



**MINUTES OF RYDE TOWN COUNCIL'S MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY  
19 NOVEMBER 2024 AT 7.00PM IN THE GEORGE STREET CENTRE,  
RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH, GEORGE STREET, RYDE.**

**Members Present:** Cllr Richard May (Mayor), Cllr Georgie Carter, Cllr Diana Conyers, Cllr Simon Cooke, Cllr Ian Dore, Cllr Jo Elliott, Cllr Pippa Hayward, Cllr Jess Higgins, Cllr Michael Lilley, Cllr Phil Jordan, Cllr Malcolm Ross and Cllr Ian Stephens.

**Also in Attendance:** Jonathan Baker (RTC Committees Coordinator), Tara Bloomfield (RFO), and Lisa Dyer (RTC Clerk)

3 Members of the public attended.

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**PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

Regarding the Interim Audit reports findings around the Town Councils Website, a member of the public asked what work was being undertaken to address the recommendations and what the time scales were to ensure that the refreshed live website would be ready for immediate use?

The Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) advised that work had already started on the website, but there were no specific timescales. However, it was being addressed. Whilst the recommendation was ideally for the original IT provider to be contacted and asked to finalise the work requirements, the Town Council decided instead to request that Cllr Simon Cooke, who has the necessary IT skills, to assist, and which would incur no additional cost to the Town Council.

**98/24 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Charles Chapman, Cllr Karen Lucioni and Cllr Jenna Sabine

**99/24 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS**

None declared.

**100/24 REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION**

None requested.

**101/24 MINUTES TO THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes to the previous meetings of Ordinary Full Council held on 17 September 2024 and the Extraordinary Full Council held on 15 October 2024 were reviewed.

It was noted that with regard to the minutes to the Extraordinary Full Council meeting, the Network Ryde Youth Manager had asked a question about Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision around what would happen to the sites identified for closure as there were concerns about the security of the site at Oakfield.

In response to the question, it was noted that there would be an increase in the provision for SEND pupils at primary level and sites would be repurposed accordingly depending on the outcome of the consultation.

After a proposer, seconder and a vote via a show of hands, the following was:

**RESOLVED:**

**THAT the minutes to the previous meeting of Ordinary Full Council held on 17 September 2024 were agreed.**

**THAT, subject to the above addition regarding the query on SEND provision, the minutes to the Extraordinary Full Council meeting held on 15 October 2024 were agreed.**

**102/24 MAYORS ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The mayors report was circulated ahead of the meeting which provided an update on his activities since the previous Ordinary Meeting of Full Council and included, amongst others, the following:

- Ryde Marina - Finally the electricity supply had been connected and, along with other improvements and investment, the facility has reached a positive tipping point in terms of the business plan, which was currently under review in preparation for 2025.
- Steam Punk Festival – This inaugural event was opened and attended by the mayor.
- Network Ryde Coffee Morning – The mayor attended the event to help raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support.
- Ryde Police Station Public Front Counter Reopening – This long awaited reopening of the front desk in Newport Street was attended by the mayor on behalf of Ryde Town Council.
- The Department – The mayor visited the site, viewing construction work and discussing the forthcoming Spring 2025 opening of the new cultural centre in Cross Street.

The mayors full report detailing all activities, can be viewed **HERE**.

## 103/24 OFFICER REPORT

Members noted the following reports:

i. Network Ryde Youth Service Manager

Members noted the written report, which was circulated before the meeting, and which included the following:

- Network Ryde continued to offer a full and varied service provision to young people including new sessions that had not previously been on offer within the former High Street base. A selection of activities had been held over the October 2024 Half Term period, including the first 'Murder Mystery' event, where the mayor agreed to be the victim!
- Sadly, members noted that one of Networks Ryde's volunteers, Lou Croain, had passed away unexpectedly. This had affected both the Network Ryde Team and young people as Lou had volunteered with Network Ryde for nearly three years. A session was held for young people to talk and receive offers of support where needed, supported by The Youth Trust. Further support had also been offered to the Team. A celebration of Lou's life was held on 15th November 2024 with many attending.

The full written report can be viewed [HERE](#).

ii. Community Development Officer

Members noted an oral update from the Community Development Officer which included the following:

- Ryde Information and Support Service – The service was initiated on 4 November 2024 and there had been two new appointments made. These were a Service Support Manager (on 20 hours per week) and a Service Support Assistant (on 16 hours per week). In its first week the service had attracted 14 visits (12 people with two making follow up visits), all of which were Ryde residents. Since then, there had been 43 contacts, which represented 37 actual clients with six return visitors. A third of clients had disabilities and half had benefits issues. Seven clients were referred to Citizens Advice. Seven were also assisted with online applications, nine with paper applications and eight were provided with support on phone calls.

It was decided to start slowly to establish logistics in terms of where it was best to work with clients and what opening times were more suitable to allow some shadowing to train the Assistant. The Service would be promoted from Mid-November 2024 in the press and posters would be put up around the town. Funding from National Lottery Awards had been applied for the second half of the pilot project. Support from Sovereign and Network Group (SNG) had also been sought as well as from other Town and Parish Councils via the Isle of Wight Association of Local Councils (IWALC).

- Timebanking – There were currently 45 members of which seven were organisational members and 74 exchanges had been achieved. The first successful coffee morning was in October 2024, and another had been planned for December 2024. This had given members the opportunity to hear what was being offered and requested. The Timebanking software had held things back slightly with communications, but a newsletter to highlight all the offers and exchanges on the virtual noticeboard had been planned. There were regular Drop In Sessions on Tuesday mornings in the library alongside the “Living Well” coffee morning as well as once a month on a Wednesday evening.

Finally, the Community Development Officer and Community Development Assistant would attend the National UK Timebanking Training Day event in London on 20 November 2024.

- Ryde Community Guide 2024 - The second edition had been printed and was being professionally delivered across Ryde. The costs had been covered mainly through advertising and equated to 20p per household – slightly up on last year (12p) but having the guides delivered professionally had saved a considerable amount of staff time organising volunteers.
- Cookery Sessions – These continued throughout the town. One course had been carried out at The Foyer, one at Network Ryde for Home Education Students and one at a local Primary School. There was also one starting in the afternoon at Network Ryde for young people. This had been made possible with funding from SNG and the South Western Railway Community Fund. More were planned for early 2025.
- Sherbourne Centre - This continued to be closed to local residents, but there were hopes it would reopen for everyone to access. The Charity Commission had been updated on contact details for current trustees. A meeting with the Community Action Resilience Officer to get advice on Ryde Town Council taking over the lease and supporting it with new trustees had been planned.

### iii. The Clerk

Members noted the written report, which was circulated before the meeting, and which included the following:

- Planting Contract - Unfortunately, the summer planting contractor had ceased trading. Ryde Town Council would be sending out ‘Requests to Quote’ for a new contractor imminently to ensure plants were ordered by the December deadline.
- Dog Fouling - A common theme during the autumn and winter months were the increase in dog fouling, and 2024 had been no different. Therefore, Ryde Town Council would shortly launch a poster and social media campaign to remind owners to pick up after their dogs and that “any bin will do!”.

- Christmas 2024 Plans - Five trees had been ordered for St Thomas's Square, Minghella Square, Town (Coop) Square, Binstead Millenium Green and Gassiot Green in Oakfield.

Merry & Bright 2024 would run from 5pm - 8pm on 6 December 2024 and the former Natwest Bank building would be used for some Craft Workshops and Face Painting activities. The building would also act as the First Aid station for the evening. The Mayor would turn on the Christmas lights in Ryde just before the start of the Merry & Bright festivities at 4.45pm.

- Resilience Grant - It was also noted that the £10,000 Resilience Grant from Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) for flood defences had been approved and would be used to purchase various flood defence items for the town.

## 104/24 MEMBERS REPORTS

Cllr Lilley reported he attended the unveiling of signs installed at the eastern entrance to St John's Park in Ryde earlier in the day. The signs were a bid to help prevent suicide, as part of Men Only IOW's suicide prevention initiative.

He also reported that as Chair of the Ryde Community Development Trust, he was looking to establish a work shop to focus on physical and mental wellbeing.

Cllr Conyers advised members that she had recently attended various IWALC meetings as well as an online meeting with the Isle of Wight Councils Cabinet Members regarding housing issues. Everyone noted that these informal meetings were open to all members and staff.

Cllr Cooke advised that IWALC regularly conduct training sessions and that all members were eligible should they wish to attend any.

Cllr Dore had attended the recent Remembrance Day and Remembrance Sunday services and took the opportunity in thanking all members and staff who had also paid their respects to those that had served during conflict.

The mayor advised that he had been working with the Principal of Ryde Academy to discuss how students could improve their University prospects. He also advised members that he had attended a recent University of Portsmouth (UoP) Memorandum of Understanding Steering Group meeting which had refocused on education and aspiration. Finally, the mayor informed Members that he attended a recent meeting of Ryde Academy Council which expressed a desire to engage more with the community.

Cllr Ross had attended recent Carnival Association meetings and advised that plans for the 2025 carnival season were already underway.

## 105/24 MEMBERS QUESTIONS

Cllr Lilley asked for an update on the UoP Dotto Train Viability Project. It was noted that a viability plan was being developed and that Cllr Jordan would contact relevant parties in due course.

Cllr Lilley asked for an update on the situation regarding Ryde Arena. It was noted that a draft condition report had been set out which was not very encouraging. Owners AEW had expressed a desire to sell the building, but the cost was somewhat prohibitive. There had been some interest to turn the building into a commercial venture, but the cost of repairing the building would be a major barrier.

Cllr Lilley asked if Ryde could benefit from some of the recently announced £1.8million government funding aimed at bus services on the Isle of Wight as there were some areas of the Town that were not on a main bus route. It was noted that the funding was for the whole of the Island, but any ideas to improve the services in Ryde could be raised at the local Bus Users Group Meetings.

## **106/24 FINANCE AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

- i. The approved minutes of the Finance and Community Resources Committee Meeting held on Tuesday, 10 September 2024 were noted.
- ii. Recommendations arising from the meeting of the Finance and Community Resources Committee held on Tuesday, 12 November 2024, were discussed.

After a proposer, seconder and a vote via a show of hands, the following was:

### **RESOLVED:**

- a) **THAT a review and approval of the recommendation from the Finance Committee to implement the updated Financial Regulations which are in line with the new National Association of Local Councils (IWALC) template, be agreed.**
- b) **THAT the notes from interim internal auditor report and any actions arising, be received and noted.**
- c) **THAT the recommendation from the Finance and Community Resources Committee that Ryde Town Council supports the decision of continuing with the appointment of Lightatouch, who is independent to the Council, as the internal auditor for the 2024/25 financial year and that the work carried out is effective, be agreed.**

## **107/24 HALF YEAR BUDGET MONITOR AND YEAR END REFORECAST**

The report from the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) was reviewed.

Members were advised that the first six months of the 2024-2025 financial year had been challenging for the Ryde Town Council with maternity leave, staff changes and time commitments to the Town Board all contributing factors.

The disappointing summer weather had also reduced the Town Councils capacity to generate revenue from its beachfront operations and marina visitors numbers were affected. However, despite these challenges, the Town Council Team had come together to protect both the services provided and the finances of the council.

The 2025-2026 Financial Year would unfortunately present even bigger challenges and every effort would be required to keep all costs to a minimum.

The RFO advised that there would be an informal budget meeting held on Friday, 6 December 2024 between 10.30am-12.30pm in the former Natwest Bank and all members and staff were encouraged to attend in order to discuss the budget setting and where savings could best be made.

The issue of Vectis Hall and the projected annual maintenance budget figure of £50,000 was raised, and it was noted that as the owners of the Grade II listed building, Ryde Town Council had a duty to maintain it. However, the Clerk advised that the Town Council needed to seriously consider Vectis Halls future and the RFO was looking at all the available options for it.

It was noted that adopting a prudent approach to spending in the remaining six months of the 2024-2025 financial year, the council should reach its budgeted General Reserves of £282,915. However, no further spending should be made from these reserves unless it was extremely urgent.

#### **108/24 COMMUNITY PLANNING COMMITTEE**

- i. The approved minutes of the Community Planning Committee Meeting held on Tuesday, 3 September 2024 and Tuesday, 15 October 2024 were noted.
- ii. Two vacancies remained for the Community Planning Committee. As there were no nominations, the matter would be deferred to the next meeting.

#### **109/24 RYDE TOWN BOARD**

A report from the Deputy Clerk / Business Development Manager on the latest developments regarding Ryde Town Board, was circulated ahead of the meeting.

Members noted that correspondence from Jamie Cowling, Deputy Director of the Governments Community Delivery Unit was received on Thursday, 31 October 2024 stating that Ryde Town Board would receive up to £20million. There would be a revised prospectus published in 'due course' for the programme with new strategic objectives and the programme delivery would start in the 2026-2027 financial year with an increased period of consultation and engagement for project planning.

It was noted that as an elected body, Ryde Town Council could meet with the Town Board at some future juncture to be advised of any future proposals for Ryde.

#### **110/24 CONSULTATION: HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE SAFETY PLAN 2025-2030**

Members noted the latest plan which set out the direction of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service over the next five years and provided information on the following:

- Who they are as a Service.
- The risks and challenges they face.
- The work carried out.
- The steps taken to prevent and respond to emergency situations.

Members were advised to pay particular attention to pages 21-24 of the plan where the proposals were set out.

Members largely agreed that the plan was a sensible one, and that no collective response was required. However, should members wish to they could respond individually with any comments.

### **111/24 POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY**

Members were required to note the strategy.

Forty-nine organisations had been involved in producing the strategy including Aspire in Ryde, Citizens Advice, (Newport) Pan Together, the Footprint Trust and the Island's various foodbanks and was approved by the Isle of Wight Councils Health and Wellbeing Board on 31 October 2024.

It was noted that Ryde Town Council had in the past few years achieved a lot in addressing poverty issues with the Covid 19 response in 2020, the appointment of a Community Development Officer and the setting up of a Community Forum.

### **112/24 REMOTE MEETINGS CONSULTATION**

Members were initially asked to delegate the response to the 'Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority Meetings Consultation' to the Clerk in consultation with the IWALC representatives. However, it was suggested that it would perhaps be more beneficial that a link to the consultation was sent to all elected members, allowing individual comments to be submitted.

It was noted that since the initiative had been implemented during the Covid 19 Pandemic period to enable engagement at meetings during lockdowns, there had been widespread campaigning from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) to make the practice become permanent. Should remote practice be brought back officially, it was noted that the Town Council would need to invest in specialised software. However, such imposed changes could mean that grant funding would be made available to help meet such costs.

After a proposer, seconder and a vote via a show of hands, the following was:

#### **RESOLVED:**

**THAT the sending of a web link to all councillors to access and comment on the Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority Meetings Consultation, be agreed.**

### **113/24 FORMER NAT WEST BANK UPDATE**

Members were advised that the building would be referred to as Number 11, St Thomas's Square.

Regarding the opening up of the toilets to the public at Number 11, members noted that the Town Council was in the process of appointing an architect to draw up the plans.

**114/24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING OF ORDINARY FULL COUNCIL**

Members noted that the next Ordinary Meeting of Full Council would be held on Tuesday, 4 February 2025.

Meeting closed at 8.50pm

Signed.....

Cllr Richard may  
Mayor of Ryde Town Council - 4 February 2025

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