

## Michael Paler - Mayors Report

September 2021

Welcomed the Charity Bike Ride From Largs To East Cowes In Aid of Ellen MacArthur Cancer Trust, Piam Brown Ward And Teenage Cancer Trust. Well done to the brothers Nicholas And Matthew Earley back to East Cowes reception at Ellen MacArthur Cancer Trust centre. The brother raised £4500. Well done.

Attended the Isle of Wight Conservation Awards. This was a well attend event at the Town Hall with people from all parts of the Island.

Cowes Town Council. Project meeting.

Opening of Classic boat museum. This is a new showcase for East Cowes.

Attended Business Expo 2021. Good to support our local business taking part in the event.

Transport Forum Isle of Wight and Hampshire on Zoom

This was a daylong event to see the plans for the next 15 years. It was a very an informative meeting. Will circulate minutes of meeting when I receive them.

IWALC Workshop at Sandown

Isle of Wight Association of Local Councils  
Community Resilience Workshop

25 September 2021

East Cowes and Whippingham Covid Support Hub.

Coordinator Michael Paler

As we look back over the past 18 months we all started with no idea what was to come and we made it up as we went along. The Isle of Wight Council set up a volunteer hub for the island. I then contacted the volunteers to match them up with Shielded people that had been assigned to our hub. The one to one shielded and others who needed help worked well for us as this allowed them to go through the past 18 months with the same people. The request for help were sent straight out as soon as they were received from IOW Covid support. This was for medical prescriptions, Shopping and phone calls, We also set up a system with the local chemists for timed collections and deliveries There were also local shops who took on home deliveries which supported the community. There were 435 requests for help of the 1st phase of covid in one week. We covered every request each day thanks to the 68 local volunteers. We received support from so may firms local company's and even PPE from a firm in Lee on Solent. This was delivered by Rib on a Sunday morning with the help of the Cowes Harbour Master. I was asked if we

could take on the Whippingham ward due to no cover. We collected Meds from Ryde, Newport, Wootton and St Marys Hospital.

I decided to step down from the Town Council August 2020 as Covid had made this a full time task which needed continuity. Things changed day to day. Councils don't work this way and I was able to report back to the Council each month as to how covid was going. We had learned many things and the Community hubs zoom calls gave us information that helped to plan ahead.

The Isle of Wight Council passed on the next phase to Community Action. Most of the systems that we developed have worked well and are still in place. This stage was more about supporting people and families in need. This allowed money to help with utility bills and Food parcels were made available by money from the local council funds. This was due to people being furloughed or losing their jobs.

We also helped many families with sick children.

The next part of our journey was to get people to be vaccinated. We worked with East Cowes Medical centre and arranged to get everyone vaccinated by arranging transport to Westridge at Ryde. If the Medical centre had not filled all the places they would give me details to put on our social media. Best result 250 people booked in one hour. We also used the Optio Voluntary Car Service. Our volunteers have now taken part in Mental Health First Aid and working with Optio car service.

Looking ahead the volunteers that were part of this fantastic effort for their community have all come forward at each stage of the pandemic and will be remembered.

Some of the community made Scrubs, Face masks and children's art packs.

The time has now arrived for the East Cowes Town Council to take the community with them to build on the amazing community spirit evident during the pandemic and to enable them to enjoy some form of normality after the most dreadful period we have experienced since wartime.

Work has started on the East Cowes Community Hub and Library. This will be where we can signpost residents to get help from external organisations, charities and agencies. There will be a meeting room which will be available for community use as well as a flexible library/community area for groups and individuals to meet up and enjoy various activities, together with the library service. It will also house the administrative offices. The Council are hoping that it will truly become a vibrant, central hub for East Cowes residents. Also, on the agenda for the council to take forward is the leasing of the Jubilee recreation ground in York Avenue and the Victoria Grove play park and green areas from the IW Council.

The Council will soon be considering how best to develop the Jubilee Recreation ground and one idea is to create a sustainable garden. This would potentially, be the first garden of this type in the U.K. and could provide the local community with a place to meet and relax in a beautiful woodland setting. It will also provide an opportunity for the community to volunteer to look after the garden as part of the

NHS Social Prescribers programme and could include a sensory garden as part of that wellbeing programme.

The wellbeing of the community and making East Cowes a better place to live, work and play is always at the heart of the Council's aims. To this end we have recently taken the lease for the landward side of the Esplanade and are working to develop this into an attractive and enjoyable recreational area that the local community and visitors alike will find appealing. We are also supporting a local voluntary group who are working very hard to install Gabon's along the landslip area of the seafront, so that this too can be enjoyed.

A recent addition to our thriving Town Hall has been the installation of cinema equipment to develop a community cinema. We are hoping that this will encourage people back out into the community once more.

In an effort to raise the Council's profile and improve communication to residents we have launched a refreshed website, a Facebook page and a quarterly newsletter, which is delivered to every household in the town. The newsletter has been instrumental in helping us to recruit a team of volunteers who undertake litter picking, develop the community cinema and support the library. The council feel that this has been another method of encouraging people to get out and enjoy social interaction once more.

The Council are confident that the experience they have gained over the last twenty months has fully prepared them should the pandemic resurge. The pandemic brought out the very best in the East Cowes Community. Our voluntary support hub quickly had a bank of volunteers who were ready and willing to do whatever was required and they are happy to return if needed. We have tried and tested plans in place and have undertaken specialist training to deal with all future forms of support to the vulnerable in the community. All the services have worked together during this dreadful period to ensure the covid response worked well and I am confident that we will be able to provide a well-connected network to respond to whatever comes. My hope is that we will not need to bring these plans into action again.

Seaside and Coastal Regeneration Conference. Zoom

This was covering the UK. Report from the event will follow.

I have also attended the Alzheimers cafe, NHS Falls, prevention and awareness at the Town Hall. Listening cafe, These take part each week and are well attended.

## **Cllr Palin - October Report**

### **Teemill**

Myself, Cllr Reardon and Cllr Lake all attend a talking tour by the creator of Rapanui / Teemill at the end of last month, in the Albany Building. We were shown around the building, which includes a storage area but also production where the t-shirts are made, packaged and posted. We were shown how the process has progressed from mass screen printing to digital printing and how each order is custom made, they are not printed on mass but ready to order.

We also had a short talk on the circular economy, and It was explained that Teemill clothing can be returned in return for a discount on the next purchase, and remade into another product We all then made our own tshirts using the screen printing machine, with recycled ink and 4th/5th use tshirts.

More information is available here - <https://rapanuiclothing.com/our-story/>

### **Corporate Scrutiny Committee**

Like every month I attended Corporate Scrutiny Committee on Behalf of IWALC raising questions of the Isle of Wight Council Cabinet. This month I raised questions over the corporate plan in relation to engagement with the youth council and youth MP, ongoing bids for future funding, reducing the environmental impact of council-run facilities, the timeframe for a permanent working solution for the floating bridge, a review of protocol 16 in the constitution, and progress with the Island deal. I thanked the cabinet for the extended Ryde interchange consultation and consulting closely with residents and the Ryde town council. I also raised questions over the current floating bridge situation and called out the last conservative administration for not acting. (

<https://onthewight.com/floatingbridge-councillors-butt-heads-over-legal-action/>)

### **Barratt Homes - Saunders Way**

Over the last month I have been in contact with Barratt homes about an abandoned freezer that had rotting food inside. After speaking to their social media team, I am now in contact with their Southampton offices via email. I am pleased after 2 weeks of chasing, the freezer was cleared last Thursday and then removed the following day. Since then I have had residents contact me about more issues which I have begun chasing including the completion for the road, overgrowing brambles and litter.

### **Red Funnel**

This month I also attend a meeting and yard walk with Red Funnel talking about issues we have in the town and what they can do. I stressed the importance of getting the work with the new yard underway and was told early next year they would come back to the town council with a plan. I also spoke with them about the importance off accessibility and stressed that they work with Isle Access to ensure their full service is accessible. I once again made clear that vehicles should not be directed up old road and needs to be made clear to passenger. I suggested to red funnel they meet with residents in the town square semi regularly and face the difficult questions we all have, and they said they would take this on board, they have confirmed they will have a stall at the Christmas market. Finally we also spoke about the Christmas market, and I thanked them for letting the ECBA run the market from their carpark this year.

### **Draft Island Planning Strategy**

Last month myself, Diana Conyers (Chair of IWALC) and Shirley Smart (Former Indy Isle of Wight Councillor) met with the MP and Cllr Peter Spink as part of Corporate Scrutinies Task and Finish Group looking at the Island Plan. This gave us the opportunity to raise concerns with the plan but also highlight the areas we felt were important and welcomed.

### **IW Council Planning Committee**

On Tuesday I attended the Isle of Wight Council planning committee, as the Oil Drilling application was being heard. Whilst I was only observing this meeting, it was important to attend as if approved it would have had huge implications for East Cowes and Osborne, due to increased HGV traffic and the transportation of toxic chemicals through our town more regularly. I am pleased to say the committee unanimously rejected the application and said No to oil drilling.

I have since been in contact with the ward county councillor Suzie Ellis, both celebrating but also giving her my support if we need to write / speak to the Secretary of State for Energy to turn down any appeal. This is a cross party effort and hope the 6+ year campaign against oil drilling here has finally been won!

## **Cllr Reardon – October Report**

### **The future of high streets**

Four speakers gave us an insight into the factors which will impact and guide the future for our high streets.

#### **Matt Baker**

Matt from Rise associates explained that as 17,000 chains have disappeared the need for more independents is growing, this has been helped by the government levelling up fund but much more can be done.

Regeneration is needed as we move forward in a different way, focus is now on fundamentally different work/ life balances and community led ideas which bring forward an aspiration to reclaim your towns identity, boost civic pride and support small business by providing safe and inclusive areas for pop up and new start ups to grow.

These will be a frontline for memorable experiences and celebration of heritage.

#### **Ojay McDonald**

Was Covid a disruption or distraction?

Technology is driving high street change and creating retail evolution, he gave an example of a 9 year old called Ryan. Ryan is paid by YouTube and google play to stream him playing with toys he has 30 million followers and a net

worth of 112million dollars! Other factors to look at are climate change and global warming especially in town centres mainly built on concrete and asphalt which will heat up causing extremes.

We are however social creatures and towns can be a breeding ground for innovation and experiences if they are safe, green areas providing a clean environment which creates an exciting urban place that encourages inward investment.

We need to mix the old and new and rebuild a new dynamic town centre for mixed use, this has been led by the no longer needed commute for workers to other areas for employment. Suzanne Clarke

Women do 80% of shopping but are not actually visible on the high street, women's lives/ roles have changed and are more complex these days.

Women aged 18-25 don't identify on the high street at all for different reasons than older women, factors include exhaustion and divorce, single mothers need safe sociable spaces. Women are still doing 1950s roles but also working so online shopping seems the preference here, older women have found more freedom with the free bus pass but otherwise would need a car and good parking options to access the high street. Over 65 women often look after grandchildren as well as interest in hobbies like gardening, cooking and crafts this combined with not having husbands to look after at home makes them prime high street shoppers if the environment is right. Understanding women's preferences and building around them is key, daytime activities and lack of toilets are all areas to be researched women need to feel safe and catered for.

#### **David Preston -NABMA**

Markets are a major part of the history of our towns and there is a huge growth in this area, it promotes community, supports social and cultural interaction and creates an incubator for start ups that increase footfall within the town centre. The market is an anchor role that provides low cost and

low entry trading, research shows that in market towns 64% more people visit the surrounding shops with an average spend of £60.

Retail will only succeed when it is incorporated into a regeneration of the area around it, it becomes a place maker for community engagement for al fresco eating, food and drink festivals, Christmas events, meeting spaces, essential library facilities and free rehearsal space for music and drama performances but must be a central green space. Therefore we need to repurpose not new build, make a safe and unpolluted environment and research ways to attract women especially of all ages, a youth council and landlord forum may provide space for pop ups along with local councils using social media more for greater communication and engagement, also look at improving the night time economy of the area to combat loneliness and mental health with inclusive spaces not just focused around alcohol.

The 4 speakers were asked for one word to describe an achievable enhancement to town centres that encompass this research

### **SAFETY**

Ways to make people feel safe in the town centre whether that be removing traffic during daytime to night time area patrols.

### **PARTNERSHIPS**

Working together with local groups and stakeholders gives a more comprehensive overview of what's needed and desired.

### **Environment**

Green spaces that help to combat climate change, add flora and fauna and provide facilities (public loos, libraries, meeting places).

### **Markets**

Market places are central as a gathering space for community events and an influencer of possibilities to enhance trade and innovation.

## **SUMMARY**

Ideas for the town council to take forward

- 1-remove traffic as far as possible from town centre
- 2-create a green space (Phoenix yard)?
- 3-reinstate buses and other transport alternatives
- 4-re open toilets in public areas
- 5-create a space for pop ups (maybe the old library)?
- 6-promote Town hall/community hub for theatre & drama, cinema and music, library and meeting space.
- 7-market creation!
- 8-more planting, adopt the allotment to facilitate the local produce and planting theme.
- 9-support new business start ups especially sustainable and innovative.
- 10-promote and enhance the public spaces we already have, the esplanade should be a focus for a community place and if it can be linked with the town centre could create a desirable and profitable environment within which to work and live.

## **Cllr R Packham – October report**

On 30th September I attended the Environment Sustainability Forum Meeting by Microsoft teams. There were 3 presentation speakers, one on Sea grass and the others were about planting trees and the benefits

of having hedgerows. They said sea grass plants are supported by Carsburg and they have paid £200,000 for sea grass plants.

We have lost 50% of our hedgerows since the second World War and there are hedgerow regulations since 1997.

They did mention that the Sea Scouts at East Cowes have planted trees and there is a Wildlife Countryside Act since 1981.