

Cabinet Lead Reports – Full Council 22nd September 2021

Councillor Tim Pike

Cabinet Lead for Finance, Regeneration and Estates

Business Grants

The last main Government Business Grant scheme closed in June. During the coronavirus pandemic, Havant Borough Council issued more than £33million in grants to more than 2,000 local businesses.

The grants were delivered over 12 different schemes set up between March 2020 and July 2021.

The Council has successfully applied for further grant funding of £781,000 for its discretionary scheme (Additional Restrictions Grant), having fully spent the original allocations of £3.5 million.

Estates

A number of new team members have started recently and a further experienced member is due to join the team within a couple of weeks. These additional resources will enable the team to address many of the historic and strategic legacy issues and continue to provide an enhanced value-added property service.

Void rates within the portfolio continue to be very low indeed and represent less than 1% of the portfolio. There is only one vacant and unlet premises within the portfolio excluding the Meridian Centre.

A few new leases have also been agreed including two recent lettings at 1 Park Rd South.

Rental arrears across the portfolio continues to be very low due to proactive management. Greater attention is being given to debt recovery processes involving managing agents in order to improve debt collection statistics.

Regeneration

I am pleased to report that at its 8 September meeting Cabinet noted the progress on Havant's regeneration programme and the Havant town centre regeneration as well as approving the development of a refreshed Regeneration Strategy. Progress was approved to take forward some important projects in Havant town centre including Civic Plaza East and Bulbeck Road car park. The Regeneration Strategy focusses on a number of other key projects across the Borough including Hayling Island Seafront, Leigh Park and Waterlooville Town Centre, as well as Havant Town Centre.

Work is continuing on developing all the various threads relating to strategic infrastructure; Havant Thicket reservoir tree clearance works have started on site. Active travel plans, including the Hayling Billy Trail, are progressing. Hampshire County Council's consultation on the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) started on 6 September and runs until 31 October. This consultation covers the LCWIP for Havant. Meanwhile good progress is being made with a feasibility study on the mainland routes for the Hayling Billy Trail and bridge options. A consultation programme is being developed to get stakeholder views.

The outcomes of several funding bid applications are due in the autumn including the Levelling Up Fund for Havant Town Centre, Restoring Our Railways for the Hayling Billy Trail and One Public Estate for the Civic Plaza Site.

Economy

Havant Business Partnership

Havant Borough Council will partner with Langstone Park (formerly Langstone Technology Park) to host the next Havant Business Partnership on October 6. The event will provide a key opportunity to showcase the progress made in transforming the borough and an opportunity for leading businesses to shape our plans moving forward. There will also be contributions from Langstone Park on plans for strategic investment in new commercial space, along with DWP who will promote the exciting opportunity the national 'Kickstart' work placement scheme provides for local businesses and young job seekers.

Jobs Fair

We are currently working with DWP to hold another virtual jobs fair on 4 October for Havant & East Hampshire residents, after the extremely successful event held in October 2020. Both the Havant and EH fairs held last year had the highest participation level in the West of England region.

This is a key opportunity to connect local job seekers with local vacancies as well as being part of our priority to support young people into work.

Solent Freeport

The Outline Business Case for the Solent Freeport was submitted to Government by the Solent Freeports Consortium Ltd on 30 July 2021. This includes designation of Dunsbury Park as a 'tax site' through which business occupiers can benefit from a range of specific tax incentives. A further business case will follow in the autumn before Freeports become operational towards the end of 2021. Designation as a Freeport tax site will provide an opportunity for the Borough to play a key role in the flagship national Freeports programme, attract new inward investment, boost jobs growth locally and bring new training and employment opportunities to priority areas including Leigh Park.

Rebel Business School

Following the success of the previous programme delivered in December 2020, Rebel Business School (formerly Pop Up Business School) will be delivering an online course to Havant residents and businesses from 18th to 22nd October 2021. The course provides training in all aspects of starting and running a business, including digital skills and e-commerce. This is being delivered in partnership with East Hampshire DC, New Forest DC and Waverley BC and is part of the Council's economic recovery programme