

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

Building Control

The day-to-day service is being delivered ‘as usual’ with all aspects of the service being delivered, exceeding targets.

Building Safety Act 2022 Updates / Implementation – Approval of First 2 Building Control Competence Schemes

From the 1st October 2023 all Building Control Surveyors who practice ‘restricted activities’ will be able to register on the new mandatory register of Building Inspectors held by the Building Safety Regulator. If they have not registered by 1st April 2024 they will be unable to practice restricted activities independently.

The full definition of ‘restricted activities’ has yet to be published but is widely understood to be the core Building Control functions of issuing decisions on Building Regulations applications and carrying out site inspections to ascertain compliance with Building Regulations.

To register Surveyors will need to complete a registration application, part of which will include demonstrating their competence. Competence can be proved by obtaining certification from a competence scheme.

The first two competence schemes have recently been announced. One will be run by the newly formed Building Safety Competence Foundation and will require Surveyors to complete an application, which includes detailed examples of their work, and then take an exam. The other is run by the Chartered Association of Building Engineers and will include the submission of a detailed portfolio and then undertake an interview.

The Council is supporting staff to enable them to complete the competency validation and registration requirements by the deadline. It is understood that staff will then need to re-register periodically and this is likely to be every 4 or 5 years.

Building Safety Act 2022 Updates / Implementation – New Reporting Requirements for Data and Key Performance Indicators

The new national Building Control reporting requirements identified in the last report are still being addressed. Building Control's national representative organisation LABC has been in meetings with the Building Safety Regulator, their economists and all the main suppliers of building control back-office systems including IDOX Cloud (which Havant uses), to determine what support is required for Councils.

All the software providers who have been in discussions to date are keen to ensure they can provide their clients with reporting functionality in good time for the implementation date, but some uncertainty remains over the reporting requirements, an issue that should be clarified, in the coming months, by the Building Safety Regulators IT partner PA Consulting.

Planning Policy (including the Local Plan)

Work has continued at the sub-regional level on the Statement of Common Ground covering all of the Partnership for South Hampshire Authorities. This sets out how as a group of local authorities we will work together, under the Duty to Cooperate, on strategic planning matters. This includes topics such as how the need for development is addressed across the sub-region, environmental constraints and the integration of transport and land use planning.

The Statement of Common Ground will be considered in September for approval. In the meantime, work continues on a refreshed Spatial Position Statement for South Hampshire which will set out fully how those strategic planning topics will be addressed through cooperation and bringing forward local plans.

Work also continues on the development of the Borough's Local Plan – Building a Better Future. Following the consultation last year, the project is currently at the stage of preparing the evidence base. We also continue to monitor potential changes to the planning system and whether any change to the approach to the Local Plan is needed as a result. Government have recently announced further proposed reforms to the plan-making process, which would implement elements of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (LURB).

Nonetheless, there are some reforms which are going to take place in the near future, notably the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain. This will apply initially to all major planning applications submitted from November 2023 and will require at least a 10% net gain in biodiversity.

Following the meetings of Planning Policy on 4 July 2023 and Cabinet on 26 July 2023, an overarching legal agreement is being signed between Havant Borough Council, the South Downs National Park Authority and the landowners of the Warnford Park Nutrients mitigation site. This legal agreement does not provide any nutrients mitigation to the Council or any developers in the Borough, however it does ensure that when developers secure the mitigation they need, the Council is able to monitor and enforce against those obligations. This agreement ensures that the Council continues to be able to discharge its obligations under the Habitats Regulations in relation to nutrient neutrality.

I also attended a meeting, through the District Councils Network, a meeting at 10 Downing Street regarding nutrient neutrality. We were able to highlight directly to officials at Number 10 the difficulties with the current approach to ensuring that development is nutrient neutral. In particular, we highlighted how this issue incentivises low density greenfield developments and that taking large amounts of agricultural land out of production does not represent a sustainable solution to the very real issue of reducing excess nutrients in our protected sites.

Government has since tabled an amendment to the LURB which would require local planning authorities, as the competent authority under the Habitats Regulations, to assume that designated sites would not be adversely affected by proposed development.

Whilst welcoming the principle of Government legislating to help local authorities affected by nutrient neutrality matters we are seeking more information on how the proposals will work in practice. Havant is home to many nationally and internationally important species and sites and their long-term protection and enhancement is critical and although we want to see affordable homes delivered in Havant it must not be at the expense of our cherished environment.

Development Management

Casework

A large number of significant planning applications remain under consideration by the team, including a number of cases where technical issues and/or S106 negotiations are prolonging the time being taken to reach a decision.

[These include Cabbagefield Row, Leigh Park (150 dwellings); Land north of Long Copse Lane, Emsworth (210 dwellings); Land east of St George's Avenue, Havant (184 dwellings); Southleigh Park House, Havant (reserved matters application for 70 dwellings); Southmere Field, Havant (65 dwellings); Rook Farm, Hayling Island (300 dwellings); Land rear of Fathoms Reach, Hayling Island (51 dwellings); South Downs College, Purbrook (102 dwellings); Land north of The Oysters, Hayling Island (29 dwellings); Land south of Saltmarsh Lane, Hayling Island (60 dwellings); Land at Kingscroft Farm, Havant (140 dwellings); Former Dairy Crest Depot, Leigh Park (74 dwellings); Land at Palk Road, Havant (90 dwellings); Victoria Road/London Road, Waterlooville (29 dwellings; the 'Blue Star land', Waterlooville (90 dwellings)].

A new application was registered in respect of the Campdown site, east of College Road, Purbrook (628 dwellings, community centre and allotments) during July.

Planning Committee

A retrospective planning application for the use of land at Tournurbury Woods, Hayling Island as a wedding and events venue, utilising a new access avoiding the adjacent Farm, was considered by the Committee on 31st August 2023, where the application was approved subject to conditions and the completion of a S106 Agreement.

Environmental Health

The Animal welfare team has been awarded the RSPCA PawPrints: Stray Dog Services Award (Silver).

The service has started recruiting for ten vacant posts that currently exist across the service. The first-round targeted team leaders and other Senior roles. This only led to the filling of one the three posts given the lack of suitable candidates.

Further recruitments is current underway for officers in the animal welfare and private sector housing teams but the Council is finding it difficult to recruit good quality and experienced officers.

The Southern Water Buoy, off Hayling island seafront, broke away from its mooring on the 10th of August 2023. Whilst the buoy has been recovered the condition of the buoy and its instruments is still being assessed.

I was pleased to be able to join the Langstone Harbour ecologist on one of their weekly water sampling trips. I was impressed with the diligence applied to this very comprehensive water sampling task, ensuring that full integrity is afforded the samples and the process of taking them and getting them delivered to the testing laboratory. Results of the tests will be published after the full 20 week testing period has been completed.

Licensing

Briony Appletree, has been successful in becoming the permanent Licensing Team Leader, her duties will also include the management of the Animal Welfare Team.

At the meeting of the Licensing Committee on 16 August 2023, Members agreed to put forward the following revised policies for adoption by Full Council on 20 September 2023:

- Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy - this was subject to a four-week public consultation and survey of key stakeholders. The final policy has been amended following feedback.
- Statement of Licensing Policy (Licensing Act 2003) - this was subject to a four-week public consultation but no amendments have been made to the policy
- Statement of Principles (Gambling Act 2005) - this was subject to a four-week public consultation but no amendments have been made to this policy.