@nfdc.gov.uk **T** 023 8028 5438 (office hours only)

 [newforestdc](https://twitter.com/newforestdc) #SaferNewForest