



## **MAYOR'S REPORT AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**May 2024**

It has been a privilege to serve Ryde as mayor over the past twelve months – what an interesting role it is; a heady mix of public-facing engagement and working with staff, councillors and others to shape and move forward a vision for the town. It's taken almost a year to get used to it!

It is an exciting time to be in Ryde; there is much to celebrate and there are many opportunities for improvement although, of course, many seemingly perennial frustrations remain, for instance litter, the lack of constant public toilets, vandalism and dog poo – all of which the staff team continue to work to overcome.

I have continued to support the staff, in particular the clerk and deputy, as they have prepared the Town Council's structure, systems and priorities in readiness for the advent of the Ryde Town Board. I would like to offer my congratulations to **Steve Holbrook** (CEO of the IW Chamber of Commerce), on his ratification by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) as the chair of the Town Board. At the time of writing, we are still awaiting DLUHC's final approval of the board's membership. This is frustrating, as timescales are tight to run comprehensive community consultation and develop ten- and three-year plans, ready for submission to DLUHC by August 1<sup>st</sup>. Planning is underway to enable swift decisions around how to address this as soon as the board is approved. It is still the case that the Town Council will act as the Board's secretariat, working with the Isle of Wight Council to enable the Board's projects to progress. I should again point out that this does not mean that RTC has any influence over the Board's decisions – it's shaping up to be a fiercely independent body. Allan Bridges, together with Liz Edmunds-Lamb, has been partially seconded to support the Board's initial set-up.

Meanwhile, staff and councillors have continued to work hard to develop and realise a range of projects, to work with residents, and to support other organisations to do so. I've continued to meet with key stakeholders, all of whom are very positive about the future of Ryde – and all continue to express a wish to work together to realise the potential of the town and its ability to better support its residents and businesses, as well as offering visitors a memorable experience.

Amongst the usual activities, meetings and training in the full and invigorating life of a councillor, since my last report/our last full council meeting I've been involved in

supporting and attending the following meetings and events.

- Attended meetings of the Ryde Community Development Trust
- With the clerk and deputy clerk, met with Cowes Town Council/Ross Edmunds (IWC) to discuss Place Planning issues and mechanisms for evaluating projects
- Alongside other councillors, attended meetings of the Ryde Community Forum
- Represented the town at the licensing of Revd. Olly Mitchelmore and Revd. Heath Monaghan at All Saint's Church
- Attended the Student Impact Awards at the University of Portsmouth (UoP)
- Alongside other councillors, attended the launch of the Beach Accessibility Project
- Attended the RTC/UoP Memorandum of Understanding Steering Group meeting with the Town Clerk.

The Memorandum of Understanding between this council and UoP continues to enable a number of projects and opportunities for both parties and remains a strong link for us with a leading, ambitious university. There is an increasing focus from the steering group on the key area of educational aspiration and how to enable young people from Ryde/the Island to access the skills and knowledge they will need to build a strong future.

- Represented the town at the presentation of the Book of Remembrance, given to the town by John and Sue Taylor.

I would like to thank John and Sue for their generosity and for investing their time and resources in the production of the Book of Remembrance, which records all service personnel from Ryde who have lost their lives in conflict from the Great War onwards. The book has been given to All Saints Church for safe keeping, and a copy will be made available to Ryde Town Council. I'd also like to thank Hannah East for her time liaising with John Taylor and for working with cadets representing each of the services and with Revd. David Morgan to arrange the moving presentation service.

My thanks, as ever, to staff and councillors for their continued dedication and work to improve the town and support its residents, particularly as we gear up for a busy summer season. The marina and beachfront teams are working particularly hard to be ready, with electricity about to (*finally*) be available to berth holders, the build-up of sand resulting from winter storms redistributed and with the prospect of unbroken sunshine and balmy nights between now and the autumn. What a great time to be in Ryde!

**Cllr Richard May – Mayor of Ryde**

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