

Cabinet Lead Reports – Full Council 23 September 2020

Councillor Alex Rennie: Cabinet Lead for Communications

Communications:

Coronavirus communication has been the major focus since March.

The role of the communications team has been to communicate accurate, timely information and provide reassurance in a time of crisis as part of the Local Resilience Forum.

Work has included:

- ongoing service updates
- promoting support available to residents
- promoting support for businesses
- ensuring central government guidance is shared.

All channels of communication have been used with a particular focus on embracing digital via the website and social media.

It is worth noting, that every possible effort has also been made to reach our residents and businesses – so we developed the ‘your council is here to help you’ leaflet.

Printed and distributed to all homes in the borough.

We also sent five e-newsletters to approx. 7,000 residents giving them all the latest updates to keep them informed and reassured during lockdown.

Business communications:

Promoting the grants and support to businesses was a lifeline to them.

Some stats 1 April to 1 September 2020:

- 33 bulletins sent to those signed-up to receive business news with 84% engagement
- Facebook - 77 posts – 178,643 reach – 8,917 engagements
- Twitter - 79 tweets – 46,338 reach - 767 engagements

Dedicated information for businesses about what support was available (grants, loans, furlough etc.)

Webpage www.havant.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support now been updated 274 times

Most of our business-facing messages have pointed to this page which has 18,265 visits from when it went live on 24 March 2020 to 1 September 2020.

A promotional campaign was also launched about 'returning to the High Streets Safely' which included all channels and signage.

There were four rounds of the 'discretionary grants' funds with associated communications campaigns.

Councillor communications:

It was important to keep councillors informed throughout 'lockdown' so that they could disseminate important messages.

Communications to councillors during the height of the pandemic included:

- 23 editions of Serving councillors
- Peak open rate of 76%
- Virtual councillor briefings were also established

Coronavirus website update

The coronavirus information on the website has had 85,043 page views (correct as of Wednesday 2 September 2020).

43,717 page views were in the first three weeks on the coronavirus information going live on the website.

We have set up three website pages dedicated to coronavirus information, all in a prominent location on the homepage.

Council service updates <https://www.havant.gov.uk/coronavirus> - updated 318 times since going live on Tuesday 17 March 2020. This was aimed at being the main landing page for our residents with clear information updated regularly on the status of all of our services.

Support for businesses <https://www.havant.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support> - updated 274 times since going live on Tuesday 24 March 2020.

Support for vulnerable people <https://www.havant.gov.uk/vulnerable-people> - updated 28 times since going live on Monday 30 March 2020.

Weekly stats have been circulated on the performance of these pages through the Cllr newsletter.

We also provided an update on each council service creating an additional 16 web pages.

Website update

Compared to the same period last year (264,835 in 2019), we have had an extra 110,737 website visits (375,572 in 2020).

Website improvements

- New Browsealoud tool launched (orange button in top right corner of website). This is accessibility software that means it is now possible to listen to every webpage on our website.
- Website adapted to provide latest information on coronavirus pandemic
- Complete overhaul of licensing pages to make the number of licenses available clearer and the application processes easier to find
- Website currently achieving a 96% pass rate for accessibility
- Refreshing metatags on the website to ensure the page description is relevant to improve search results
- Improvements to the Mayor's webpage with new information and the ability to invite the Mayor to an event directly from the webpage (saving administration time in the Mayor's office).

There are on average 30 updates made to the website each day to ensure it is compliant, relevant and up to date.

Website accessibility compliance

Making a website accessible means making sure it can be used by as many people as possible. At least one in five people in the UK has a long-term illness, impairment or disability. People may not have a choice when using a public sector website, so it's important they work for everyone.

New accessibility regulations came into force for public sector bodies that say your website must be 'perceivable, operable, understandable and robust'. The full name of the regulations is the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. Existing websites need to comply with the 2018 regulations by 23 September 2020.

Havant Borough Council has conducted a full accessibility audit of its website. The audit identified various issues which we are currently in the process of fixing. One of these issues was the colour contrast used on the website and this has been corrected by using a darker tone.

We use a tool called Site Improve to help monitor our compliance. In February, we had a score of 62 and we now have an accessibility score of 96.8/100.

For more information, please visit the GOV.UK website:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/accessibility-requirements-for-public-sector-websites-and-apps>

Social media update

Since lockdown in March we have been sharing a broad range of messaging;

including public health information, lockdown guidance, as well as business as usual content.

At the beginning of the pandemic we were sharing lots of public health messaging. This has now changed to softer messages such as 'enjoy summer safely' and respecting the outdoors.

We have recently run two paid-for campaigns; one promoting the Coronavirus and YOU survey and the other regarding returning to the high street safely.

All of the following metrics are from the beginning of March 2020:

Facebook

862 new likes giving us a total of 4,441.

This is more than double the increase (401 new likes) for the same period in 2019.

In the last two months alone (July and August) our posts have reached 283,911 people.

Our top post was about 'Nellie' the recycling collection fish from the Final Straw coming to Hayling beach (posted 14 July).

The post reached 21,990 accounts and 2.7k engagements (including 152 likes, comments or 96 shares).

Twitter

197 new followers meaning we are now on 3,658.

Our top tweet was sent during the August heatwave and asked residents to be considerate about their water usage. The post had a reach of 5,655.

Instagram

67 new likes meaning we are now on 718.

Snapchat

Following good examples from other councils and government organisations, we are currently looking at whether there is merit in launching a Snapchat account.

E-newsletters:

During the coronavirus pandemic, we have gained 773 new subscribers. We now have a total of 9,734.

Compared to the same period from last year, we only gained 101 new subscribers. This shows that we have had a substantial increase in people signing up to our email alerts.

122 bulletins were sent with an engagement rate of 85.2%.

The national average engagement rate for local government is 62%

General communications:

- Developed an attractive, informative and engaging video which highlights our innovative approach to nutrient neutrality
- Press releases issued across a range of topics
- All internal communication with staff (who are predominately working from home)
- Signage to ensure the office is Covid-secure

Digital Strategy

At today's Full Council meeting the Council will be asked to adopt the Digital Strategy. This represents a significant milestone for the Council as it prepares to transform service delivery. The Strategy provides the design guidelines which will underpin all decision-making in relation to digital investment, whether this be financial or officer resources.

Work continues on developing the plans surrounding digital infrastructure under the theme of transformation, as considered in the Cabinet meeting on 2 September.

Cabinet has also approved the migration to Microsoft Teams, which will see councillors and officers using a much improved platform by mid-October, further enabling new ways of working.

Communities

LEISURE

CIL Neighbourhood Portion Action Plan

Sport and Leisure Officers are actively promoting the opportunity of CIL funding to support sport and physical activity providers in a range of infrastructure projects across the borough. Officers are providing support in applications and those projects which specifically address strategic priorities identified within the open space, sport and recreation strategy, will receive priority support in their development.

Artificial Cricket Pitch Installations

Artificial cricket wickets have been installed at both Emsworth Recreation Ground and Waterlooville Recreation Ground, by contractor Total Play. A final installation at Havant Park is due to take place early September. The facilities, as funded through S106 and CIL, create an opportunity for the user clubs to enhance their offer to the community, particularly in the development and growth of their junior sections, who use the facilities for match play and practice and provide a positive playing experience.

Get up and Go

The Sport England funded Get up and Go programme for inactive over 55's now has six exercise classes; including Yoga, Fun Fitness and Pilates all running again post lock down in outdoor locations across the borough. All classes are well attended (between 7-12 participants per session) with many beginning their journey and others resuming. Social distancing and hygiene measures have been maintained throughout to ensure a safe environment for all in line with government guidelines. The project officer continues to plan with partners to see the return of further activities such as Bootcamp, Nordic Walking, Coastal Rowing and Ballroom & Latin American Dancing once it is safe to do so.

Participant feedback has seen high levels of enjoyment, motivation and positive attitudes towards the restart of activities, as well as high levels of gratitude for the opportunity to get back into the community to do something they enjoy safely with trusted personnel. Such case studies are highlighted to Sport England through their evaluation process at the end of August.

Hayling Island Bowls Club

The project to convert the grass green to an artificial surface and install floodlights is now fully funded. External funding has been sought to match fund the already secured CIL and Section 106 monies. With £70,000 secured from Sport England. Officers from the Community Team have recently submitted a planning application relating to the floodlighting of the green and will await a planning decision. If the project receives planning approval officers will seek to identify a recognised contractor to undertake the work, with works scheduled to begin Spring 2021.

Hayling Island New Skatepark Provision

Officers continue to support the Hayling Skate park user group to improve the provision at the existing West Beach location. Officers are working with the Regeneration Team to secure other funding, with a Veolia bid expected to be submitted shortly. A new concrete skate provision is estimated to cost in the region of c.£150,000.

Play Investment Programme 2020-2021

This year's play investment programme will see investment into play areas that have not previously received improved provision as part of last year's programme. Officers are currently undertaking site visits to determine the scale of the programme for 2020-2021. It is envisaged that improvements will be made to play provision, as well as gates and fencing where required. Officers from the Community Team will identify suitable contractors to undertake the work, with works being completed prior to April 2021.

Borough Wide Tennis Improvements

Small scale tennis court refurbishment will be undertaken at the following three sites; Emsworth, Bidbury and Purbrook. Works are scheduled to start at Emsworth on the 1st September 2020 for a week, with Bidbury and Purbrook following on immediately after works are complete at Emsworth.

Refurbishment includes; a jet wash clean, small scale refurbishment of the surface on each court where needed, rebind of the top surface, colour respray and new tennis furniture (nets and posts).

Hayling Island Dirt Jump Group

Officers are working with the newly established community group associated with the dirt jumps located near Station Road on Hayling. Work has included supporting the group in becoming formally constituted, as well as helping them to apply for a lease. Officers from the Community Team will continue to support the group in realising their aspirations for the development of the dirt jumps and their safe management.

Grass Pitch Improvement Funding

Hunt Forest Group have been chosen as the supplier to provide the verti drain machinery, as funded through the Football Foundation and S106 funds, to be used by Norse South East to improve aeration of grass pitches across the borough. The machine has been ordered and due for delivery by October, at which point its operational schedule will commence.

COMMUNITY

Events

Event applications are not being taken at present and no events will be permitted on council-owned land this year.

Stockheath Firework Display is postponed until 2021 due to the coronavirus situation. The organisers are currently working with Officers to secure a new location for the display in 2021 as the land is not large enough for the expected crowds. Fundraising activities will continue to take place through the year and all money that has been collected so far will go towards next year's event which is the 25th Anniversary.

Covid 19

The huge amount of work done by the Community team in relation to Covid-19 has been covered in great detail by the scrutiny work programme. That included a very productive Task and Finish Group that took place on Wednesday 12 August by the Operations and Place Shaping Board.

The Local Response Centre continues to operate 9-5 Monday – Friday in line with the Hampshire County Call Centre opening hours.

Only one call per week is being received at present, at the peak we received 158 calls per week and 1231 calls dealt with in total from 1st April.

We are no longer supporting foodbanks with additional supplies following feedback from each of them that they are stable at present, however, should the need arise with a second lockdown we are ready to continue to support working in partnership with Community First.

Community First was successful in securing Lottery funding for food for Havant and for a Wellbeing postholder to assist with any future complex cases which come in via Volunteers or the Local Response Centre.

Preparation for a local lockdown or outbreak means that there are plans in place to ensure support for local residents will be available should it be required.