

## **Cabinet Lead for Finance –**

### **Councillor Neil Bowdell**

#### **1. Finance & Treasury**

##### **1.1. Treasury Management:**

Havant's treasury investment portfolio remains in a strong position. With minimal borrowing, but high levels of investment, the high interest rates have positively impacted HBC treasury investments.

The council has £38.6M out in active investment loans and we are currently locked in to generate £2.1M in interest, whilst new investments being offered at 5.75-6%. This is an increase of £250k since the last report. There remains scope to increase this further.

A full report on 2022/23 Treasury Management and a Mid-year report on the current year was presented to the Audit & Finance Committee on 30/10/23.

##### **1.2. 2021/22 Financial Statements:**

Central Government, in conjunction with the PSAA approved auditors, have set clear deadlines to finalise historic audits and clear the national backlog. HBC's 2021/22 Financial Statements are still outstanding (un-audited), but this will now be completed no later than 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. A progress report was taken to the Audit & Finance Committee on 30/10/23 and all remaining actions are expected to be cleared soon.

##### **1.3. 2022/23 Financial Statements:**

The draft 2022/23 financial statements were made public during September, but the audit will not commence until the prior year has been completed. Whilst this means our audited accounts are "delayed," there are currently over 900 local authority accounts that are overdue for audit across the country dating back as far as 2016.

##### **1.4. 2023/24 Budget monitoring:**

The current budget is monitored throughout the year and reported to cabinet each quarter. The quarter one (month 3) report forecast a potential overspend

of up to £1.7M but with planned mitigation expected to bring this figure down to ~£500k. This figure is being monitored in detail every month and is expected to reduce significantly by the quarter two report due to the next meeting of the Cabinet.

### **1.5. 2024/25 Budget:**

The budget setting process for the 2024/25 fiscal year is well under way. There are several key steps to ensure appropriate engagement with both senior officers and elected members before a full and balanced budget can be presented to full council in February 2024. This includes planning for the revenue budget, updating the MTFP (Medium Term Financial Plan) (a 5-year rolling financial plan) and setting the capital programme for 2024/25.

### **1.6. Finance Team**

The finance team have recently strengthened its business partnering function. This plays a key role in setting and monitoring budgets and supporting managers in understanding their budgets, reducing costs and financial planning for the future. This is already having a positive impact towards bringing our costs back in line with budget.

## **2. Council Tax**

2.1. No update.

## **3. Mayoralty and Health and Safety**

### **3.1. Mayoralty**

The team continue to support the office of the Mayor, both with official engagements, and with matters relating to national or civic events.

We have been working with Councillors and officers, following the agreement of Motion at the Full Council in July 2023 to agree a Terms of Reference and Criteria for a Havant Honorary Citizen Award to promote and Honour Residents of the Borough who have given eminent service to their community, around wellbeing, sporting achievements, bravery or another acts that support

the community as a whole. The first meeting of the Civic Board was held on 12<sup>th</sup> October and there was full agreement to the proposed terms of reference, so this is now being communicated to all Members so that they can start to consider nominations in their Wards.

This year's Remembrance Sunday Parades at Havant, Hayling Island and Emsworth will be held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2023. The Council are working with relevant organisations to ensure that all Health and Safety measures are followed, that all processes set down by the Council and Police are complied with, and that the appropriate Risk Assessments are in place.

### **3.2 Health and Safety**

A Health and Safety page has been created for councillors which has been added to the Councillor Hub webpage. This encompasses councillors Violence and Aggression, Accident and Incident reporting, and Member of the Public Incident reporting. The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), entitlement, with signposting to the Local Government Association (LGA), and the HBC Mental Health First Aiders. We are hoping that Cllr's will find these pages useful.

The team have been carrying out Incident Investigation training which was created specifically for HBC and following the HSE/NEBOSH Syllabus. The target audience is for Managers and Team Leaders. So far eleven people have undertaken this training and received their 'Incident Investigation Competent Person' Certificates.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 2023; World Mental Health Awareness Day was celebrated with a 'Tea and Talk' which was run in the Plaza Collaboration space. A vintage tea and cake spread provided the backdrop and the event was well attended, with quizzes and prompts creating meaningful discussions.

We have been working hard to develop new process and forms for staff and the internal platforms have been updated to reflect those changes.

#### **4. Corporate Governance**

4.1. Nationally, governance arrangements continue to be under the spotlight.

Governance has always been an area of continuous improvement and refinement for all Councils and that is certainly the case now more than ever. Work continues to strengthen our governance arrangements to ensure that they reflect the most up to date guidance and best practice and that these arrangements are understood and followed by all.

#### **5. Human Resources**

5.1. The National Joint Council for local government services confirmed in

November the pay award for 2023-24 for officers on the council's salary scale points. This will mean an uplift of £1,925 to each scale point (3.88% was also stated for anyone outside of those scales or for associated allowances). In addition, the Chief Executive pay award was confirmed nationally as 3.5%. The HR team is working closely with payroll partners to process these uplifts in December's payroll.

5.2. In October, the HR Committee approved 18 amended HR policies and an updated Equality Policy, all contained only minor adjustments, but this means all live HR policies are once again within their published review dates. A second phase will commence in 2024 to review the design, approach and format of all HR-related policies.

5.3. After four months since the new Salary Sacrifice Shared AVC Scheme benefit was introduced, 35 people have signed up to the scheme and over 100 have registered onto the portal, which provides access to information and webinars on the Local Government Pension Scheme and Shared AVCs. Two sessions have been hosted at The Plaza for colleagues to attend presentations on these subjects too, which have been attended by close to 50 people. A further remote session has been arranged in November.

5.4. The apprenticeship levy is now being utilised by 7 council employees, 2 of whom have been recruited directly as apprentices (in the Communications and HR teams respectively).