

Cabinet Lead Reports – Full Council 27 February 2019

Councillor Michael Wilson
Leader of the Council

Corporate Strategy and Budget 2019-20

The revised and updated corporate strategy and business plans are included as part of the budget papers submitted to Full Council today for approval. As a set of documents, they provide a clear outline of the key strategic aims and objectives I want to see delivered for Havant Borough and importantly, how they will be funded for the next year. The Strategy and Plan have been developed alongside the medium term financial strategy (MTFS) ensuring the alignment of the policy and the MTFS. I believe that the Corporate Strategy is concise, clear and focussed on tangible and realistic outcomes across the short, medium and long term, particularly focussing on our key regeneration aspirations over the coming years. Our senior management team are now working with colleagues to develop detailed delivery plans and progress against these will be reported during the coming year.

External Relations (including PUSH, HIOWLA & Solent LEP representative for HBC)

I attended a meeting of the PUSH Joint Committee on 5th February. Since becoming Leader, I expressed my concern at the apparent lack of influence for Havant within PUSH and I wanted to ensure that HBC received its fair share of investment from the Solent LEP. The Government's review of the LEP boundaries gave me an opportunity to raise my concerns and to consider with Partners whether the Solent LEP remained the appropriate vehicle for us. There has been a reconfiguration due to the number of authorities which straddled more than one LEP and so there has been a change of focus. As a result, in part due to my lobbying, a Solent Leaders' Forum has been established and is due to meet in the next couple of weeks. Whereas in the past, the Districts had one representative on the Solent LEP, the Forum will provide an opportunity for the districts to make a direct contribution to Solent LEP policy and decision making. I intend to make full use of this new opportunity to promote the Borough's needs in terms of infrastructure and funding.

Hampshire Housing Deal

The Government are seeking to negotiate a number of housing deals with groups of authorities who are able to offer increased housing delivery. Previously, they were insisting on a 20% increase over and above the Government's own objectively assessed need. Now it seems they are prepared to be more flexible in terms of specific percentage increases. The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have had some preliminary discussions with County about feasibility. Given that we have just made tough decisions within our own draft Local Plan regarding

allocations, I am sceptical about the role we would be able to play. Inevitably, what is not clear at this stage is what is on offer from MHCLG in terms of funding, infrastructure and benefits for our existing communities.

Revised National Planning Policy Framework

Members will be familiar with the 'Duty to Co-operate' under the NPPF, which required authorities to consider whether they could accommodate additional housing for those neighbouring authorities who could not meet their allocation under the 'Objectively Assessed Need'. Under the revised NPPF this has been strengthened and economic areas will be required to provide a 'Statement of Common Ground', defined as a written record of the progress made by strategic policy-making authorities during the process of planning for strategic cross-boundary matters. In other words, evidence will be required of the steps which have been taken to accommodate development on behalf of neighbouring authorities or cogent reasons why it isn't possible. As it is incumbent upon all authorities to provide a statement, I have agreed in principle to HBC being part of a joint instruction for the work to be undertaken and to make an appropriate contribution to the cost. There is a degree of urgency to the extent that a statement will be required as a prerequisite for a sound Local Plan.

Business Plan for the Culture Creative Industries and Built Environment Themed Panel 2019/20

The creative industries have been identified as an important economic growth area in the Solent and the PUSH Joint Committee was presented with a business plan to continue to support this sector. We were advised that the number of creative business in the area grew by a third to over 5,000 during the period 2010 to 2016. Often a little seed funding can result in matched funding from other sources and this together with a number of training and networking events is thought to have assisted in this growth. I would like to see the growth of creative and digital economies in Havant and we need to ensure that the borough is attractive for this important sector.

Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy Guidance Offsetting and Mitigation Requirement

Adequate and realistic mitigation for protected birds is crucial to the soundness of our Local Plan and the viability of several of our allocated housing sites. The Joint Committee was presented with guidance on mitigation and offsetting requirements which was presented in a final report. I have appended the report as I believe it is of interest to members due to the significance of this work to our area.

Taxi Licensing

At the last Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Government Association (HIOWLA) meeting, it was highlighted that there are no national licensing standards and therefore taxi drivers or operators had the ability to choose to

licence with the most lenient authority. Once licensed, they are able to conduct business in other authority areas. There is an obvious safeguarding issue and therefore a need to consider a joint approach or lobbying Government to impose national standards.

Brexit Preparations

The Cabinet are receiving regular updates on the work of our Brexit Team to ensure we are resilient in the event of a 'no-deal' Brexit. The key short-term issues we could face include the potential impact on local road networks because of potential delays caused by increased processing times for vehicles passing through the Portsmouth International Port.

Longer term issues that could impact locally include the availability of workers particularly in social care, construction and agriculture sectors.

We are making sure that our own business continuity plans are robust and able to deal with any impacts and, through our Economic Development Team, helping to signpost local businesses to key information, particularly those who import or export goods.

Corporate Performance

Cabinet members will provide reports on performance across their portfolios; however, I do wish to highlight a few items on overall corporate performance:

The Quarter Three Health Check will shortly be available to Councillors to review.

The Local Plan was unanimously approved at Full Council on 30th January 2019 and has moved forward to the next stage. I am grateful to Members for approving the Plan despite its controversies. The up-to-date Local Plan will mean we can defend the Borough against speculative development and avoid government intervention. The work to develop a robust Local Plan has been extensive and is a significant milestone for the Council and the Borough as a whole.

Since my last report Council approved the Regeneration Strategy. This strategy provides the framework for the regeneration of the Borough over the short, medium and long term. This was a key step towards ensuring that we meet our aspirations to stimulate the regeneration of the Borough for the benefit of present and future generations. We cannot do this alone, but we have a key leadership role to play as a catalyst, working with key stakeholders to deliver our vision.