



Mayor's Annual Report

2020/2021



2020 is a year that will go down in history, I am sure. The UK and the world, as a whole, suffered the biggest crisis since the Second World War. 2020 was a year that brought uncertainty, illness, and loss to many residents in Ryde but also initiated an amazing community response which saw many residents and organisations come together to look after the vulnerable residents on the town and protect the NHS.

2021 has started more positively with many residents now vaccinated and there is now hope that life will return to 'normal' again soon. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our hardworking NHS staff and all community volunteers who have worked tirelessly to look after the sick and vulnerable and ensured that the vaccination programme on the Island has been a success.

I would also like to thank all Town Councillors for their hard work over the last year, I am sad to report the death of our Deputy Mayor Councillor Adrian Axford who worked tirelessly for the Town for many years and will be sadly missed. I also wish to thank our retiring Councillors, Henry Adams, Nancy Farrell, Tim Wakeley and Wayne Whittle for their hard work over the years.

2020 was also the year where the phrase 'You're on mute' became common place. The Council adapted quickly to this new way of online working and managed to maintain our core services such as the allotments and beach lifeguard service throughout this period. We owe a debt of gratitude to all our staff for allowing their homes to become offices. Many also suffered the tribulations of working from home whilst simultaneously 'home schooling'. They have done a terrific job in very difficult circumstances.

Corporate Plan

2020 saw Ryde Town Council formulate their first Corporate Plan which outlines the aims and objectives for the next 5 years. A copy of the plan is available on the Town Council's website.

When formulating the plan, we looked at all areas of the Town Council's business and identified where, and how, we can make improvements within the Town for the benefit of residents. The plan included the employment of a Business Development Manager. Allan Bridges was appointed to the role in January his primary focus is to generate additional income for the Council to enable us to maintain and grow our existing services and implement some new initiatives.

Supporting the Community and Voluntary Sector

2020 saw the cancellation of many of Ryde's regular events but also saw the community come together in a new way to support our vulnerable residents. The Town Council ran the emergency hub in conjunction with Aspire from the start of the 1st lockdown, delivering food, prescriptions and supporting the vulnerable and those shielding within our community. Scores of volunteers stepped forward to offer support to those in need and this has been the real positive to come out of these troubled times. Many new friendships have been forged and these friendships are likely to continue long into the future.



2020 saw the community, charity, and voluntary sector particularly hard hit by covid restrictions. Many were unable to fund raise as normal and this saw their incomes dwindle. A new initiative 'Ryde Unite' brought these organisations together to raise funds and support each other through the Covid Crisis. A special thanks goes to Trever and the team at Aspire who took the lead on this to ensure it was a success and are still working tirelessly providing help to those isolating, and in need, because of the pandemic.

The Town Council has also supported local community organisations in various ways.

In 2020 we have:

- Provided grants totalling in excess of £130,000 and support to over 15 community organisations such as the Waterside Pool, beach soccer and the bus museum.
- Co-funded the post of Community Connector, based at Aspire Ryde, to strengthen community services, especially for the town's most vulnerable residents.
- Funded a volunteer co-ordinator.
- Hosted a local market on Eastern Gardens promoting IOW businesses.



Supporting Local Business



The Covid restrictions have been devastating to local businesses who have seen their income drop or in some cases disappear completely. The Town Council funded a range of events throughout the last summer in Ryde to attract visitors and help to boost the local economy. Every weekend throughout the summer holidays saw a range of free entertainments 'pop up' all over the town. The performances included Operatic performances at Appley Tower, buskers, dancing and a magician in a moving 'Covid Secure' box! We also worked with the local ferry companies to ensure visitors knew that Ryde is not just a gateway to the Island but a place to visit, enjoy and stay.

The pandemic did afford the Town Council a chance to step back and review their approach to marketing the town to visitors. We commissioned an expert to review our marketing projects and we will be implementing many of the suggestions in readiness for this summer.

The Town Council also wish to thank Ryde Business Association for working tirelessly over throughout the pandemic to support local businesses. Making sure they had all the information regarding grants and funding to help them survive the crisis.

Regenerating our Town Centre and Saving our Historic Buildings

The Town Council purchased two heritage buildings this year, one Vectis Hall, is in a state of disrepair and the Town Council believed it is best placed to ensure this Grade II listed building is saved and refurbished. The Town Council are in the process of applying for grant funding to support the refurbishment of the building which will hopefully see it bought back into public use.

The Town Council have also purchased the former St Thomas' Church building as a new home for their expanding Youth Service, Network Ryde. Fortunately, St Thomas' s does not require significant works to enable the Youth Service to move in. We have been lucky to have much of the work funded by Heritage England thus far and for that we are very grateful.



In late 2019 the Council, with support from IW Council, Ryde Business Association, and other community organisations, won a prestigious award from Historic England

(the High Street Heritage Action Zone) to regenerate the High Street and work is now underway on this 5-year project. Significant grants have already been awarded from Heritage England as part of this scheme to St Thomas' Church and the old Pack and Culliford's building to protect these Historic Buildings and restore them to their former glory.

The HSAZ project has also awarded funding to develop a business case for Ryde Theatre. This will be the first step to see if there is a viable plan for the future of the building. The Town Council, and many residents wish to see this Grade II listed building restored back to its former glory.

Supporting the Next Generation

In April 2020 we welcomed a new Youth Work Manager Bex Swan just weeks after the first national lockdown commenced. Bex and her team ensured the Youth Service continued operating despite Covid restrictions with innovative projects such as the 'Virtual Youth Club' and weekly quizzes. They have received extra funding for a successful allotment project which funded Network Ryde working with Ryde Academy to support young people at risk of exclusion from school. The project has been a great success and has secured funding to continue this year.

Network Ryde have continued to operate 1-2-1 sessions for young people that need them and to provide the virtual Youth Club. However, I know the staff can't wait until they are allowed to welcome young people back through the doors at 147 High Street again!

The Town Council have also been appointed as a Kickstart Co-ordinator in the area. We have secured in excess of 30 funded work placements for Young people who are registered as unemployed. The scheme gives them valuable work experience working for 25 hours per week in within local businesses. Their wages are funded by the government's Kickstart Employment scheme.

We continue to provide and manage the skatepark on Ryde seafront, it is currently closed whilst we undertake repairs. We are in negotiations with the IW Council to extend the lease on the park. This would enable us access to apply for funding to refurbish the park.

Planning Contribution.

The Town Councils Planning Committee has, along with its obligatory duties, overseen and agreed to the revision of the Ryde Position Statement and the Ryde Place Plan. These are two important documents. The Place Plan sets out a number of aspirations and initiatives which looks to enhance and benefit the town and its environment for all its residents. The Position Statement is seen by the Town Council as a critical document that will help to shape and inform the Isle of Wight Councils Island Planning Strategy.

Taking over Ryde Harbour and Rejuvenating the Esplanade

The Town Council is finalising negotiations with IW Council to take over the ownership and management of Ryde Harbour and adjacent parts of Eastern Gardens for £1. The Town Council has plans to invest in the Harbour over the next 5 years to improve facilities for both permanent berth holders and visiting yachtsmen. The plans for improvement include, adding additional berths, installing WIFI and electrical hook ups on the pontoons. It is hoped the takeover will now be completed by April 2022. The Town Council, as part of this project also have licenses in place to operate a deckchair and water sports hire business on the beach this summer.

The Town Council welcomes the funding to improve the interchange on the Esplanade and this funding should see great improvements to the area and our historic Pier.

Open Spaces

The Town Council continues to fund the maintenance of many of our local open spaces and playparks. This year we secured public access to additional access to Green space on a site near Nicholson Road called Rosemary Fields. We are working with Natural Enterprise to improve the site for all to enjoy.

Despite the limitation's lockdown brought about a team of local volunteers worked with the Isle of Wight Council parks team to ensure the Town's flower beds were planted and looking great for the summer. The flowers really brightened up the Town and were appreciated by all. We are very grateful to the volunteers and feel lucky to have such a wonderful community spirit in the town.



Thank you all

I have been honoured to be Mayor in the past tumultuous year. I wish to thank all the Ryde Town Council staff, councillors, all the Covid-19 local volunteers, community organisations, faith groups, businesses and most importantly Ryde's residents. You all make Ryde the wonderful and special place it is and will make it great in the future.

Cllr Michael Lilley - Mayor of Ryde