



## RYDE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICER REPORT

<b>Committee:</b>	Full Council
<b>Date:</b>	4 July 2022
<b>Report Author:</b>	Jon Baker - Committees and Ryde Place Plan Co-Ordinator
<b>Report Title:</b>	Celebrating Ryde – The 2022 Annual Town Meeting
<b>Context:</b>	For Noting Only

## **1. SUMMARY**

This report is to provide members with an overview of the Celebrating Ryde Day, which was an all-day event on Saturday, 14 May 2022. The event was held as the main part of Ryde Town Council's Annual Town Meeting.

## **2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Annual Town Meeting is a mandatory forum which every Town and Parish council must hold between 1 March and 1 June every year. Its purpose is for the residents of a town to meet, celebrate local activities and engage with the public on current issues within the community.

Usually, this takes the form of a standard meeting lasting an hour or so with an agenda, which is minuted. However, the Annual Town Meeting, as in most towns in the past has not attracted a great number of attendees, which has resulted in little engagement between residents, stakeholders, and Ryde Town Council.

As as there is no legal requirement for the meeting to be done in this way, it was suggested that to generate more interest and increase the attendance numbers, the meeting would be developed into an all-day event which would provide an opportunity for Ryde Town Council and all stakeholders to showcase the previous 12 months activities and what plans, events and projects were in place for the ensuing year.

## **3. PREPERATION FOR THE DAY**

In late March, Chris Ashman, the Isle of Wight Councils Director of Regeneration contacted officers of Ryde Town Council and enquired if there could be a public meeting which would highlight the Ryde Place Plan and encourage the public to attend and discover more about the plan. It was at this point that it was suggested that the Annual Town Meeting could be utilised to accommodate this as well as expanding it further to highlight many other activities and achievements that had taken place and what plans there were for the forthcoming year.

A mailing list of all stakeholders and interested parties was created and an initial email was sent out, advising of the day, and asking if they would be interested in having a stall to engage with the public. All Town Councillors were also invited.

A series of fortnightly meetings with Chris Ashman (along with his PA), Lisa Dyer, Hannah East, Allan Bridges and Jon Baker were held where updates on progress were given. Invitees were contacted several times leading up to the day with floor plans sent and requests for their stall details. A clearer picture of who would be attending was then generated.

Posts on Ryde Town Councils Social media platforms were also published and updated regularly with an encouragingly good level of hits.

Ryde Methodist Church was booked for the occasion and initially it was suggested that it could be held over two days (13 and 14 May), but it was felt that one day would suffice, creating a more concentrated event.

On the day before and the morning of the event, officers and stall holders prepared the Church with banners erected, tables laid out and various paraphernalia assembled.

Those stall holders who confirmed attendance were:

- Arc Consulting – Ryde Place Plan
- Isle of Wight Council – Regeneration Projects (including the Ryde Interchange)
- High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ)
- Ryde Society
- New Carnival Company
- Ryde Carnival Association
- Shademakers
- Wight Wave (Isle of Wight Beach Soccer)
- Bird Aware Solent
- Aspire
- Community Led Homes

In addition, Ryde Town Council had a stall promoting the newly acquired Ryde Marina along with the popular new Beach Hire facilities. Network Ryde were also in attendance promoting the Town Councils highly regarded Youth Service and its future base at St Thomas's Church. The organiser of the popular Classic Car Show would also attend for an hour or so handing out promotional material for the 2022 show.

A series of videos (Celebrating Ryde Businesses, Biosphere, Culture, Community, and the Future) was also produced to help promote the day and which could also be utilised throughout the year promoting the town and these were posted on all Ryde Town Council's social media outlets. Featured in the video were many local businesses, partners, and stakeholders. (A link to these can be accessed via the Appendix at the end of the report).

#### **4. THE CELEBRATING RYDE EVENT**

The day of the event started at 10.00am and from the start there was a flow of visitors, keen to engage with all stall holders. The period between 10.30am and around midday was the busiest, but after midday attendance did drop off a degree although some curious members of the public were still dropping by all afternoon.

One of the busiest stalls was for the Ryde Interchange, manned by Dave Newton (the Isle of Wight Councils Strategic Manager for Regeneration, Infrastructure & Transport).

Feedback from Dave and Chris Ashman was that a lot of residents' fears around the Interchange had been allayed and many had left with a more positive outlook on the project.

Other areas of particular interest were Ryde Marina and the Ryde Place Plan where both stalls attracted lots of public interest informing of plans and aspirations.

Ryde Town Council provided feedback forms for the public to complete and return to us and whilst there wasn't a huge response to this the findings are summarised as follows:

- Ryde Place Plan – A need to understand it more (this can be addressed with a review undertaken by Ryde Town Council)

Address post Covid 19 issues in the plan by making available some quiet spaces for reflection and sanctuary for the elderly and vulnerable. Ensure public conveniences remain clean with adequate washing facilities.

- Other Areas Ryde Town Council could have more control and focus on:

- Full ownership of Ryde Beaches.
- More control around any possible pollution of beaches.
- Bike / E Bike Hire facilities.
- More sports facilities.
- Better directional signage around the town.
- Introduction of Heritage Trails.
- More pedestrian crossings

- Any other services RTC could look to take over:

- Ice Rink Building – potential conference / concert venue.
- Ryde Town Hall.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The decision to make the Celebrating Ryde Day the focus of the Annual Town Meeting was, officers believe, beneficial. Previous Annual Town meetings had been poorly attended and as such a waste of member and officer time and resources. By transforming a mandatory meeting from one of mere obligatory duty to a more informative and interactive day meant Ryde Town Council was able to engage with residents in a far more productive way. Councillors and officers were able to meet with the public and address questions and some concerns.

Throughout the day, it was estimated that around 200 people had attended (compared with around an average of half a dozen at previous Annual Town Meetings) and all stakeholders that were there agreed that it was a useful day where they were able to inform and promote their various organisations, projects and events face to face.

Officers are of the opinion that for a first attempt, the Celebrating Ryde Day was a success and should be held on an annual basis. However, there were some aspects which need to be addressed and which could improve the occasion in the future. These are:

- Duration – It was felt that six hours (10am – 4pm) was too long. There were many visitors between 10.30am to Midday, but during the afternoon there was a significant drop in numbers. This was probably due to people heading home to enjoy a Saturday evening and the weather was sunny and warm (the Cup Final was also on that day!). It was therefore suggested at the “Wash Up” meeting the following week between staff that any future Celebrating Ryde Day could be shortened to around two to three hours (possibly 11am – 2pm)
- Venue – Whilst the Church was a good venue and could well be used again, other options might be looked at. Ryde Library was suggested, although the church is closer to the High Street where shoppers are more likely to come and visit.
- Better Promotion – Whilst RTC had utilised its website and social media platforms as well as issuing posters to local business to display in their windows, it was believed that the next event could have some additional promotional tools such as a stall in the High Street on the day of the event advising of it being held along with leaflets being handed out. More comprehensive advertising in the local media outlets could also be considered.
- Encourage those who benefit from RTC grant funding to attend and promote their organisations – There were quite a few invited who did not attend or even respond to the invite. This was unfortunate as it would have been beneficial to those parties and demonstrated the diversity of services, amenities and bodies which provide support and assistance for residents of and visitors to Ryde. One way of possibly encouraging such attendance would be to make a condition of receiving any grant funding that they be expected to attend and help with the promotion of the town.

However, the feedback from those who exhibited on the day has been very positive and there is a real belief that the “Celebrating Ryde Day” should become an annual event and plans are already in place for 2023.

**6. APPENDIX - CELEBRATING RYDE VIDEOS – ACCESSED VIA THE FOLLOWING LINK:**

<https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/celebratingryde>