

## Mayor's Annual Report

The Town Council has had a busy and productive year, undertaking a wide range of initiatives and activities.

### Town Office and Staff Changes

I would like to begin with our Town Office and staff.

At the end of 2025, we said goodbye to Debbie Faulkner, our Town Clerk/RFO, after many years of outstanding service. We also said farewell to Andrea Young, our Administrative Assistant.

Following a recruitment process, the Council appointed:

- **Mr Patrick Jolin** as Town Clerk
- **Mr Richard Shaul** as Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)

After nine years of dedicated service, our Deputy Town Clerk, **Kate**, has decided to retire. This led us to begin the process of recruiting her replacement, as well as filling the role previously held by Andrea.

During this process, we also created a new role of **Communications and Funding Manager**. I am pleased to announce that both positions have now been filled:

- **Mrs Tracy Jones** – Deputy Town Clerk
- **Ms Sarah Preston** – Communications and Funding Manager

### Precept 2026/27

Cowes Town Council has decided to keep the precept for the 2026/27 financial year largely the same as the previous year, in order to minimise the burden on taxpayers.

As a result, a Band D property in Cowes will see a **small decrease of £0.89** for 2026/27.

### Support for Flood Resilience

The Town Council has successfully secured grant funding to support residents in cleaning up after flooding incidents.

This funding has been awarded by **Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) Distribution** through its *Powering Communities to Net Zero Fund*. It will be used to purchase clean-up equipment and a storage unit. We are currently progressing the permissions required to locate the unit within the town.

### Cowes Youth Voice

The Town Council is committed to engaging with young people in Cowes to better understand how we can support them.

Two **Youth Voice** meetings have been held to gather feedback. The most recent meeting was attended by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, alongside:

- 16 students from Cowes Enterprise College
- A youth representative from the IW Biosphere Group
- The Youth Trust
- Together for Mission Zero
- Representatives from the Cowes and Northwood Place Plan

A wide range of ideas were discussed, and these are now under consideration by the Council.

### **Daisy Ring Bus**

Volunteer drivers for **Daisy Ring Bus C.I.C.** can now benefit from free parking in Cowes, thanks to the support of the **Northwood House Charitable Trust Co. Ltd.**

Volunteers are able to park at Park Road Car Park using a complimentary permit, supporting their work in transporting patients between the ferry and Southampton hospitals.

The Trust already provides free parking for NHS patients travelling to the mainland, and Cowes Town Council is pleased to administer this scheme on their behalf.

### **Grant Funding**

The Town Council continues to support local organisations through its annual grant funding programme.

Grants may be awarded for events, projects, activities or equipment that benefit the Cowes community. Recently supported organisations included:

- Isle of Wight Community Club
- Cowes Classics Day 2026
- Cowes Men's Shed
- Vectis Corps of Drums Marching Band
- Isle of Wight Literary Festival
- Friends of Northwood Cemetery
- Supporters of Cowes Library
- Association of Sail Training Organisations (ASTO)
- Angel Radio Isle of Wight
- Cowes Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society

More information and application forms can be found at:

[www.cowestowncouncil.org.uk](http://www.cowestowncouncil.org.uk)

## **Cowes Week 2026**

Preparations are well underway for **Cowes Week 2026**, which marks the **200th anniversary** of the regatta. We have shared feedback from last year with organisers, including requests for more provision for young people and families. The Town Council is also developing its own plans to support the event.

For the second year running, we will have a **gazebo on The Parade**, and we encourage residents and visitors to come along, speak with us, and share their views

## **High Street Improvements**

The Town Council has been working in partnership with:

- Isle of Wight Council's Regeneration Officer
- Cowes and Northwood Place Plan Group
- University of Southampton's Future Towns Innovation Hub

This collaboration is delivering a long-term programme of improvements to the High Street. Recent work includes:

- Installation of **Corten steel planters** (sourced locally from ISM Solutions)
- Planting by **Care in the Garden**
- Removal of the old BT phone box

Future plans include improvements to the area outside Sainsbury's, including new seating and additional planting.

## **The Parade Toilets Refurbishment**

The Town Council continues its programme of upgrading public conveniences. Following the refurbishment of the Medina Road toilets in 2024, work has now begun on **The Parade toilets**, which are currently closed while refurbishment is underway

**Closing Remarks** Finally, I would like to thank all councillors for their support over the past year, and to extend my gratitude to the residents of Cowes.

**Cllr Stuart Ellis**

Cowes Town Mayor