



Committee: **FULL COUNCIL**

Date: **21 JULY 2021**

Title: **LEADER'S UPDATE**

Report of: **LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

### **Alliance**

1. It has only been nine weeks since the Administration of the Council was taken on by my Alliance Group and I am pleased that we are already starting to implement changes based on our commitments to the electorate of democracy, openness, transparency and accountability. We have reintroduced reverse proportionality to all scrutiny committees and supported the appointment of chairs of these meetings drawn from those that are not part of the Alliance. We have also reduced the ability of Cabinet Members to take delegated decisions. Further proposed changes to the constitution set out on the agenda for today's meeting will continue our drive to greater openness and transparency.

### **Cabinet**

2. I am extremely proud of the way my Cabinet colleagues are getting to grips with the issues in each of their portfolios and the challenges and opportunities in each of their areas. It is important that we take our time to understand the details of the very many services the council provides so that we can make decisions about how we prioritise and plan to improve what we provide to the Island's community.

### **Covid**

3. The response to the Covid-19 pandemic has been a significant draw on the council's resources for the last eighteen months and will continue to have an impact for many years to come. The government has now eased its final restrictions on how we can live our lives which means today's Full Council meeting will be the first we have held in County Hall for many months. However, with the freedoms come responsibilities and we will encourage everyone to think about continuing, where appropriate, with all of the good behaviours that have helped in our response to the virus.  
I am very conscious about the long lasting impact of Covid-19 on the Island and the Alliance will make sure that recovery from Covid-19 is integral to everything we do.

### **Homeless**

4. I was humbled to attend the formal opening of Howard House on 7<sup>th</sup> July, the council's new assessment hub for homeless people. This new service is the culmination of joined up work across the council's property, planning and housing needs services to deliver a high quality facility for up to 17 homeless people. I wish to formally acknowledge the leadership of Councillor Clare Mosdell, who during her role as

Cabinet Member championed the need for £500,000 of council funds, and I know that was no easy feat, for the project supplemented by £300,000 of funding government. I am reassured that the council has applied the learning from the tragic death of Howard Derham in 2017 as the impetus and inspiration for this new service.

### **Education**

5. The council has received nearly £408,000 from the Department for Education (DfE) to provide healthy food and activities to free school meal eligible children during the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021 – the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) scheme.

Over the Easter holidays, 1,388 sessions of four hours were commissioned, and attendance was 85% of those eligible. In total some 352 children and young people benefitted from the HAF provision. It was also possible to offer surplus places for a fee to children not eligible for the scheme free of charge, 52 children made use of this offer. For the summer holidays, over 8,000 sessions have been commissioned and providers are currently being trained and inducted into the HAF programme ready for delivery in later July/August

### **Water sports/beaches**

6. I can report that marker buoys have now been reinstated at several Island beaches this summer to assist in protecting swimmers from anti-social behaviour on the water. Buoys and a launching lane have been installed at Colwell and Totland Bay, whilst a further sixteen buoys have been deployed off Bembridge, Yaverland, Sandown, Lake and Shanklin. Beach information signage has also been updated to reflect the changes and advise beach users about all aspects of the beach infrastructure and water safety

The Alliance want to improve the look and feel of our towns and coastal areas especially in the collection and management of litter. We can use the government's welcome back fund to address some of these issues. It will allow more frequent bin emptying where required and more litter picks over the summer period. However, we are very keen to develop a more sustainable approach as soon as possible.

### **Ryde Interchange**

7. The public consultation for the Ryde interchange 'Greener/cleaner', development proposal, is a really important process to help finalise the plans and designs for the scheme. I hope that as many people will get involved. The scheme is a significant green travel investment in one of the key Island's gateways and attracts over £10m of government funding.

### **Newport Harbour**

8. A twelve week major project to dredge Newport Harbour was completed at the end of June; this saw nearly 20,000m<sup>3</sup> of material removed and has ensured an improved and constant depth of the navigable channel.

### **Island Plan**

9. It is a particular aspiration of the Alliance Administration to accelerate the development and adoption of the Local Development Plan (Island Plan) and this will now be considered at July's Cabinet meeting, with an extended period of public consultation to follow. My Group is committed to this being an inclusive consultation

process, and to listening closely to the views of everyone about the proposals in the plan.

I am grateful that Councillor Fuller has been very active with staff in bringing these aspirations forward quickly, having already taken the time to arrange briefings for town and parish councils and councillors.

### **Small business growth**

10. The council has received formal confirmation of funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to progress its 'Innovation Wight project'. The funding will be used to refurbish a building in Northwood for a co-working and business incubation space. It will allow the development and delivery of a programme of business support for businesses looking to grow.

### **City of Culture**

11. Councillor Julie Jones-Evans has been proactive in reaching out to Southampton City Council to understand how the Isle of Wight can benefit from a successful bid by the City to be the national City of Culture in 2025. Her report to Cabinet in July reflects the changes to the timetable for expressing interests to government and the benefits the Island can gain especially by linking its marine and environmental offers along with its strong music heritage.

COUNCILLOR LORA PEACEY WILCOX

*Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships*

Contact Point: Councillor Lora Peacey Wilcox | Leader of the Council  
821000 | e-mail [lora.peacey-wilcox@iow.gov.uk](mailto:lora.peacey-wilcox@iow.gov.uk)