

RYDE TOWN COUNCIL

Mayor's End-of-Year Report 2025/26

It has been a great honour to be the Mayor of Ryde for the past year. Ryde is an incredible town and I am proud to live here and to serve on the Town Council. It has also been an honour to be the first woman mayor!

As I have pointed out in my bi-monthly reports, the Mayor has two rather different roles: to lead the Council on internal, operational issues and to represent it at external events. I have to admit that, when I agreed to put my name forward for the post, it was the first role that attracted me most. There were some significant operational issues that I felt needed to be addressed. I believed that, after a period of expansion, we needed to review our priorities, ensure that we were undertaking all our activities efficiently and effectively, and make sure that we had the financial and staffing resources necessary to do so.

I am pleased to say that we have made significant progress in this respect. We held a strategic planning workshop in July last year, which led to a series of discussions culminating in February this year with the publication of an Action Plan for 2026-2027. We also had a very successful budget consultation event in December last year, which helped to shape our 2026/27 budget. And, with the help of consultants, we have just completed a thorough review of our staffing needs.

I was rather more apprehensive about my role as the Council's representative at public events - I am the sort of person who prefers to operate behind the scenes! However, this has actually proved to be very enjoyable and interesting. I have attended a wide range of events, including (to name just a few) the opening of paddle tennis courts and the Veteran's Craft Lounge, anniversary celebrations for Hovertravel and Specsavers, several Remembrance Day services and the Elim Church's Christmas concert. My last task will be to light the beacon to mark the anniversary of VE Day. In performing these functions, I have met an incredible variety of people and have been warmly welcomed everywhere I've been. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my deputy, Karen, for standing in for me at several events that I was unable to attend.

However, it has not been an easy year. This is partly because of external factors. Further cuts in the Isle of Wight Council's services have again forced us to make difficult choices: do we allow services in the town to deteriorate or do we subsidise or take them over ourselves? The Ryde Neighbourhood Board has also presented challenges. As the Town Council's representative on the Board, I have had not only to ensure that the Council's interests are reflected in Board decisions but also to respond to questions and concerns about the Board's operation raised by councillors and the general public.

But I have also had to deal with some difficult internal issues. As colleagues know, in October last year we discovered an unfortunate and unexpected staffing problem. It is neither necessary nor possible for me to go into further detail about this here. And, last but certainly not least, I have to admit that I have found my leadership role difficult. For a council to operate effectively, it is sometimes necessary for councillors

to put aside personal and political differences and work together, with each other and with the staff, for the benefit of the community. Unfortunately, there have been times this year when, perhaps due to my own shortcomings, this sense of teamwork has been lacking. Hopefully my successor will be more successful in this regard.

However, despite these challenges, it has been an incredibly interesting and rewarding year for me. In conclusion, I would like to thank everyone who has helped to make it so. I would in particular like to thank our Clerk, Lisa, and her excellent staff, with whom it has been both an honour and a pleasure to work, and the incredible public of Ryde, whose diversity, energy and enthusiasm continue to astound me. Thank you all!

Diana Conyers, May 2026