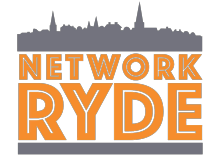




**RYDE**  
TOWN COUNCIL



## **RYDE TOWN COUNCIL'S MAYORAL ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22**

### **Celebrating Ryde – Opportunity and Hope**

The last financial year saw us coming out of numerous lockdowns of the world-wide Covid19 pandemic. It has been a tough two years and we are faced with the hard realities of world-wide events including war, climate change, and cost of living crisis.

Throughout this period Ryde Town Council has remained open operationally and open for business. We instigated improvements in service delivery and initiated new projects that will improve the Town and bring stronger benefit to the community.

This year I am delighted that my report is a celebration of opportunity and hope.

### **Investing in the Town, Heritage, and People**

Ryde Town Council in partnership with IW Council and other local stakeholders attracted over £15M in investment. In last 18 months, Ryde Town Council purchased two buildings for preservation of our heritage and development:

- St. Thomas's Church into the new, permanent home for Network Ryde.
- Vectis Hall as a community facility.

The Government's Department of Transport, through the Isle of Wight Council, are investing heavily in the new Interchange Scheme which will see that area of the Esplanade transformed into the welcome that visitors expect of Ryde. Ryde Town Council are pleased with this investment and will continue to work with the stakeholders to ensure the project is completed on time and with the people of Ryde at the forefront of the project's mind.

In May 2021 the election brought new members onto the council with wider representation and diversity. 14 of the 16 seats were elected which is a significant improvement on previous elections and, this year, there were no co-options necessary.

Six councillors are women and the vast majority live within the wards that they represent. The age ratio has significantly decreased with the youngest councillors in their thirties and the eldest in their eighties. This truly is a team of councillors working together in partnership with the staff team in making sure there is improved representation within the community to influence the town's direction.

## **Voluntary Sector**

Ryde Town Council have worked hard throughout the last couple of years to support the voluntary sector as we recognise they provide an important service to residents, especially those most in need. Whether this is help with fuel poverty, support for carers or physical & mental health – Ryde Town Council will continue to support organisations who provide these services within the town.

### **Partnerships**

Ryde Town Council are forging ever-better partnerships with key stakeholders in Ryde. Whether this is the partnership working with IWC over the transfer of Ryde Marina, the upcoming Memorandum of Understanding with Portsmouth University or working with Aspire and Natural Enterprises on projects – partnership working is key and Ryde Town Council are pulling people together to work on a huge number of projects at any one time.

## **Ryde High Street Heritage Action Zone**

Through this investment we are now seeing the signs of change in the centre of town with feasibility studies and growing plans for many of our empty important historic buildings such as the Town Hall, St. Thomas's, Vectis Hall, and St. Mary's Convent.

We have supported local community businesses such as Shademakers and Ryde Arts to gain over £2.5M to bring the Packs Building on Cross/Union Streets back into use as a future arts centre.

We have also supported Aspire in its establishment of the Community HUB (former Readers) building that houses a number of community business from bike repairs to paint recycling and in the future needed housing units and further community facilities.

## **Ryde Marina**

The biggest success has been the successful takeover of Ryde Harbour from IW Council and re-branding it as Ryde Marina. The Marina also is the new base of the Ryde beachfront operation that was successfully launched in the Summer of 2021 with deckchair and other beach equipment such as paddleboards and kayaks on the beaches.

## **Network Ryde**

Often referred to as Ryde Town Council's jewel in the crown, Network Ryde will soon have the new home that it so richly deserves. The team have provided a wonderful service in incredibly difficult times for the young people in Ryde but they are already at the point where their current location cannot meet their aspirations.

St Thomas's Church was bought as that new home and we continue to see steady progress towards the big move. Grant funding is crucial to the success of the project and we have seen grants from The HSHAZ and the Architectural Heritage Fund enable us to strive to make it the new base of Network Ryde operations that will help the service to grow.

## **Events Calendar**

The continued investment and promotion of the Town in 21/22, means that in 22/23 we will see a full, extended programme of established events such:

- Classic Cars Extravaganza
- Jack Up Events
- Love Mondays
- Ryde Carnival
- Wight Wave Beach Festival
- Harp Festival
- IW Pride
- Merry & Bright Winter Celebrations
- Jubilee celebrations
- Many, many more

As well as this we are seeing new events such as the start of the final leg of the Tour de Britain. National events are now seeing Ryde as a go-to destination and this will only increase!

These all add to the vibrancy to the Town which increases visitor numbers, creates new jobs, improves facilities and opportunities for residents and boost our economy and sustainability.

## **Grant Funding**

Many of the events you see listed above have been made possible through our grant-funding programme. We are very aware of the ongoing benefit that grant funding can provide for these, and other, organisations within the community. Sometimes an important project requires initial seed-funding to become operational and self-sustaining, other times Ryde Town Council view events etc as a marketing partnership where the income generated for the town has far-reaching benefits.

## **Green Spaces**

As part of the local Biosphere it is vital that Ryde lead the way when we look towards the environment. Ryde on Bloom continues to go from strength to strength, encouraging people of all ages to be more active in their gardens and we hope to have a record number of entrants in this year's competition.

The 300+ allotments that Ryde Town Council administer are always a source of much pride and enjoyment for the allotment holders and for the council. We are planning a great deal of improvements across our sites and hope to work together with allotment holders to ensure that the allotment sites are the best they can possibly be.

We are delighted that the allotment that Network Ryde have at our Quarry Road site remains an important part of their service and one that is supported and worked on by a fantastic number of Network Ryde users.

## **Growth and Transformation of Team Ryde**

The investment that Ryde is seeing will lead to an increase in prosperity and the number of jobs within the town. This is also true of Ryde Town Council where the team is growing along with the number of projects and town improvements that are progressing.

We have had some wonderful successes with different government schemes such as Kickstart and we also have a number of staff working towards apprenticeships as part of our upskilling of staff.

Ryde Town Council have facilitated over 20 young people to enter employment through the Kickstart scheme in Ryde, providing genuine career opportunities.

At the start of last year the number of staff working at Ryde Town Council, across all areas, totalled 15. In July and August this year that number will have doubled to over 30. This is a real mix of full time, part time and seasonal work with a blend of different jobs across the full spectrum of ages including a Business Development Manager and a whole Beachfront team. This new team works together to make Ryde Town Council more sustainable by creating surplus that can be reinvested.

The Facilities Team work extremely hard behind the scenes to ensure that the town's facilities, toilets, skatepark and many of the green spaces are kept in good order and available. This is often a thankless task but their hard work is definitely worth a mention here in the Mayor's Report – thank you Liam and Shay for your efforts.

Finally, we are also incredibly proud of our Town Clerk, Lisa Dyer, who won the prestigious national title of New Clerk of the Year. Well done Lisa!

## **Place Plan Community Development – The Final Word**

Ryde Town Council are primarily concerned with opportunities. Opportunities to improve the town of Ryde and increasing the number of opportunities for the people of Ryde.

Ryde's Place Plan encapsulates this strive for improvement. What do we, as a town, want Ryde to become and how do we achieve that together? These are the most important questions facing Ryde Town Council and ones that we hope to go some way towards answer this year.

Cllr Michael Lilley



Mayor - Ryde Town Council