

Cabinet Lead Reports – Full Council 27 January 2021

Councillor Michael Wilson

Leader of the Council

Corporate Strategy

The Covid-19 pandemic, response and recovery continue to place considerable pressure on the organisation. When Full Council takes place, we shall still be in the midst of our third lockdown and the meeting will be wholly remote, rather than the hybrid experiment at previous meetings. Nevertheless, I am pleased to report that since the last meeting our services have been fully maintained and our response to the pandemic has continued to be rightly focussed on support for residents and businesses in the Havant Borough. Between Christmas and New Year, I attended a meeting of the Local Outbreak Engagement Board and a Ministerial Briefing regarding the changes moving from Tier 4 to Lockdown. I am grateful to those officers who worked over the holiday to revise guidance and messaging to help our residents.

Despite the current set back, we continue to concentrate on recovery and the first Cabinet Liaison Panel met during September to discuss our recovery programme to assist with community and business recovery. The Government is keen to ensure that the housing market and development continues and the progress of our Local Plan and our innovative approach to the nutrient neutrality issue will assist with development in our borough.

You will recall that at the last meeting Full Council agreed to the 'Shaping our Future' transformation programme which will enable us to progress our objectives and strategies in a sustainable and economically viable manner into the future. I have met with Max Wilde, who is an expert consultant in transformation, who will be providing advice on the programme. This will be a focus for me and senior management in the coming months.

External Relations

PUSH, HIOWLA & Solent LEP representative for HBC

Solent LEP 9th October.

The regeneration plans include a possible autonomous and cycle route along the Hayling Billy trail. This exciting and innovative proposal would enable a continuous off-road link between Havant town centre and Hayling Beach, providing an upgraded leisure link and also alleviate some of the congestion on the A3023. The Solent LEP kindly agreed to fund an initial feasibility study prepared by Lichfields. The study was presented at the LEP board meeting on the 30th September. I was pleased to be invited to promote the initiative and argue the benefits as a Solent project. There was widespread support for what has potential to be an eye catching and populate infrastructure project.

DCN Assembly and AGM

The DCN Assembly and AGM, which I attended on the 14th October was dominated by discussion surrounding the Planning White Paper. The keynote speech was provided by Christopher Pincher MP, Minister for Housing. Many authorities, including HBC, have responded to the consultation and expressed our concerns, particularly with regard to the exponential increase in housing numbers required as a result of a change of algorithm. The Minister was at pains to indicate that Government would listen and at the time of writing it would appear that they have listened!

With regard to the pandemic, the importance of local, placed based responses and the building of resilience were expressed as the challenges for immediate consideration.

On the 21st December, I attended a leaders' call with MHCLG Minister Luke Hall to discuss the provisional local government settlement.

At the most recent DCN call the issue of maintaining remote meetings beyond the 21st May 'sunset clause' was raised with the Secretary of State MHCLG. To date, there is no provision for the primary legislation required to extend the deadline. Whilst there is a possibility that remote meetings may still be required beyond May, many leaders felt that there were some benefits beyond the pandemic such as greater accessibility for the public and efficient use of resource.

HLOWLGA

The meeting due to take place on the 20th November was cancelled.

Solent Leaders' Forum

The meeting which took place on the 14th January 2021 concerned the Free Ports. The concept is currently high on the Government agenda as a method of attracting both internal and foreign investment into the economy as part of the 'Levelling Up' policy. The Solent LEP is putting together an expression of interest which would bring together three sites including Dunsbury Park to provide tax incentives for investors and jobs and skills training to the borough. The Solent leaders endorsed the expression of interest which is an example of close cooperation amongst the Solent authorities, recognising the potential benefits to all, of a successful bid.

Havant Business Partnership

I was pleased to provide the introduction to the first HBP online meeting on 30th September. It is important that we maintain and build on the links between business, HBC and local education providers. Given that we know that our young people are suffering the most from increases in unemployment due to the pandemic, the need to provide apprenticeship and training opportunities is more vital than ever. See the Kickstart Scheme, below:

The Free Port initiative will also have the potential to provide a skills centre in the borough in conjunction with key employers to ensure that the right skills are available locally.

Corporate Performance

As an organisation, we continue to have low instances of sickness of 0.91 days per FTE, which is below the public sector average. Our staff turnover rate of remains low reflecting the current economic environment. Our key corporate projects are progressing as per the approved strategies at Full Council.

Progress against key performance indicators (KPIs) has been strong during the quarter with uninterrupted performance of our regulatory services. Minor planning applications achieved 85% decided within agreed target (against a national target of 65%). Collection rates for Council Tax and Business Rates have reduced but this is to be expected given the current circumstances. Missed bins and fly-tipping has increased during the quarter and this is under review to understand the reasons.

Regeneration

Regeneration – Porfolio Holder Report

Work continues to bring forward the objectives of the Council's ambitious Regeneration Strategy, which was adopted in November 2018. Over the last few months, the focus has rightly been on efforts to support economic recovery, whilst ensuring that we do not lose sight of the long-term regeneration objectives, taking into account a post-Brexit and post-Covid economy.

In Havant Town Centre, we are reviewing the options for the Civic Plaza car park development, to ensure schemes form part of a wider Civic Plaza/town centre development package. An application has been submitted to the Government's One Public Estate Fund for a grant to facilitate this process and engagement with other key stakeholders has begun to ensure we look at the site comprehensively.

With regard to the Meridian Centre, while the long-term redevelopment aspirations for the town centre regeneration remain unchanged, efforts are being concentrated on supporting the retailers and occupiers who have been affected by lockdown restrictions and exploring opportunities to increase vibrancy and footfall, whilst protecting the Council's investment.

The disposal of the former landfill site at Brockhampton West has generated a capital receipt for the Council as well as release a strategically located site for employment. I am keen for the proceeds to provide a catalyst for our regeneration aspirations.

Work is underway to develop a delivery plan for Hayling Island Seafront, that will set out both the short-term priorities and longer-term strategic development opportunities, all within a comprehensive Council approach which will ensure we align the regeneration aspirations to the operational management of assets like car parks and beach huts, as well as to the ever dynamic coastal processes.

Discussions and engagement are continuing on a range of other regeneration opportunities, including for Waterlooville and Leigh Park. I was pleased to be invited with fellow councillors to a second presentation by urban designers instructed by Flick Drummond MP. Flick is keen to lead the regeneration of Waterlooville and this is an aspiration of our regeneration policy.

Further, work continues with the Solent Local Economic Partnership (SLEP) and Hampshire County Council (HCC) on the Havant Infrastructure Plan, which will identify those infrastructure priorities to support a growing economy. I have mentioned the proposed enhancements to the Hayling Billy Trail to linking the seafront with Havant town centre.

Economy

Business Support: Pop Up Business School

I am pleased to report that we worked with the neighbouring authorities of East Hampshire, Eastleigh, Test Valley, and the New Forest to deliver a week-long business training course. Attendees gained information, inspiration and practical advice to learn how to start, build and evolve their business. The free, five-day online course was delivered through a Hampshire-based enterprise called The Pop-up Business School and ran from Monday 7th to Friday 11th December via Zoom. It was broken down into two sessions per day (10am–12.30pm and 1.30pm–3pm). The Pop-up Business school has a very strong track record of delivering results and is part of the council's wider economic recovery programme.

Attendees continue to receive support from The PopUp Business School after the Course and can join an optional PopUp Hampshire Whatsapp Group who provide an ongoing network of support with other attendees.

You will have seen the promotional press releases on social media.
<https://events.popupbusinessschool.co.uk/HampshireDecember2020>

They have further online Courses which commence in February 2021

<https://events.popupbusinessschool.co.uk/events>

Jobs Fair

On 7 October, the Council supported DWP in delivering an online jobs fair to support job seekers in Havant & East Hampshire. DWP and HBC promoted

and sourced vacancies and employers to be part of the event which was promoted by DWP and HBC social media teams. Collectively 55 vacancies from 40 different employers were posted in the hour and the event was the most successful of DWP's events in the South West. Follow up work is taking place to see how many claimants were successful in finding work through the event.

Kickstart job placement scheme.

HBC is keen to support the Kickstart scheme to create new job placements for 16 to 24-year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long-term unemployment. The aim is to provide around 5-10 placements across both Councils. Funding from government covers a six-month placement to help build young people's skills and confidence and is meant to act as a steppingstone to further employment. We are also promoting the scheme locally to encourage take up by local businesses.