

Cabinet Lead Reports – Full Council 19 July 2017

Councillor Mike Cheshire: Leader's Report

Finance and Devolution, HIOWLGA, Business Rates Retention, Solent Growth Forum, Solent Growth Forum, TCPA Spring Conference, Internal Communications.

Finance

The team has produced the outturn for the 2016/17 financial year, which was reported to Cabinet on 28th June 2017. This showed an underspend against the approved budget - which has been partly used to fund some carry forwards, with the remainder being used to increase our reserves. This puts the Council in a stronger position to meet the financial challenges ahead.

The team has produced the year end Statement of Accounts which is now subject to audit review and a press statement has been sent.

The team continues to prepare for the transition to Capita. "Due diligence" work will commence shortly, and this will provide greater clarity to both staff and Capita on the full details of the move.

Sadly our Chief Finance Officer, Craig Smith, left us on 30th June 2017. We thank him for his hard work, and wish him well in his future. Andy Radford has joined us as our Interim Chief Finance Officer, to provide support until a new permanent CFO joins us. That recruitment process has commenced.

Business Rates Retention

The 2017/18 outturn report shows a slight reduction in overall yield, after discounts and exemptions, of £223,000. However, the gross business rates baseline, prior to any discounts or exemptions being applied increased from £81.402m on 1/4/2016 to £81.750m as at 31/3/2017, which demonstrates growth of 0.43%. The reduction in net yield is due to a number of factors, the most significant of which are:

- Increased take-up of discounts & exemptions
- Empty properties within the ratings list (for example, vacant units being refurbished prior to reoccupation)
- General Refunds (particularly backdated refunds relating to prior years)

There have been two other significant business rates movements which have impacted on the business rates outturn for 2016/17.

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Local Government Association (HIOWLGA)

The HIOWLGA meeting was held on 16th June 2017 and there is nothing significant to report from that meeting.

Devolution and the Combined Authority

At the LGA the Secretary of State for Local Communities stated that the Combined Authority Issue remains “a top priority for ministers”, and although Hampshire County Council is supportive of a “two tier authority” their funding gap may require a Hampshire wide consultation about the issue of Reorganisation of Local Government. I will keep you posted as and when more information is forthcoming.

Solent Growth Forum

The Solent Growth Forum is currently being revamped. I met with Marc Griffin, Head of Capital & Infrastructure for the Solent LEP who has taken over lead contact for Solent LEP for the Solent Growth Forum on 19th June 2017 to discuss the growth forum’s forward plan and I will report back further, once the agenda has been clarified.

Local Government Association Annual Conference

I attended the LGA Annual Conference in Birmingham between 4th and 6th July. The conference provided an opportunity not only to raise the profile of our Borough but also provided an opportunity to meet with partner agencies and associates such as Norse and a number of colleagues from other Local Authorities involved in the 6 Councils Project. Any significant points from this event will be fed back at the next Full Council.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Leader/ Staff Briefings – I have had the pleasure to meet with a number of staff from around the organisation to provide staff with an insight into the Council & its future and discuss with them our future plans. Briefings went well and were well received by staff.

You’re a star – I also had pleasure in meeting members of staff who were nominated this quarter for a ‘you’re a star’ award. Over 50 members of staff received a nomination and there some fantastic examples of how staff have outperformed and delivered for our Council. Staff recognition is vital and I place a great deal of importance on this part of council business.

Councillor appointments – Following some in initial tweaks, all councillor appointments have now been made. I wanted to thank everybody who provided their input into this process and I hope that you are all happy with the appointments made.

We have an additional Cabinet member, Councillor Lulu Bowerman, who has agreed to take on Cabinet Lead for Governance and Organisational Development. The Cabinet reshuffle of portfolios that has been undertaken will help to ensure that portfolios are generally more tied to Operational matters. The new responsibilities have been issued, along with the names of the Heads of Service that deal with the individual matters.

Sabbatical – I will be taking up an opportunity to enhance my interest in History, which will result in me being out of the area for a total of 4 months between now and 31 December. Councillor Tony Briggs will be Acting Leader between 1st August and 31st December in its entirety, to ensure there remains consistency of leadership. I will resume my position from 1st January 2018. I would like to thank Cllr Tony Briggs for taking on the duty of Acting Leader and the many others of you who have offered their support which allows me to take up this exciting opportunity. During the time I am out of the area, of course I will still be accessing my emails and involved with council business as a back bencher.

Partnership Working with East Hampshire District Council - Councillor Richard Millard the new Leader at EHDC and I met on 25th April 2017 to maintain the strong working relationship between our two Councils. The Joint EHDC/ HBC Cabinet on 29th June 2017 provided further opportunity to ensure our two Cabinets continue to work well together to provide the best outcomes for our residents.

Winchester City Council – The Chief Executive and I met with the new Leader and Chief Executive of Winchester City Council on 3rd April 2017, to explore any further opportunities between our two Councils. The meeting was positive and as a consequence of that initial meeting, I have invited the Leader, Councillor Horrill, to the Plaza to demonstrate how we successfully deliver co-located working and to discuss the 6 Councils commissioning model. I will update you further should Winchester decide if there are any opportunities for us to work together.

Current National issues

High Rise Blocks – Following the tragic events at Grenfell Tower on 14th June 2017, officers have been liaising with a number of agencies, such as Hampshire Fire and Rescue, Police and landlords etc. It is important to reassure residents in the Borough that we, along with other agencies are responding to residents concerns and that residents should raise any concerns with their landlord in the first instance and then to Environmental Health/Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service if their concerns are not addressed.

Terrorist Threat – Acts of terrorism remain high in everybody's thoughts. We all need to ensure that we keep ourselves vigilant in terms of a terrorist threat, which has not diminished.

Brexit – A UK exit from the European Union remains on the agenda and we continue to monitor International affairs to ascertain impact on Brexit on council business and our residents (see Cllr Narinder Bain's report). Again at the LGA, it was emphasised that the two main issues for Brexit are:

1. The CONTROL of our Borders (emphasis on Control – not closing)
2. The UK decides on our own Laws (which will require a complete repatriation of all Laws that concern us in the UK).

The discussion then lead onto the repatriation of Laws, will they be repatriated to Whitehall, or devolved down to Local Government. Again, watch this space.