



Committee Report

ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL

Date	28 February 2024
Title	LEADER'S UPDATE REPORT
Report of	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Saturday 27 January 2024 saw the Island's first event that celebrated and recognised the vital role of local care and support workers across the whole health and care system. The council worked closely with the Isle of Wight NHS Trust to develop a dedicated day, offering development and wellbeing opportunities, to those who support some of most vulnerable people in our Island communities. The event was open to all those who provide direct care from all IOW organisations including those employed by the Isle of Wight Council, the IOW NHS Trust, private care homes, nursing homes and those who deliver care and support in peoples own homes. The day was a great success and is set to return as an annual event.

The theme for this year's National Apprenticeship Week (5 to 11 February) was #Skillsforlife. The week reflected on how apprenticeships can help individuals to develop the skills and knowledge required for a rewarding career. There was also lots going on throughout the week with several events scheduled for managers and staff alike to meet with apprenticeship training providers, for managers to understand the responsibilities required in supporting an apprentice and also a celebration day where the apprenticeship team were on the road visiting various council sites promoting the apprenticeship scheme.

Sarah Teague the strategic manager for learning and development spoke at the Association for Public Service Enterprise Health and Social care forum promoting our commitment to being an age friendly employer. Over the past year we have worked hard to develop age-friendly recruitment practises, creating career paths for all roles, recognising the value that older people can bring to the workforce and the important life skills they have to offer.

Isle of Wight Council welcomes the government announcement to protect the health of children and young people through a ban on disposable vapes and a restriction on vape flavours and marketing. The council's advice on vaping is clear: if you don't smoke, don't vape; if you smoke, vaping can be a useful tool to help you quit but they are not risk free. We will continue to lead work for a smokefree generation through our multi-agency Tobacco Control Group, including working with schools, parents, and carers to prevent smoking and vaping in children and young people, and supporting people to quit through our commissioned stop smoking service.

January saw the Benefits team receive the highest number of new claims in the 2023/24 year. This is a common trend, as people often struggle financially after the festive period, and seasonal work dies down. The Benefits team continue to assess new applications for housing and local council tax support within 13 days and changes in circumstance within 4 days. To date £186k of discretionary housing payments have been paid to residents facing difficult financial circumstances to ensure they can remain in their homes. The speed of processing such payments has been instrumental in supporting residents during the winter and the cost-of-living crisis.

The Council's children's services partnership arrangements with Hampshire ended on 31 January, and our new independent children's services department came into being. The service is led by Ashley Whittaker, the Strategic Director of Children's Services, and he is supported by two Service Directors, one covering education, inclusion and access, and the other children's social care. The launch of this new service is an opportunity to refocus attention on improving outcomes for children, young people and families on the Island, and ensure that children's services are fully embedded within the wider council operations. Priorities include implementing the learning from last year's Ofsted inspection of children's services and addressing the relatively low number of children in many of our primary schools.

As part of the council's ongoing climate strategy, and in response to the Climate Emergency, the IWC ensures that social and environmental impacts are considered when selecting products and procuring them. By selecting Nokia phones as our standard replacement handset, we have recently ensured the planting of 3,250 trees by Ecologi in a [Mangrove Planting at Kandranay in Madagascar](#). Based on our recent and historic purchases of Nokia phones from HMD Global and their work with Ecologi on our behalf the IWC has now planted more than 5000 trees.

The government's grant funding scheme to support those residents and businesses affected by Storm Babet closed at the end of January with 191 community recovery grants being awarded at a value of £95,500 and 37 business recovery grants equating to £92,500.

Finally, could I take this opportunity to remind residents to renew their Garden Waste Service subscription. The service re-opened on the 16 January and is extremely popular with over 2,000 one off card payments being received to date and over 7,000 set to renew by direct debit. The service currently has a large waiting list, with any remaining spaces available to be opened to new subscribers from the 20 February.

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