

ANNUAL MEETING OF RYDE TOWN RESIDENTS

NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 24 APRIL 2023 AT 6.15PM

HELD AT GEORGE STREET CENTRE, RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH

Ryde Town Council Councilors Present:

Cllr Michael Lilley (Mayor), Cllr Georgie Carter, Cllr Simon Cooke, Cllr Joe Elliott, Cllr Tom Hanley, Cllr Jess Higgins, Cllr Phil Jordan, Cllr Karen Lucioni, Cllr Richard May, Cllr Malcolm Ross, and Cllr Ian Stephens.

Ryde Town Council Staff Present:

Jon Baker (Committees and Ryde Place Coordinator) and Hannah East (Marketing & Events Officer).

Guest Speakers:

Graham Biss (Managing Director of Natural Enterprise), Sharon George (Department), Joe Plumb (Department) and Bex Swann (Network Ryde).

Number of public attending - 52

01/23 NOTES TO THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The notes to the previous meetings held on 19 April 2021 and 14 May 2022 were agreed.

02/23 GUEST SPEAKERS

The following guests addressed the meeting:

- i. Cllr Michael Lilley - Mayor of Ryde

The mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

The 2022-2023 council year had been a very eventful one and various activities and projects were highlighted which included:

- Progress on St Thomas' Church as the new home for Network Ryde.
- Ryde Marina – continued development since acquisition from Isle of Wight Council in 2022.
- Supporting the community through the cost-of-living crises via a Ryde Community Development Forum.
- High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) Shop Front improvements and the future plans for improving the pedestrian zone.

In May 2023 the Mayor would be stepping down after four years in the role. This extended period was to allow for some stability during a difficult period which included the Covid 19 Pandemic and the subsequent cost-of-living crises.

Everyone was reminded that on Sunday, 7 May 2023, there would be a Big Community Picnic to mark the Kings Coronation.

Finally, the mayor paid tribute to the former Town Cryer, Steve King who had recently passed away. Condolences were expressed to his family.

ii. Youth Manager, Network Ryde, Bex Swann - Youth Investment Fund for St Thomas' Church.

The Youth Manager for Network Ryde gave a presentation on the progress of St Thomas' Church which had been acquired as a new base for Ryde Town Councils Youth Service, Network Ryde.

St Thomas's had been built in 1827 and along with being a place of worship had also been in later years a Heritage Centre. However, for the last ten years the building had been in private ownership. Ryde Town Council therefore took the decision to acquire the building when it came onto the market in 2020 as a new home for Network Ryde.

The successful grant application award of £578,000 from the Youth Investment Fund meant that Ryde's Youth Service would be significantly improved by adding more space and facilities. Following work being carried out on the roof and stain glass windows, the remaining development had commenced in March 2023.

The new facility would create a safe, warm, and accessible space which would include showers and toilets, a kitchen where young people would be able to cook with produce, they had grown on the dedicated Network Ryde allotment.

There would also be quiet and confidential spaces including an IT area centered around the retained church pews and an indoor games area would also be provided.

An outdoor area for users would also offer an area where wildlife would be encouraged to live alongside the facility with bat and swift boxes fitted.

It was anticipated that the building would be completed and ready to open its doors to users by the summer of 2024.

iii. Graham Biss - Appley Tower Restoration Project.

Graham Biss of Natural Enterprise provided a presentation on the restoration of Appley Tower. The building had been neglected for several years and the initiative would see it being brought back into public use as a viable and fully accessible asset to Ryde, which the public could enjoy, and which would look to generate potential income providing future sustainability.

The schedule of the project was as follows:

- November 2019 – Production of a detailed Feasibility Study November 2019.
- Detailed set of costings commissioned for Tower repairs estimated at £224K.
- Detailed plans and drawings commissioned.
- Series of community consultations undertaken at each stage of the project to include seeking a community partner to operate the tower.
- Prepared and submitted planning applications for the tower and creation of four beach huts – in support of the tower.
- Received project support from Ryde Town Council, the Isle of Wight Council, and the Natural Enterprise Board.
- Application to Architectural Heritage Fund and Heritage Lottery Fund.

As of April 2023, the following had been confirmed:

- Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £248K had been approved.
- Partner support from Ryde Town Council, the Isle of Wight Council and Natural Enterprise to match fund the Heritage Lottery Fund grant. Total projected project cost would be £368K.
- Awaiting discharge of pre-renovation planning condition.
- Final building regulations sought, and approval pending.
- Heritage research project had started with first workshops being held on 18th April 2023.

Future steps would be to construct four beach huts. These would be specifically targeted for use of the local community on short term lease agreements and form a steady revenue stream for the upkeep of the Tower. The top of the Tower would also be fully accessible as a public viewpoint.

Tenders would also be sought for the critical stage of the renovation work.

Exhibitions, walks and presentations would be provided as well as social media and website updates. Work should be completed with the tower opening to the public before January 2025.

iv. Sharon George and Joe Plumb - Department Renovation Project.

Sharon George and Joe Plumb both gave a presentation on the project for converting and developing their base in Cross Street Ryde into a creative and cultural space called 'Department'. This would deliver various arts and cultural events and activities. There would also be new working and performance spaces, a shop and café (with an outdoor terrace) as well as providing a long-lasting home for Shademakers and Ryde Arts.

The building, which was once the site for W & J Woods Merchants and then Packs Department Store had recently become the home of Shademakers UK who manufacture carnival costumes and equipment. They had been most notable for their performance at the Queens Platinum Jubilee Celebrations in London in 2022.

In partnership with the Isle of Wight Council, the group had been successful in securing £1,969,458 of government funding to turn the store into a cultural venue.

A planning application had since been submitted to the Isle of Wight Council for consideration and subject to approval, development on the building would start later in 2023 with a view to opening the facility in the summer of 2024.

03/23 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS TO GUEST SPEAKERS AND WARD COUNCILLORS.

Questions asked and comments made by the public were around then following:

- Appley Tower and the confirmation around the commitment for long term maintenance of the Tower supported by the revenue from the four community beach huts.
- Shademakers were complimented and thanked for bringing an iconic former department store building back into community use as 'Department'.
- Ryde HSHAZ had been recognised as having some of the project completed, however reassurances were given that the pedestrian zone would be completed with the resurfacing, street furniture and greening added, in the coming year.
- The futures of Ryde Town Hall and Vectis Hall would continue to be monitored by Ryde Town Council. Working Groups had been set up to look at all options around the feasibility of trying to bring both buildings back into possible use.
- Some concerns were raised around Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and any impact of a second levy being collected on top of existing Business Rates bills.

04/23 DATE OF 2024 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The date for the next meeting / event would be identified in the Spring of 2024 and communicated to all in due course.

The meeting finished at 7.45pm

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - PRESENTATIONS LINKS:

- [Youth Investment Fund for St Thomas' Church – Network Ryde](#)
- [Appley Tower Restoration Project – Natural Enterprise](#)
- [Department Renovation Project - Shademakers](#)