



Committee:	FULL COUNCIL
Date:	18 MAY 2022
Title:	LEADER'S UPDATE
Report of:	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Chairman, I submit the following leader's report as a summary of the achievements of last year by the Alliance Administration.

We started our first year in administration with an aim for the council to work together with our communities to support and sustain our economy, environment, and people; achieving this by being community focused, effective, efficient, and fair. We know that the Island has many challenges. But we remain determined to tackle these and make a real difference to the lives of the Island people.

We implemented our commitments of democracy and openness, and accountability by reintroducing reverse proportionality to all scrutiny meetings and supported the appointment of chairs of these meetings drawn from those that are not part of the Alliance. We also reduced the use of delegated decisions.

I am very conscious about the long-lasting impact of Covid-19 on the Island and in addition to the aim outlined above the Alliance will make sure that recovery from Covid-19 is integral to everything we do.

Delivering services for our local community is not only about focussing on large scale projects but is also about those small differences that we can make daily. The summary of activity below reports on the wide range of activity that has been delivered by this council in the last year:

People and Communities

- In July we opened Howard House the assessment hub for homeless people and the culmination of joined up work across the council to deliver a high-quality facility for up to 17 people.
- Delivery of schemes to provide healthy food and activities to free school meal eligible children, funded through the Holiday Activities and Food Scheme.
- Colwell, Totland Bay, Bembridge, Yaverland, Sandown Lake and Shanklin benefitted from marker bouys being reinstated at beaches to assist in protecting swimmers from anti-social behaviour on the water.

- Embedding a new 0-19 children's public health service, working with NHS Solent and directly improving the outcomes for children and families.
- Ofsted inspection of Children's Social Work teams concluded that our services were judged to be "good in all regards. There is and always will be more to do but this external validation provides us with assurance about our work in this incredibly challenging area.
- Provision of a £54,000 small grant fund for local groups providing mental health support to residents on the Island. Seventeen organisations have received one-off grants of between £750 and £5,000.
- The partnership work of the council's hospital discharge team was recognised when it was highly commended at the Municipal Journal Awards. The introduction of the discharge facilitation service and an integrated discharge team has enabled a system wide response to a wicked problem. This is welcome recognition for the work of the whole system.
- Working with the Lions Barber Collective, we have been able to offer BarberTalk and BeautyTalk; free mental health training to hair and beauty professionals to help them support their customers.
- To ensure vulnerable residents receive high-quality support to live well and independently at home, in their chosen communities the council and its health partners have funded a new Living Well and Early Help Service, which will be delivered by Aspire Ryde. The support will include services based within the heart of the community at already well-established community hubs; greater access to advice, guidance and support for people and their families to live well, maximise their well-being, and maintain positive mental health and access to support to help prevent people reaching crisis.
- Approval of the Isle of Wight Dementia Strategy seeking to improve the health and well-being of Islanders living with dementia, ensuring that they, and their families and carers are supported.
- In collaboration with the NHS Trust, IW CCG, Carers IW, Age UK, People Matter and Healthwatch we have engaged with unpaid carers to seek their views to help shape an Isle of Wight Carers Strategy.
- Hosted a careers fair for those thinking of working in social care, providing the opportunity to meet local care employers and listen to their first-hand experience as well as receive advice in writing CV's and training courses available with local training providers.
- In partnership with the IW College, launched a free three-day course on social care, with guaranteed interviews for vacant roles.
- Supporting a new sensory support service for residents with sight and/or hearing loss. Wight Sense will provide support for local people to remain independent and confident in their daily lives.

- Set up the Island's first community pantries in East Cowes, Ryde and Ventnor, giving those in need a helping hand by getting food at a lower cost on a weekly basis. For a weekly contribution of £5 members will receive over £15 worth of fresh, frozen and general food.
- Successfully bid for Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme Funding which has enabled us to purchase five units to of accommodation for those who are homeless.
- Local delivery of the national Homes for Ukraine programme, working alongside voluntary sector and other public sector partners.

Environment

- Use of Welcome Back funding to provide more frequent bin emptying and more litter picks over the summer 2021.
- A major project to dredge Newport Harbour was completed at the end of June; nearly 20,000m³ of material was removed to provide for a constant depth of navigable channel.
- Approval of our Climate and Environment Strategy in autumn 2021, with an aspiration for the Island to be Net Zero by 2040. Following the approval of the strategy we have launched the mission zero hub which will promote a wider Island approach to help our community meet the challenges of climate change.
- Reviewing all the council's investments with a view to ceasing any investment in carbon producing activities, including the pension fund and its investments.
- Presented the first annual Bob Edney Countryside Conservation Award, which was in memory of Bob, who worked in the council's countryside service for 39 years. The award was won by the Isle of Wight Green Gym, which work in various locations across the Island.
- Work to create a new, all-weather, shared-used path of approximately 1.2 kilometres long upgrading what is currently a largely gravel track between The Riverside Centre on Newport Harbour and Mews Lane on the Newport to Cowes cycleway, funded through the government's Active Travel 2 and Local Transport Plan programmes. The improvements have created a path which is suitable for use by cyclists, pedestrians, and the mobility impaired.
- Further funding from DfT has been secured to increase local cycling and walking infrastructure plans in other locations across the Island, working directly with Town and Parish Councils to develop these.
- To encourage green travel, the introduction of five bike stands to accommodate up to ten bicycles in the car park of Fort Victoria country.to encourage green travel.

- Supporting Keep Britain Tidy's Great British Spring Clean, encouraging families, neighbours, friends, and colleagues to join forces and pledge to pick up litter, protecting our local communities and precious wildlife habitats.
- Working with the community in East Cowes to develop and commence the delivery of work to East Cowes Esplanade, which will be carried out by an Island based contractor.
- Setting up a task and finish group to consider fly-tipping and developing a clear strategy for dealing with this important local issue.

Economy

- Completed work to allocate the government's Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant, with over £4.3m funding provided to support Island businesses in the hospitality and leisure industries.
- We have commenced work on the Ryde Interchange "greener/cleaner development proposal, a significant investment in one of the Island's key gateways which has attracted over £10 million of government funding.
- Commenced work on the Innovation Wight Project, which will see the refurbishment of a building in Northwood for a co-working and business incubation space, allowing for the delivery of a programme of business support for local businesses looking to grow.
- Supporting Southampton in the City of Culture bid, recognising that the Island can benefit from the success of a bid for Southampton.
- Completion of the works at St Mary's roundabout and delivery of the second phase of this project.
- A successful bid for £1m of brownfield land release funding will provide much needed support to enable the release of three sites for delivering housing and work is progressing on this.
- Continuing support for the delivery of the Branstone Farm development which will see phase 1 completed in summer 2022 and much needed affordable units being provided in partnership with Vectis Housing.
- Support for the Visit Isle of Wight BID which has resulted in a further five-year term for what is a very valuable tourism initiative, helping the Island compete for the "staycation pound".
- Following confirmation of a successful levelling up fund bid, work has commenced on the East Cowes Marine Hub which will support 106 new jobs through renovated employment floorspace, 32 new sailing academy jobs and 10 apprenticeships. Island based companies are involved in the first phase of works which will see the whole south elevation restored and two whole internal floors will once again be accessible.

- In collaboration with the IW College and Solent LEP, we held an apprenticeship fair, attended by 300 young people and parents who received the latest information about the wide range of apprenticeship opportunities available both on the Island and further afield.
- Provided every business on the Island a chance to gain an award from Green Impact, improve their environmental performance and reduce operational costs. Participants get access to the Green Impact website and an online toolkit giving them ideas and solutions to improve their sustainability and reduce their carbon footprint. Reducing operating costs is a particularly important benefit this year, with the increased cost of energy even small reductions in energy use can add up to big savings for businesses.

I would like to thank the dedication of all staff throughout the council and cabinet members for their work over the past twelve months for helping us to deliver the many activities listed above; also, those councillors who have supported us. I am also conscious that some of the activities listed were started by the previous administration and we have worked to ensure that they are completed and would offer my thanks to them for starting some of this work.

Lora Peacey-Wilcox