

Cabinet Lead Reports – Full Council 22 January 2020

Councillor Michael Wilson

Leader of the Council

Introduction

It has been a somewhat poignant and reflective period since the last Full Council with the Holocaust Memorial Day marking 75 years since the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and with the passing of 2 previous well-respected Councillors, Virginia Wilson-Smith and Hilary Bolt, both of whom, had a massive positive impact on the borough and the communities they represented.

Corporate Strategy

The draft Corporate Strategy was reviewed at Cabinet on 5th February. Following discussion at Cabinet the document was updated to reflect feedback from Cabinet members and it is now recommended to be adopted by Full Council.

The Corporate Strategy is the document which captures the essence of the proposals of Havant Borough Council for delivery of services. The document forms a key part of the core policy framework and requires to be approved by Full Council. The document is designed to guide the approach of the Council to local issues for the next 5 years. This policy document provides the backbone upon which the strategies for the delivery of each service rests.

Subject to adoption, the Corporate Strategy will be shared with relevant stakeholders, our online Citizens Panel, our business forum and our community groups. This engagement exercise will provide the opportunity for the content to be reviewed and feedback considered in order to further strengthen the document during 2020-21.

Following the engagement exercise, the intention is to bring back a refreshed version later in the year. In addition, subject to adoption, a detailed Corporate Action Plan will be built by Heads of Service with Cabinet leads to cover the key activities required in 2020-21 in delivering the Strategy.

The five identified themes of the Corporate Strategy are:

- An environmentally aware and cleaner Borough
We want Havant to set high standards for environmental sustainability. This will be fundamental to any future development or regeneration project.
- A safer environment, healthier and more active residents

We intend to improve the quality of life for our residents and ensure equality of opportunity across our areas

- A thriving local economy

We intend playing a key role in promoting economic prosperity within our borough and campaign to attract new businesses to our area and will work with employers who wish to relocate and/or grow their businesses

- Infrastructure that matches our ambitions

To succeed on the delivery of our themes we must ensure that the physical infrastructure is in place, working with partners in the public, private and third sector to initiate and create development schemes and regeneration.

- Creating a sustainable Council

Our approach to delivering services needs to focus on how we manage ever-decreasing financial support but seeking to deliver ever-increasing outcomes moving from a service provider approach to resident demand approach by better understanding the real needs and aspirations of our residents.

Each theme has a breakdown of the evidence, our intent for what we are trying to achieve for the borough and what we will develop going forward to deliver that intent.

External Relations

Hayling Residents Public Meeting (HIRA) - 12 February 2020

I attended the HIRA meeting which included a presentation by Mark Cubbon, Chief Executive of Portsmouth Hospitals' NHS Trust, outlining their plans for an extension to the Accident and Emergency provision. He also took a questions and answer session answering residents' questions relating to their experience of using the current facilities, particularly at QA Hospital.

The second part of the meeting concerned the current situation at West Beach. Engineers from the East Solent Coastal Partnership outlined the current position and the constraints on our options both natural and financial. The pressing situation is the failure of the groynes and the programme of removal as and when they fail.

The timber sea defences including the groynes at West Beach were built by the Council in 1976, in response to beach erosion. These structures have been regularly maintained, and it is estimated that we have invested over £1M in repairs over the years as they are exposed to wave action on a daily basis. Nevertheless, the timbers have now either reached or are nearing the end of their functional life. In 1997, the decision was taken to let nature take its course and in 2008 the Council renewed this decision to continue to extend

the life of these structures where possible until they became a significant health and safety risk, and then to remove them. This decision is in line with North Solent Shoreline Management Plan which recommends a 'Hold the Line' policy along the South Hayling frontage but allowing the shoreline around the south west of Hayling Island to evolve naturally with minimal interference.

Following storm damage, the first sections of timber revetment were removed in 2012 and 2013, allowing the beach to evolve naturally and led to the need to relocate the beach huts. In March 2018 the timber groynes at West Beach were outflanked by the beach retreat and were removed prior to their collapse, the remaining beach huts were then relocated.

The decision not to replace the revetments and groynes was driven by the general policy for the site but also the disproportionate cost of replacing them. Crucially, there is currently no funding mechanism available from central government to maintain or construct new coastal defences at West Beach, as there are no residential properties at risk from coastal flooding or erosion at this location. The data suggests that there have been significant storm events in the last few years and this has accelerated the erosion. The task force is considering whether we need to accept that the coastline will subject to change and we adapt our approach accordingly.

Any new defences would come at a considerable cost (estimated at £3M-£5M) and would have to be funded from existing Council budgets, unless there is a change in government policy. Income from the car parks, would be dwarfed by the cost and this expenditure would have to be considered in the context of competing budget pressures across the Borough and our regeneration strategy.

In the meantime, the task force is working on our Blue Flag application and additional resource has been allocated to ensure the safety of bathers over the summer. Residents will be reassured that a risk assessment has been undertaken in conjunction with the RNLI. The task force will continue to monitor the car parks to ensure that we maintain adequate parking. A maintenance programme is in place to deal with issues on a phased approach and we are looking to improve signage and will maintain the communications established with the beach hut owners.

Further details on the history of coastal management at West Beach can be found at: <https://www.escp.org.uk/history-west-beach>

Visit to Alton Leisure Centre - 13 February 2020

I appreciated the opportunity to visit the new Alton Leisure Centre where I was able to see first-hand the quality of the newly completed Leisure Centre that has been purpose built and recently completed. A new leisure facility for Havant is one of the options to be considered as part of the Regeneration

Strategy and it was helpful to see what officers had delivered for East Hampshire District Council.

Partnership for South Hampshire Joint Committee (PfSH) - Statement of Common Ground workshop – 10 February 2020

The meeting focused on the nutrient neutrality issue which is holding up development across the Solent region. Representatives of Natural England, Environment Agency, Southern Water and the Hampshire and IOW Hampshire Wildlife Trust attended to advise Leaders on progress. There was evidence that MHCLG and DEFRA were in serious discussions seeking to provide planning authorities with definitive guidance on how to proceed. Currently, NE and the EA are providing conflicting views as to the extent of the issue and whether it should prevent development without mitigation. The Wildlife Trust presented a possible solution that they could manage low grade farmland, currently over fertilised to overcome its poor quality, and this could become wildlife habitat. This would work as a similar scheme to carbon credits. This is just one option which is currently under consideration, another would be to improve the screening of wastewater released back into the sea and avoid the nitrates entering the ecosystem in the first place.

The budget for the Bird Aware scheme was approved for the year 2020/21. This award-winning scheme is designed to mitigate the disturbance to wetland birds by educating and residents, particularly dog walkers. The scheme, which is funded by developer contributions, was created in the Solent region and has been adopted by other regions as a mitigation response to limit the effects of housing development.

The topic for the Leaders' Workshop was the Statement of Common Ground. As planning authorities, we are required to agree a statement of common ground identifying whereas a region we can accommodate housing numbers for neighbouring authorities who are unable to meet their own targets. This is a prerequisite for approval of local plans by the inspector. This was a controversial topic as it is likely to lead to the reconsideration of sites in PfSH authorities which have been rejected in the past as unsustainable. The work should at least provide an evidence base to either seek additional infrastructure funding to make sites work or rule them out once and for all as unsuitable. The emphasis was on considering the economic benefits and requirements first and the housing numbers second.