

**Cabinet Lead Reports – Full Council  
Councillor Michael Wilson – 24<sup>th</sup> February.**

**Leader of the Council**

---

**Corporate Strategy**

As we continue in Lockdown, at the time of writing, as an organisation we are not only working to assist our residents in terms of health and the economy with our public sector and other partners, but also to consider life in the post pandemic world, which aspects of our lives have been transformed forever and which aspects will return to a familiar pattern. Whilst we have all been battered by the experience, we are as an organisation looking for the opportunities which will arise.

As members are aware elections were postponed last year and there has been some debate as to when they should be held. I have taken part in District Councils Network Leaders' discussions with the Secretary of State MHCLG and other ministers canvassing views about timings. There were strong opinions from political leaders of all parties that elections should be postponed to at least June/July if not September. Nevertheless, they will proceed in May.

The issues of practicality in terms of holding District, County and PCC elections are myriad: including how candidates can obtain sufficient signatures for their candidacy in a legal and covid secure way, who is going to man polling stations, where the polling stations will be situated given that many are schools or community buildings currently used for vaccinations or as testing centres, how to count in a Covid secure way and the democratic observation of the count. I am advised that the Cabinet office will be providing guidance on these and other issues and there will be additional funding to Councils. I will await the guidance with interest!

**Corporate Performance**

As an organisation we have continued to support residents and businesses during the national lockdown with grants to businesses continuing to be distributed in a timely manner and our local resource centre for the vulnerable remaining in operation. This support has been provided while still providing our regular services to residents.

Progress against key performance indicators (KPIs) across our services remain strong. Collection Rates for Council Tax and Business Rates have reduced and this is expected given the current circumstances with respect to the economic situation as a result of the pandemic. Our Council Tax collection

rate is down by 1.26% compared to last year and our business rates collection is down by 8.72%. Central Government have confirmed support to authorities with respect to collection fund deficits and this will assist with respect to these current deficits. Our Regulatory services performance, in particular planning remains strong (minor applications decided in 8 weeks remains at 85%) and we continue to closely monitor our income streams in particular with respect to parking and property which remain down as a result of the pandemic. Corporately, our staff continue to deliver our services, with the majority working from home. Sickness remains low at 1.74 days per FTE and below both the public sector (2.2 days) and private sector (1.8 days) average. Our turnover rate remains extremely low, as would be expected under the current economic conditions

## **Regeneration & Economy – Portfolio Holder Report**

The Council continues to prioritise work on its Business & Economy Recovery Programme, which not only provides direct support to businesses in the immediate term, but also provides a focus for a series of projects and initiatives to support economic recovery and promote the long term growth of the Borough's economy.

While the outlook remains challenging for many of the Borough's businesses, there are also some very positive signs of resilience in certain sectors in the economy, including in the advanced manufacturing, engineering and healthcare sectors.

The Economic Development Team continues to prioritise the provision of advice & guidance to local businesses on sources of grant funding and broader support during the current national lockdown.

Work to deliver the Havant Regeneration Strategy (Opportunity Havant) continues, with the successful completion of the sale of Land at Brockhampton taking place early in the new year. The Havant Infrastructure Investment Plan (HIIP), produced by the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership (SLEP) in partnership with the Council and working alongside the County Council, will be concluded in early February. Working alongside partners, this will provide a useful tool to ensure we focus our efforts on investments in strategic infrastructure that will support a growing economy.

Work will shortly commence to develop an outline business case for the Civic Plaza Plus project, which will form part of broader work to identify how best to deliver our aspirations for Havant Town Centre in a landscape changed by both the pandemic and significant changes in the retail sector. A decision on a bid submitted to the One Public Estate programme is awaited and if successful, will accelerate work with other public sector partners to enhance the scheme. Alongside this, work is underway to look at opportunities to enhance Hayling Island Seafront as part of an emerging and comprehensive plan.

The Free Port expression of interest was submitted on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> February before the 12 noon deadline. This is a bid for customs and tax concessionary area in the solent region, specifically around Southampton Port, airport and the Dunsbury Business park in Havant. The Expression of Interest was submitted by the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership (SLEP) on behalf of a coalition of businesses, local authorities, including Havant Borough Council, and other partners. This work has taken place over an incredibly tight timescale and has highlighted the close working relationship between the authorities comprising the Solent area. Dunsbury Park, a key employment site for the borough, could bring significant potential for accelerated employment growth and investment into our area. If we are successful, this could have a transformative effect in the borough, enabling high skilled employment and training for residents and particularly young people who have and will suffer as a result of the economic impact of the pandemic.

In parallel, an expression of interest has also recently been submitted to the Health Foundation's Economies for Healthier Lives funding programme for £500,000. If successful, the project will focus on how we can change perceptions, raise aspirations and unlock the hidden potential of the young people of Leigh Park, with a particular focus on 16-24 year olds as well as creating sustainable pathways to employment by engaging with local employers. Communication and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including residents and businesses, will be critical to the future success of this work.