

## HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Operations and Place Shaping Board held on 30 September 2020

Present

Lloyd (Chairman), Milne, Raines, Robinson, Scott, Smith K and Francis

### **57 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Carpenter, Councillor Howard and Councillor Jenner.

### **58 Minutes**

This item was not discussed.

### **59 Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **60 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda.

### **61 Councillor Training Including Induction**

The Cabinet Lead for People and Organisational Development opened the item.

In February there had been a meeting held to discuss Planning training with a view to mirroring the training held at East Hampshire District Council, as it was a regular training programme. These training sessions would reflect Havant's individual need but would ultimately allow for Members of both Councils to be flexible in which sessions they attended. The Cabinet Lead explained that planned training for Members had been put on hold as the Covid-19 Lockdown had taken place. As the Lockdown had progressed and the council had moved to remote working and remote meetings, training had to be focused on helping Members to learn to work in a digital environment. Virtual meetings and training could be recorded if necessary, allowing for increased flexibility and accessibility for Members in completing training. Moving forward a library of training sessions could be put together for members to look at, with presentations, question and answer sessions, and peer learning.

The Chairman expressed her thanks to officers for all their technical input over the years but felt that too much time had passed since training was initially looked at.

The Cabinet Lead for People and Organisational Development explained that previous proposed training plans had created complaints, and moving forward it would be up to the Members in conjunction with officers to establish the best needs for the Development Management Committee's training.

In response to a question about training frequency, the Development Manager responded saying that at the meeting in February 2020 they had agreed to try and establish a potentially twice monthly training session for Members to try and cover a variety of topics. Matters of common interest to both councils could be held for Members of both together, whilst separate training sessions could be held for borough-specific training also.

The Cabinet Lead for People and Organisational Development highlighted the potential that virtual training sessions would hold, as training methods and topics could now be more diverse than before.

The Head of Organisational Development told the Board that virtual resource libraries with learning resources were to be launched in the coming weeks. There was an intention to give this to Councillors to allow them to access videos, webinars and pdfs covering a wide range of topics. This would be a step away from blanket training to an individualised response when it was eventually rolled out.

In response to a question about officer training, the Head of Organisational Development explained that monitoring of officer training took place in the form of a record which marked which officers passed their online course. Officers were ultimately responsible for their own development record, which they could share with their manager.

The Head of Organisational Development also added that resource libraries and e-learning facilities were live and so could be altered. The Training Needs Analysis Survey previously circulated for Members would be utilised to see where Councillors felt they could use more support, shaping their own development as officers do.

The HR Business Partner explained that the Training Needs Analysis Survey was shaped this year focusing strongly on the Councillor Competency Framework and published Councillor Role description in order to help Councillors themselves consider their role as a councillor and focus on any gaps which needed filling. Now that the survey had been completed, the HR team would look at seeing where that training could be sourced from and where the priorities lay.

The Cabinet Lead for People and Organisational Development in response to a question concerning Councillor attendance, said that Democratic Services kept records of Councillor attendance for all council meetings and the statistics for these were brought to the Councillor Development Panel. There had not been progression in bringing Councillors training records to the public domain, and there still remained to be a question mark over who explicitly manages Councillors.

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In response to a question regarding the 'A Councillor Can' campaign, the Cabinet Lead for People and Organisational Development explained that whilst it raised awareness in the public of the work of Councillors whilst it had taken place, any sort of leaflet campaign could not be undertaken whilst the Covid crisis was ongoing. The Cabinet Lead informed the Board that the Councillor Development Panel had been looking at the campaign as an ongoing project, and that leaflets had been distributed at the Youth Conference held in March 2020.

In response to final questions submitted by the Board, the Cabinet Lead replied by saying:

- a) whilst the elections for 2020 had been put on hold, work would be undertaken before the elections in 2021 in order to create an induction programme which reflected the needs of new Councillors in the 'new normal';
- b) the Charter for Elected Member Development would be reassessed in March 2021, and new criteria had been given by South East Employers to meet which would be looked at by the Councillor Development Panel;
- c) a manual/handbook for Members with useful contacts in had begun to be created in early 2020 pre-Covid, but would be picked up by Democratic Services to continue; and
- d) the 360 Feedback Tool had not yet been used to its fullest extent but had promise to be of significant benefit to Members who used it.

The Board recommended a number of proposals regarding the DMC Training, which would be fed back to the Planning Development Manager and the Development Manager to consider. These were:

- (i) a training scheme for members to sit on the DMC be started before the end of October 2020, in the form of a private virtual meeting whereby all DMC members and standing deputies determine:
  - a. what should be included in the training scheme;
  - b. when that training should be undertaken and completed in relation to taking a seat on the DMC; and
  - c. that the committee also considers expanding the size of the committee during that initial meeting, and reports the outcome of that consideration to Cabinet.
- (ii) that a decision regarding a written test is included in discussions as soon as possible before the end of October 2020.

## **62 Nutrient Neutrality Update**

The Planning Policy Manager opened the item by giving a brief history as to the Nutrient Neutrality issue. Officers told the Board that the council's mitigation scheme was launched on 18 August 2020, and there had been a site visit by a DEFRA minister and the Chair on Natural England on 10 September 2020. The

Development Management Committee was able to take this mitigation scheme into account when making a decision, notably on 10 September 2020 also.

The Planning Policy Officer explained that Warblington Farm would be taken out of intensive agricultural use, thereby reducing the damage to the Solent's European Sites. Management of the site would maintain the level of nitrogen at 5kg/ha/year which would free up space for new development. They explained it was worth noting that there are pre-existing issues which development could not solve, but there were schemes to help with this, such as catchment sensitive farming, for example. Excess nutrients from agricultural activity could take many years to reach the Solent. External consultants had been brought in to ensure the scheme was robust, and a review was undertaken by them, the results of which could be found on the council's nutrient specific webpages. By restricting the agricultural use of Warblington Farm, the Solent's water quality is maintained, thereby meeting the requirements of the Habitats Regulations.

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Lead for Planning, Hayling Seafront Strategy and Commercial Services explained that the net effect of additional housing would be less than a 1% increase in the worsening of water quality, but as no one could be sure how much additional nitrogen could be increased, it was better to use Warblington Farm to reduce the likelihood of a significant impact. They also explained that Warblington Farm could only deliver a finite amount of nitrate mitigation, but not all sites coming forward would require unlocking some of the mitigation from the scheme. This would continue to be monitored.

In response to a question concerning the upcoming Havant Thicket Reservoir proposal, the Planning Policy Manager responded by saying that the proposal in its basic format was factored into the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Local Plan. It would not be an immediate solution but could continue to be looked at by the council in conjunction with Portsmouth Water and the PfSH.

In response to a question regarding the calculation of the Nutrient Neutrality calculation at Warblington Farm, the Planning Policy Officer told the Board that the amount of nutrients in a dairy farm was established by Natural England at 36.2kg/h/year. The maintenance figure of 5kg/h/year could be subtracted from this in order to work out how much nitrogen could offset development. The 60 hectares of Warblington Farm taken out of intensive agricultural use could remove 1872kg of nitrogen which could be offset against development. It was highlighted that nutrient mitigation on a development site would always be preferred to off-site mitigation. The Planning Policy Officer also explained to the Board that the council would maintain a log of applications which used the mitigation scheme, and the amount of offsetting each application would require, to ensure there would be sufficient capacity within the mitigation scheme. This was now a part of the planning application process.

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Lead for Planning, Hayling Seafront Strategy and Commercial Services encouraged Board Members and the public to look at the documents found on the council's website regarding the topic. These not only provided technical assistance and understanding, but also

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highlighted some of the challenges the Special Protection Area posed and how the council would look at them going forward.

The Planning Policy Officer in response to questions explained that each application which accessed the mitigation scheme would need to sign up to a Unilateral Undertaking (UU) or a Section 106 Agreement, and a scale of payment according to the scale of development. This payment would always be earmarked for Warblington Farm management. The Planning Policy Manager also added that the Solent LEP had contributed a little over £200,000 to the scheme through reassignment.

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Lead for Planning, Hayling Seafront Strategy and Commercial Services assured the Board that whilst they held the position in Cabinet, they would resist any attempts for the mitigation to be used on developments which fell outside the borough.

The Planning Policy Officer gave clarity concerning questions about brownfield versus greenfield development, and how brownfield sites could not offer on site mitigation, therefore being more nutrient “expensive” to develop.

The Officers concluded by informing Members that the land would be managed as non-intensive agricultural land by the tenant farmer as per the agreement the council held with them. The Environment Agency had not raised any concerns regarding the scheme, and that Natural England had worked closely with the council in preparing the mitigation scheme.

It was recommended that:

- (i) the Operations and Place Shaping Board be updated quarterly on the transformation of the farmland used as mitigation for additional nutrients generated by new housing in the borough; and
- (ii) that in the event of any changes to the law or the scientific findings on the matter, affecting the HBC mitigation scheme, that those changes - their cause and effect are brought to the attention of Scrutiny ahead of any new actions or calculations to be applied, being implemented.

**The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and concluded at 7.08 pm**

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