

## Ryde Mayor's Report – February 2021

### **AMOENITAS SALUBRITAS URBANITAS - , 'A Healthy, Beautiful Place'**

The Town's motto dates from the incorporation as Ryde Borough in 1868. It can certainly be read as meaning, '*A Healthy, Beautiful Place*', but its phrasing, deliberately ambiguous, allows for another interpretation, '*A Community That Celebrates a Healthy and Beautiful Way of Living*'. These words are with me every day and have been with me every day since I was elected as Mayor.

We are living through very sad times and Ryde residents are living and dying due to the greatest world crisis since the Second World War. More UK Citizens have died of Coronavirus than the UK civilians in the Second World War and that simply demonstrates to me the enormity of this pandemic. Since our last RTC Council meeting in December, Ryde and Isle of Wight has gone from a very low infection rate to one of the highest in the UK. Our hearts must go out to all those who have Covid and are still recovering from Covid. Those in our community and across the world who have died from Covid, and the families who have lost loved ones. The team of staff at Ryde Town Council have been hit by this terrible virus, they have shown and continue to show great courage and our heart goes out to them.

We as a Town Council have to offer our community a message of hope at this critical time and be focused on the road to recovery post Covid. Many in the community have been vaccinated and many more will be over the coming weeks. Our mission and vision since March 2020 is to support our residents through this terrible time and have a Town Council building the foundations of a launch pad to re-build our healthy, beautiful place that inclusivity improves and provides hope for the future and future generations. We go forward together.

### **Transformation**

Ryde Town Council has totally transformed in the last 12 months and now has a flexible, responsive and inspirational staff team. We adapted very quickly to the circumstances of Covid and have never stopped providing services and support for Ryde residents throughout the community, during a year of crisis. We operate now virtually, remotely and proactively.

### **Achievements and Outcomes**

My February Report celebrates the ACHIEVEMENTS and OUTCOMES in the past 12 months that we need to celebrate in making the phrase, "*Actions Speak Louder than Words*" into reality. RTC staff and members since the start of the first Lockdown have risen to the challenge of the Covid-19 crisis and have worked incredibly hard in getting to 2021 and being prepared with a fighting plan to recover post-covid. These are some of the achievements in 2020/21:

- A Ryde Charter and Corporate Plan 2020-25
- A highly skilled and motivated Ryde Staff Team that has the capacity to implement an ambitious Corporate Plan. These included in 2020/21, a new Town Clerk, Business Development Manager, Administrators, Youth Services Manager, and Maintenance Officer. IW Council and RTC jointly appointed a Ryde Historic Action Zone Project Manager. The Team are already delivering outcomes.

- A Community Connector programme in partnership with Ryde Aspire and other key local stakeholders provided support to the most vulnerable during Covid and that provides the basis of support for the future.
- Ryde Unite brings all the Ryde social enterprises together to build a strong voluntary sector for the future.
- A Community and Marketing (Events) Grant Fund that has developed to support Ryde residents and organisations to develop and grow including Waterside Pool, Bus Museum, Ryde Carnival, New Carnival Company, Ryde Arts, Monkton Arts, Wave Beach Sports, and much more.
- An emerging new Marketing strategy (Ticket to Ryde) that embraces the digital age and social media, that involves Ryde Town Council working in partnership with local travel operators, Visit IW, Ryde Business association, and all stakeholders in promoting the Town. The pilot Ticket to Ryde promotion in August 2020 saw 140000 plus followers on social media, increased profile of over 40 local shops and businesses.
- Ryde is now able to borrow, match fund and lead on major grant applications to improve the Town. It has become more self-reliant and will start to income generate in 2021, so that in the future The Town Council will be less reliant on the precept. We are improving on what Ryde has to offer visitors and residents, such as beach equipment and improved public areas. RTC in collaboration with IW Council and Historic England, has a £1M Ryde Historic Action Zone to improve High Street.
- RTC now owns 2 historic and community asset buildings St. Thomas's Church and Vectis Hall and has a plan to eventually purchase Ryde Theatre/Town Hall. There is finalisation of Ryde Harbour and Eastern Gardens being bought from IW Council for £1 by May 2021. There are plans for Appley Tower to be transferred to RTC and Natural Enterprise charity from IW Council. Ryde is reclaiming its historic assets.
- Ryde has a bespoke and award winning Youth Service, Network Ryde, that throughout 2020 supported Ryde young people through a range of imaginative solutions to Covid isolation such as a virtual youth club and youth allotment. Network Ryde has established and received Government Kickstart funding to provide 42 work placements for young people aged 18-24 to get work with local employers.
- A Greening Ryde commitment to tackle the deficit of Green Space in the Town and actively involve Green volunteers in collaboration with voluntary and business sector to deliver Ryde's commitment to Biosphere principles. In 2020, green space at Nicolson Road was opened up and renamed Rosemary Fields and Ryde volunteers worked with contractors in planting across the town with colourful flower beds.

## **2021 and Future**

The February Full Council meeting approves the 21/22 budget which will be a Post-Covid Recovery, Hope and Opportunity Budget that will consolidate and build on the actions taken in the last 12 months. We did this transformation in 2020 without putting up the precept last year and supported our community throughout the pandemic and lockdowns whilst meeting our targets in the new plan. We will now fix a 2021/22 budget that enables Ryde to meet the challenges of a post-covid world to benefit all our residents in an inclusive way.

Cllr Michael Lilley – Mayor of Ryde