

Full Council Meeting 3 February 2026

Mayor's Report

Introduction

The Mayor has two main roles:

1. To take a lead in the *operation* of the Council, including chairing Full Council meetings, attending all other meetings and working with other councillors and staff to ensure the Council operates as efficiently and effectively as possible.
2. To represent the Council *publicly*, including representing it on other bodies (such as the Ryde Neighbourhood Board), attending public events and holding informal meetings with members of the public.

I describe below my main activities under these two headings.

Operational activities

The last two months have not been easy for the Council, due in large part to an unexpected staffing issue. Councillors have been briefed separately on this.

On the positive side, we had a very successful Budget consultation event on Friday 12 December. Since then, we have had a second informal budget meeting and a meeting of the Finance Committee, which will be making a recommendation to this Full Council meeting. Due to increases in the costs of most activities and the loss of some external funding for Network Ryde, some increase in the precept was inevitable. However, we have tried to keep the increase as low as possible while at the same time avoiding cuts to key services.

Following a decision at the last Full Council meeting, it was also decided to have further discussion and consult the public on the draft Action Plan. This has been done and, following an informal meeting of councillors, it was decided to withdraw the proposal to establish a Community Services Committee. The revised version will be presented to this meeting.

One of the activities in the draft Action Plan is to conduct a review of our staffing position. The Council has grown rapidly over the last few years and we need to ensure that we have the right number of staff in the right positions and that they are deployed as efficiently and effectively as possible. A start has already been made on this exercise. In order to ensure objectivity and impartiality, the review has to be conducted by an independent body. A contract has recently been issued to a company called Council HR and Governance Support, who have extensive relevant experience. They will start work shortly.

Public activities

In the last two months, I have undertaken the following duties:

1. *Ryde Neighbourhood Board*: I have attended three meetings of the Board (on 5 December, 10 December and 9 January) and two meetings of the Communications Committee, of which I am a member (on 10 December and 26 January). Minutes of these meetings can be found on the Board's website. However, the key points are:
 - The required documents were submitted to the government on time.
 - The contract to re-establish a business association has been re-awarded to Zoe Thomson, following a proper tender process.
 - The contract to manage the Board's public communications has been awarded to Robertson Foster. Their role includes management of the Board's website and communication with the media. I am confident that their appointment will improve communication and increase transparency.
 - As a result of concern expressed by myself and some other Board members, and with the encouragement and support of Robertson Foster, it has been agreed that the *Ten-Year Vision* and other documents will be released to the public. The *Vision*, together with a press statement updating the public on the Board's activities, should be released on 9 February. This will be followed by other forms of publicity, including drop-in events and a newsletter.
 - There have been two resignations from the Board. These will not be filled until after receipt of the government's response, in order to ensure that invitations to apply for membership are tailored to meet specific needs.
 - The Town Hall has been the subject of much discussion. The owner put it up for auction but withdrew it at the last minute, following information that the Board would, when it has access to funds in April, be prepared to provide some financial support to enable a community group to purchase it, subject to various conditions.
 - AEW invited the Board to make a bid for the Ice Rink but, although this is another high priority project, the Board is unable to commit any funds at this point.
 - At the meeting on 9 January, the meeting considered a request from Wight Gateway Ltd to help fund feasibility studies for a ferry terminal at Ryde House, as part of the proposal for a new ferry service from Ryde to Portsmouth. The request was refused, primarily because it was not on the list of priority projects.
 - The possibility of RTC taking over part of the Board's administration and operation is under discussion.
2. *Meet Your Councillor*: I attended sessions in the Library on 3 December and 7 January. Public turnout continues to be low but I still think it's important that we continue to offer this opportunity for residents to come and talk to us, especially since RISS is also open at this time. Please let me know if you are able to join me at any of these sessions. It would be good for residents to meet other councillors.
3. *Garfield Christmas Market*: I attended the Garfield Road Methodist Church's Christmas Market on Saturday 29 November. It was very well attended, I had some useful discussions with residents and handed leaflets about the Budget Consultation.
4. *Merry and Bright*: Unfortunately, as you know, the weather was not kind to us on Friday 5 December. However, I was amazed how many people turned out,

despite the weather. I was able to visit most of the sites and joined the last part of the parade. Thank you to the New Carnival Team and everyone else who helped to make it such a success.

5. *Christmas services:* On Sunday 14 December I was invited to attend the Elim Church's Christmas event, which was held at Ryde School. It was a very enjoyable occasion, with lots of activities, including carols and a nativity play.

As always, please feel free to contact me at any time if you have any issues or concerns you would like to discuss.

Diana Conyers

January 2026