

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

Planning Policy

Planning Policy Committee will consider the responses to the consultation on the Building a Better Future Plan on 20th March 2023.

At this stage, no changes will be proposed to the Local Development Scheme, the timetable for the Local Plan's production. Nonetheless, the Council must be conscious of the reforms which Government are intending to roll out to the planning system this year and moving forward.

A consultation document was published on 22nd December, which sets out proposed updates to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). However, the precise details of reforms will not be known until a final refreshed NPPF is published in the Spring. This could result in changes needed regarding how the new Local Plan will be produced, with knock on impacts on its production timetable.

Water Quality

As the Council will know, there is an ongoing challenge to plan for sufficient water resources for our region. There is a growing population and economy to support, whilst climate change and the need to protect our natural environment reduce the availability of water.

The Council has engaged with these discussions on a regional level, which were being consulted on through Water Resources Management Plans for both Portsmouth Water and Southern Water recently. The proposals to reduce abstraction on the Rivers Test and Itchen have led to the development of a Water Recycling project which would further treat wastewater coming out of Budds Farm Wastewater Treatment Works, pump that treated water to Havant Thicket Reservoir and subsequently, via a piped network, deliver water to the wider Southampton area. The Council's responses to both consultations were considered by the Cabinet on 8th February 2023.

In order to publicise and increase knowledge of these consultations, the Council also facilitated a public meeting where our residents could ask questions directly of both Portsmouth Water and Southern Water. This led to a useful discussion and increased awareness of these proposals and how they could impact our borough. The main issues which were raised through that discussion were appended to the Council's responses to the consultation before they were submitted.

In January, I was pleased to join the first meeting of a local authorities' stakeholder group, set up by the leader of Wealden District Council. The aim of this group is to not only share experiences, but also to understand best practice in gaining access to the executive office of Southern Water, in the hope of resolutions for some of the

issues. Issues raised among the attendees, which comprised councillors and officers from across Southern Water's catchment area, centred around storm overflows from wastewater treatment works, escapes of wastewater pollution into streams and rivers, and pipe network breakdowns affecting people's homes.

Climate Change and Sustainability

As was highlighted through the last Full Council update, addressing the energy efficiency of the borough's homes is critical in the long term to address the causes of climate change, to meet net zero and reduce long term temperature rises. Meanwhile, in the short term, the increases in the cost of energy is having a significant impact on our communities.

Havant Borough Council is part of the Warmer Homes, a consortium of local authorities, led by Portsmouth City Council. Through this scheme, eligible households can get access to energy efficiency upgrades, renewable energy and heating system improvements.

Funding remains available to eligible households so any residents who have not yet submitted an application should do so. It's important to stress though, the funding will end shortly so eligible residents need to submit an application form without delay. Further information can be found at www.warmerhomes.org.uk. Any households who consider they could be eligible can apply either online or by calling for free on 0800 038 5737.

Moving forwards, we are continuing to work with our colleagues at Portsmouth City Council to explore further funding from the Government's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.