

Annual Report 2025 to Bembridge Parish Council

Twelve months ago, Isle of Wight Councillors voted to change the organisation of the Isle of Wight Council from a cabinet system to a committee system where a number of “service committees” will make decisions rather than a Leader and cabinet. That decision will only come into effect on 21st May of this year. Residents should not feel a difference to the day-to-day delivery of Council services but it should provide an opportunity for more collaborative working within the Council as cross-party committees will make key decisions rather than single party cabinets.

Island planning remains a key unresolved issue from 2023/24. The Island Planning Strategy was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate last year, after many years of negotiation locally, with a proposal to increase house building to 453 a year, up from an historic average of around 350. Unfortunately, last month the Planning Inspectorate based in Bristol rejected that plan and says that the Isle of Wight should be building 703 new homes a year. It has given the Council two options: amend the current plan accordingly or withdraw the plan and submit a new plan under the current government’s preferred “standard method” which would mean around 1,100 new homes a year (3 times our historic average). In my opinion, neither option is remotely acceptable. Even if we did propose 703 homes or more (and I am of the strong opinion that we should not), we simply do not have the builders, materials or infrastructure on the Island to deliver them. This is a very unfortunate example of remote, unelected decision-making trumping local democracy. Councillors will debate the issue at an emergency Isle of Wight Council meeting on 28th May.

Turning to more local issues, I am as frustrated as everyone else by the lack of progress that has been made on improving the surface and drainage on the junction between Station Road and Embankment Road, despite the best efforts of the Parish Council with my support as Councillor. The Isle of Wight Council seems to be saying that a proposal is approved and it is now over to Island Roads to deal with it but nothing has been done. This week, in my capacity as MP, I have requested an urgent meeting with the Council and Island Roads to get the work underway without further delay. I will report back to Parish Councillors as soon as I have news.

Finally, I wish to congratulate all returning Parish Councillors. As a Village we are lucky to have a well-run Parish Council with efficient clerking support. With so many of the same councillors returning after 1st May I feel confident that the Village remains in safe hands.

Cllr Joe Robertson

14th May 2025