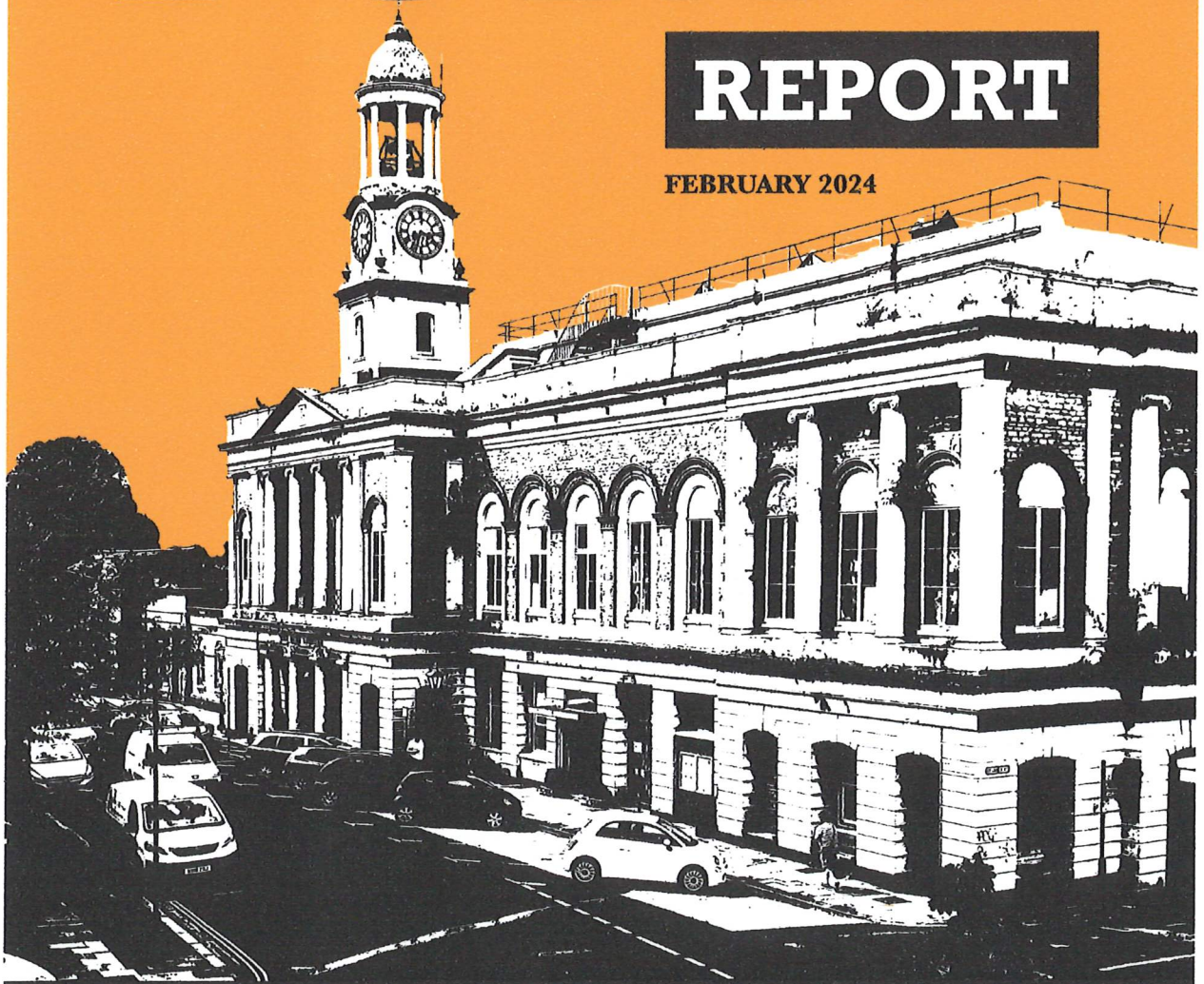


**THE**

# **FORTH**

**REPORT**

FEBRUARY 2024



**A Community Consultation on the  
Future of Ryde Town Hall & Theatre**

FORTH is proud to present what we consider *The People's Report*.  
The information found herein is informed and inspired by the  
thoughts, expertise, creativity and ingenuity of the residents  
of the Isle of Wight, and of Ryde in particular.

February 2024





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Please note that the terms '**Ryde Town Hall**' and '**Ryde Town Hall & Theatre**' are used interchangeably within this report and refer to the same building. 'Ryde Town Hall' is used more often simply for the sake of brevity.

## Ryde Town Hall & Theatre:

### Can You Imagine?

With longing and melancholy, author Philip Norman in his memoir *Babycham Night* recalls a childhood played out at the end of Ryde Pier. Published in 2003, we understand the book was launched at Ryde Town Hall & Theatre.

Informed by over 100 consultations with local people, 3 well-attended stakeholder meetings and 1,086 completed surveys, Friends of Ryde Town Hall can say with confidence that our community feels a similar collective longing and melancholy for a building many recall fondly but that today no one can inhabit or enjoy.

Over the past two years FORTH has asked the community to re-imagine Ryde Town Hall & Theatre, to picture it renewed, revitalised, reborn. Many have spoken and we have listened. And we're still listening.

What follows is a statement on how Islanders might repurpose Ryde Town Hall if given a chance. And why shouldn't they - we - be given a chance to affect a new future for Ryde Town Hall? Why shouldn't the ideas and desires of the people who will populate the building be given respectful and serious consideration? Not everyone's desires will be met, not all ideas will be possible, but we believe that the voices of local residents are a clarion call to be heeded.

Please, as you read what follows, open your minds and imagine.

#### **Friends of Ryde Town Hall Committee**

Zoë Barker, Anmarie Bowler, Simon Norris, Michael Ross & Paul Wells

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Ryde Town Hall is on Lind Street, PO33 2NL





# **We Are Here**



After the closure of Ryde Town Hall & Theatre in 2010, the Isle of Wight Council sold the building to a private individual, but today the building remains empty and unused.

In 2021, Ryde Town Council voted in favour of its purchase in principle, but it has become apparent that both the cost and liability would be too great for the Council to take on.

Ryde Town Council supported the formation of the Ryde Town Hall Trust in May 2023. The Trust is now the body responsible for negotiating the purchase of the building with the private owner.

## **Where Do We Go Next?**

## Part 1

# Introducing the Friends of Ryde Town Hall: The Story So Far

Established in the Winter of 2020/21 at the request of The Ryde Society and members of Ryde Town Council, FORTH is a resident-led advocacy organisation – an unincorporated constituted association – whose mission is to rally public support for returning Ryde Town Hall & Theatre to public use. The FORTH Committee maintains a growing database of Friends and enjoys an actively upbeat presence on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter).

## Significant Milestones in the Life of FORTH -

- A two-year 'Listening Tour' which resulted in consultations with over 100 individuals representing themselves and over 100 organisations.
- Meetings with Ryde Town Council's Town Hall Working Group prior to the establishment of the Ryde Town Hall Trust. FORTH introduced the Working Group to a significant individual who expressed serious interest in providing seed funding to enable the Trust to buy the Town Hall from the current owner.
- Hosted 3 stakeholder meetings in Ryde at The Star Coffee & Ale House, Ryde Library and Department. During these 2-hour sessions FORTH made a presentation, then lead a discussion and took questions from local arts, cultural and business leaders.
- Organised a 'town tidy up' that saw 40+ volunteers join us outside Ryde Town Hall and collect over 60 bags of rubbish from around the town.



'Big Help Out' Town Tidy Up - 8 May 2023

Photo: Tim Bull



- Meeting with Duncan Wilson CBE, Chief Executive of Historic England to discuss the Town Hall and future funding.
- Attended grant funding workshops including those organised by Portsmouth Creates and another hosted at Aspire Ryde.
- Visited Shanklin Theatre and developed an excellent relationship with its leadership team in an effort to understand their successful not-for-profit operation. They have recently revealed exciting plans to expand their reach by transforming a nearby building into the Shanklin Performing Arts Centre.
- Attended Creative Island (formerly 'Island Collection') networking events where we met local people keen to be involved in the redevelopment of Ryde Town Hall.
- Took part in a volunteer fair organised by Community Action IOW, hosted by Department in Ryde.
- Organised a month of small scale fundraising at The Star Coffee & Ale House.
- Researched, designed and distributed a survey inviting the local community to share their views on the future of the Town Hall.
- In consultation with FORTH, the Georgian Group placed Ryde Town Hall on their Top Ten Heritage at Risk List 2023.



## THE GEORGIAN GROUP'S 2023 TOP 10 HERITAGE AT RISK LIST REVEALED

Ryde Town Hall and Theatre, Ryde, Isle of Wight PO33 2NL


Ryde Town Hall and Theatre, a grade II-listed building, was designed by James Sanderson of London in a neoclassical style and built in 1830. The clock tower and an additional story on the east wing were added in 1869. The building opened as a market hall in 1831 and has a rich history of holding lavish balls, concerts, and royal visits. The Town Hall was badly damaged in a major fire in 1933 but was subsequently restored and served as the headquarters of Ryde Borough Council for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the first floor of the building converted to a theatre in 1991 and later a music venue. Three years after the closure of the venue in 2010, the building was sold to a developer but, with nothing done to it since, it has fallen victim to vandalism and neglect.




The Georgian Group's 'Top 10 Heritage at Risk List' - published 13 December 2023  
[www.georgiangroup.org.uk](http://www.georgiangroup.org.uk)




# Introducing the Friends of Ryde Town Hall Continued: The Story in Numbers



**1267**  
Individuals signed up to the Friends database




**949**  
Followers and Friends on Social Media (Facebook and X)



**1086**  
Ryde Town Hall Survey responses from members of the public




**146**  
Meetings and events attended by members of the FORTH Committee




**100+**  
Local organisations engaged in the Town Hall conversation



**70**  
Organisations attended one of our 3 stakeholder meetings



**30**  
Organisations put on record how they would make regular use of a restored Town Hall



**45**  
Individuals joined our Ryde town tidy up (collecting 60 bags of rubbish)



**1**  
Highly engaged community keen to save an important asset

## The Ryde Town Hall Trust:

### What the Community Reasonably Expects

A Working Group of Ryde Town Councillors (Simon Cooke, Phil Jordan and Richard May) with Ryde Society Chair Helen Keogan established the Ryde Town Hall Trust in May 2023.

The Trustees are Simon Cooke (Chair), Helen Keogan, James Longford and Dominic Minghella. The Trust seeks first and foremost to purchase the Town Hall from the current private owner and we support them in that continuing effort.

#### The local community requires the Ryde Town Hall Trust to:

**Communicate** regularly with Ryde residents regarding on-going developments with the Ryde Town Hall project.

**Embrace** the vast and diverse expertise within our community and make the Ryde Town Hall project a superior example of real, substantive and on-going community engagement.

**Be transparent.** Some public funds are being used to research and develop the Town Hall project so transparency is not only vital to the project's success but a legal requirement.

**Understand** that most Ryde residents have realistic expectations regarding the Town Hall project. As a community, we accept that it is complicated and a change of fortunes for the building must take time.

**Recognise** that local business people, leaders of artistic, cultural and charitable bodies, and their constituents, will accept many different possible outcomes for Ryde Town Hall if there is community consultation throughout the process.

**Utilise** The FORTH Report to guide and inspire their efforts.

**Partner** with FORTH to build a stronger, engaged and dynamic union for the good of this enormous but vital project.

**“The importance of active and visible intervention to save, revive and actively and positively utilise Ryde’s critical cultural capital cannot be overstated.”**

*- Ryde Place Plan, p.79*



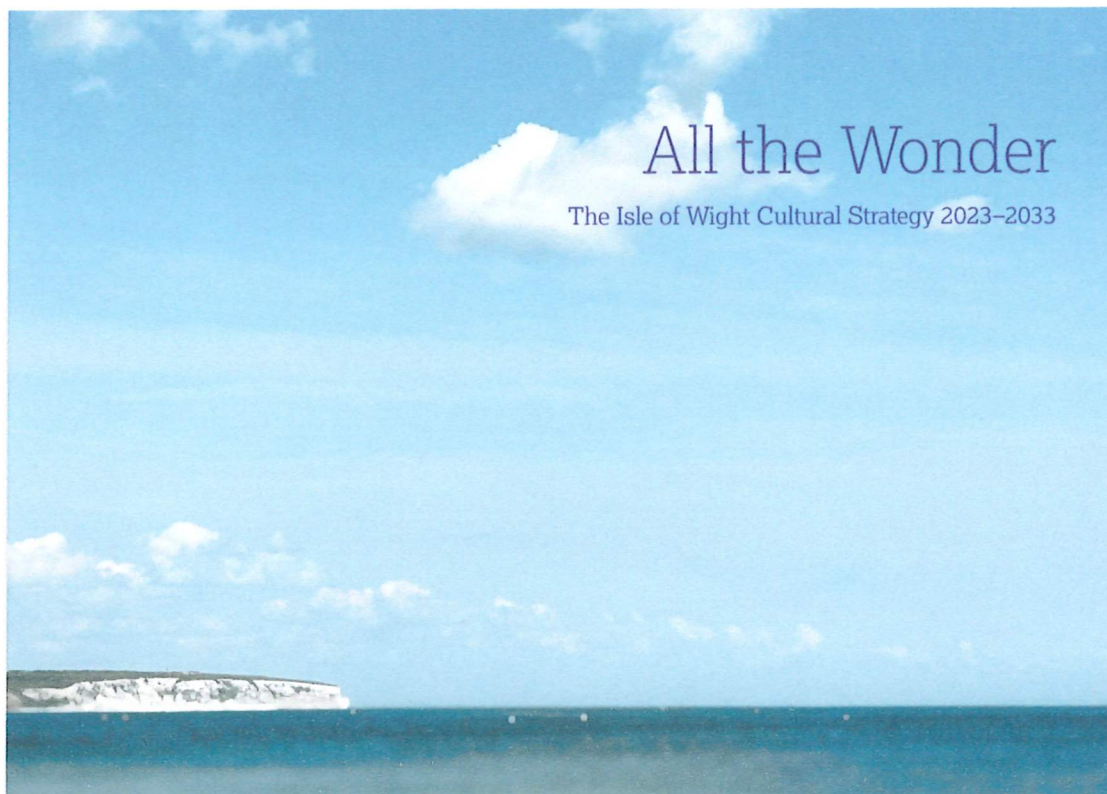
## **Challenging but Not Impossible:** **We've Got the Wind at Our Backs**

While redeveloping a building like Ryde Town Hall will not come without its challenges, it's clear that we have never been in a better position to make it happen:

- The Island currently enjoys Arts Council England Priority Place Status. ACE and other national grant funders are well aware of Ryde Town Hall and the issues it must overcome. There seems to be a strong desire among funders to provide assistance if we, as a community, work together effectively.
- FORTH has and will continue to support and organise the community engagement required by national grant funders, growing a groundswell of support and increasing the project's chances for success.
- The Ryde Town Hall Trust was registered with the Charity Commission on 22 May 2023 (CIO, Charity Number 1203172). Its primary aim is to secure the purchase of the Town Hall.
- We understand that the Town Hall's private owner is willing to sell. A significant individual has expressed interest in providing the Ryde Town Hall Trust with the seed funding required to purchase it.
- We understand that Ryde Town Councillor Phil Jordan enjoys an excellent relationship with the Town Hall's owner which should smooth the way for the Trust to purchase the building.
- The High Street Heritage Action Zone (HAZ), in which Ryde Town Hall is included, is a four year programme funded by Historic England, Ryde Town Council and IOW Council with the aim of regenerating Ryde town centre.
- The Government recently announced that Ryde will receive £20 million in Levelling Up Funding, spread over a period of 10 years, to help regenerate the town centre and improve public safety. We understand that the Town Hall project is likely to be a top priority.
- Ryde Town Council has commissioned The Goddard Partnership to produce a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) & Condition Report for Ryde Town Hall. At the time of going to press we understand they are in draft form but final versions will be made available to the public in due course.



- Local projects like Department in Ryde, Network Ryde/St Thomas's Church, Shanklin Theatre/Shanklin Performing Arts Centre and Sandown Town Hall are leading by example. Each has found success by meeting a need, engaging their community and articulating a clear vision that resulted in funding.
- The University of Portsmouth and Ryde Town Council have signed a Memorandum of Understanding, a partnership agreement that covers areas of mutual interest such as addressing educational inequalities and supporting economic growth in the region.
- The Isle of Wight is a designated UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, a recognition of the Island's special ecological and cultural diversity. Biosphere Reserves may attract funding for projects that demonstrate commitment to conservation and sustainable development.
- The Isle of Wight Cultural Strategy 2023-2033, developed by Creative Island, sets out a plan to help the Island regenerate and transform over the next ten years. Having a Cultural Strategy in place dramatically increases the likelihood of securing new funding from Arts Council England, Historic England and other trusts and foundations.
- The number of completed Town Hall surveys (1000+) demonstrates how invested residents are in the fate of this community-defining building.



'All The Wonder' - Isle of Wight Cultural Strategy 2023 - 2033 (Creative Island)

## **Bricks, Mortar and Values:**

### **The Community's Guiding Principles**

We were reminded by an experienced local leader that returning an old building to public use would take more than a well-researched wish list. We needed a set of simple but essential principles, gleaned from the people the building would serve, to light our way before, during and after it was returned to public use. FORTH, informed by our community, believes those values, those guiding principles are as follows:

- While we as a community worry that Ryde may be in danger of 'taking on too much,' we nonetheless feel that it is shameful for local assets to sit empty, unused, decaying and depreciating.
- Those managing local projects should draw on the experience, skills and expertise of local people and keep residents informed and engaged.
- Pride in Ryde's artistic output ensures residents genuinely look forward to supporting events and spaces that showcase local creatives.
- We long for our young people to embrace that which is quintessentially *Isle of Wight*, while seeking effective ways to introduce them to a vast world beyond the Island.
- The people of Ryde are keen to implement green initiatives.
- Celebrating our demographics enables us as a community to see the sense in establishing, promoting and supporting opportunities for multi-generational fellowship.
- We urge local initiatives to find clever, engaging and financially sustainable ways to cater to locals and visitors alike.

## Part 2

### The Vision:

**While FORTH and the residents who helped inform this Report understand that not all the ideas described here can be implemented, we believe that everything that follows should be *on the table for serious consideration.***



Graphics courtesy of Ryde Town Hall Feasibility Study & Business Case - July 2021



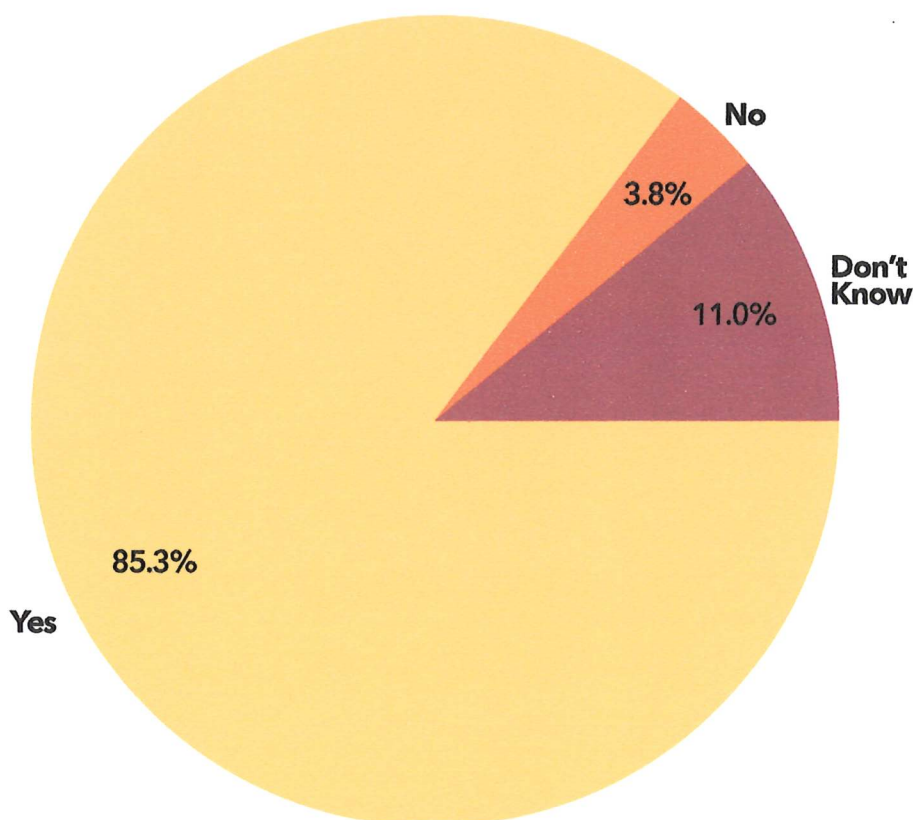
## Sensible, Supportable, Sustainable:

### Ryde's 'Indoor Town Square'

There are countless ways in which Ryde Town Hall could be redeveloped and FORTH remains fiercely open-minded about what these might be. But the *best* ways are surely those supported by the residents of Ryde, the people who will utilise the building most often, giving it life, longevity and purpose. If we are able to grow, support and market a cultural arts centre worthy of local people, this same cultural arts centre will surely draw in visitors from further afield.

There are many examples of communities across the country who have transformed disused buildings into compelling, mixed-use cultural arts hubs that support local endeavours *and* attract national/international art, performance, events, workshops and conferences. A tried-and-tested economic model, a vibrant cultural arts hub stimulates the footfall that makes for a successful high street.

The Ryde Town Hall Survey asked respondents if they were likely to make use of other amenities in Ryde town centre when coming to events at a re-opened Town Hall. The response was overwhelmingly positive with 85.3% answering 'Yes.' Perhaps even more notable, only 3.8% said 'No.' This makes a compelling case for the potential economic benefits of a re-opened Town Hall.



*Is it likely you would make use of other amenities in Ryde town centre when coming to events at a re-opened Town Hall? (eg, pub, restaurant, shop)*

## Performance Space:

In a recent conversation with Island screenwriter and producer Dominic Minghella, he recalled, as a child, watching his brother Anthony playing a gig on stage at Ryde Town Hall. Apparently the award-winning film maker wanted to be a 'rock star' in the early days. Dominic remembered himself and all his siblings performing regularly at the Town Hall's Isle of Wight music festival competitions. His sister Edana went on to become a professional jazz singer and many members of the Minghella family are professionals in the world of entertainment. The Town Hall was their *first* stage and remains important to the Minghellas, as it does for countless families in Ryde.

But even without the benefit of this major performance venue Ryde is blessed with many performing arts organisations that boast local, national and international followings (including two National Portfolio Organisations). These organisations would be in a position to expand their (paying) audiences if a large, well-equipped performance space were available to them locally. The Town Hall auditorium can seat up to 500 making it one of the largest indoor performance spaces on the Isle of Wight. It would be an incredible asset for the whole Island.

Residents have expressed the desire to see the Town Hall serve as a showcase for local artistic output. By providing a place where Islanders can regularly perform, we have the opportunity to brand and market the new space, enticing paying crowds that will help fund the building's operation. The particular output of Ryde's carnival and theatre companies, street performers and bands could be a compelling calling card capable of breathing immediate life into the building.

**"The outstanding quality of Ryde's ecology, arts pedigree and built heritage is the raw material for enterprise. As assets for a year-round visitor economy, as a priority pathway for national and regional investment in the emerging green economy, as opportunities for new creative industry, as 'pull' for new business location, and as a source of new specialist training and skills development, these natural and cultural resources have the power to build sustainability."**

*- Ryde Place Plan, p.63*



At a FORTH stakeholder meeting in 2023, a local musician made a persuasive case for nationally broadcast events. Imagine, for example:

## BBC Radio Presents, Live from Ryde Town Hall on the Isle of Wight [insert musical performance]

Picture the Isle of Wight Symphony Orchestra, Vectis Brass Band, RAW Samba, performances from our own Harp Festival or unplugged gigs courtesy of Isle of Wight Festival artists. This kind of content could be of interest to broadcasters both local and national. The Isle of Wight Festival in fact provides us with an excellent example, as it is broadcast on Sky Arts each year.

Further in favour of this point, Arts Council England recently announced funding for grass roots music development. (See *Arts Council England, £5 million Boost to Grass Roots Music, 13 Nov 2023*). The confluence of a vibrant local music scene, national media content needs and new funding streams, along with local expertise from organisations like Platform One and the Isle of Wight Festival, makes our community perfectly placed to build, grow, market and support an inviting and diversely-programmed performance space inside the Town Hall.



FORTH Committee Visit to Trowbridge Town Hall - 4 April 2022



## Exhibition Space:

The phrase 'if you build it they will come' is apt when considering a state-of-the-art exhibition space inside Ryde Town Hall; a place for local and national artists to show their work. It's clear from the many conversations we've had with local people that the Island lacks sufficient exhibition space to support artists keen to promote and sell their work. Gallery space in the Town Hall would be much in demand and provide a regular income for the building.

FORTH has identified an excellent example of a small but state-of-the-art exhibition space that showcases local artists while also attracting national and international work; that of The ARC in Winchester. The space that The ARC has developed, while intimate, provides museum quality lighting, temperature control and proper security, allowing them to host major works from national museums and collections.

The ARC showcases local creatives while also hosting work by nationally prominent artists. For example, The Hayward Gallery Touring Arm has recently lent The ARC prints of major works by Georgia O'Keeffe and later this year Crafts Council will be facilitating an installation by Grayson Perry. The ARC's ethos makes for a rich mix of visual art, a bustling exhibition space that welcomes locals and visitors alike, and has become a place where young and old consider the work of their neighbours alongside that which graces the walls of major galleries.

A restored Ryde Town Hall could become a member of the Touring Exhibitions Group (TEG). Its professional membership represents galleries, museums, libraries and art/science centres of all sizes. As well as gaining access to a wide range of nationally touring exhibitions, TEG also gives members the opportunity to have their own installations picked up and toured around the country by other exhibiting bodies.

Importantly, the *Isle of Wight Cultural Strategy 2023-2033* as part of its set of goals urges Island leaders - cultural, political and business - to "Develop partnerships including touring relationships for arts and heritage." (p.14)

Our local community - artists and audiences - are yearning for exactly this; a place that showcases local art and heritage, as well as effectively partnering with others and creating the appropriate infrastructure to attract art and heritage from further afield. A revitalised Town Hall should no doubt be a place that regularly hosts touring exhibitions *and* the work of local creatives.

## Space for the Small but Mighty:

Small but highly effective community groups are the unsung heroes of any thriving community. From sports clubs to historical societies, these people-powered organisations often punch well above their weight. Inside a renewed Town Hall, FORTH and our community are eager to support a coalition of small-scale groups that promote multi-generational interaction, better health and well-being, and increased intellectual and physical stimulation.

For example, in November 2023 Island-based creative mental health charity Independent Arts started a multi-generational chess club, funded by the National Lottery. This is an example of the type of useful, ingenious local endeavour that could grow, enliven and in some small part financially support a redeveloped Town Hall.

To date, FORTH has compiled a list of thirty local groups and organisations who have put on record how they would seek to make regular use of a restored Town Hall, among them Ryde Film Club, RAW Samba, Rainbow Island, Theatretrain and VIVA Carnival Club. (See Appendix 3 for the complete list). We anticipate many more to come.

With the recent success of teenage sensation Luke Littler, a young man from a small community, darts is another example of an indoor sport that brings young and old together, enabling many to enjoy an easily-organised weekly activity in a shared space. This is *only* an example of what is possible when seeking to use a community asset to promote well-being, but examples like this are more important than ever:

**“Recently the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared loneliness to be a pressing global health threat, with the US Surgeon General saying its mortality effects are equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. In older adults, loneliness is associated with 50% increased risk of developing dementia and a 30% risk of incident coronary artery disease or stroke.**

**But it also blights the lives of young people. Between 5% of young adolescents are lonely ... Loneliness is an under-appreciated public health threat.”**

- *The Guardian*, 16 Nov 2023

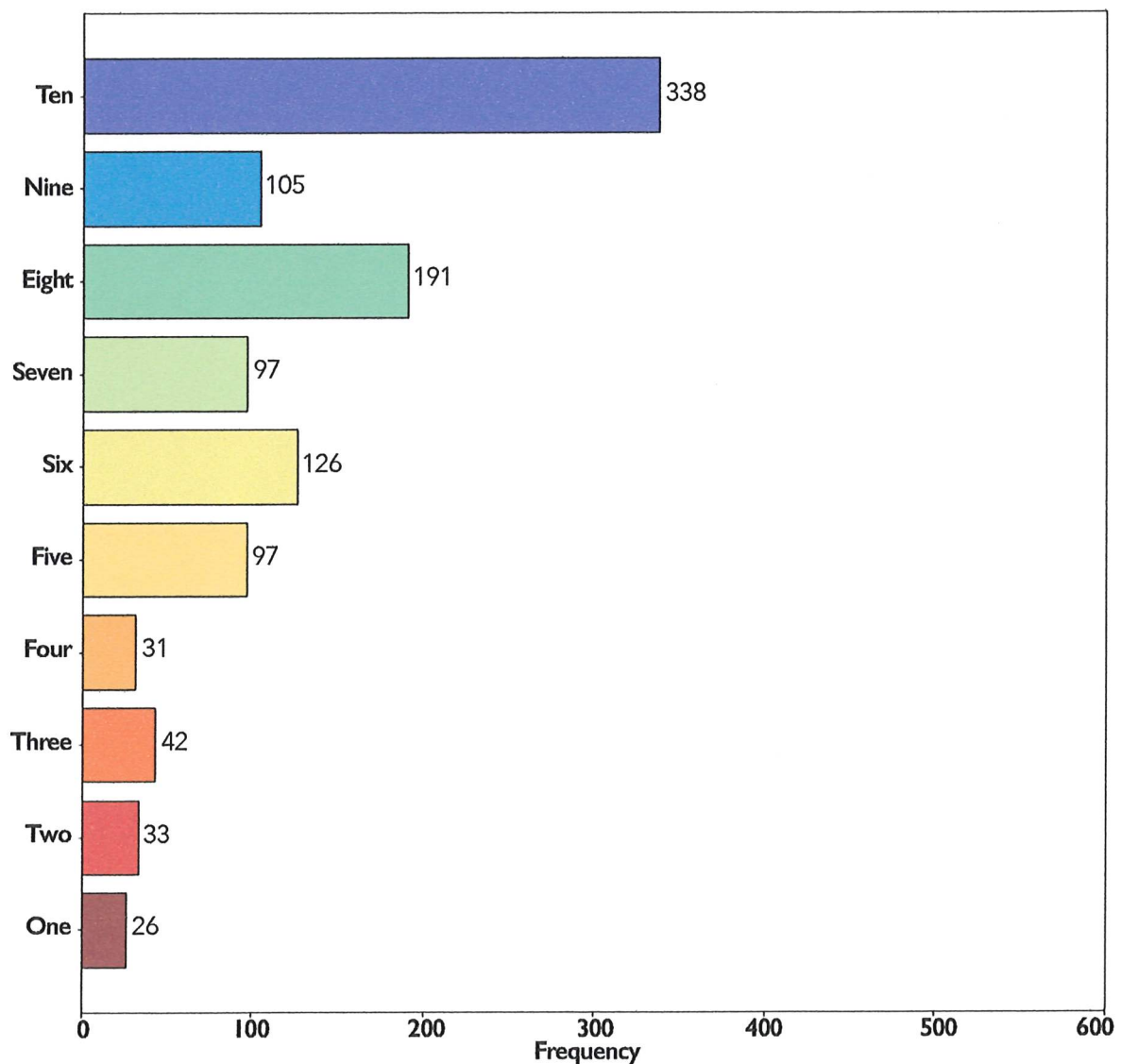
*WHO Declares Loneliness a Global Public Health Concern*



FORTH's 'Listening Tour' made it clear that our community longs for a flexible gathering space - an 'Indoor Town Square' - where, among other things, small but mighty people-powered groups can convene, interact and grow their numbers in an effort to further their groups' passions, teach, learn, laugh, connect and quite naturally and effectively combat the scourge of loneliness.

When the Town Hall Survey asked respondents about this particular issue, many saw the potential in a restored Town Hall to help tackle social isolation and improve well-being:

**How important is it to you that a renewed Town Hall address issues around physical and mental well-being, loneliness and isolation?**



■ On this scale 'Ten' denotes most important and 'One' denotes least important.

Whether chess, darts, table tennis (and the Island boasts some passionate and talented league players), children's sports led by groups including our local branch of Football Fun Factory, badminton, Pilates, seated yoga, Tai Chi or a multitude of other movement activities, the large auditorium in the Town Hall, while supporting live performances throughout the year, should also be a practical, flexible space for the work and play of countless small-scale big-impact groups, societies and organisations.

A multitude of smaller spaces throughout the building will also play a crucial role in creating an adaptable building that can easily meet the changing needs of the community.

Undoubtedly sewing, knitting, crafting, singing, reading, historical and many other groups could make Ryde Town Hall a place where they too promote fellowship and multi-generational understanding around a shared passion.

Small-scale big-impact groups in Ryde realise they will have to help fund a refurbished Ryde Town Hall. They are keenly aware that using an 'Indoor Town Square' will require them to pay affordable daily, weekly or monthly rates. Anecdotal evidence indicates such groups have become well-versed in fundraising and eagerly embrace the programming and financial benefits of partnering with others.



Lind Street and Ryde Town Hall during Ryde Pride - July 2022



## **Space to Live and Work:**

The idea of creating flexible office spaces in a redeveloped Town Hall is frequently mooted. Northwood House in Cowes provides an excellent example. At the time of going to press, each office space there achieves from £350 to £450 per month for the Northwood House coffers. The first office space in Ryde Town Hall might be taken up by the Isle of Wight Festival, which could act as a catalyst; piquing the interest of other office-based business owners.

While the FORTH Ryde Town Hall Survey showed relatively low overall interest in office space/hot desks, interest was highest amongst those aged 35 to 54. We would therefore suggest further research targeted at this age bracket to better ascertain the level of demand for new office spaces in central Ryde.

Living space is in short supply across the Island. Based on a multitude of conversations with locals, FORTH and the community would support some areas of the Town Hall being converted to affordable but well-appointed studio flats *if* they were designed to provide the Town Hall with an income. These accessible small homes could be available to anyone, but because of the hustle and bustle of the building might primarily appeal to young people; young people we as a community must support, attract and encourage to stay. This housing could be governed as a social enterprise project, built with grant funding, becoming both self-supporting and providing a regular income for the Town Hall.

Importantly it seems the 10-year £20 million endowment-style Levelling Up Funding recently awarded to Ryde could support town centre housing.

A limited number of hospitality and retail businesses may be interested in letting space in a redeveloped Ryde Town Hall. FORTH feels strongly that *local* entrepreneurs must have right of first refusal if such spaces are planned. It's important that any commercial enterprise within the Hall *complements* Ryde High Street rather than detracts from it. Above all, Ryde must maintain its reputation as a town enlivened by *independent* shops, cafes, bars and pubs.

**The Town Hall and the High Street should develop as an exciting, cooperative and mutually-beneficial partnership.**

## **'Skills Spinning' Space:**

### **A Team that Earns, Learns & Leads**

FORTH anticipates the need for at least three paid positions working together under the 'Indoor Town Square' model outlined here; they include an Artistic Director, a House Manager and a Commercial Manager.

FORTH would like to see a bursary established to support a Ryde Town Hall & Theatre Artistic Director. This person would receive a stipend to shape the creative programming in the building, provide an overall vision, serve as a spokesperson and in time help to mentor a successor.

The Artistic Director would work closely with a House Manager whose job could come with on-site accommodation. In addition to understanding all aspects of how Ryde Town Hall functions as a building, the House Manager would work with a team of Front of House volunteers. These volunteers would have the opportunity to serve as Town Hall stewards. We've already had expressions of interest from the local community - 81 Ryde Town Hall Survey respondents said they would like to volunteer their services. Further, Shanklin Theatre and Aspire Ryde, both boasting excellent volunteer corps, have offered to advise us on setting up an effective volunteer structure.

Informed by surveys and consultations, it seems many are keen to see more work experience and/or apprenticeship opportunities. Brave Island, Platform One, The Island VI Form College and others could conceivably utilise the Town Hall operation to create new schemes that provide young people with real-world experience, opening doors for them in future. Further, in conjunction with the University of Portsmouth or other educational institutions, Ryde Town Hall could serve as a satellite education space, bringing new opportunities directly to our young people's doors.

Finally, alongside an Artistic Director and House Manager, we see a need for a Commercial Manager; a person who ensures that spaces inside the building are perpetually let at daily, weekly, monthly and yearly rates. From small knitting groups to multi-day conferences, the Commercial Manager would passionately market the building locally and nationally, guaranteeing both an income and a lively inviting atmosphere. Northwood House in Cowes staffs a similar position.

We suggest that all of these positions could at the outset be filled by talented Islanders.



## Green Sky Thinking: Future Proofing the Project

The Town Hall's roof could potentially be the building's most valuable asset. There is both funding and technology available to unlock its potential for saving money and helping the planet. A well-managed roof space can produce solar power, provide insulation and capture rain water. For example:

**"Flatter roofs, of which there are many on factories, warehouses, schools and other buildings [including Ryde Town Hall's western extension] can be used to produce greener energy.**

**The simplest of these is lightweight clinker planted with sedum - succulent plants with fleshy leaves and flat nectar-rich flower heads. The extra depth of plants and clinker saves energy by insulating the building in Summer and Winter. It also retains rain water, reducing risk of flash flooding."**

- *The Guardian*, 22 Dec 2023

*Britain's Roofs Can be a Huge Resource for Solar Energy*

In a conversation with Jo Ridley from Wilder Wight Communities (a partnership project between Southern Co-op and Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust), we discussed possibilities for supporting our bee population from the Town Hall's roof.

Further, Nora Aridi, a Landscape Architect and Urbanist, who champions the intriguing notion of *Splaces* provided FORTH with exciting preliminary guidance. *Splaces* are public realm spaces situated around or beside the functional places in a city or town. Whether neglected corners or hidden/ignored concrete surfaces, Nora sees potential for greening and rejuvenation where others see decay. In an effort to make the most of all space the Town Hall has to offer, indoors and out, a local expert like Nora Aridi is a valuable resource.

Importantly, the Isle of Wight is a designated UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, a recognition of the Island's special ecological and cultural diversity. Biosphere Reserves may attract funding for projects that demonstrate commitment to conservation and sustainable development.

Ryde residents are keen to see the Town Hall project demonstrate a commitment to conservation and sustainability.

## Space for Dialogue: Thanks and Collaboration

The examples and ideas provided within this report are *suggestions*. Neither FORTH nor our local community are wedded to any one of them in isolation. But we have illustrated with colour and imagination that which is possible and look forward to the 'collaborative spin-off' ideas we hope this report inspires.

As we go about our work, FORTH finds our fellow residents to be engaged, realistic and insightful. They have not dared ask for the impossible, but instead cautiously imagine a building that is a flexible gathering place where they can socialise, learn, create, perform, work and collaborate. The community seems to understand instinctively that they must commit to this 'Indoor Town Square' if the Town Hall project is to succeed and thrive.

We would like to acknowledge both the Ryde Place Plan and The Isle of Wight Cultural Strategy 2023-2033; these highly informative and inspiring documents have provided FORTH with sage guidance.

We thank all the people of Ryde and the Isle of Wight who provided the vision for this report. FORTH feels grateful for your expertise, patience, passion and realism.



'Word Cloud' illustrating the most commonly used words in the comments sections of the Ryde Town Hall Survey



## Part 3

### THE RYDE TOWN HALL SURVEY:

#### Statistics and Analysis

FORTH launched the Ryde Town Hall public survey on 25 June 2023.  
The survey closed on 1 October 2023.

It was made available both on-line and in paper form and publicised on social media and in the local press.

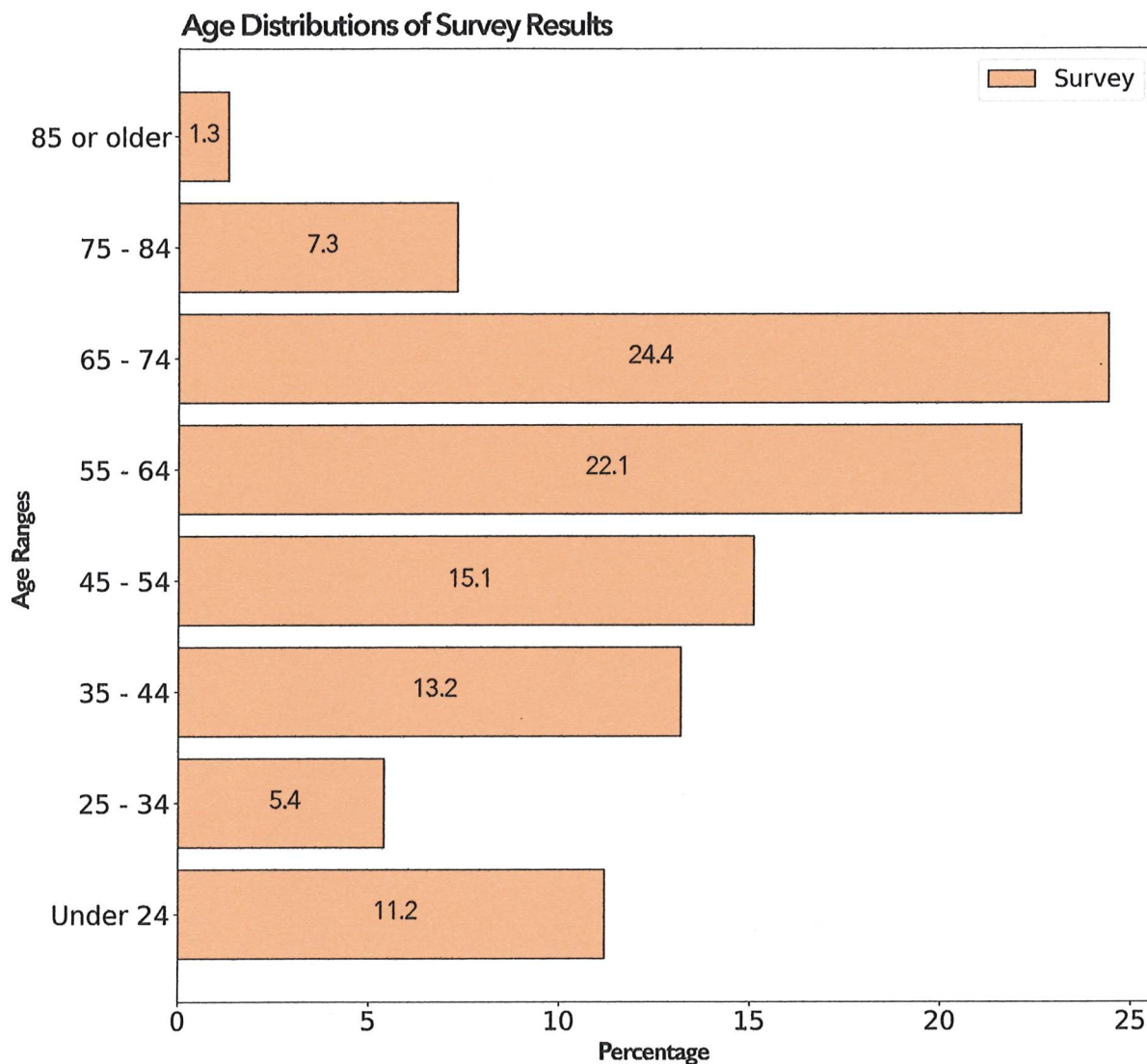
A total of 1,086 responses was recorded with the great majority of those coming from people living in Ryde and its environs.



Graphic courtesy of Ryde Town Hall Feasibility Study & Business Case - July 2021

## Demographic Breakdown of Survey Responses:

■ It's clear that the greatest number of responses came from the (65-74) and (55-64) age brackets. The lowest came from those aged 85+ and in the (25-34) age bracket.



■ The fact that the greatest response came from the (55-74) age range is perhaps not surprising. These are people who are close to or have reached retirement age. At this period of life many choose to invest their time and energies in their local community. Research carried out by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) in 2023 identified that people aged between 65-74 had the highest level of volunteering across all age groups in the UK.



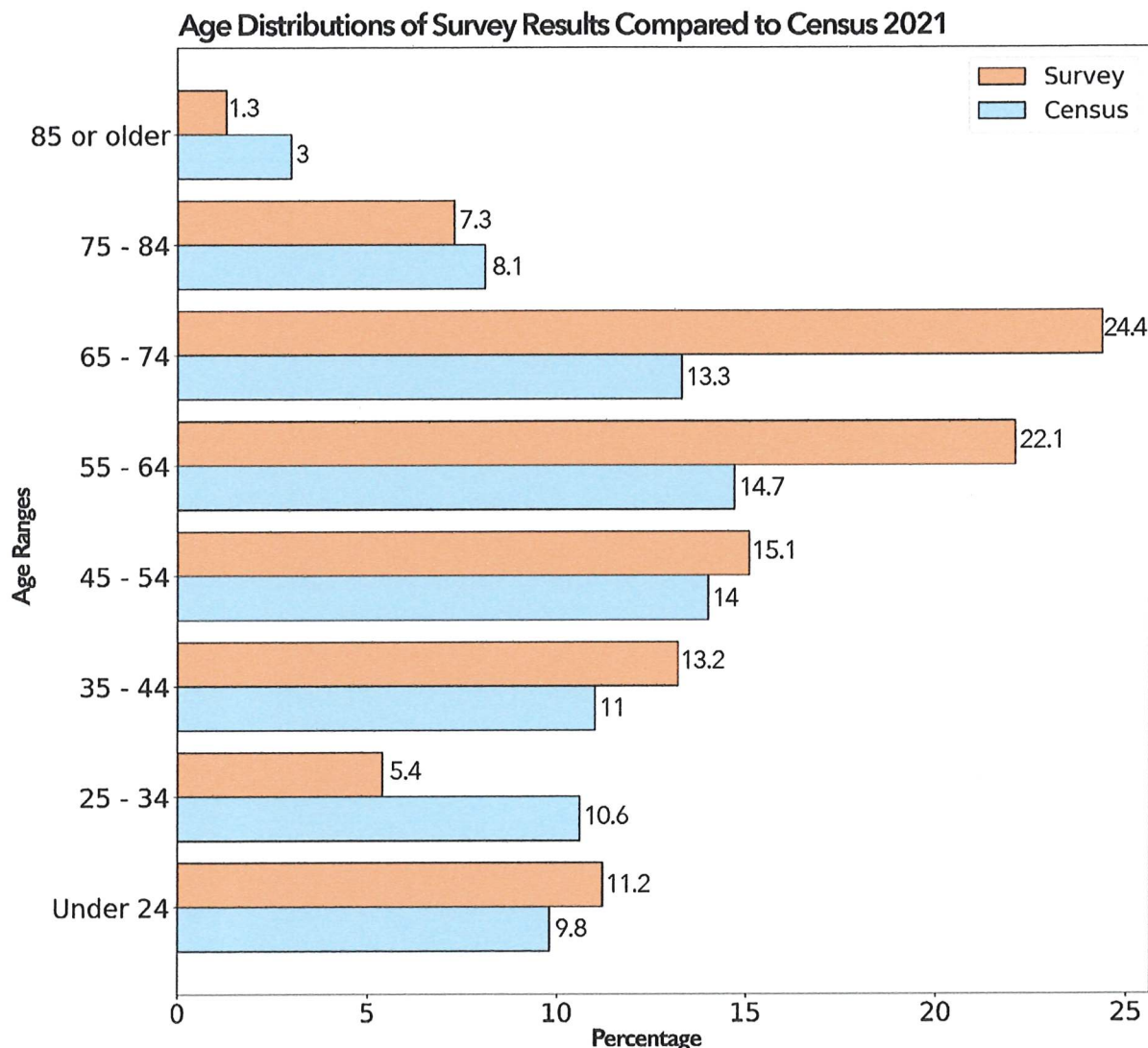
- The response received from the (25-34) age bracket is relatively low. Again, perhaps this isn't too surprising as young adults may be more likely to be prioritising a career, earning money and/or starting a family, so they may feel less inclined to invest time in their local community. The NCVO research showed that this age bracket had the lowest levels of volunteering in the UK.
- It's important to note that many older Islanders have an emotional connection with Ryde Town Hall. FORTH has spoken to countless locals who have shared huge appreciation for a building that once formed a significant backdrop to their daily lives. Many have childhood memories of Town Hall events. By contrast, a local 25 year old, who has probably never known the building to be open, is likely to feel little or no connection with the Town Hall so may feel less inclined to express an opinion on the building's fate. This underlines the importance of returning this building to public use - there are already so many young people who have not enjoyed its benefits.



'Re:Box' - A re-purposed phone box opposite Ryde Town Hall now adapted for art installations. Seen here marking the Island's Dark Skies Festival - February 2023

## Comparing the Age Distribution of Responses with the Age Groups who Actually Live in Ryde / the Ryde Area:

These figures are sourced from Census 2021.



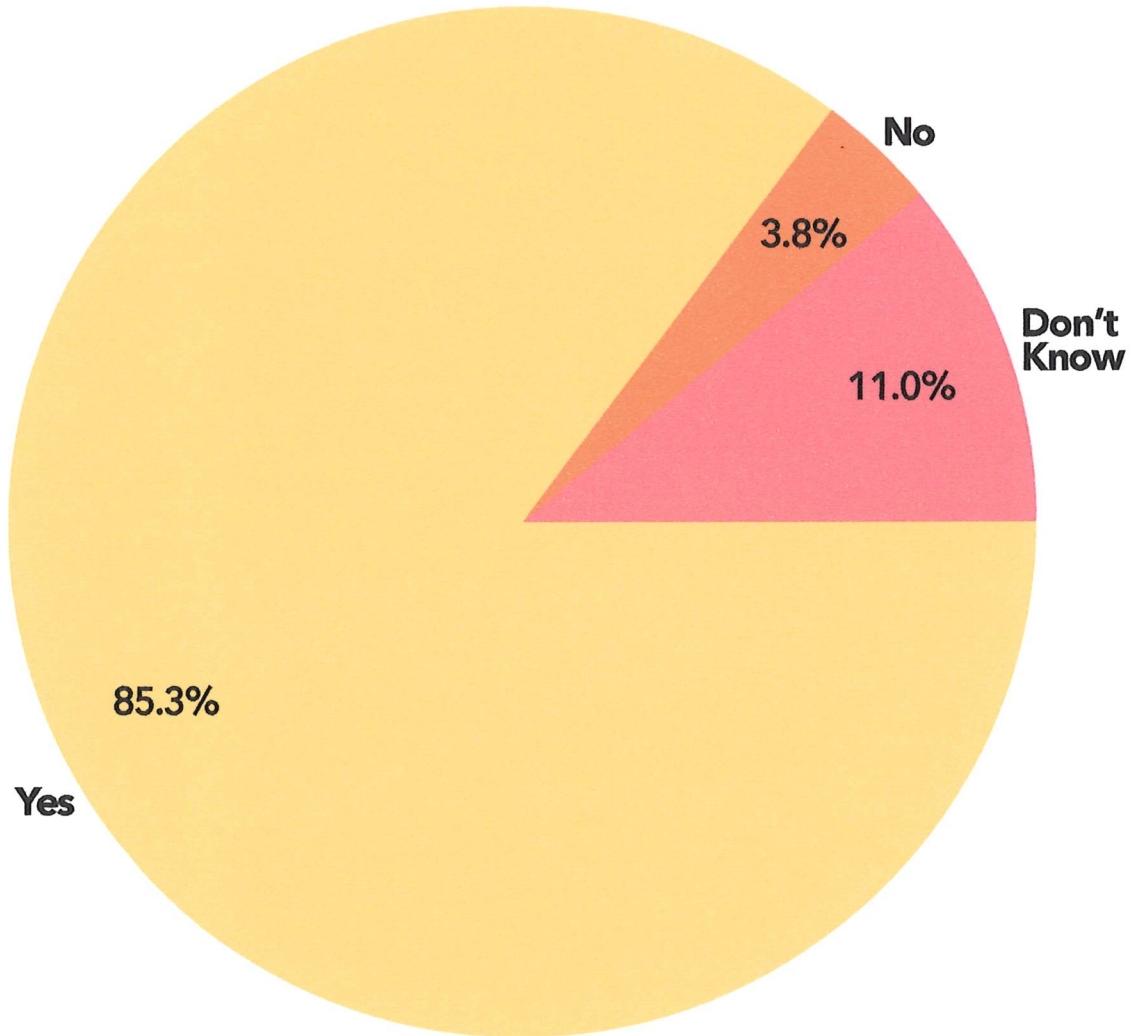
■ You can see that whilst numerically the survey achieved relatively low numbers of under 24 year olds, when compared with the percentage population, the survey actually performed very well, with a high response relative to the real population. This is the case across most ages but there are shortcomings in the age brackets of (25-34), (75-84) and (85+). FORTH pushed hard to engage with young people and seeing the under 24 year olds so well represented here reflects those efforts. There was clearly a proportionally larger response from the (55-64) and (65-74) age brackets.

■ In general, the survey sample was relatively proportionate to the real population, meaning that it is a good reflection of the current population of Ryde.



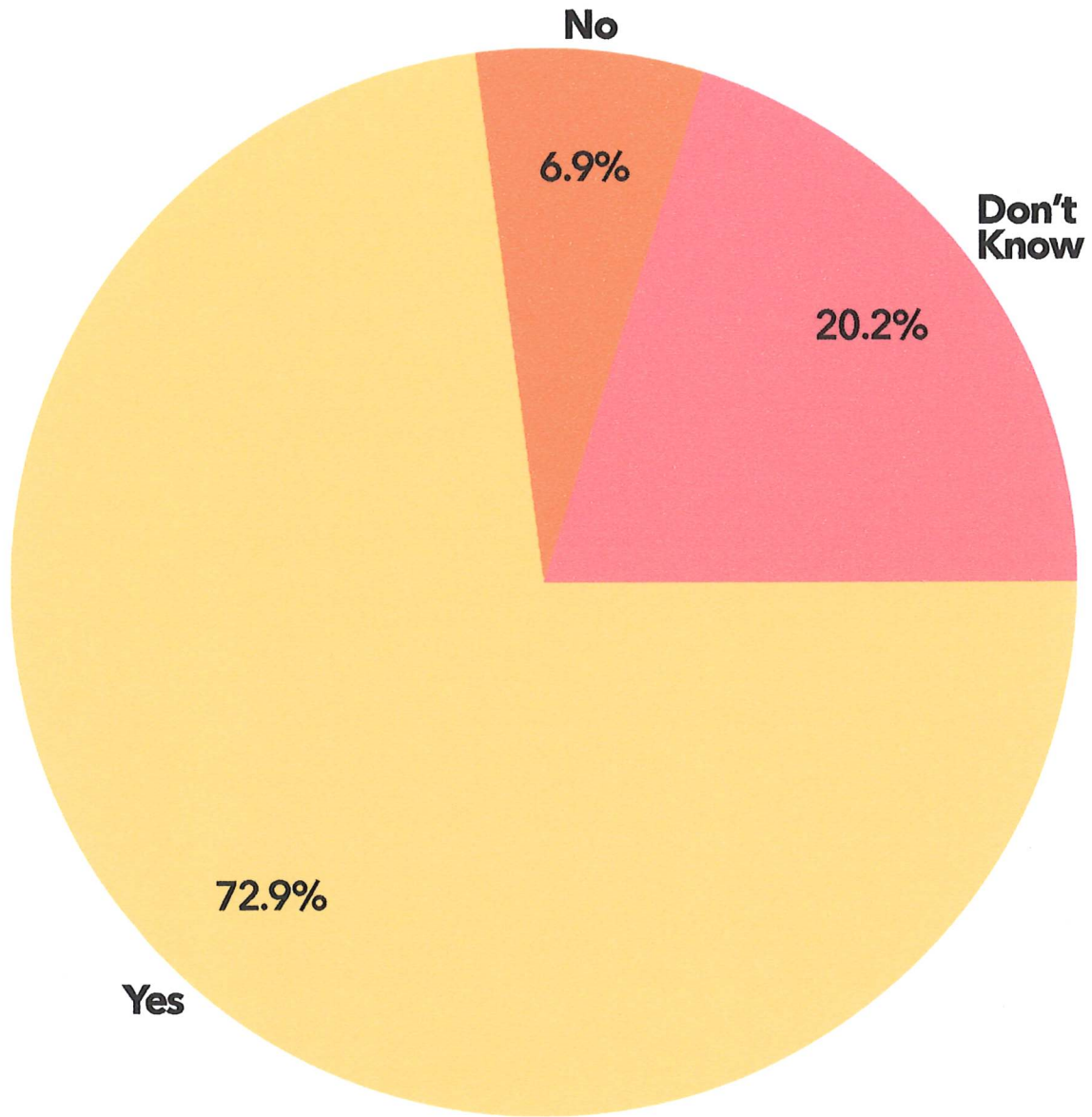
## Benefits for Ryde Town Centre:

**Is it likely you would make use of other amenities in Ryde town centre when coming to events at a re-opened Town Hall?**



■ A very large majority said they were likely to make use of other Ryde town centre amenities (such as shops, pubs and cafés) when attending events at a re-opened Town Hall. This represents a significant potential boost to the local economy and demonstrates the town-wide benefits of a restored Town Hall.

**Would you come into Ryde town centre more often if the Town Hall were re-opened to the public?**



■ A significant majority said they would come into Ryde town centre more often if the Town Hall were re-opened. This potential boost in footfall would bring many benefits to the town centre.

■ Some people recorded they stated 'No' because they felt they would be coming into the town centre regularly anyway (for example, for work).

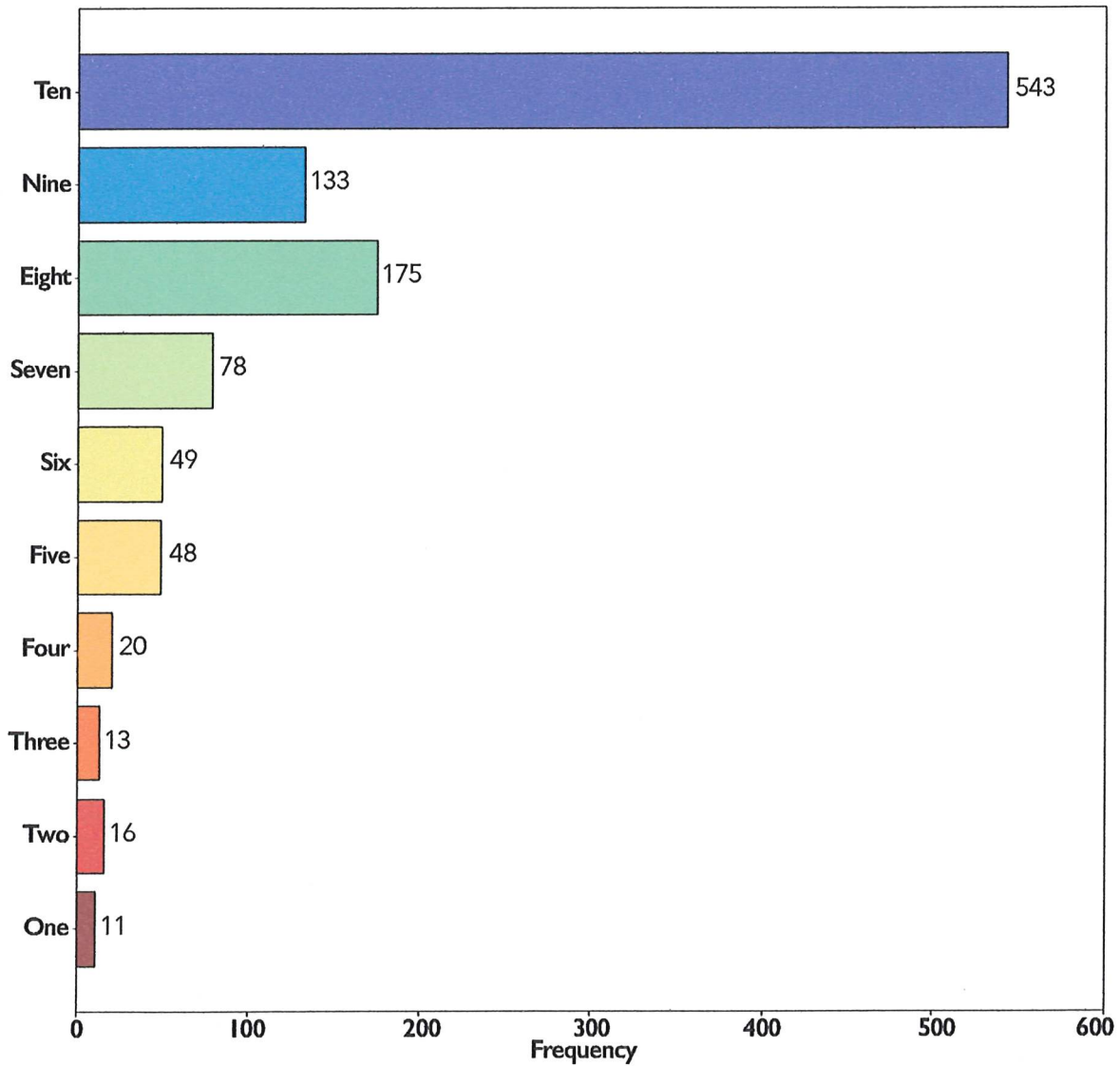


## Opportunities for Ryde Town Hall to Effect Positive Change:

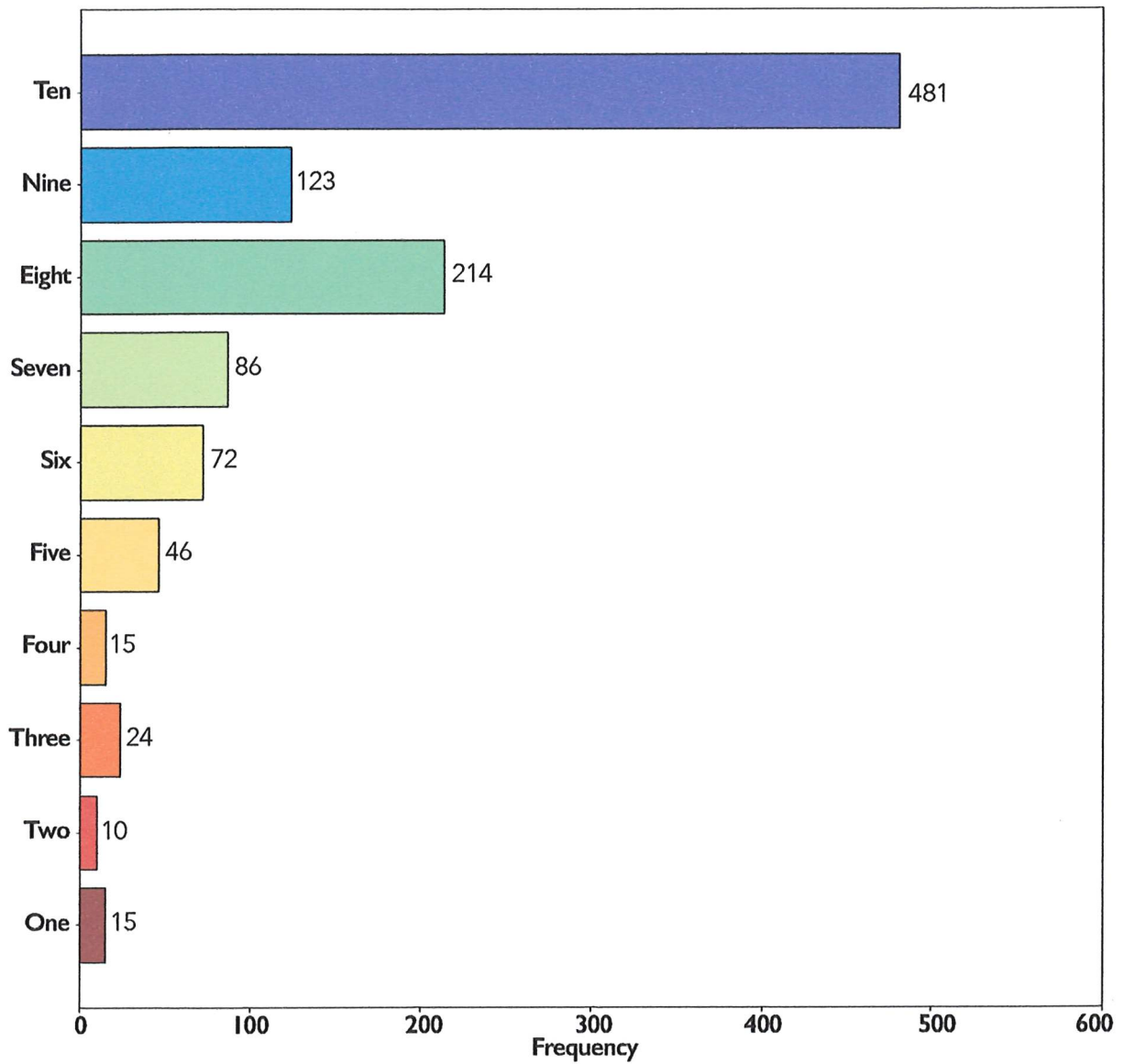
■ The following four graphs illustrate how the local population perceives the potential for a restored Ryde Town Hall to improve their lives. Community participation, pride of place, the local economy and well-being were all rated as important - with notably **pride of place** being the most important.

■ On this scale 'Ten' denotes most important and 'One' denotes least important.

**How important is it to you that a renewed Town Hall increase feelings of pride in Ryde and improve perceptions of the local area as a place to live and work?**



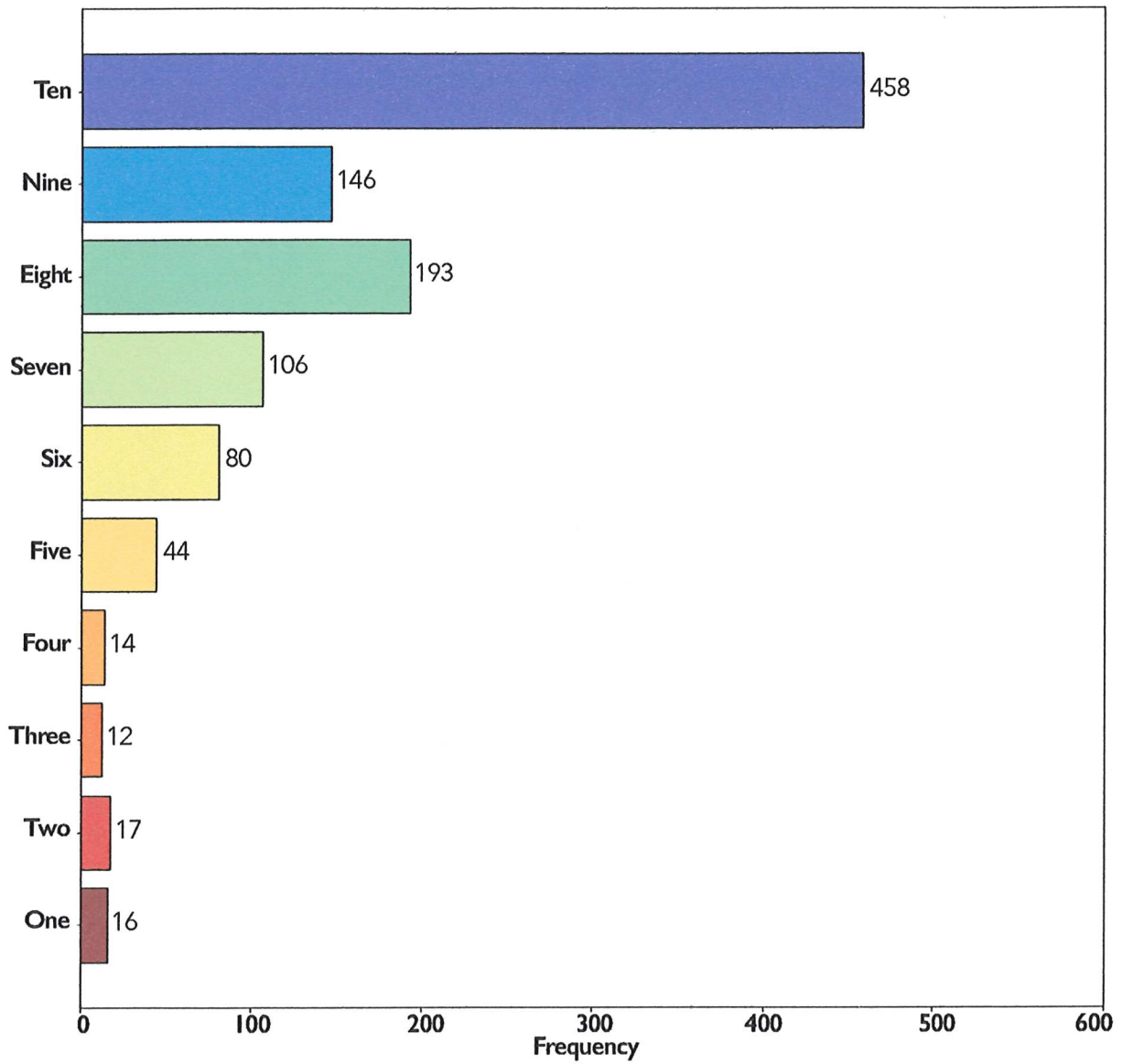
**How important is it to you that a renewed Town Hall improve the local economy by creating jobs, offering training and/or volunteer opportunities?**



■ On this scale 'Ten' denotes most important and 'One' denotes least important.

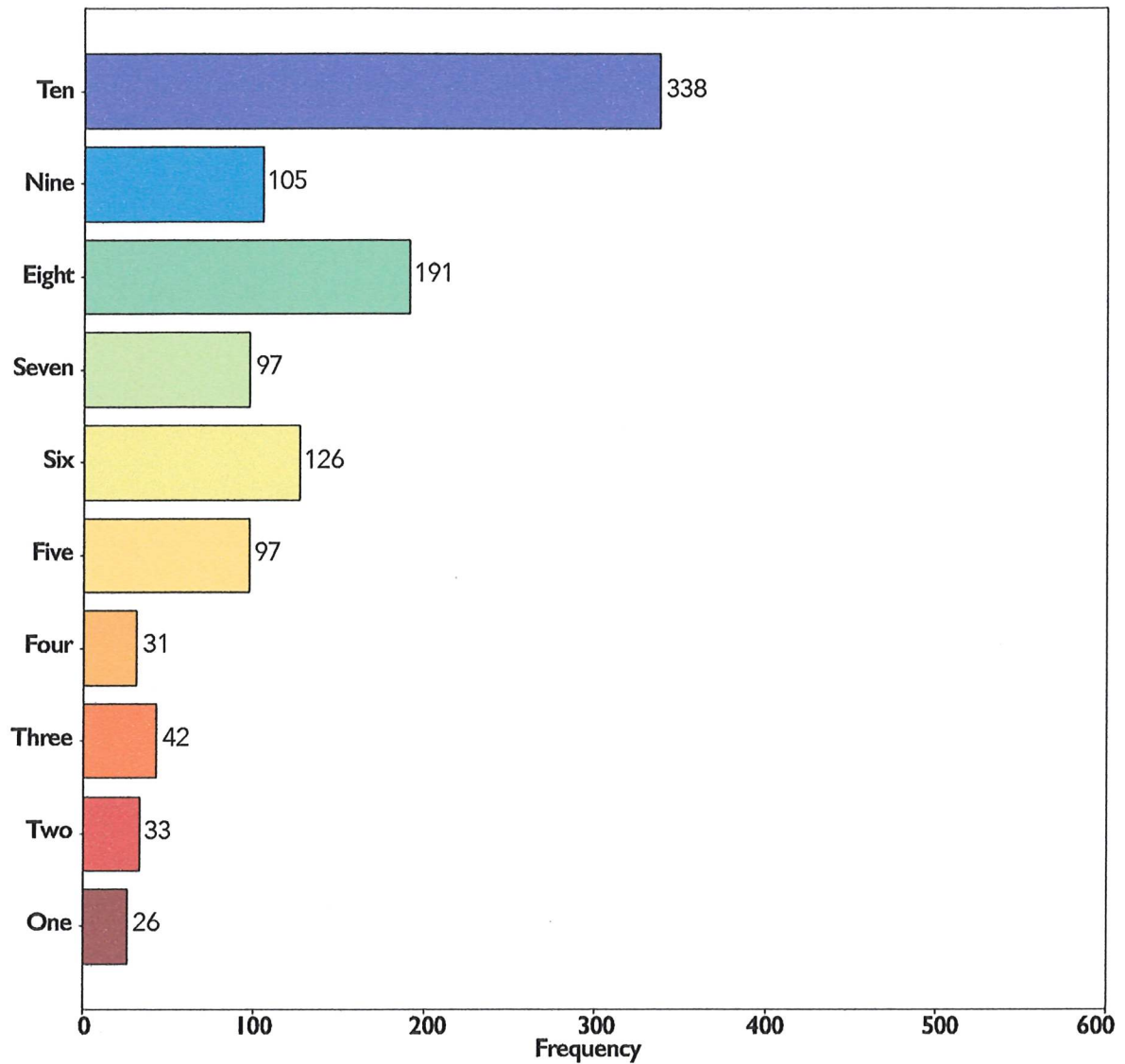


**How important is it to you that a renewed Town Hall increase local participation in community events, the arts, culture, science and sport?**



■ On this scale 'Ten' denotes most important and 'One' denotes least important.

**How important is it to you that a renewed Town Hall address issues around physical and mental well-being, loneliness and isolation?**



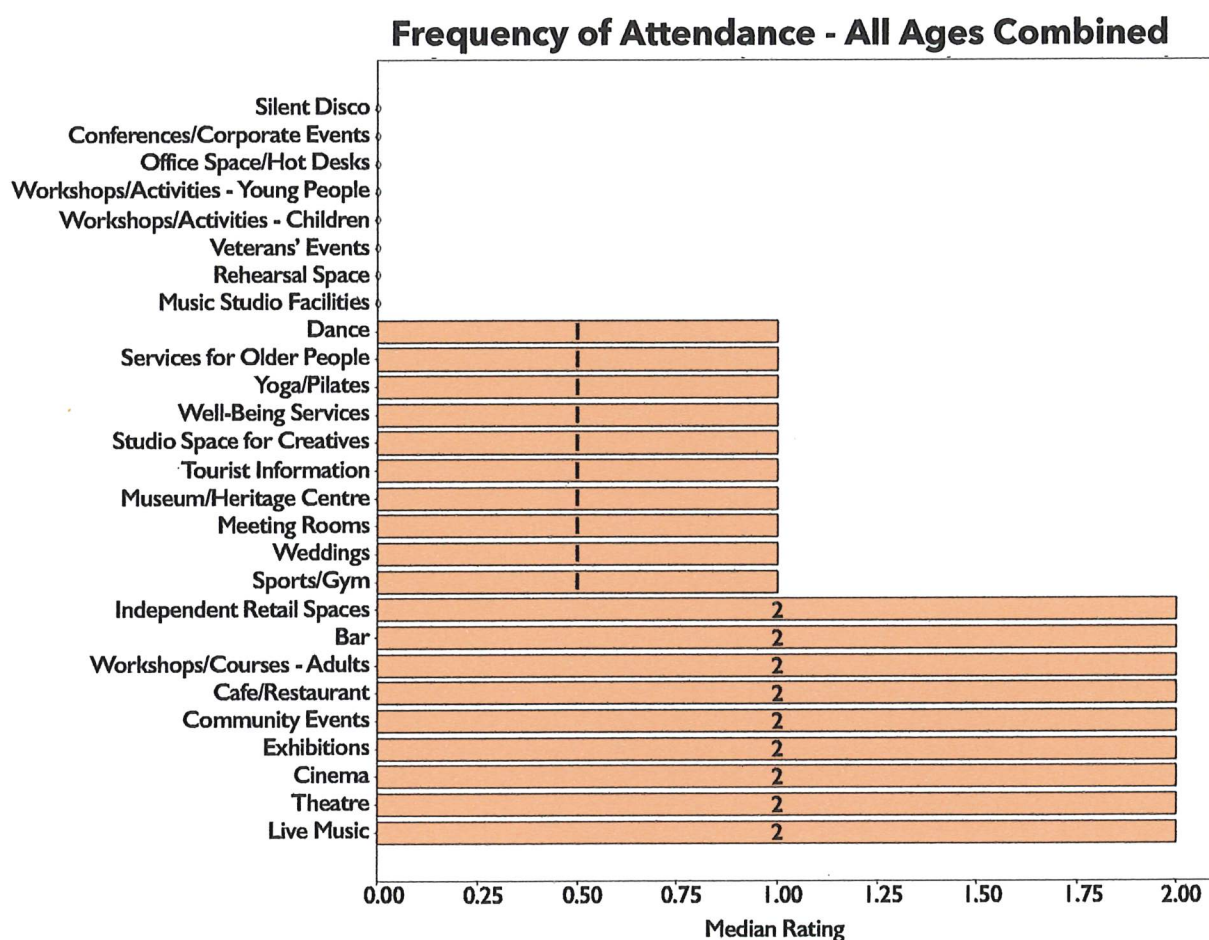
■ On this scale 'Ten' denotes most important and 'One' denotes least important.



## Community 'Supportables':

Respondents were asked how often they would be likely to support or attend a variety of activities/facilities at a re-opened Town Hall. They were given the options of most days, 3-5 times a week, once or twice a week, once or twice a month, rarely or never.

This graph shows the overall average rating for all survey participants regarding how likely they were to attend any given activity/facility. As the possible options were categorical, a median was chosen as the best measure of average. This method was chosen as it more accurately accounts for all opinions.



■ In this case, we can see a clear 'Top 9' with live music, theatre, cinema, exhibitions, community events, café/restaurant, workshops/courses for adults, bar and independent retail spaces coming in jointly as the most popular with the average person stating they would attend once or twice a month (shown on this graph as a score of 2).

■ It is important to note that scores of 0 *do not* mean that no one said they'd attend this activity/facility, only that the *average* person would not.

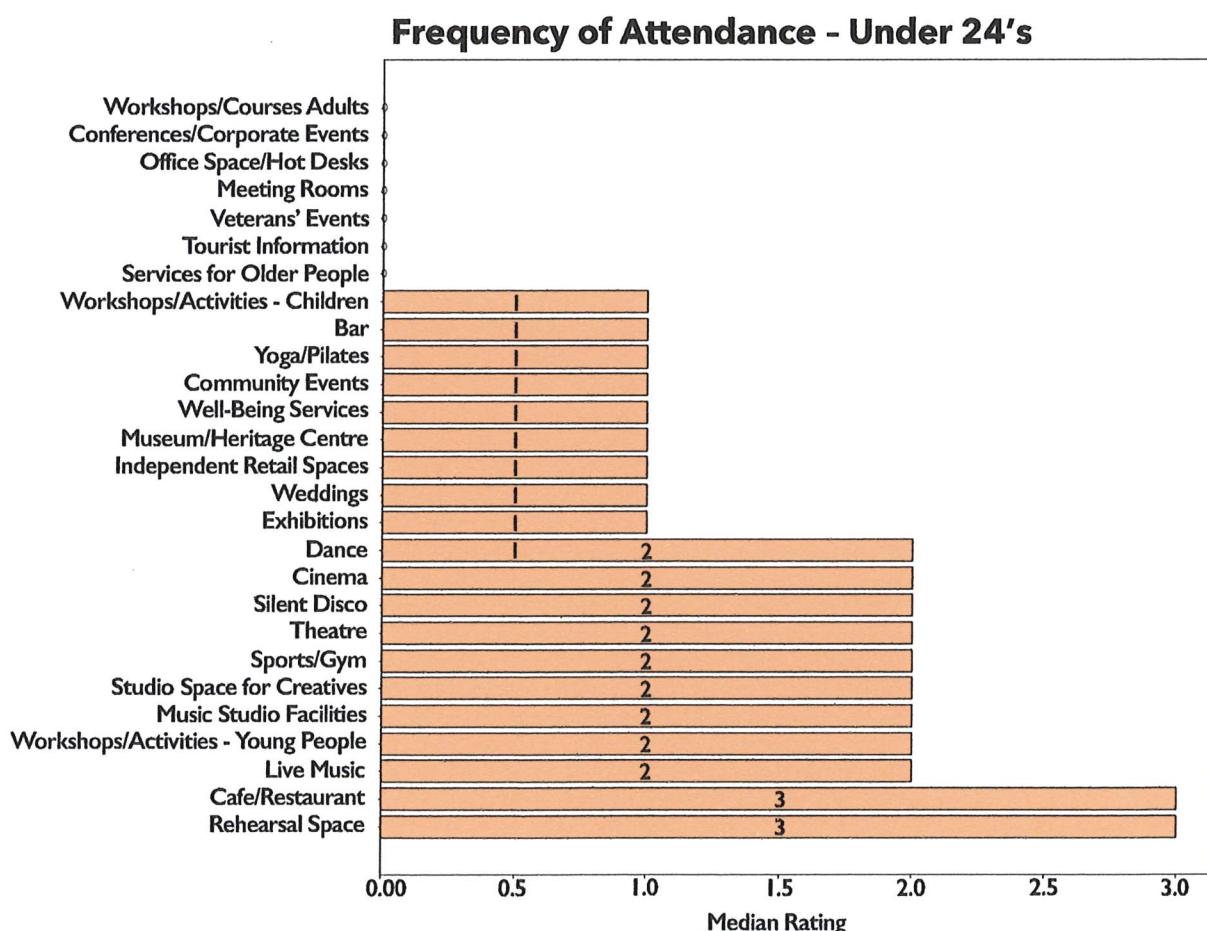
■ To see 'All Ages Combined' results broken down by each activity/facility, please see Appendix 4.

## The 'Community Supportables' Broken Down by Age Group:

■ Looking at the following graphs you can see that some facilities/activities that appear unpopular in the 'All Ages Combined' graph, are actually popular with specific age groups. For example, on average, people under 24 said they would attend a silent disco once or twice a month. In the 'All Ages Combined' graph the score for silent disco appears to be zero. Another example is rehearsal space - clearly a popular choice for the under 24's, in contrast to the average response across all ages.

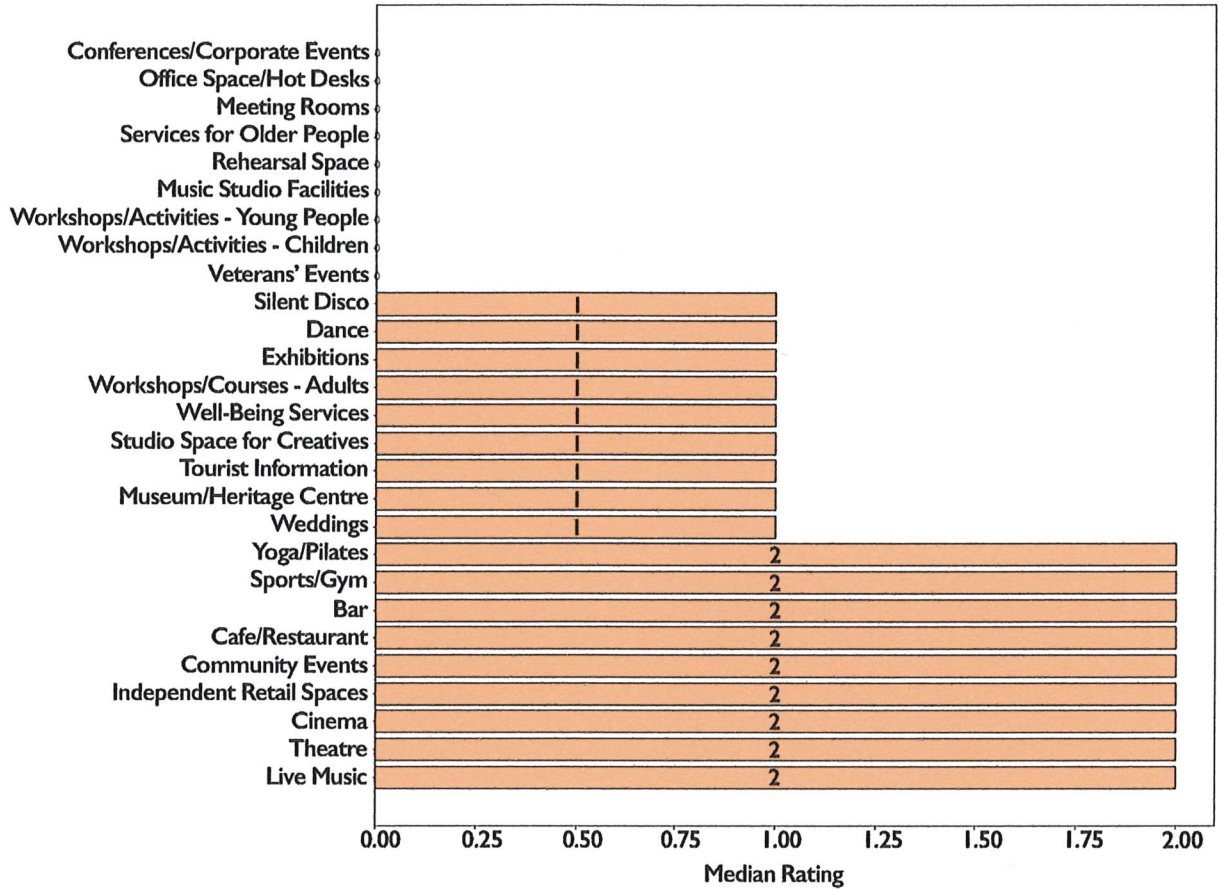
■ Some significant demographic differences evident in these graphs illustrate how important it is that a restored Town Hall maintain a flexible, adaptable approach that caters to the many and varying needs of *all* age groups. In doing so, it will serve the community well and help ensure its on-going economic survival.

■ It should be noted that while Cinema was a consistently popular choice across all age groups, a number of respondents added a comment to say they would attend Town Hall screenings if they did not compete with Ryde's Commodore Cinema. We suggest that the Town Hall could have a focus on art house films and world cinema. The programme run by the Ryde Film Club would be a good fit and they have already expressed interest in making use of a restored Town Hall as their base of operations.

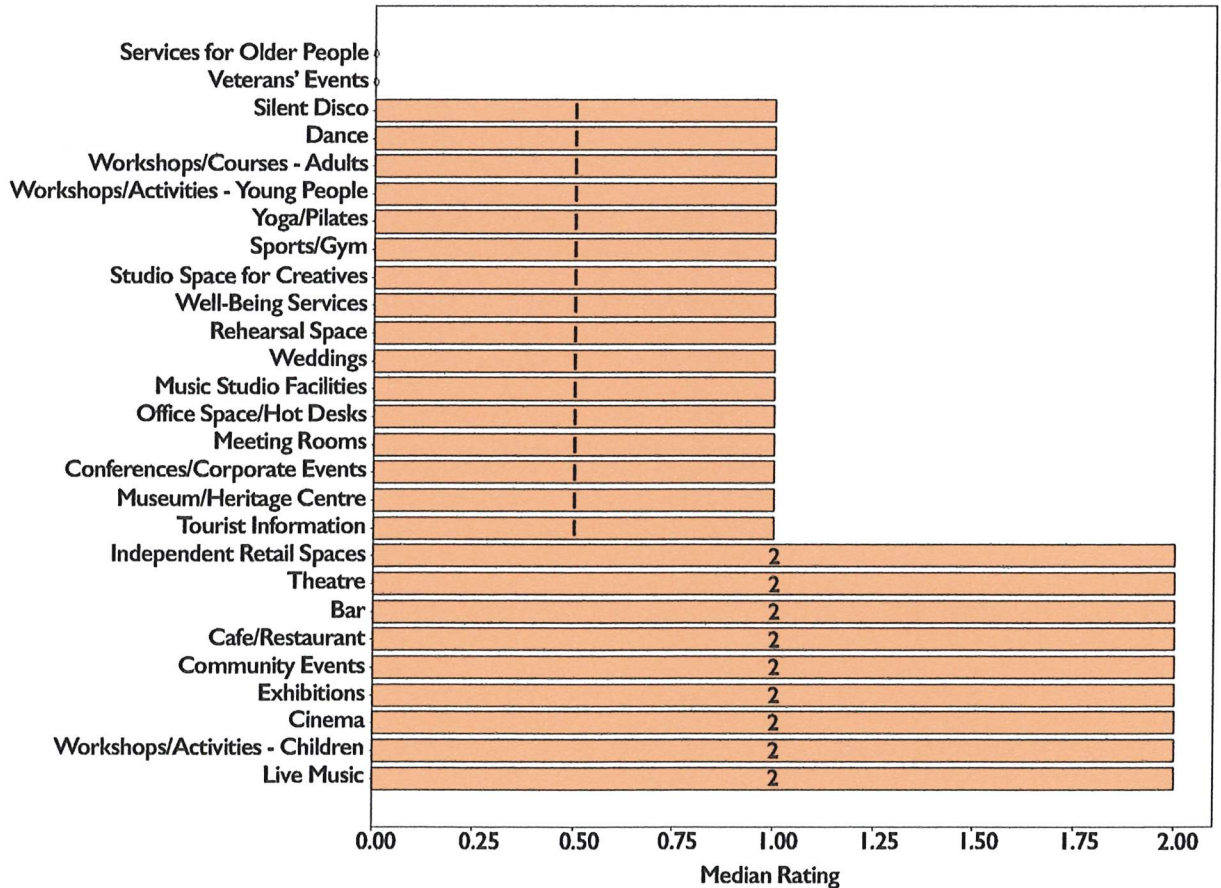




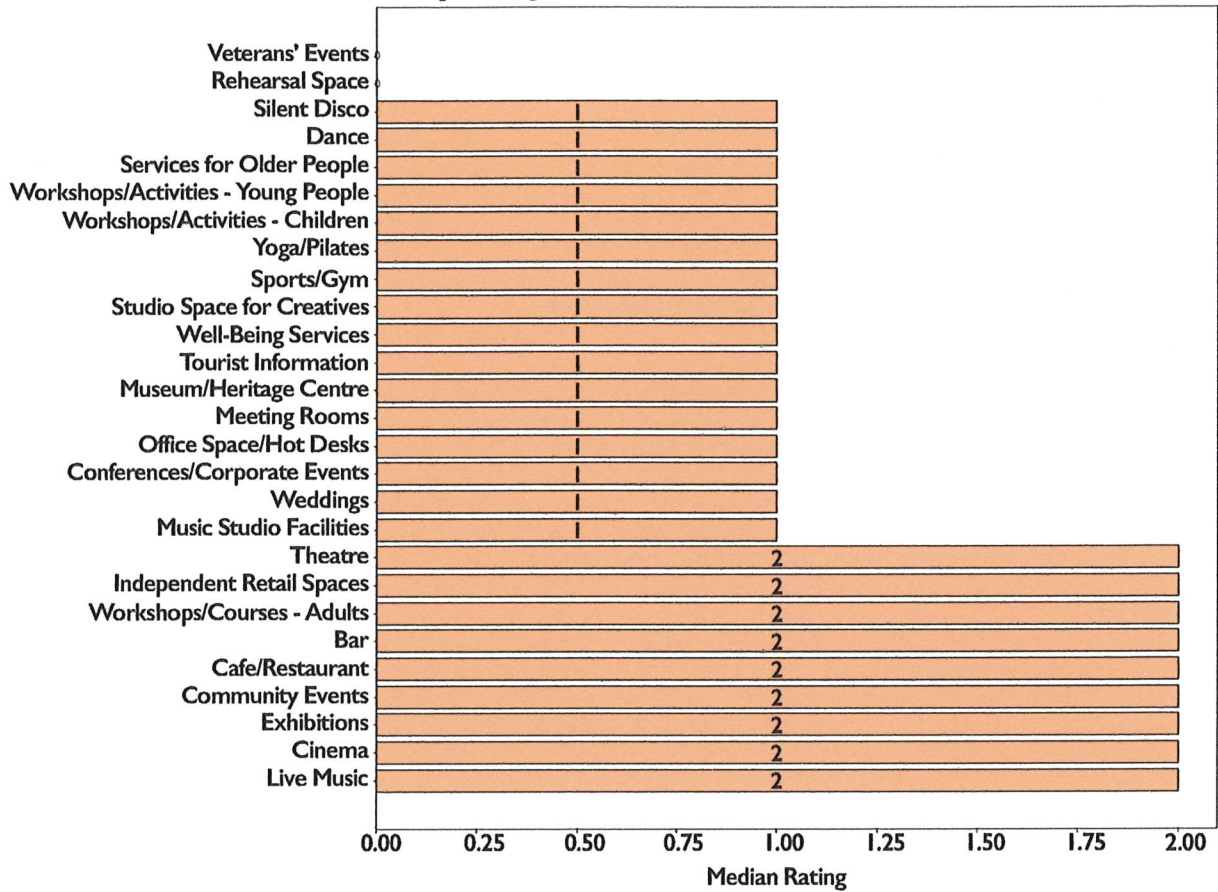
### Frequency of Attendance - (25-34)



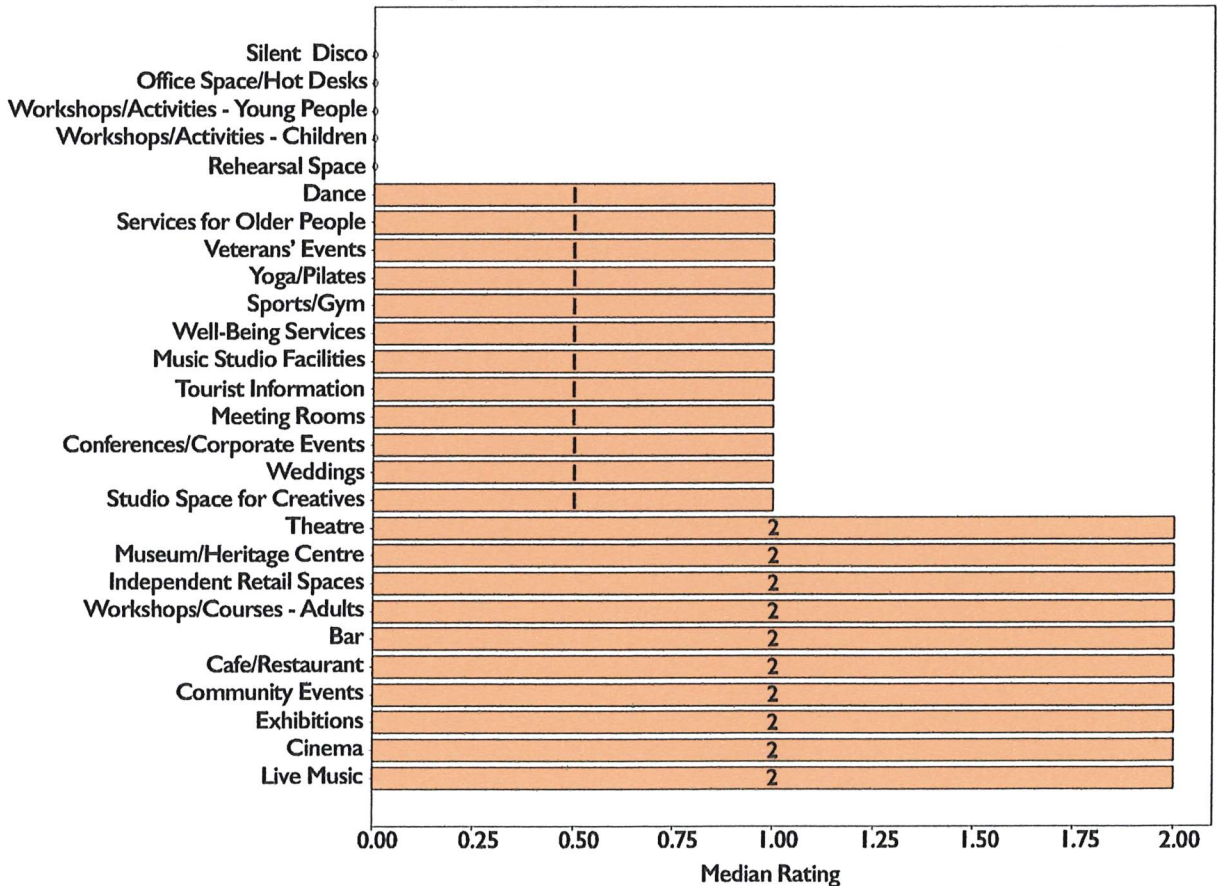
### Frequency of Attendance - (35-44)



### Frequency of Attendance - (45-54)

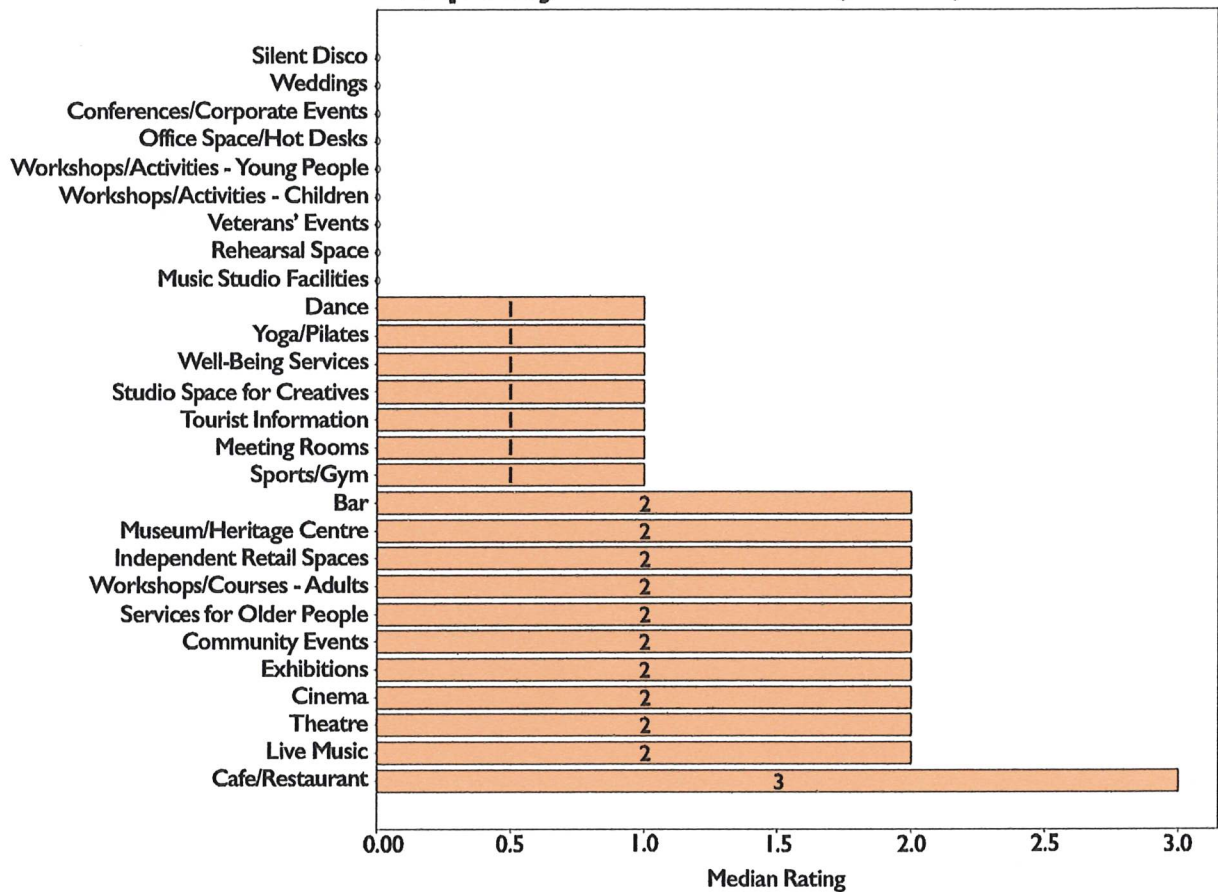


### Frequency of Attendance - (55-64)

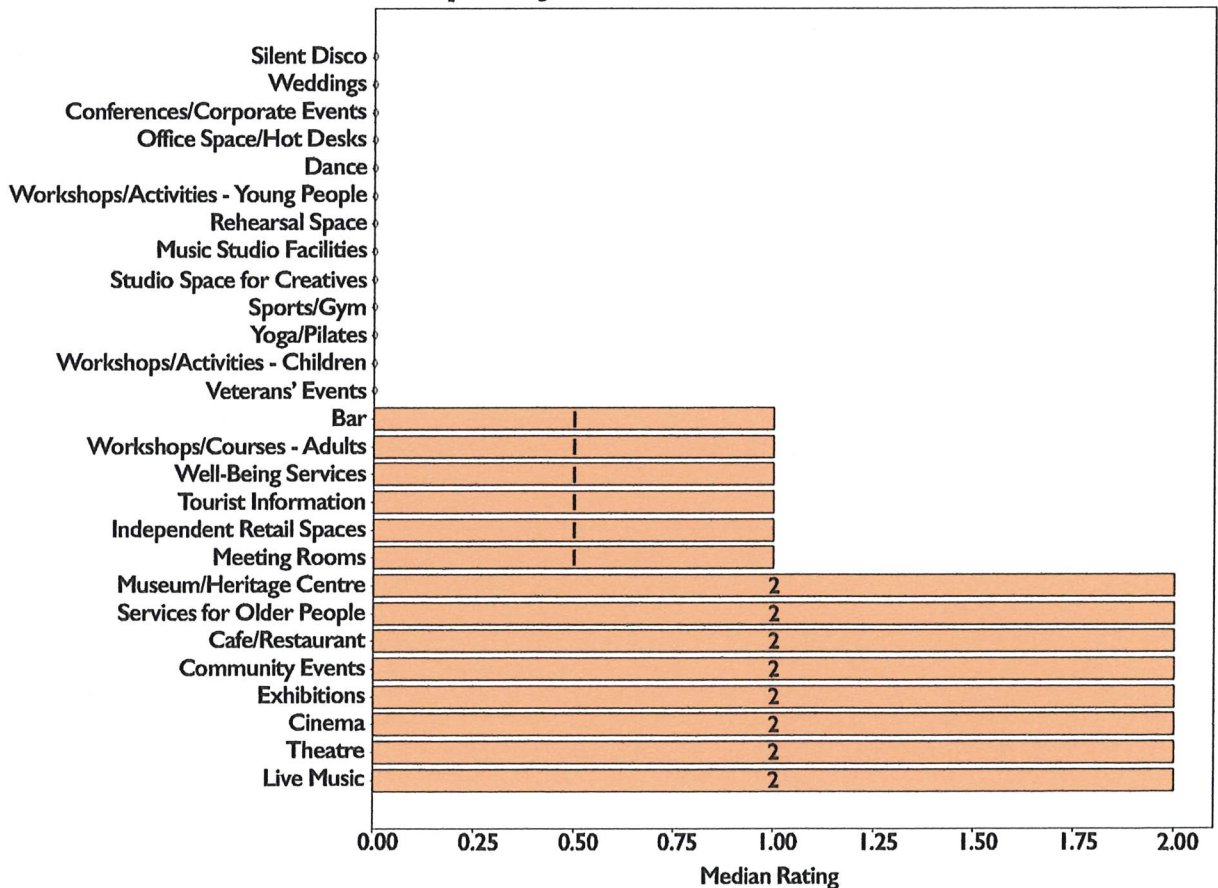




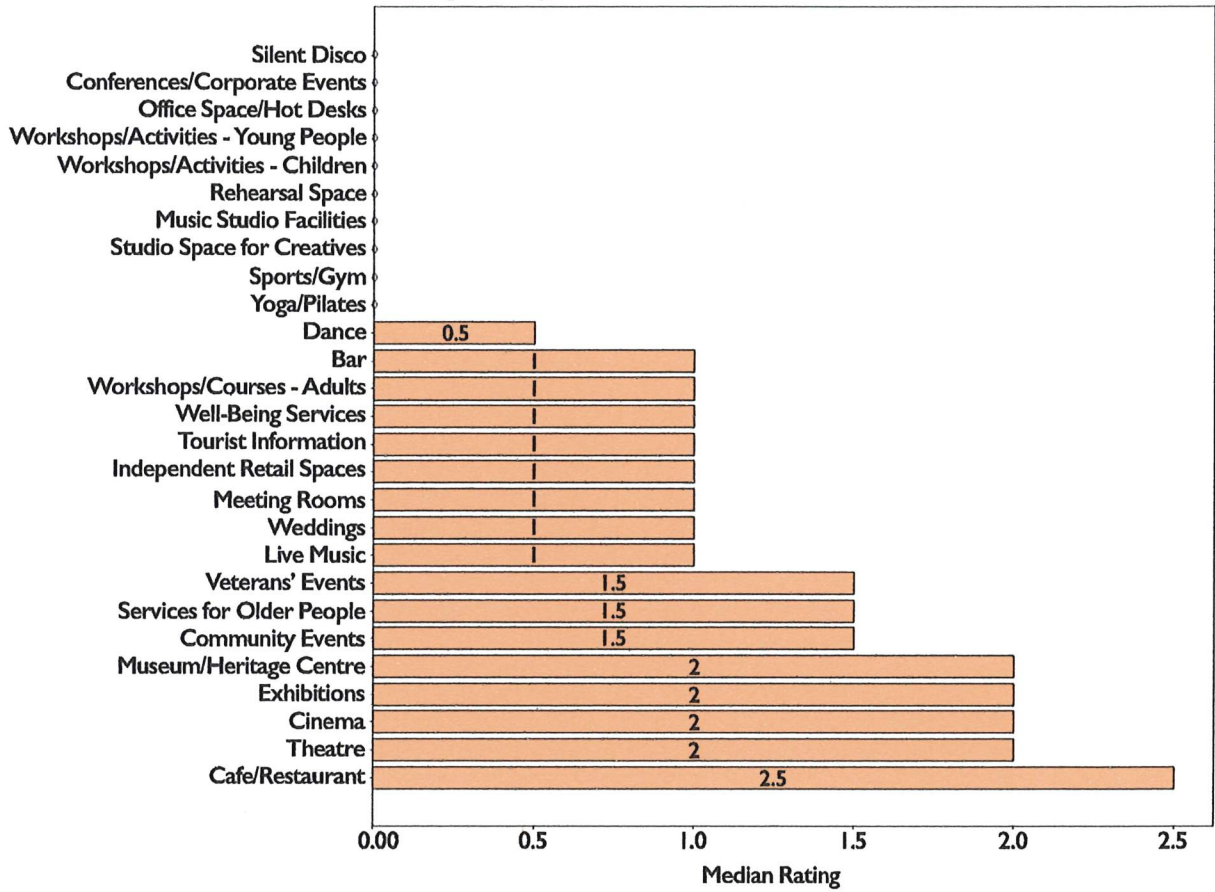
### Frequency of Attendance - (65-74)



### Frequency of Attendance - (75-84)



## Frequency of Attendance - (85+)





## The Next Steps:

### Bring Your Expertise to the Table

We encourage all readers of this document to contact us with their thoughts. If you have appropriate expertise please consider joining one of several Advisory Groups we hope to assemble in due course.

- FORTH would like to invite members of Ryde Town Council, the Ryde Town Hall Trust and selected others to sit around the same table and work together to agree on the steps necessary to move the Town Hall project forward. A shared, well-plotted road map is vital. Frankly the clock is ticking.
- FORTH would like to approach local organisations like Together For Mission Zero in the hopes that they will agree to lead a FORTH Advisory Group that will bring forward realistic best practices for making the Town Hall an eco-friendly space, with a special focus on how to best utilise the roof space. Suggested funding streams for such endeavours will also be requested from this Advisory Group.
- FORTH would like to invite a team of local arts professionals with experience in curation and gallery management to advise on creating a state-of-the-art exhibition space. We will encourage this group to be in contact with The ARC Winchester. We need to understand the minimum requirements for attracting work at a national level, while at the same time providing a platform that meets local artists' needs.
- FORTH would like to establish a Housing Advisory Group - a team of local experts to provide guidance on how residential spaces could be developed inside the Town Hall that could provide the building with a regular income. We are keen to know more about social enterprise schemes and other suitable schemes. Initially, we would like to liaise with the IOW Council Regeneration Department for guidance on setting up this important Advisory Group.
- FORTH would like to call on local grant writing experts to assist in setting up a team of people who will be tasked with creating a database of grant funding streams that the Town Hall project could tap into as we move forward. Whether large national grant funders or smaller local organisations, all funding streams should be identified and considered.
- If you have the expertise, passion and collaborative spirit and would like to serve on a FORTH Advisory Group we would love to hear from you. Contact us at:

**friendsofrydetownhall@gmail.com** or find us on social media.

## Quote, Unquote

### Residents Have Their Say

**The Ryde Town Hall Survey included a section that welcomed comments. The following is a representative sample from all comments made.**

Call me old-fashioned but a Town Hall gives a centre point. Without it, Ryde is lost.

...

Can't tell you how exciting it'll be to have this back in the heart of Ryde community.

...

A fantastic venue that I worked and performed at in the past. We need it back again.

...

All power to your elbow. I miss seeing live bands at the Town Hall and walking home.

...

Been to some wonderful functions at Ryde Town Hall, fantastic, central venue.

...

Best wishes and I hope you are successful.

...

Bring back the public toilets.

...

I often went to classical concerts but now no classical music venues in Ryde.

...

Can see the Town Hall as a good venue for the Harp Festival which I run.

...

Congratulations and good luck with this.

...

I feel it most important for the Town Hall to be open and used by all ages.

...

Convert into flats to help housing crisis.

...

Could someone clean up pavements outside the Hall and put pigeon proofing on ledges.

...

Department is having a big refurb - the Town Hall needs to offer something different/complementary.

...

Host IW competitive Music Festival, use like Portsmouth Guild Hall.

...

Get it sorted out as soon as possible, let's get some pride back in Ryde.

...

For our town centres to revitalise we need to offer exciting experiences to draw people in.

...

Get on with it!



Good luck in your endeavours to re-establish a much-loved Ryde landmark building.

...

I feel that its useful life as a venue has passed. Affordable housing is desperately needed.

...

Great survey!

...

Groups where you can go alone and meet for a coffee and a chat to combat loneliness.

...

Happy to help with legal process to get governance established.

...

Hope you manage to include some affordable residential to generate long-term income.

...

I am a member of an organisation that may be interested in hiring rehearsal rooms if affordable.

...

I am hoping this results in action - we have had too long with words and promises.

...

I feel Ryde is very sad and empty without a town hall & theatre.

...

I am a parent of a Theatretrain student and think that the space would be fantastic for Theatretrain.

...

I really hope it can become a cultural hub and well-being hub helping elevate the Island.

...

I loved it as a theatre.

...

I remember using this venue for events, balls and proms. It was beautiful.

...

I believe it will always be a drain on resources, should be knocked down and build flats for young people.

...

I run a production company that would be more than happy to get involved.

...

I wish you luck and would like to help.

...

Seriously want that lovely building to be renovated, would go to theatre & choir concerts often.

...

I would be more than happy for this vast space to be mixed use as long as it's open.

...

I'd like to see a community cafe run by people with disabilities.

...

It could be a thriving music and entertainment venue.

I think for the young people of Ryde, the versatility of the space could be great, broadening their skills.

...

If there were any fundraising events I would be willing to attend.

...

It's a disgrace that the building has been allowed to get in its present state of decrepitude.

...

It is essential that the Walker Pipe Organ also be restored for regular concerts.

...

It is important to a healthy society for public amenities to be open.

...

It would be lovely to be able to walk to a theatre venue from home.

...

It could reduce crime and save money for the council in the long run.

...

Just leave a small hall and divide the rest into apartments for affordable housing.

...

Keep up the great work!

...

Let's get going!

...

Live music at the weekends as it used to be.

...

It would be lovely to see the clock working again.

...

Very refreshing to see a positive initiative.

...

Would like table tennis/badminton court and music rooms for groups and individuals.

...

The Town Hall Council Chamber should be restored.

...

Any use of this amazing building would be welcome.

...

Do it quickly!

...

Events for 18-30 year olds important.

...

Extremely important to create a community in RYDE, it's an eyesore, restore to its former glory!

...

Make us proud of an amazing multi-purpose, vibrant venue.



## Part 4

### Meet the FORTH Committee:

#### Zoë Barker, Chair

Zoë has lived on the Isle of Wight since 2008. She has spent most of her life working in television, enjoying a variety of roles at Channel 4 and the BBC that include Continuity Producer, Edit Producer and Compliance Editor. An award-winning photographer, Zoë is very much involved in the cultural life of the Island. She is Co-curator of Ryde's smallest art gallery 'Re:Box' with Anmarie Bowler. She is a founder member of The Ryde Art Collective, Administrator and Treasurer for Friends of Monkton Arts and Co-leader of The RUG Band. She is also a contributing cartoonist to Private Eye magazine. Zoë has a degree in French & Ancient History and a Masters in Film & Television. She is a founding member of FORTH.



#### Michael Ross, Vice Chair

Michael splits his time between London and Ryde. After graduating from Oxford with a degree in Modern History, he spent 25 years as a Whitehall civil servant. He managed the National Re-survey of Listed Buildings and wrote a textbook for conservationists on Planning and Heritage. Michael was subsequently Chief Executive of the Residential Property Tribunal Service and managed its transformation and re-launch. He has also been a magistrate for over forty years and was Chair of Governors in a large and troubled London secondary school where he helped to improve its Ofsted grading. Michael has a strong interest in the visual arts and architecture and is a member of the Georgian Group.



#### Anmarie Bowler, Secretary

Anmarie moved from London to the Isle of Wight in 2017. Since her arrival she has served as Chief Copy Writer for The Wight Book and founded Brevity, The Isle of Wight's Literary Handbill. She also partnered with Zoë Barker to repurpose the iconic red phone box on Lind Street in Ryde, establishing a light box installation that showcases the work of local artists and organisations throughout the year. Before moving to the UK she worked as Director of PR at The Shakespeare Theatre in Washington DC and Director of Communications at South Coast Repertory outside LA. Anmarie has two Masters Degrees in Urban Planning and Playwriting. She is a founding member of FORTH.



## Paul Wells, Treasurer

Paul has many years' experience in tourism and marketing. As Tourism Officer at the Eastbourne Entertainment, Publicity & Catering Department he was responsible for promoting venues including the Congress Theatre, Devonshire Park Theatre and Hippodrome Theatre. Becoming Head of Tourism & Conferences in 1981, he took on the marketing of the town as a tourist and conference destination worldwide. He went on to form the Chester Marketing Bureau and the York Visitor & Conference Bureau. In 1992 he set up Sycamore Enterprises, a full service agency specialising in tourism-related design, marketing and web design including social media and PR. His clients included Transport for London, Gatwick Express, American Airlines Vacations, AT&T EMEA and Millennium & Copthorne Hotels. He retired to the Isle of Wight in 2008 to pursue his love of sailing.



## Simon Norris, Minutes Secretary

Simon is Ryde born and bred of an Island family. Initially studying Fine Art and Photography, he went on to exhibit his street photography and worked briefly as a photographer in the field of book illustration before changing direction to study for a career in healthcare and education. He is a registered nurse, has a degree in Teaching and Education with Philosophy and the Cert. Ed. teaching qualification. Since retiring from the NHS he has been repairing and restoring old books through the Quarr Abbey bindery near Ryde. What spare time he has is spent landscape painting with the odd photograph thrown in for good measure.



Our thanks to Connor Warren and Emma Beer, members of the FORTH Committee who served brilliantly but due to other commitments have stood down. Their significant contribution in FORTH's early days made a huge difference.

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We owe a great debt of gratitude to Sophie Pike who compiled and analysed the Survey data. Her expert knowledge and advice proved invaluable.

## Sophie Pike

Sophie Pike is a Social Researcher with a BSc in Psychology. A professional who works with data, she volunteered her services to produce the statistics for the FORTH Report as a way of helping her local community. She has lived in Ryde for most of her life and has chosen to settle in Ryde as a young professional.



## Appendix 1

### Organisations that have attended a FORTH stakeholder meeting:

ARC  
ARCH Aspire  
Artecology  
Aspire Ryde  
Boojum & Snark  
Brevity  
Catch Seafood & Grill  
Community Action Isle of Wight  
Co-op Community Engagement  
Creative Island (formerly Island Collection)  
Crying Out Loud  
Department  
Dimbola Museum & Galleries  
East Cowes Heritage Centre  
Eternion Productions  
Football Fun Factory  
Friends of Shanklin Theatre  
GASP  
Hampshire & Isle of Wight Community Foundation (HIWCF)  
Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (Wilder Communities)  
Harp On Wight Festival  
Horse Box Theatre  
Hovertravel  
Independent Arts  
Isle of Wight Bus & Coach Museum  
Isle of Wight Cocktail Co  
Isle of Wight Community Foundation  
Isle of Wight Family Information Hub  
Isle of Wight Foundation  
Isle of Wight Music, Dance & Drama Festival  
Isle of Wight Youth Council  
IW Creative Network  
Jacks  
Keert  
Monkton Arts  
Montage Place  
Museum of Ryde  
National Poo Museum  
Network Ryde  
New Carnival Company  
Newport & Carisbrooke Heritage Society  
Pickle and Dill  
Pinkeye Graphics  
Rainbow Island



Random-Rooms  
RAW Samba  
Re:Box  
Riboleau Studios  
Ryde Arts  
Ryde Business Association  
Ryde Carnival Association  
Ryde Film Club  
Ryde Library  
Ryde School with Upper Chine  
Ryde Society  
Shademakers  
Splaces  
StoneCrabs Theatre  
Stitch Department  
Studio 13  
Theatre Educational  
Theatre Reviva!  
The Mustard Club  
The Ryde Art Collective  
Together For Mission Zero  
University of Portsmouth  
Vectis Brass  
Vernon Square Conservation Society  
VIVA Carnival Club  
WightAID

## Appendix 2

### **Organisations that were unable to attend a stakeholder meeting but expressed support for the Town Hall Project:**

Carisbrooke Castle Museum  
Friends of Newport Minster  
Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce  
Isle of Wight Cultural Education Partnership (CEP)  
Isle of Wight Jazz Festival  
Isle of Wight Music Heritage Group  
Isle of Wight Music Hub  
Isle of Wight VI Form College  
Isle of Wight Society  
Isle of Wight Sports Foundation  
Isle of Wight Symphony Orchestra  
People Media Productions  
Platform One  
Queer and Now  
Northwood Cemetery  
Ryde Social Heritage Group  
Ryde Veterans  
Theatretrain  
The Voices of the Isle of Wight  
Widget Productions

## Appendix 3

### **Organisations that have put on record how they would wish to make regular use of a restored Town Hall:**

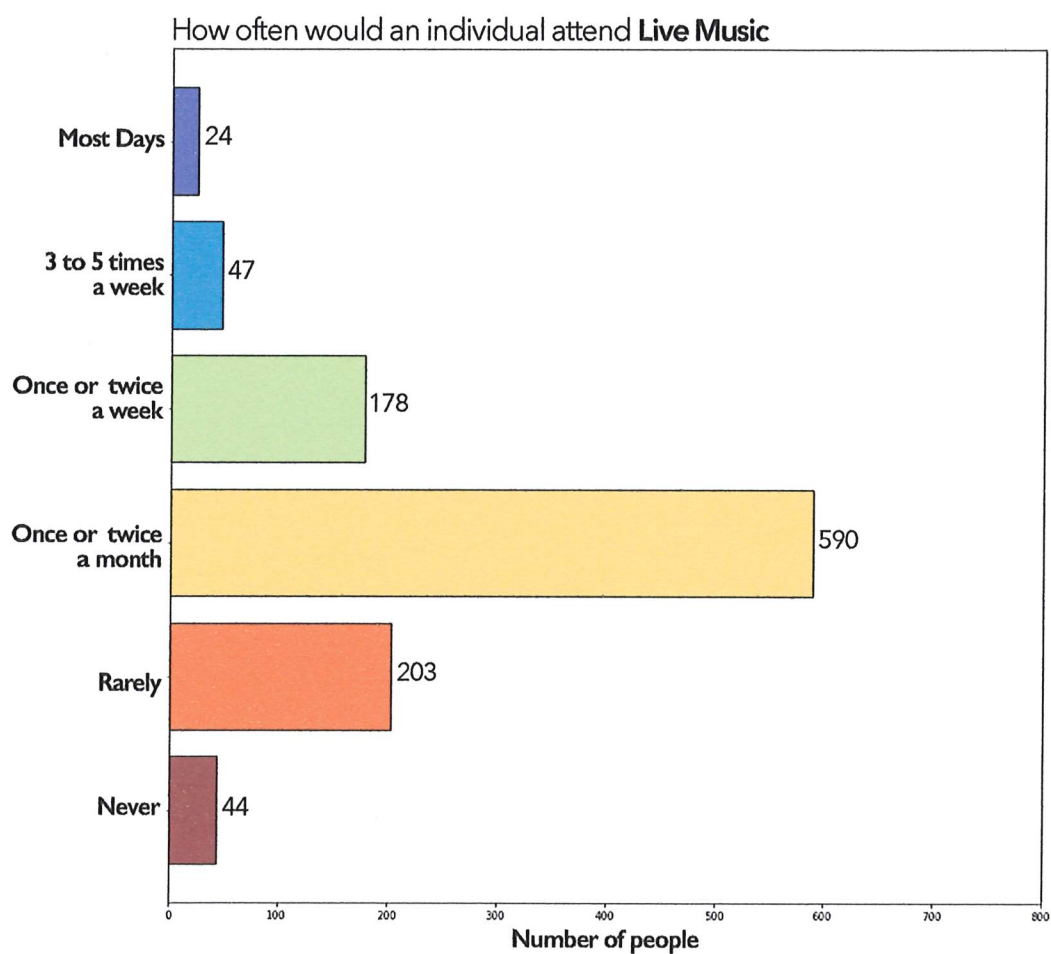
Aspire Ryde  
Community Action Isle of Wight  
Department  
Harp on Wight Festival  
Horse Box Theatre  
Isle of Wight Music, Dance & Drama Festival  
Isle of Wight Story Festival  
Isle of Wight Symphony Orchestra  
Isle of Wight Youth Council  
Montage Place  
Network Ryde  
New Carnival Company  
People Media Productions  
Rainbow Island  
Random-Rooms  
RAW Samba  
Ryde Carnival Association  
Ryde Film Club  
Ryde Society  
Shademakers  
Splaces  
StoneCrabs Theatre  
The Mustard Club  
Theatre Educational  
Theatre Reviva!  
Theatretrein  
Together For Mission Zero  
University of Portsmouth  
VIVA Carnival Club



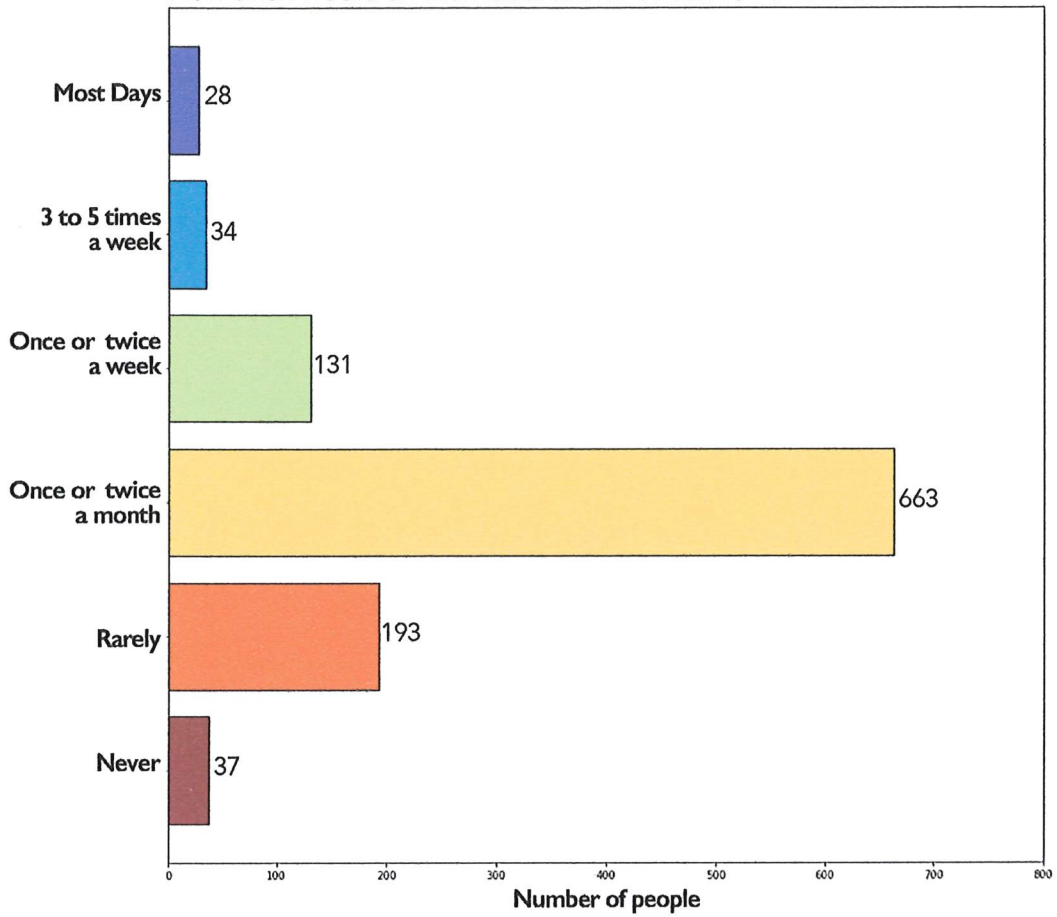
## Appendix 4

Respondents were asked how often they would be likely to support or attend a variety of activities/facilities at a re-opened Town Hall. They were given the options of most days, 3-5 times a week, once or twice a week, once or twice a month, rarely or never.

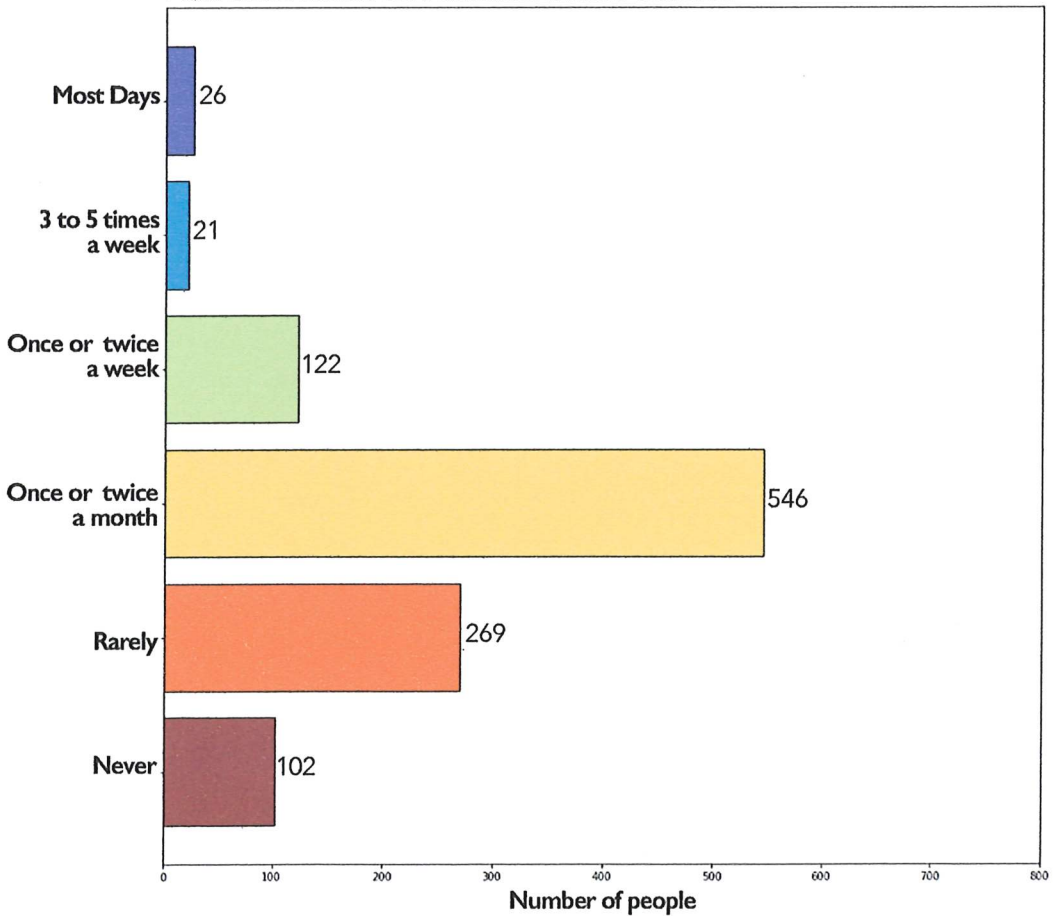
The following graphs show 'All Ages Combined' results broken down by each activity/facility:



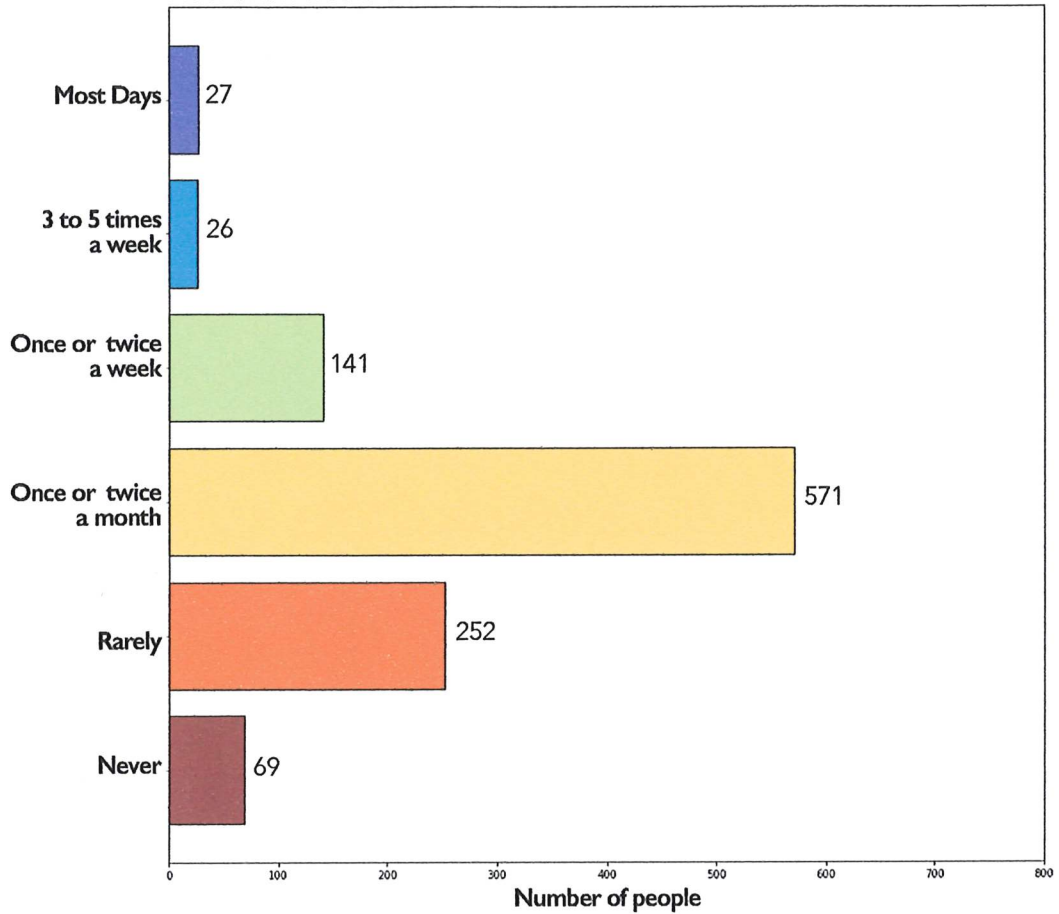
How often would an individual attend **Theatre / Performance**



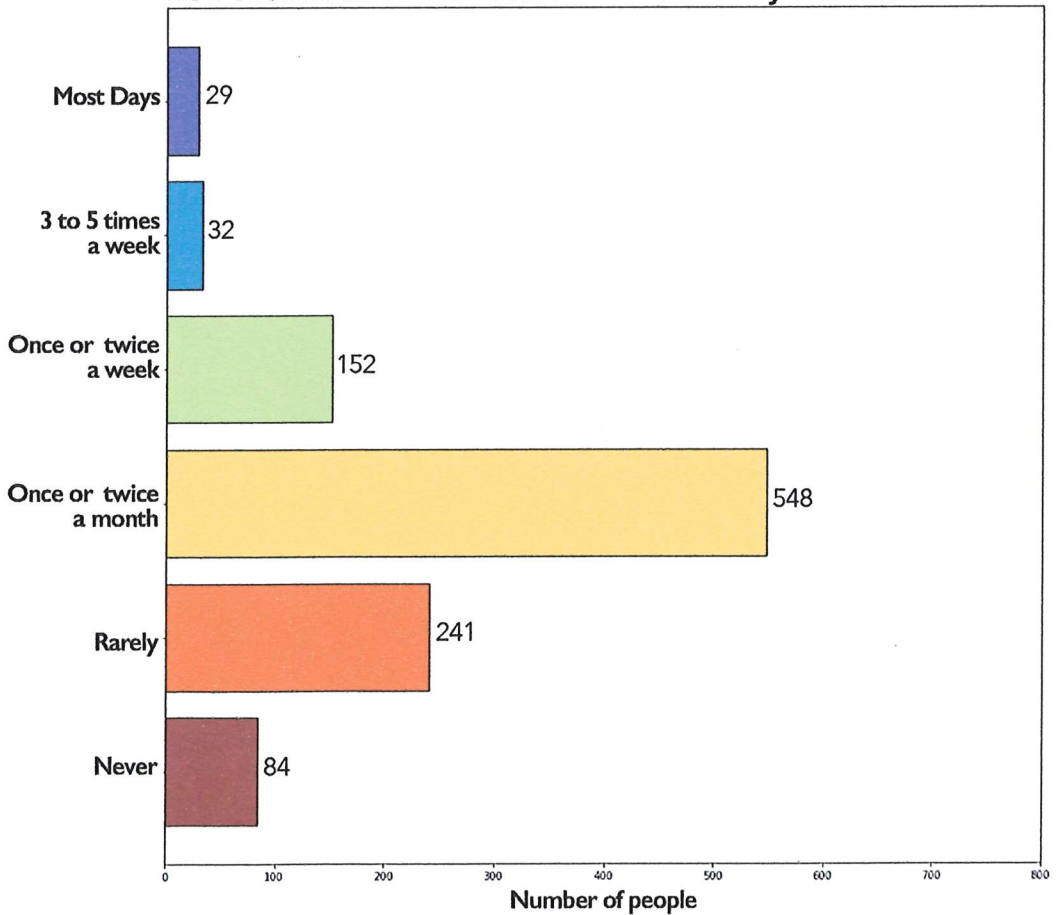
How often would an individual attend **Cinema**



How often would an individual attend **Exhibitions**

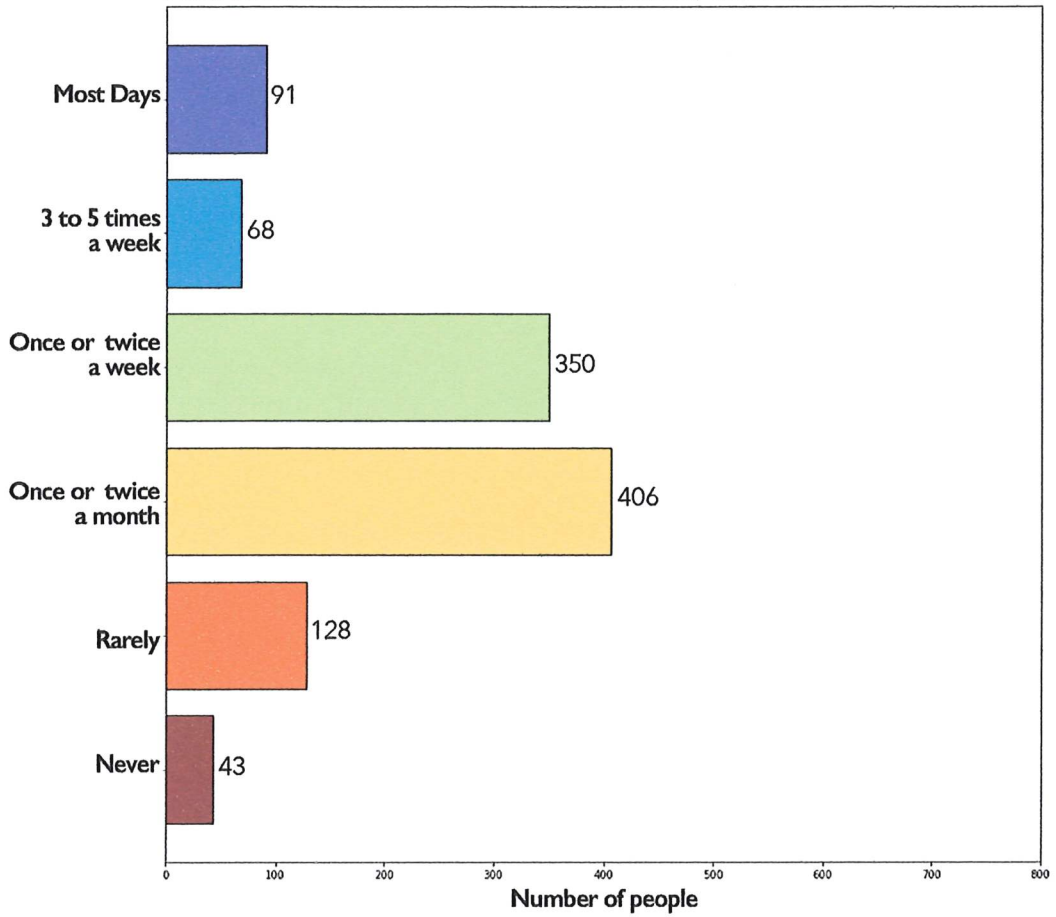


How often would an individual attend **Community Events**

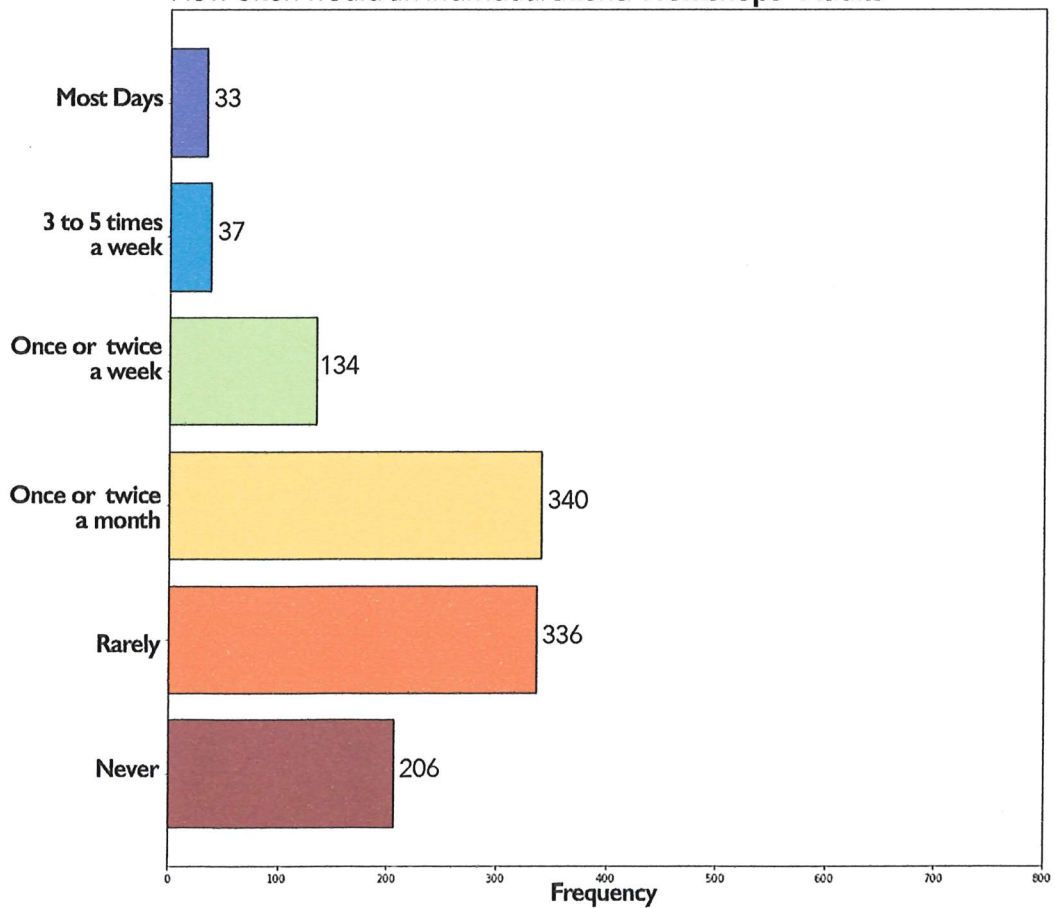




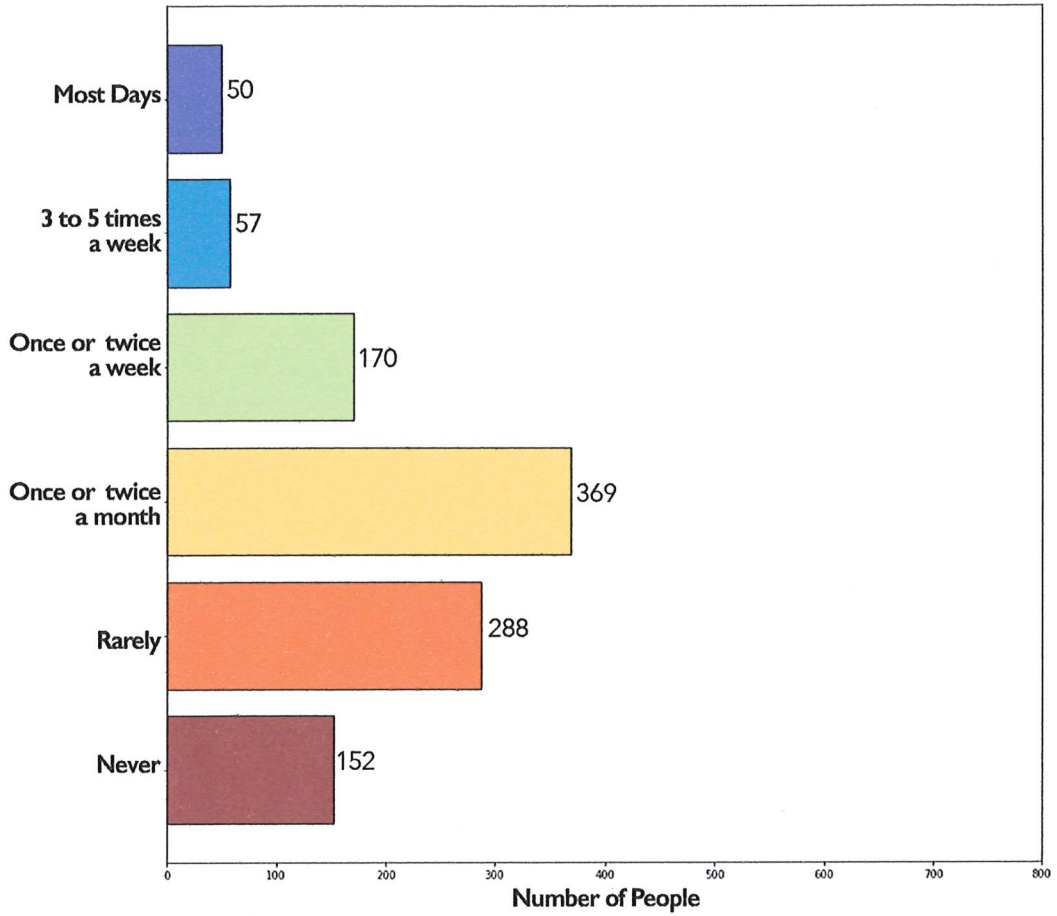
How often would an individual attend **Café / Restaurant**



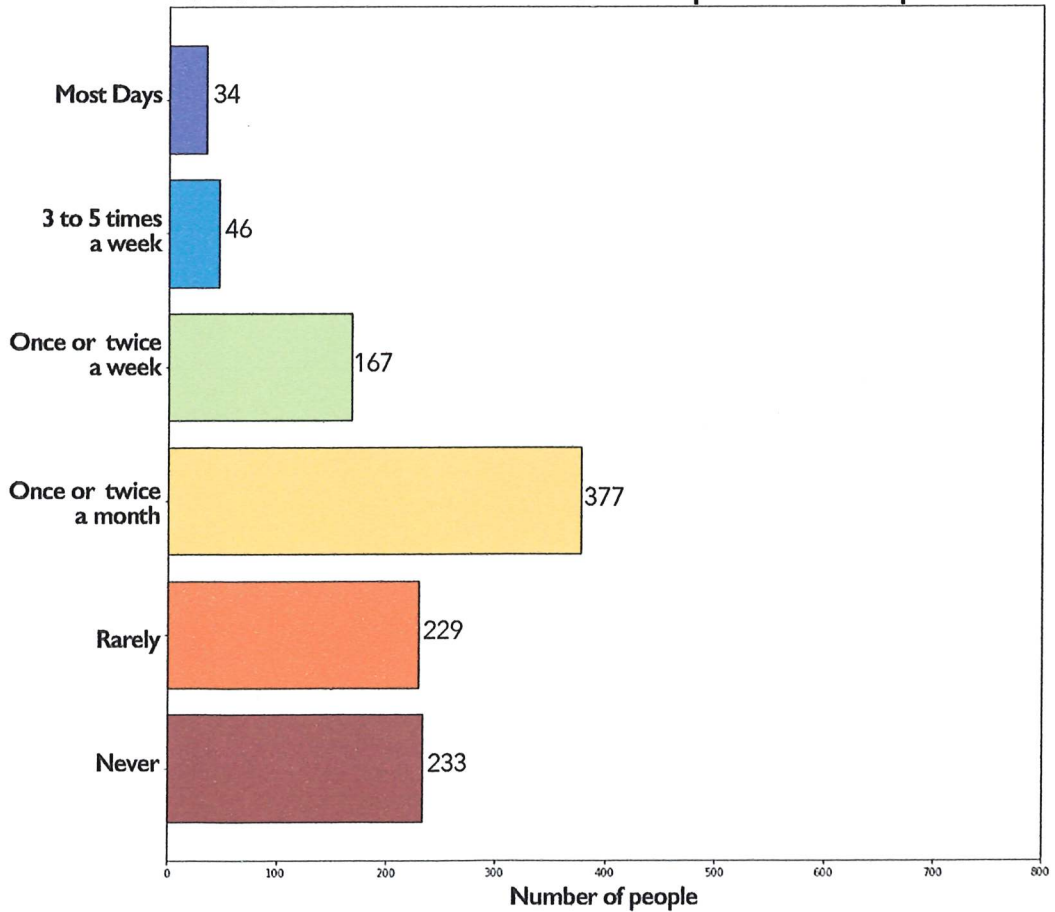
How often would an individual attend **Workshops - Adults**



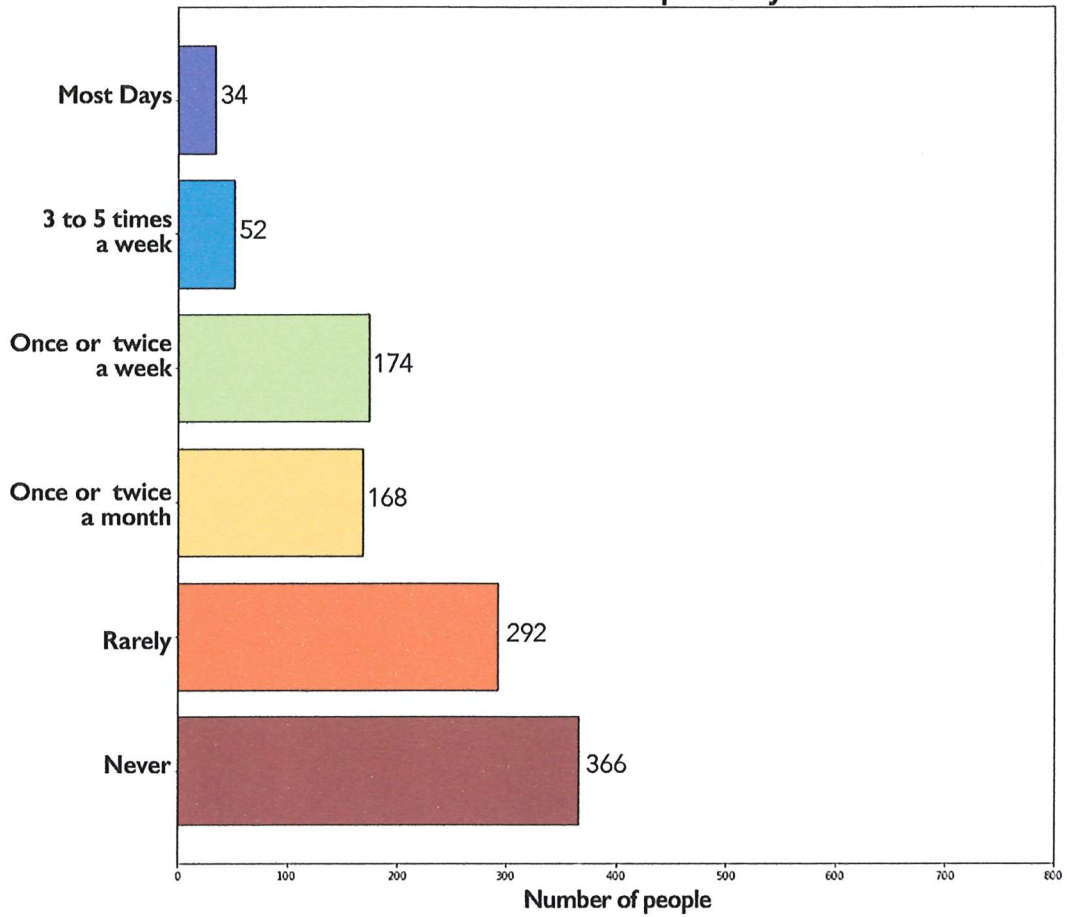
How often would an individual attend **Bar**



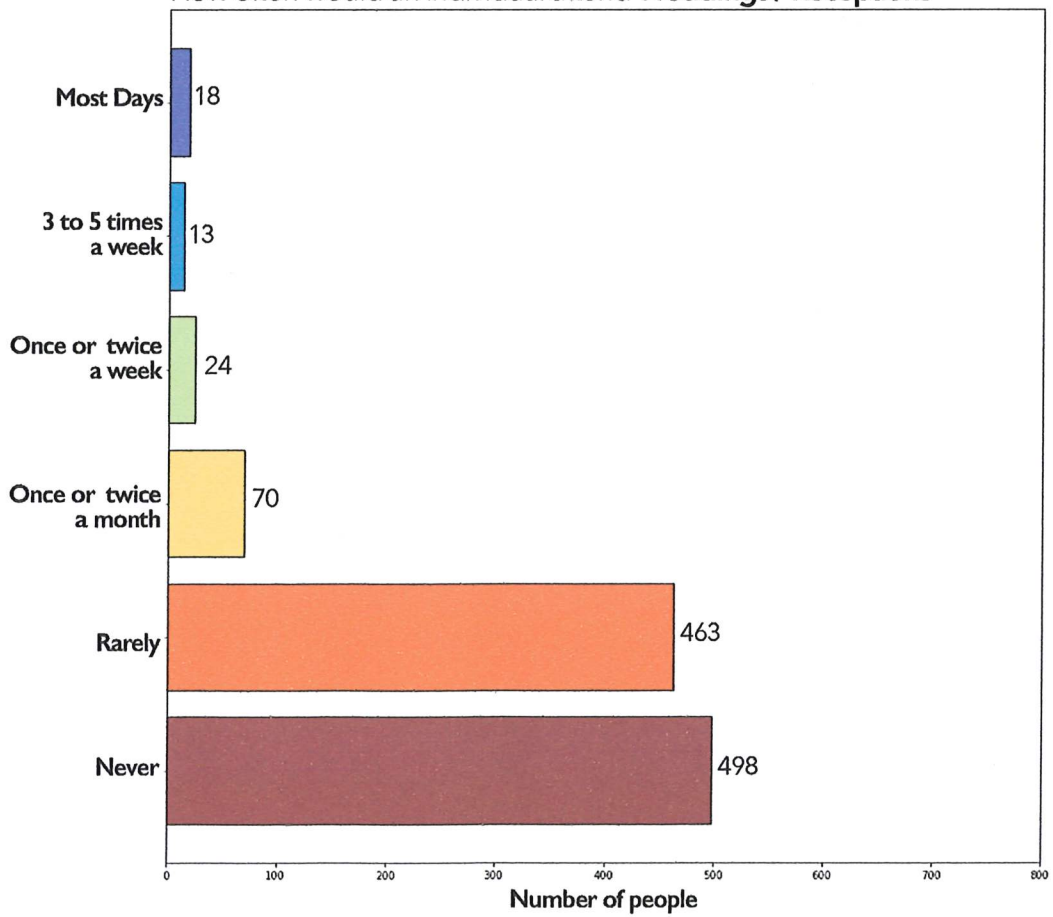
How often would an individual attend **Independent Retail Spaces**



How often would an individual attend **Sports / Gym Facilities**

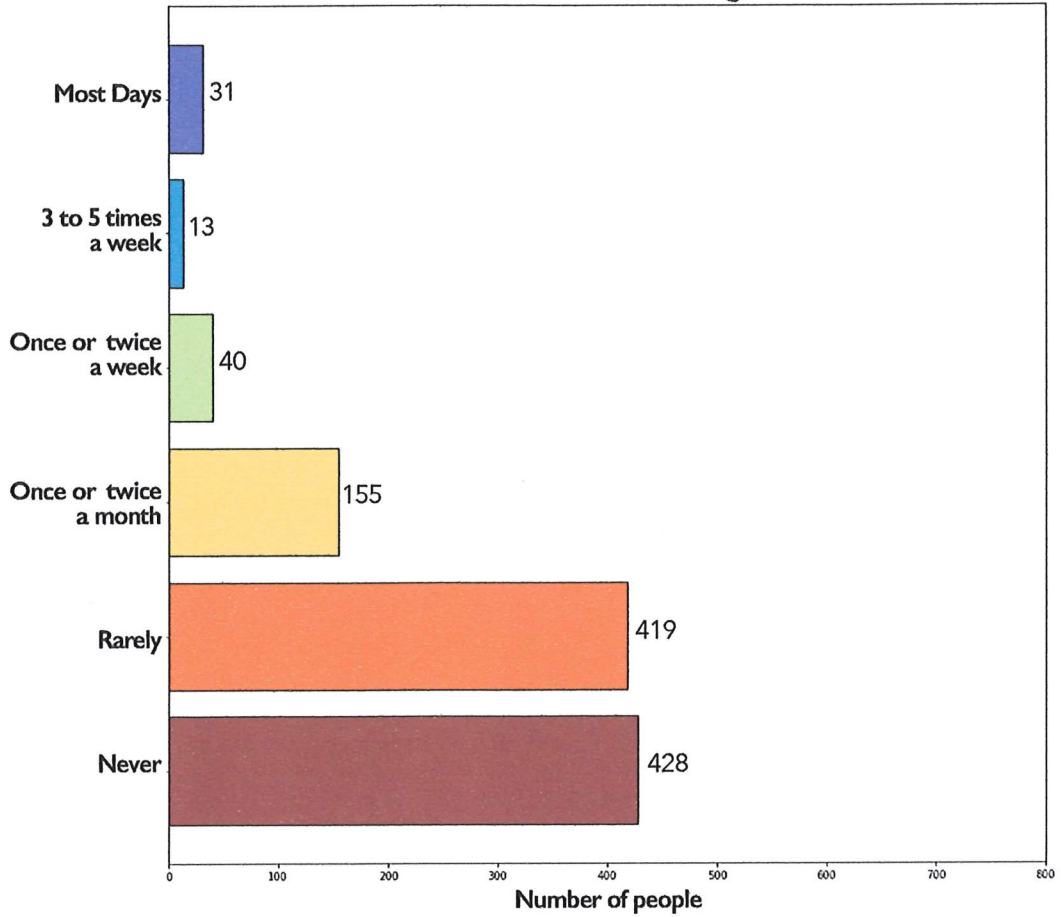


How often would an individual attend **Weddings / Receptions**

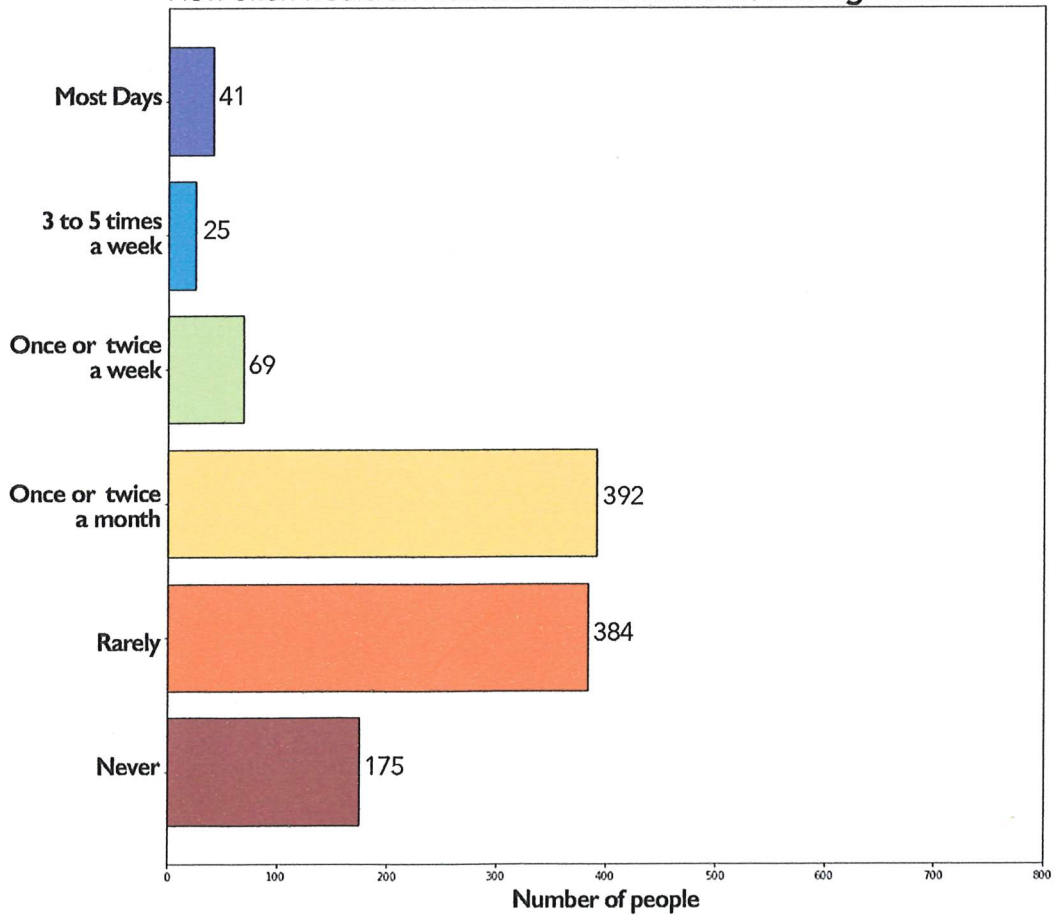




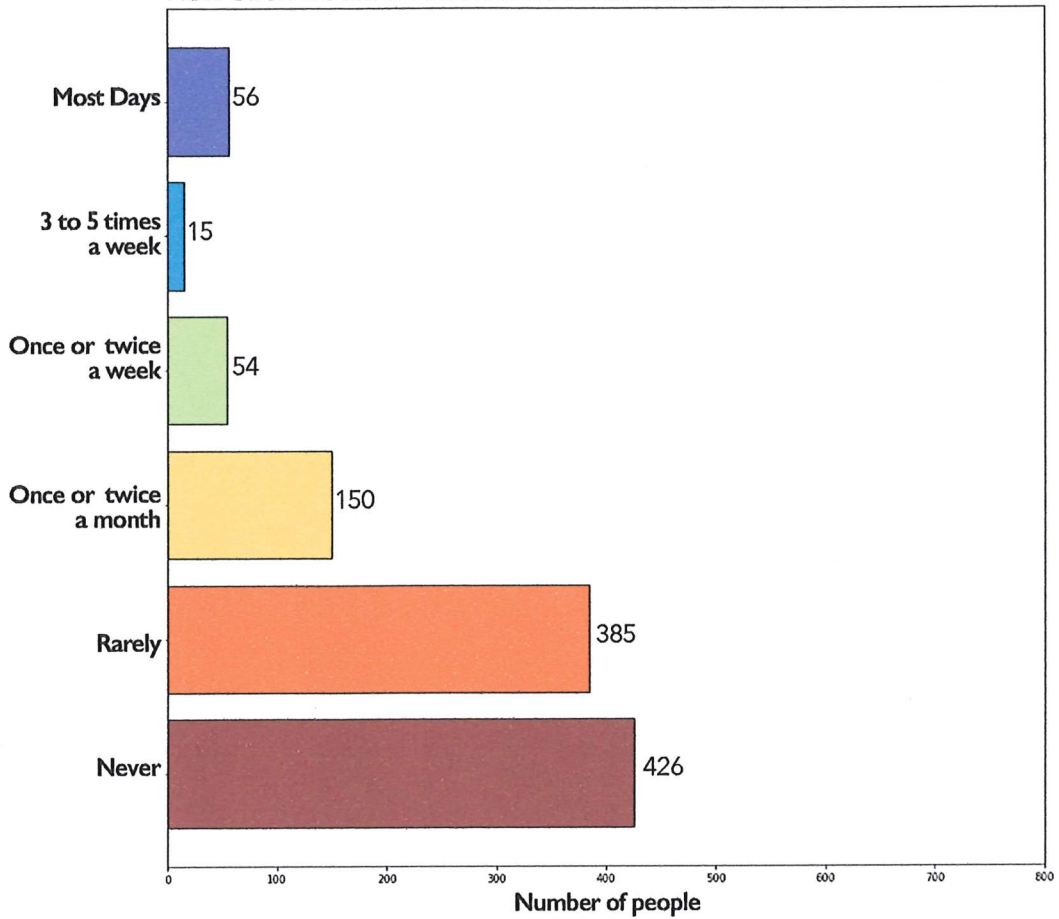
How often would an individual attend **Meeting Rooms**



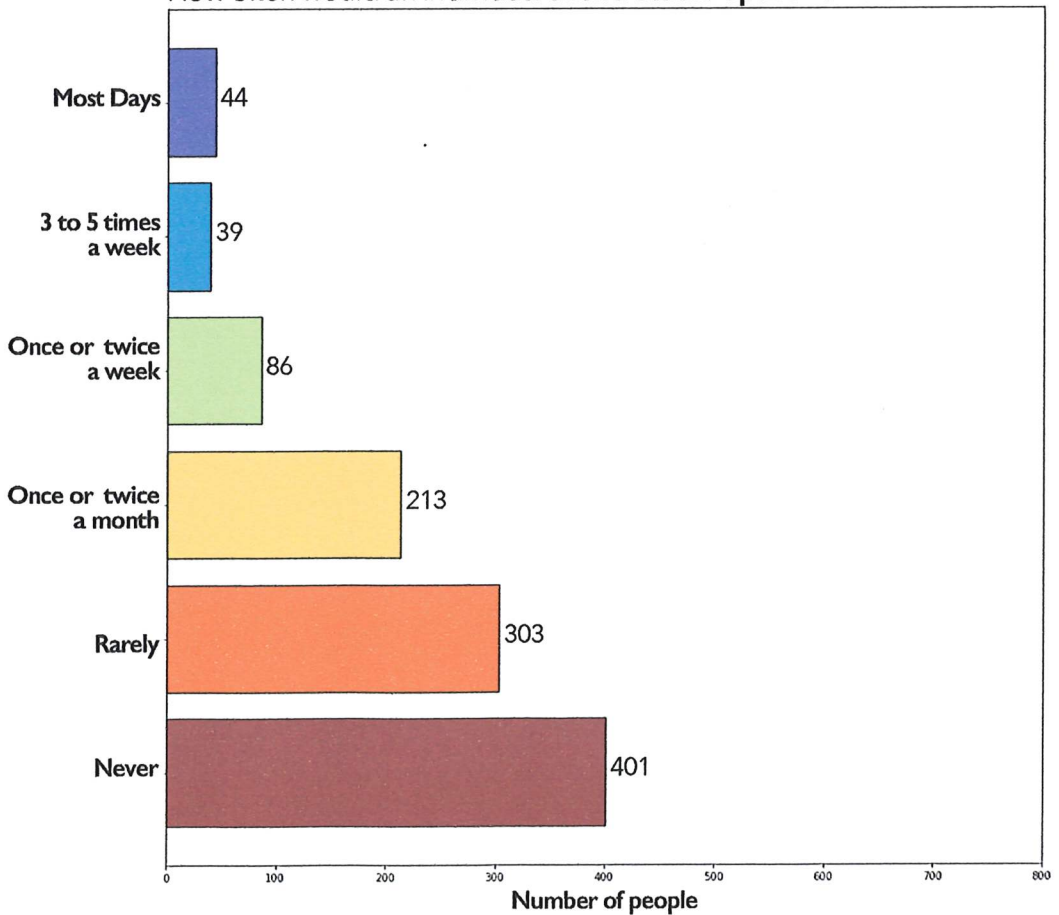
How often would an individual attend **Museum / Heritage Centre**



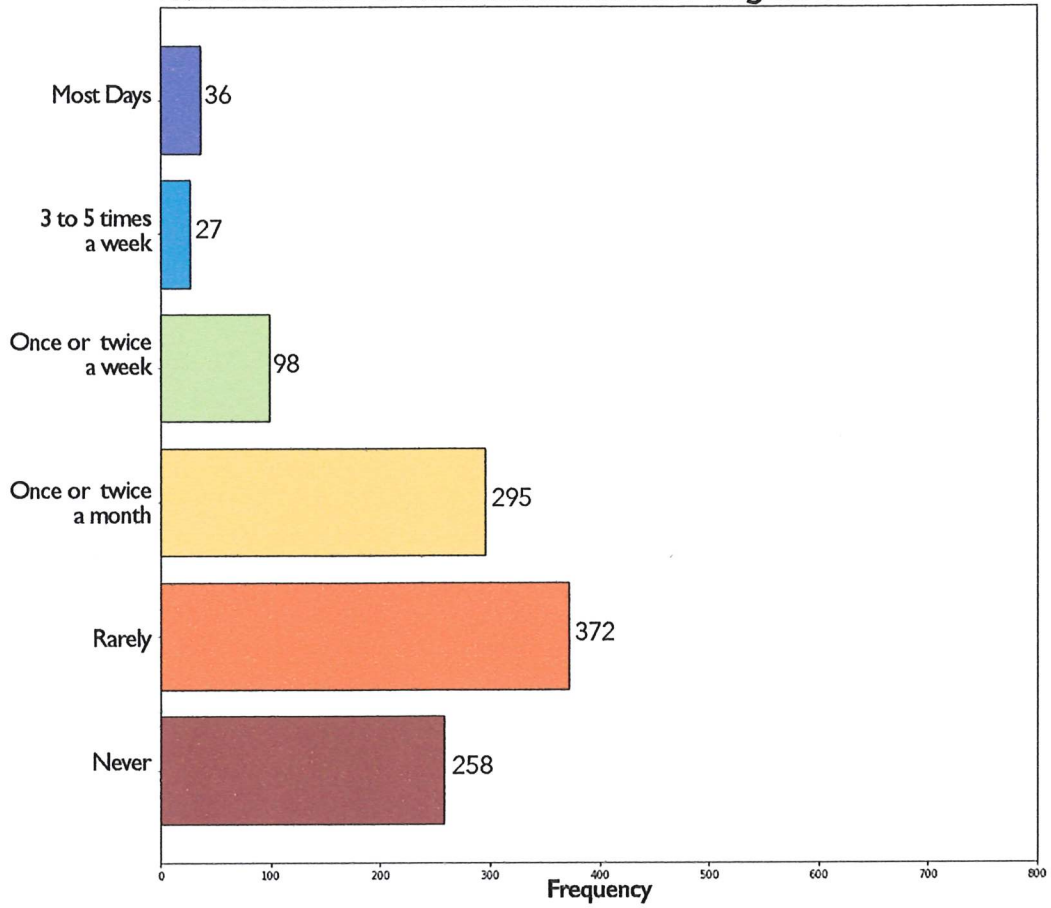
How often would an individual attend **Tourist Information**



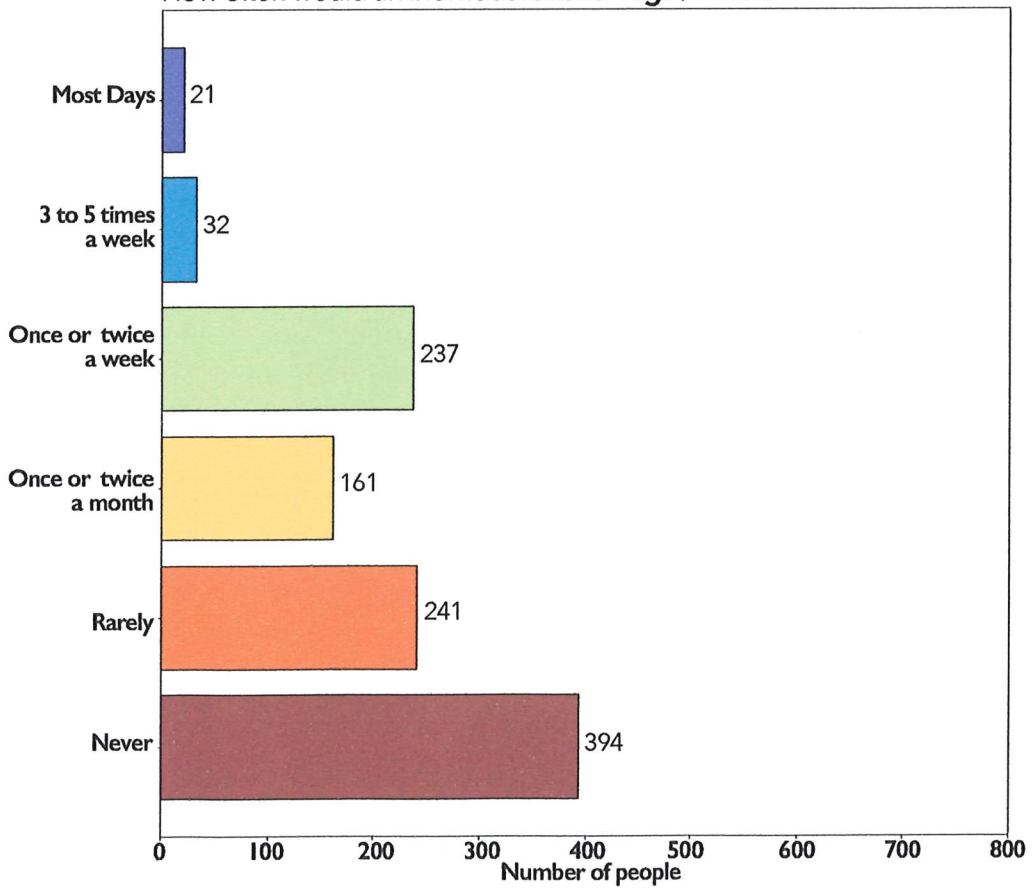
How often would an individual attend **Studio Space For Creatives**



How often would an individual attend **Well-Being Services**

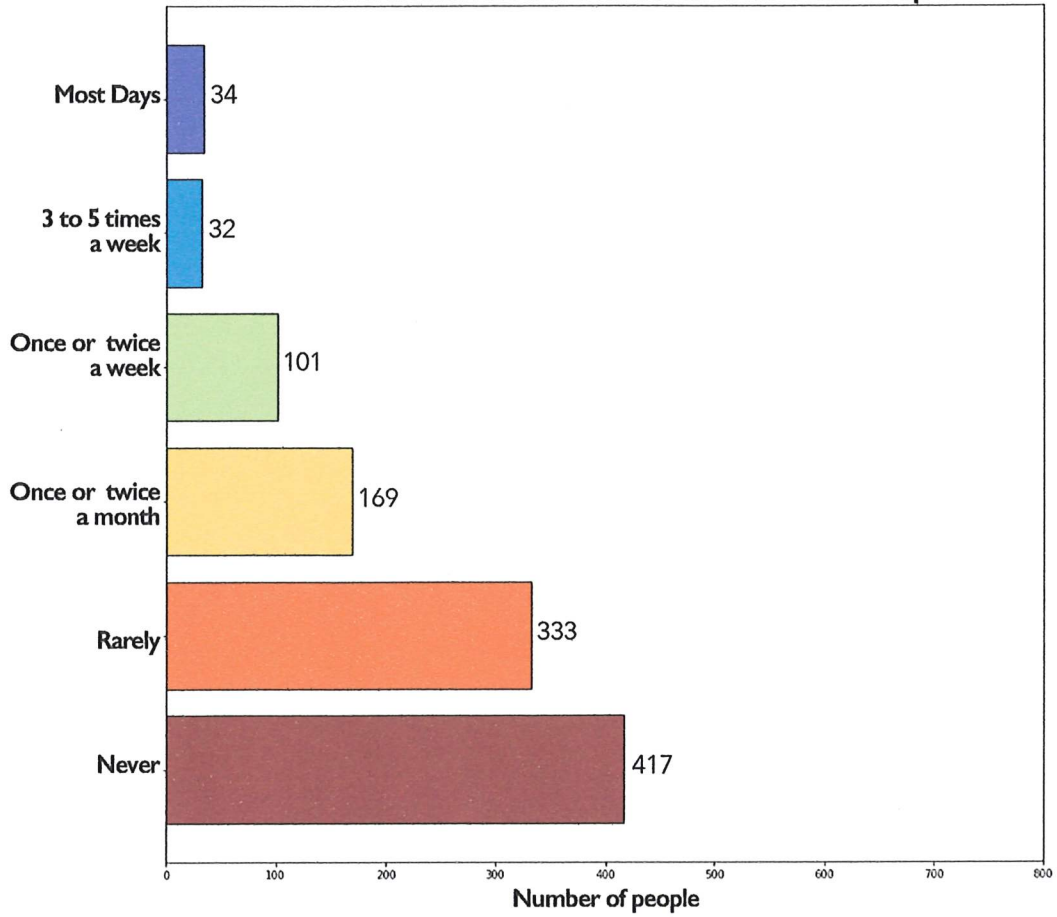


How often would an individual attend **Yoga / Pilates**

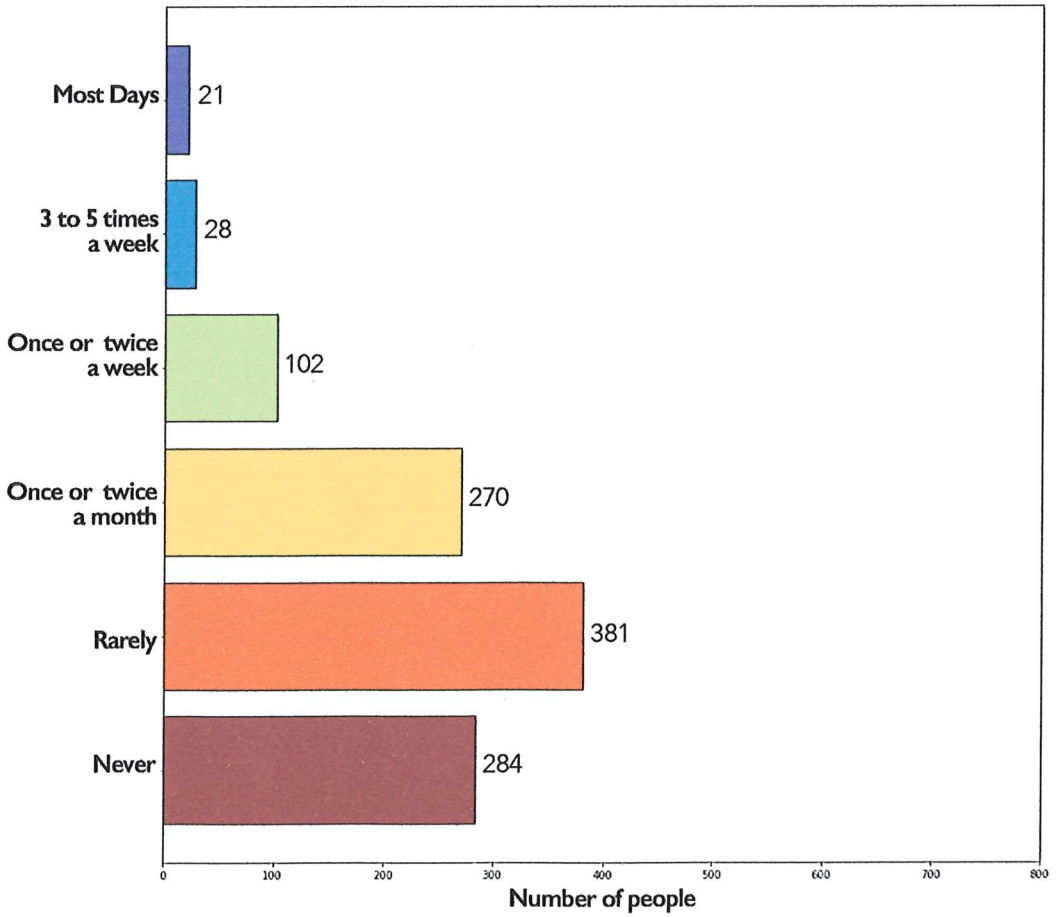




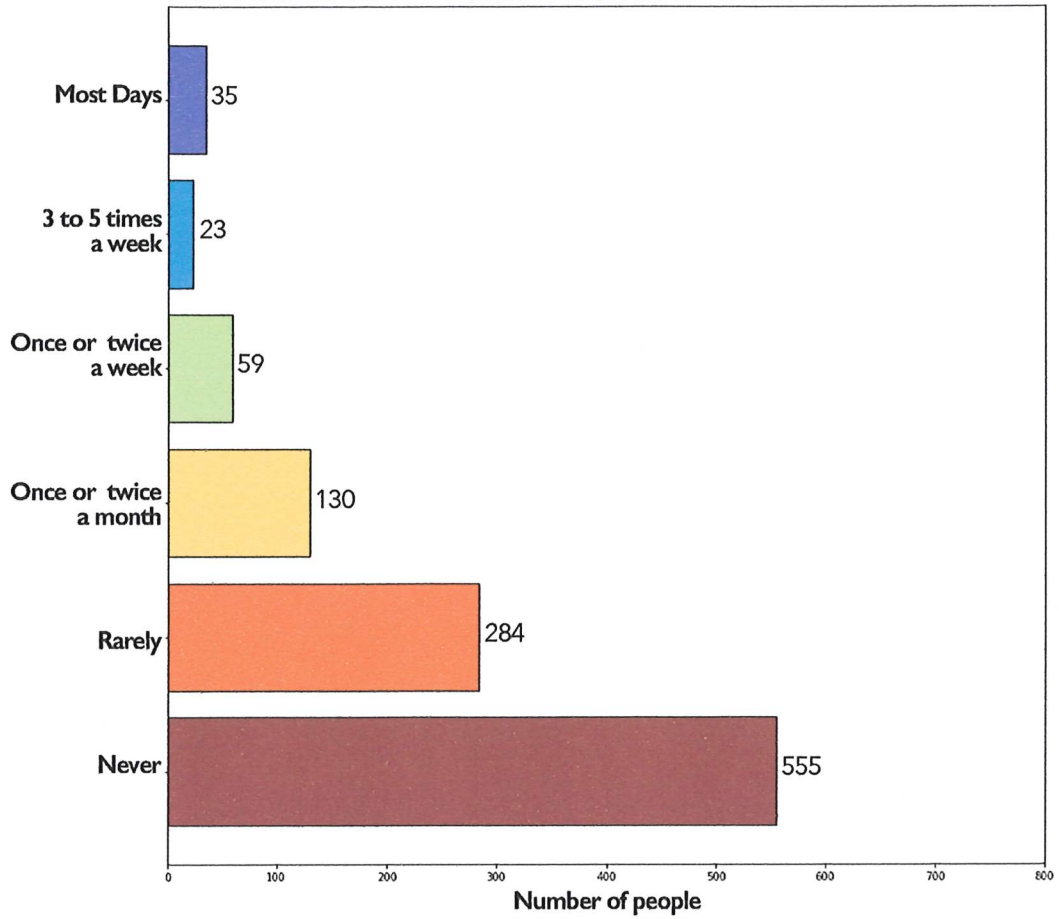
How often would an individual attend **Services for Older People**



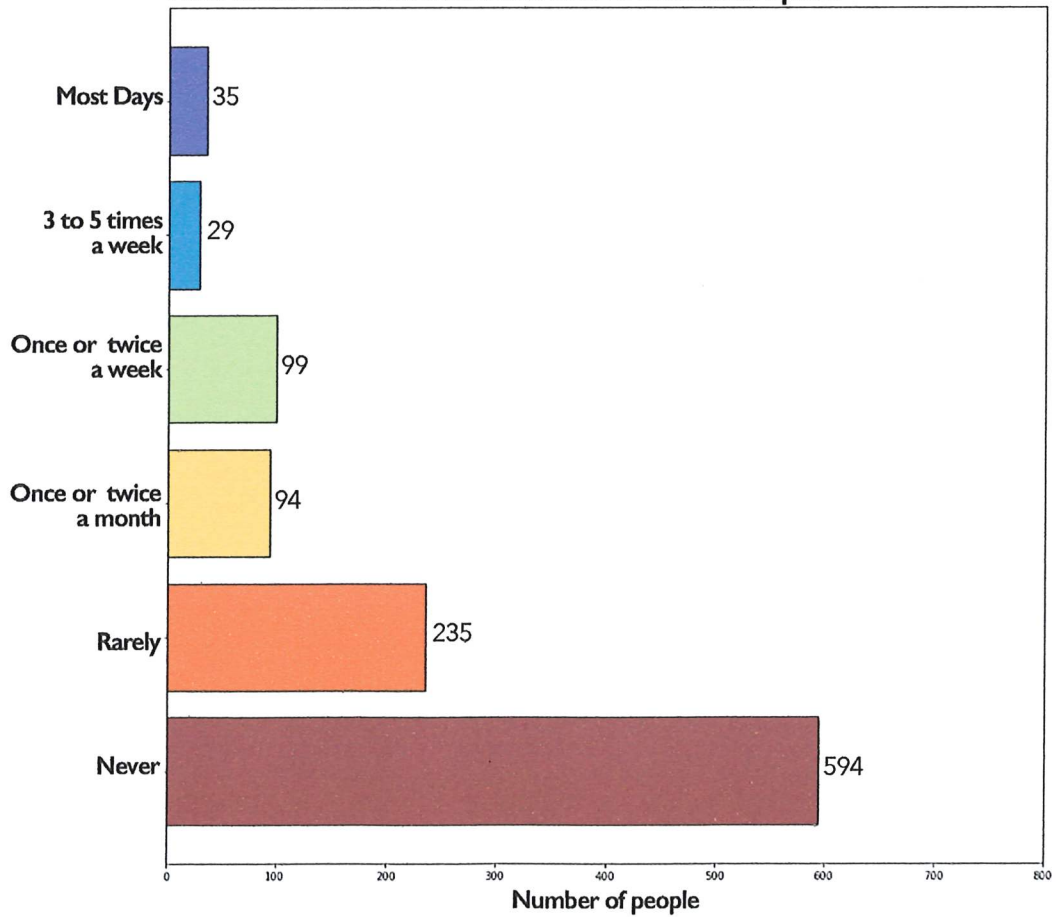
How often would an individual attend **Dance**



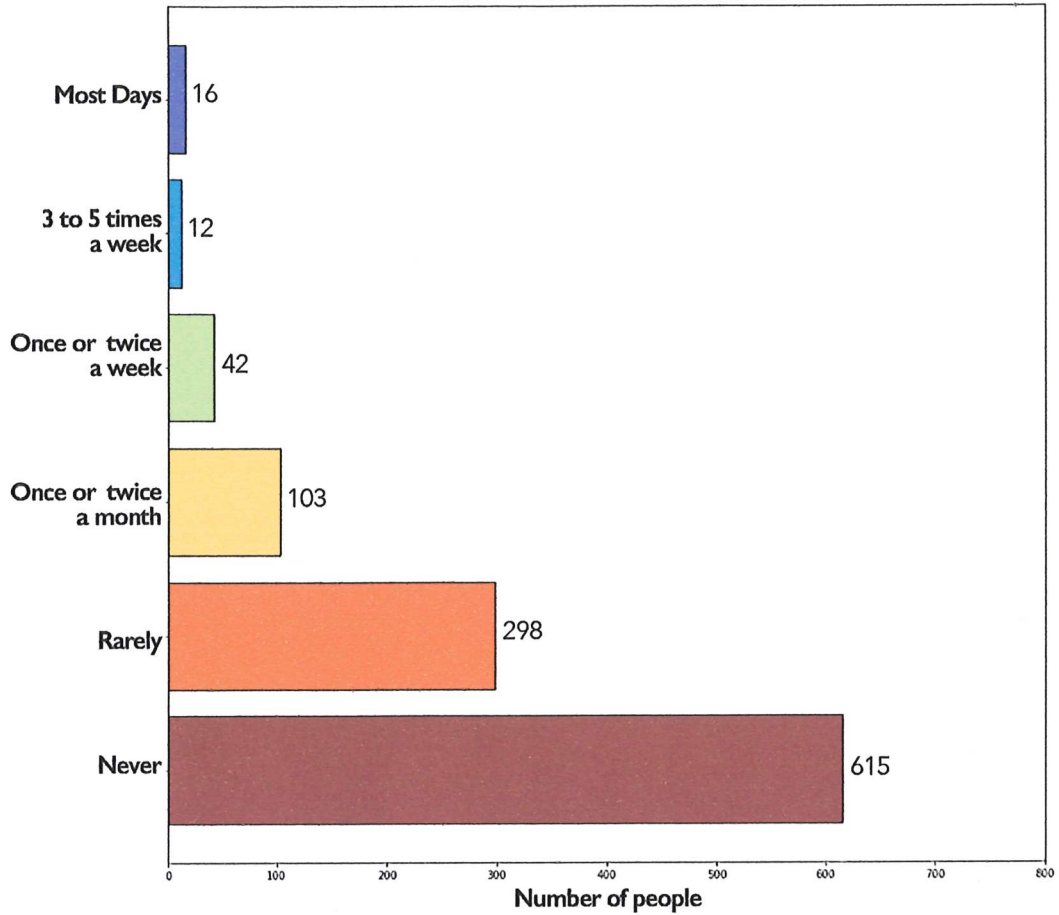
How often would an individual attend **Music Studio Facilities**



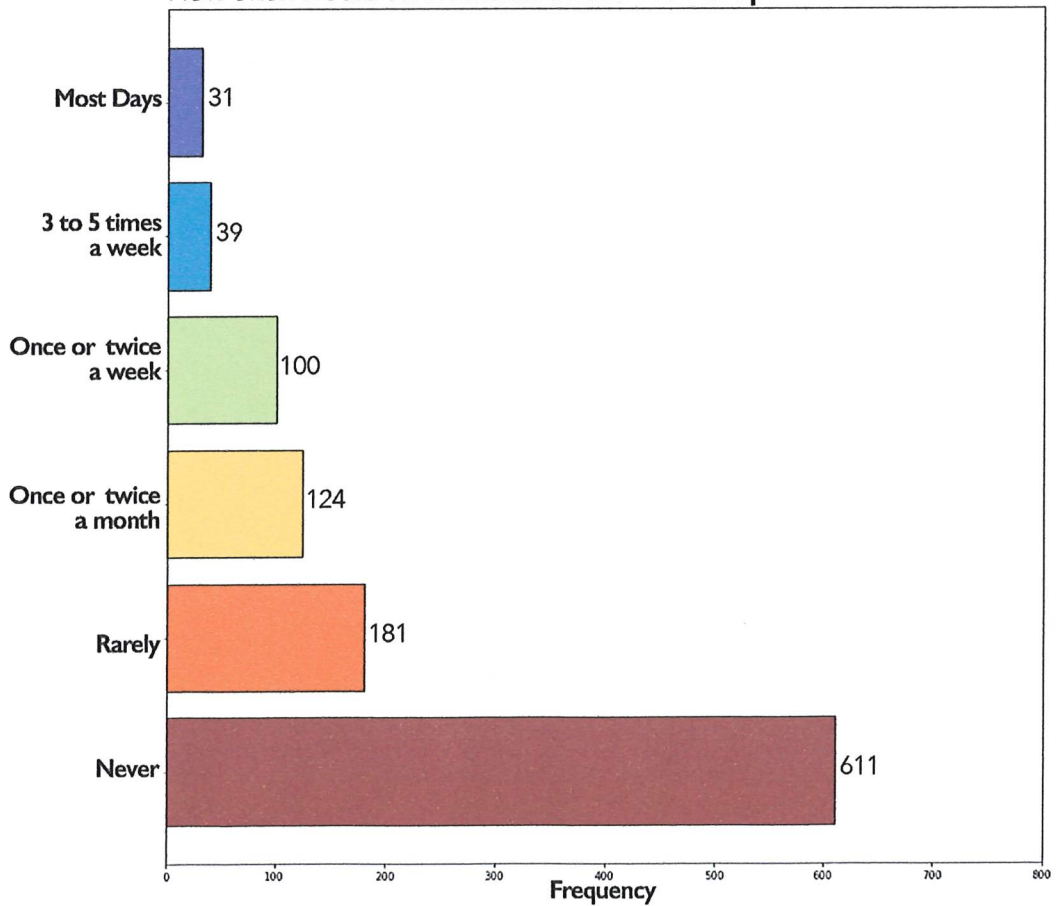
How often would an individual attend **Rehearsal Space**



How often would an individual attend **Veterans' Events**

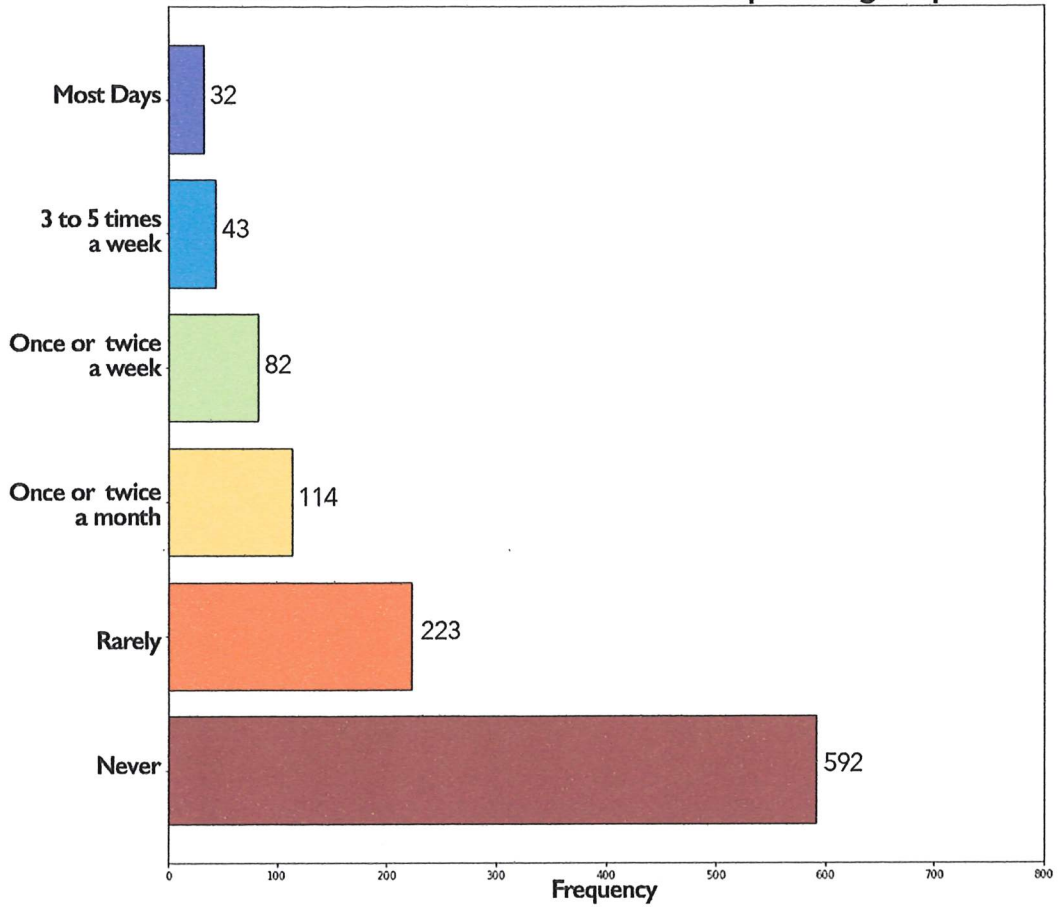


How often would an individual attend **Workshops - Children**

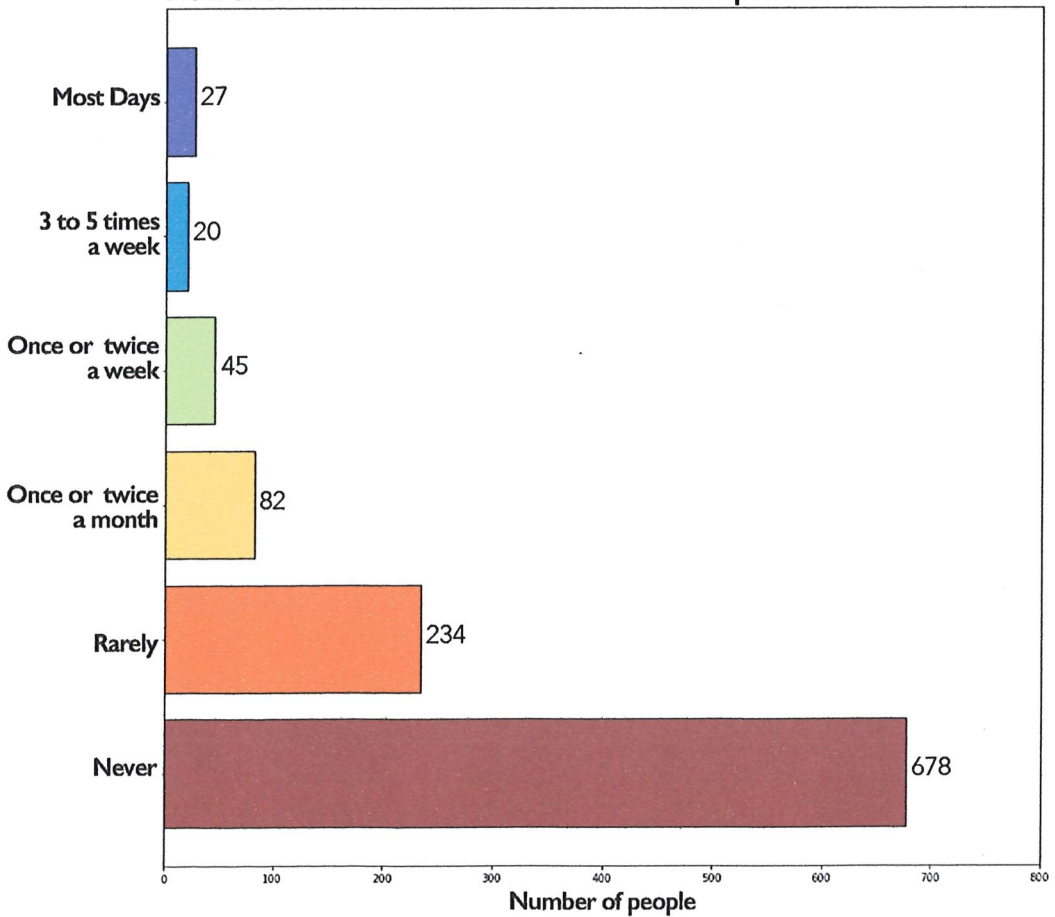




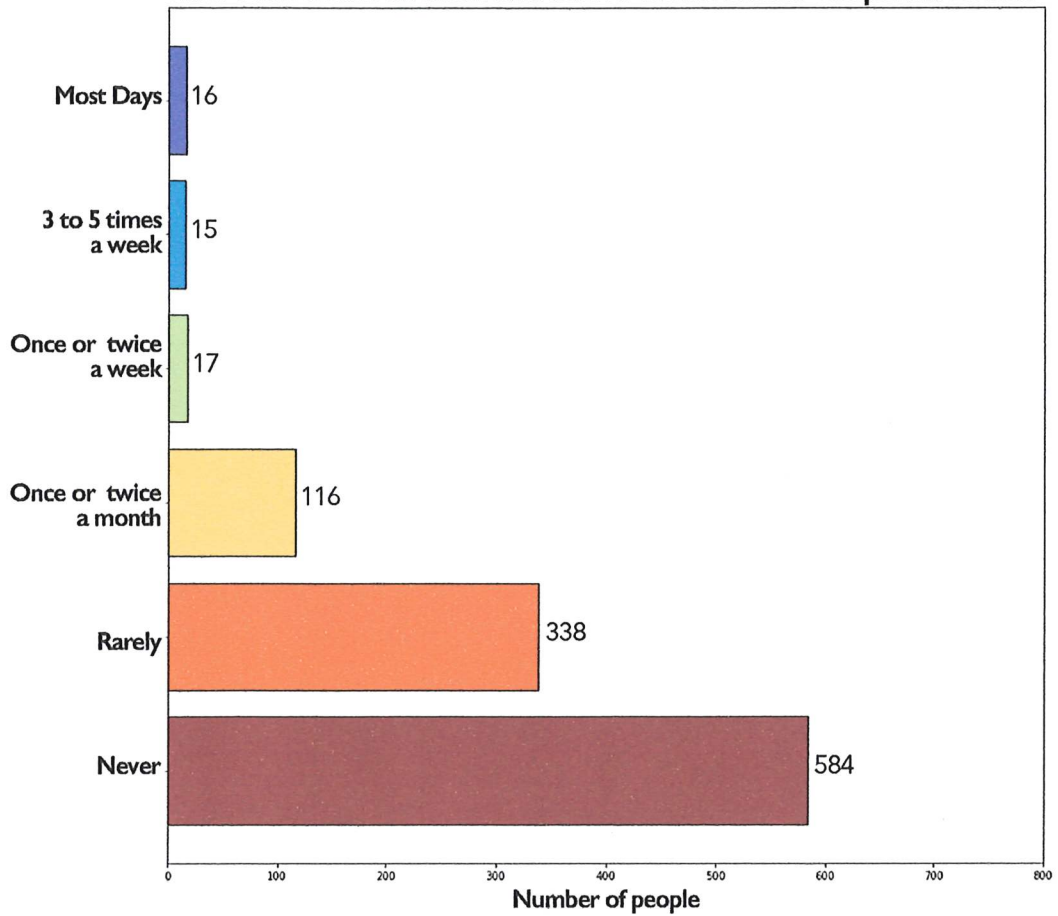
How often would an individual attend **Workshops - Young People**



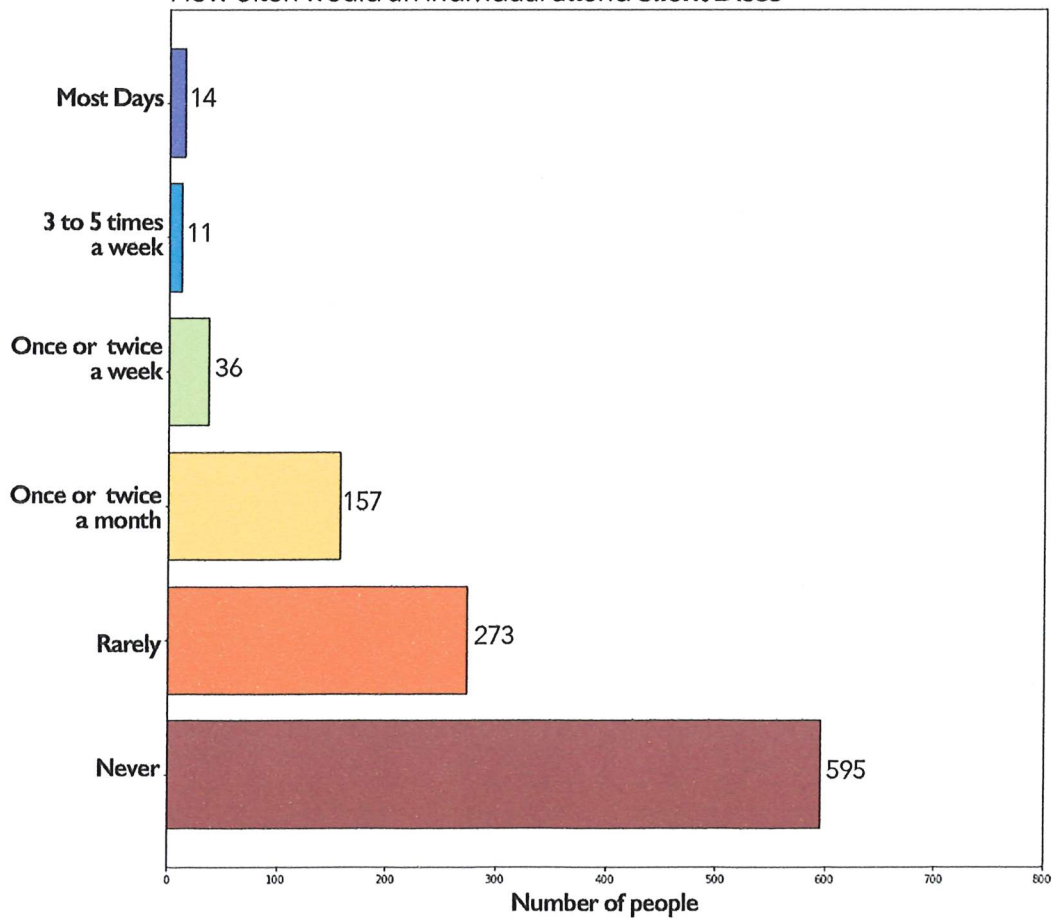
How often would an individual attend **Office Space**



How often would an individual attend **Conferences / Corporate Events**



How often would an individual attend **Silent Disco**



## Appendix 5

### The FORTH Timeline:

#### 2021

##### October

21 FORTH Facebook page launched

##### November

04 FORTH is officially launched at Royal Victoria Arcade in Ryde

14 Meeting with Cllr Michael Lilley & Cllr Jenna Sabine

17 Meeting with prospective committee member

18 Meeting with Cllr Karen Lucioni

25 Attend Island Collection\* Networking Event at Independent Arts

30 Meeting with prospective committee member

##### December

17 Meeting with prospective committee members

#### 2022

##### February

01 First FORTH Committee meeting

21 Meeting with Lisa Dyer (RTC\*\* Town Clerk)  
& Allan Bridges (RTC Business Development Manager)

22 Meeting with Sally Thompson (Project Manager, Ryde HAZ)

24 Meeting with Nick Green (Relationship Manager, Arts Council England)

##### March

01 FORTH Twitter account launched

14 Meeting with Cllr John McLagan

21 Meeting with Trevor Nicholas (CEO, Aspire Ryde)

22 Meeting with Sally Thompson (Project Manager, Ryde HAZ)

24 Meeting with Cllr Richard May

24 Meeting with Sharon George at Department (Creative Director, Shademakers)

25 Meeting with Sally Thompson (Project Manager, Ryde HAZ)

29 FORTH Committee Meeting

30 Attend HAZ Community Event at Department

31 Meeting with Bex Swan (Youth Work Manager, Network Ryde)

##### April

04 Site visit to Trowbridge Town Hall, meet with Alan Wright (Director)

06 Meeting with Cllr Simon Cooke

08 Meeting with John Giddings (Director, Isle of Wight Festival)

09 Meeting with Sally Thompson (Project Manager, Ryde HAZ)

14 Meeting with Dominic Minghella

15 Meeting with prospective committee member

16 Meeting with Cllr Simon Cooke & Cllr John McLagan

20 Meeting with John Giddings (Director, Isle of Wight Festival)



21 At the behest of FORTH, John Giddings has first meeting with Ryde Town Council

### **May**

- 03 Attend Ryde Consortium event led by Abi Wheeler (Creative Director, Ryde Arts)
- 03 Meeting with prospective committee member
- 05 Meeting with FORTH Committee sub group
- 06 Meeting with Bob Seely MP
- 09 Meeting with prospective committee member
- 19 Meeting with RTC Ryde Town Hall Working Group
- 21 Meeting with Brian Harris (Chairman, Museum of Ryde)
- 25 Attend Ryde Carnival Association event at Ryde Library
- 26 Meeting with FORTH Committee sub group

### **June**

- 08 Meeting with Fabio Santos (Executive Director, StoneCrabs Theatre)
- 20 Meeting with Cllr Michael Beston & Cllr Chris Quirk re Friends of Shanklin Theatre

### **July**

- 14 Meeting with Janet Owen (Executive Director, Island Collection\*)
- 27 Meeting with John Giddings (Director, Isle of Wight Festival)

### **August**

- 06 Meeting of FORTH Committee sub group
- 09 Meeting of FORTH Committee sub group
- 16 Meeting with prospective committee member
- 17 Meeting of FORTH Committee sub group
- 24 FORTH Committee meeting

### **September**

- 05 Meeting with Cllr John McLagan and Cllr Karen Lucioni
- 05 Attend Full Meeting of Ryde Town Council
- 08 John Giddings meets with RTC Town Hall Working Group
- 10 FORTH Committee Meeting
- 27 Attend Ryde Business Association Networking Event

### **October**

- 07 FORTH Committee Meeting
- 12 FORTH Committee Meeting

### **November**

- 05 Visit to Friends of Shanklin Theatre and tour of Shanklin Theatre
- 07 Attend Full Meeting of Ryde Town Council
- 15 Attend Ryde Business Association Networking Event
- 29 Meeting with Fabio Santos (Executive Director, StoneCrabs Theatre)

### **December**

- 08 Attend Island Collection\* event at Department
- 12 FORTH Committee Meeting
- 21 FORTH Committee Meeting

## **2023**

### **January**

- 17 FORTH Committee Meeting
- 19 Meeting with Graham Pountney (Artistic Director, Theatre Reviva!)
- 26 Meeting with Cllr Diana Conyers

### **February**

- 02 FORTH Committee AGM
- 10 Meeting with RTC Town Hall Working Group
- 23 Meeting with Lisa Gagliani (Chief Executive, Independent Arts)

### **March**

- 02 FORTH Committee meeting
- 04 Participate in Volunteers Fair at Department (Community Action Isle of Wight)
- 06 Attend Full Ryde Town Council Meeting
- 07 Meeting with Seth Klinger (Ryde Community Resilience Officer)
- 18 Meeting with Cllr Diana Conyers
- 22 FORTH Committee meeting
- 27 Meeting of FORTH sub committee
- 27 Attend Ryde Society meeting
- 29 Judging Ryde School Economics students' presentations on Ryde Town Hall

### **April**

- 05 FORTH Committee meeting
- 20 Meeting with Hannah East at Council Offices (re town litter pick)
- 22 Meeting with Duncan Wilson (Managing Director, Arts Council England)
- 24 Attend Ryde Town Meeting at George St Centre
- 25 Meeting with Georgia Newman (Deputy Director, Creative Island)

### **May**

- 07 Meeting with John Giddings (Director, Isle of Wight Festival)
- 08 FORTH Community Litter Pick around Ryde (National Day of Service)
- 15 Attend on-line funding workshop (Community Action Isle of Wight)
- 16 FORTH Committee meeting
- 18 Attend Shademakers Book Launch event at Department
- 19 Meeting with Cllr Diana Conyers
- 22 Attend 'We Connect' Meet the Funders event in Portsmouth (Portsmouth Creates)

### **June**

- 01 Meeting with Katy Edmunds  
(Director, Performing Arts & Events, New Carnival Company)
- 01 Meeting with Louise Dandy (Historic England)
- 02 Attend on-line workshop on bid writing
- 12 Meeting of FORTH sub committee
- 17 Meeting with Cllr Diana Conyers
- 21 FORTH Committee meeting
- 22 Meeting with Dominic Minghella
- 24 Attend Network Ryde St Thomas' Church open day
- 25 First FORTH stakeholder meeting (held at The Star Coffee & Ale House)

- 27 Meeting with Jo Dodd (Library Supervisor, Ryde Library)
- 27 Launch Ryde Town Hall Survey

### July

- 02 Attend Ryde Business Association social event
- 06 Attend Meet the Funders Event at Aspire Ryde
- 07 Meeting with Fabio Santos (Executive Director, StoneCrabs Theatre)
- 12 Attend Business Expo event at Ryde School with Upper Chine
- 17 Attend University of Portsmouth stakeholder event in Ryde (Tarek Teba)
- 17 Meeting with Chris Ashman (IOW Council Regen)
- 25 Meeting with Caroline Jacobs
- 27 Meeting of FORTH sub committee
- 31 Second Stakeholder Meeting (held at Ryde Library)

### August

- 01 Meeting with two grant writers
- 08 Meeting with Shademakers team at Department
- 10 FORTH Committee meeting
- 15 Meeting with Gavin Stride (Executive Director, Creative Island)
- 22 Meeting with Julie Caudle (Centre Director, Theatretrain)
- 23 Attend *Splaces* event at Aspire Ryde (Nora Aridi)
- 24 Meeting with Peter Fellows (IOW Council Regen)

### September

- 07 Meeting of FORTH sub committee
- 09 Meeting with John Giddings at Department
- 14 FORTH Committee meeting
- 18 Third Stakeholder Meeting (held at Department)
- 25 Meeting of FORTH sub committee
- 28 FORTH Committee meeting

### October

- 01 Ryde Town Hall Survey closes
- 02 Fundraising quiz night at The Star Coffee & Ale House
- 03 Attend University of Portsmouth Memorandum of Understanding event
- 09 Fundraising quiz night at The Star Coffee & Ale House
- 10 Meeting of FORTH sub committee
- 11 Meeting of FORTH sub committee
- 16 Attend Creative Island/Creative Ryde meeting at Ryde Library
- 16 Fundraising quiz night at The Star Coffee & Ale House
- 19 Meeting with Cllr Richard May
- 23 Fundraising quiz night at The Star Coffee & Ale House
- 28 Meeting of FORTH sub committee
- 30 Fundraising quiz night at The Star Coffee & Ale House

### November

- 06 Fundraising quiz night at The Star Coffee & Ale House
- 07 Attend launch of Isle of Wight Cultural Strategy 2023-2033
- 09 First meeting with Ryde Town Hall Trust



- 14 Meeting of FORTH sub committee
- 18 Meeting with Cllr Diana Conyers
- 19 Attend Shanklin Performing Arts Centre public exhibition
- 19 Meeting of FORTH sub committee
- 20 FORTH Committee meeting
- 29 Meeting of FORTH sub committee

### December

- 08 Attend Solent Cultural Plan event at Quay Arts
- 13 Announcement that Ryde Town Hall is on the Georgian Group's Top 10 Buildings at Risk List 2023

## 2024

### January

- 11 FORTH Committee meeting
- 13 Meeting of FORTH sub committee
- 16 Meeting with Shademakers team at Department
- 18 Meeting with Ryde Town Hall Trust
- 29 Attend Creative Island/Creative Ryde meeting at Ryde Library

### February

- 05 Attend Full Ryde Town Council Meeting

\* Island Collection changed its name to Creative Island in December 2023

\*\* Ryde Town Council

### Acknowledgements:

We are grateful to the Museum of Ryde for giving us access to their wonderful archive of images and objects and allowing us to reproduce them here.

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And thank you to those countless others who have supported us along the way. You know who you are.

### Further Reading:

[www.iwhaz.uk/town/ryde](http://www.iwhaz.uk/town/ryde) for: Information on Ryde Heritage Action Zone (HAZ)  
Ryde Place Plan  
Ryde Town Hall Feasibility Study & Business Case 2021

[www.creativeisland.org](http://www.creativeisland.org) for: 'All the Wonder' - The IOW Cultural Strategy 2023-2033

[www.iwbiosphere.org](http://www.iwbiosphere.org) for: Information on UNESCO IOW Biosphere Reserve

Together we can

# IMAGINE

build and enjoy a better future  
for Ryde Town Hall & Theatre







Cover design by [www.pinkeyegraphics.co.uk](http://www.pinkeyegraphics.co.uk)