

Cabinet Lead for Local Plan, Environment and Water Quality – Councillor Elizabeth Lloyd

Local Plan / Planning Policy

At the Full Council on 16th March 2022, the Havant Borough Local Plan was withdrawn from examination. A new local plan was also kickstarted, more detail on which will be available in the coming months. In addition, the Position Statement on Housing Delivery was adopted, which will provide a framework for development management decisions on residential planning applications, whilst the new plan is being prepared.

Work continues on the Partnership for South Hampshire's (PfSH) Joint Strategy. This Joint Strategy will need to accommodate the shortfall in Havant's ability to meet its housing need. In the meantime, it is important to seek bilateral agreement with neighbouring and nearby authorities regarding housing need. With that in mind, the Council has formally responded to the consultation on Test Valley Borough Council's Local Plan, seeking accommodation of some of Havant Borough's unmet housing need.

Climate Change & the Environment (CC&E)

The Terms of Reference have been agreed for the CC&E Panel and it has met once. More members are needed to make up this working group, so any Member interested in this highly important topic would be welcome. The Action Plan has been to Overview & Scrutiny when recommendations were made. Priorities for the year ahead are being worked on and I shall report on those for Full Council in July.

Water Quality (nutrient neutrality)

On 16 March 2022, the Council received new advice from Natural England regarding how new developments should be assessed in terms of whether they are nutrient neutral. This was a significant update on the previous advice. Compliance with the Habitats Regulations represents a matter of legal compliance when determining planning applications and the updates in the new methodology necessitated specific research to address. As such, the Council undertook the only prudent approach and paused the determination of affected planning applications whilst this research took place.

The new advice centred on the occupancy level of new development and whether the Council's award-winning mitigation scheme at Warblington Farm remained suitable under the methodology. These matters have now been addressed such that the Council have been able to return to a business-as-usual approach, determining residential planning applications that were paused.

Dialogue continues between officers, their counterparts throughout the Solent area and Natural England to put pragmatic yet lawful steps in place to ensure that this change in advice, without prior notice, does not happen again.

Water Quality – (bathing water)

The installation of a new marine buoy, to be sited in the sea off Hayling Island, requires a licence under the Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009, for which the Marine Management Organisation is the licence-issuing authority. The application has been made, and the public consultation period has expired. A meeting with Southern Water is imminent and MMO licence application is on the agenda.

The instrumentation mounted on the buoy is expected to provide real-time estimates of active bacteria, taking into account other environmental parameters, such as temperature, Ph, turbidity, redox potential, salinity & dissolved oxygen – meaning bacteria will not be directly measured/counted. The project will rely upon the Bathing Water Regulations classification standards.

As far as we know, the deployment at Hayling Island is a national 'first' for bathing water quality and provision of public health information. There is significant interest from other Bathing Water Controllers, and Canterbury Council is considering hosting a similar pilot deployment at their coastal bathing waters. We must bear in mind this is a pilot scheme; however, the hope is that it will further provide information and guidance for residents and visitors alike, in real-time, to our Blue Flag beaches.

HBC applied for the Blue Flag Award in October Last year, and the Awards were announced by Keep Britain Tidy (the administering organisation) on 13th May this year for the '22 bathing season. Beaches awarded the prestigious Blue Flag must achieve 'excellent' water quality as defined in the Bathing Water Directive, and the catchment must be free of potential sources of discharges that may cause short-term pollution. In addition to the water quality requirements, Blue Flag Beaches must also meet the requirements for Environmental Education and Information, Environmental Management, Safety, Public Services and Sustainable access.

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