



PAPER E

Purpose: For Information

Committee report

Committee	FULL COUNCIL
Date	18 SEPTEMBER 2019
Title:	LEADER'S UPDATE
Report of	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Introduction

1. The council has continued to progress its agenda, as set out in the recently revised corporate plan, for the benefit of the Island's community. Whilst there is much discussion and debate at a national level, which makes local planning more challenging. The council, through the cabinet has remained focused on the things which it can control in order to be able to respond to any and every challenge it might face.
2. On a personal note, can I advise Members that I have been appointed to the Local Government Association's (LGA) Safer and Stronger Communities Board. It leads, for the LGA, on the promotion of the health and safety of local communities; including issues of crime and anti-social behaviour, police governance and accountability, community safety, public protection; the fire service and emergency planning, and licensing and other regulatory activities.

Brexit

3. In recent correspondence the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, has asked for the support of all local councils in making Brexit preparations in their localities. This support is planning for both a deal and no deal scenarios and is focused on the UK leaving the EU on 31 October 2019. Government has provided funding to assist the council in providing this support and is looking to have a greater dialogue directly with local authorities as the end of October approaches.
4. The council is already closely linked to the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum which has a statutory responsibility for contingency planning under the Civil Contingencies Act and is working closely with it in developing

plans for the area. As I have reported before the main area of risk remains the potential for congestion at Portsmouth International Port impacting on the accessibility to the Isle of Wight. I continue to be in dialogue about this risk with the Leaders of Upper Tier Councils across the area and am assured of the work being done to mitigate its impact.

Adult Social Care and Health

5. I am delighted to report that the council sponsored Living Well Service has been short listed for a Third Sector Award. The service is led by AgeUK Isle of Wight with support from Carers IW, People Matter IW and The Way Forward. In the two and a half years since it was implemented 2700 people of the total 2800 referred have been diverted to more suitable forms of support than might normally be available through the traditional social care offer.
6. The development of an Isle of Wight health and care sustainability plan to keep people out of hospital and avoid permanent admissions into care wherever possible, is an important milestone in providing a framework for a more integrated and seamless approach to the delivery of health and care services to the Island's most vulnerable people. Whilst the development of the plan has been led by the health sector on the Island, the council has worked to ensure good representation of the needs of the Island's community in it and also to improve the links with all council services, especially social care. This approach is consistent with the council's own aspirations for providing One Public Service for the Isle of Wight.
7. The plan is based on objective research and benchmarking, which has countered some of the anecdotal assumptions about the causes of the pressures in meeting demand in the health and care system. The production of this plan has been aided by the support of both NHS England and NHS Improvement. It covers four broad areas of activity; care models, productivity, networks and structural challenge. As it continues to be rolled out, the council through the continued input of the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Housing Needs, will continue to work with the health sector to ensure the needs of the Island's community are met in the best possible way.
8. I also welcome the Government's recent announcement of £48m of capital funds towards improvements in the delivery of health services by the Isle of Wight NHS Trust. In the spirit of the One Public Service approach to the delivery of local public services I am pleased that the Trust have proposed the council work closely with it in identifying how best the funds can be used to the maximum benefit of the Island community, within the criteria set for their award.

Education

9. This summer saw some very pleasing improvements by our young people in both their post 16 and GCSE examination results.
 - a. The provisional A level results for the Island improved to a C from a C- in the average grade and the average points score derived from the grades

students achieved has gone up significantly from 25.7 to 29.3. Also, advanced tech-level and applied general qualifications have both improved by a full half-grade.

- b. The provisional figures reported by secondary schools indicate that GCSE students on the Island attained higher grades than in previous years. The proportion of students attaining a grade 4 or above in English and maths this year has improved from 55 per cent in 2018, to 60 per cent. The 'attainment 8' outcome which measures the results across the wider curriculum is also significantly better.
10. Both sets of results represent excellent news and I am sure councillors would wish to join me in offering their congratulations to all of the students, teachers and other educational professionals for their hard work and dedication in achieving these results. Ensuring that all young people have the best start in life so that they can fulfil their potential is one of the key outcomes set out in the corporate plan and our drive to improve educational attainment is key to achieving this outcome.
 11. It is unfortunate that our extensive consultation exercise on how best to deal with the surplus primary school places in the West Wight was threatened with legal challenge over the summer. It was both prudent and pragmatic for the council to withdraw its latest round of consultation rather than become deeply embroiled in expensive legal action, more especially because the cabinet had not yet come to a final decision about which option it would implement.
 12. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills and I are clear that, in considering how we might resolve the issues of the surplus places in the West Wight, we should never lose sight of needs of the young people who live there now and will do so in the many years to come. Our focus must not be about buildings but has to be about giving them the best possible opportunity to fulfil their educational potential.

Regeneration

13. The consultation period on the master plan for Newport Harbour concluded on 30 August. An initial review of website and written comments show overall responses have been positive, the main expressed concerns are about the scale of proposed development at Seaclose. A consultation summary will be published later in the autumn and final changes to the masterplan will be discussed with statutory consultees.
14. Works to progress key infrastructure projects are proceeding as planned; most notably being those at : Nicholson Road, a planning application for phase 1 has been submitted and a funding application to the Solent LEP prepared; Venture Quays, the dialogue with Homes England is now much more constructive with a focus on the final details of the acquisition; the procurement exercises for both Dinosaur Isle and Sandham Gardens are well progressed. The full business case for Digital Business Incubation hub will be considered by the Solent LEP board in October.

15. I am extremely disappointed that Newport was not included in the second announcement for Future High Street Funding and that nowhere on the Island was identified in the first round of funding announcements for the Stronger Towns Fund. However, I am more optimistic about this fund having had a very constructive meeting with civil servants from the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHCLG), the Chief Executive of Solent LEP and the Island's MP. I am also much more optimistic for a positive outcome for the Heritage High Street bids submitted for Newport and Ryde, given the positive views of representatives of Historic England when they recently visited the Island.

Infrastructure

16. The Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Transport continues to be actively engaged with Government and South Western Railway (SWR) about their plans for the future of Islandline. This issue was the subject of a long and involved debate across the Island as part of the Department for Transport's (DfT) award of the franchise to SWR. I and the Cabinet Member are keen to understand how SWR is planning to deliver its commitments made in the bid to DfT.
17. I am very pleased that the scheme to implement the new road layout at St Mary's Roundabout will begin in the next few weeks. I recognise that this will cause some disruption to the travelling public and I know that everything has been done to minimise this disruption. However, I also know that the projections for the growth of traffic on the roundabout until 2034 show that if we do not do these works the current experience of congestion on the roundabout will only increase, as will the level and length of delay over the period.
18. It is important to see these works as part of a wider package of works to improve travel times from St Mary's roundabout through to the Asda roundabout, funded through a grant of over £9m from Government. The construction of the Asda roundabout and the revised layout along St George's Way have all contributed to this package and further works are planned between Coppins Bridge and the Matalan roundabout.

Housing

19. There has been a lot said in the media over the summer about the levels of proposed housing numbers set out in the consultation draft of the Island (Local) plan. I would like to make it clear that these numbers are only draft for consultation but have been produced using the Government's prescribed methodology. The council's planning team are still working through all of the comments received during the consultation process in order to produce a further version of the plan in the New Year. It is worth reflecting that the housing target in the current Island Plan is 520 units per annum but that the actual rate of delivery over the last seven years has been 390 units. At the end of August there were 2,525 Island residents on the council's housing waiting list.

20. I would remind members that the council must produce a plan which complies with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), agreed by Government and which sets out that “Local plans should be informed by a local need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance unless exceptional circumstances justified an alternative approach”. The council is looking very closely to build an argument for ‘exceptional circumstances’ to reduce the overall numbers it must plan for. It is also looking understand whether it must still need submit a plan that complies with the NPPF in order to have a negotiation with Government about a different level of housing numbers.
21. In this context the local need assessment is important because it informs the five year land supply the council must identify in its Island Plan and it is used as a measure against which the delivery of housing is assessed. These two indicators are critical because the new NPPF directs the council to grant permission for any development where there are no development plan policies, or those most relevant to determination are out-of-date. It is therefore important we have an Island (Local) Plan approved by Government through its normal processes or else risk the possibility that any development, of whatever size and form be granted planning permission, irrespective of the views of the local community and the council.

Fire Authority

22. The Home Office gave approval to the creation of a new combined fire authority for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight over the summer period. This will come into effect from April 2021 and works are ongoing to achieve that date. It is expected that a shadow authority will be formed in April 2020, which will take decisions about the new authority; the Isle of Wight Council will still retain responsibility for the service until the April 2021 handover date.
23. As part of these responsibilities it must refresh its Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) with effect from April 2020. Members will note that there is an item on council’s agenda setting out how that will be done. I hope they will support the proposed approach of creating a joint plan for the whole of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight area which can be taken on by the new combined authority when it comes into being. This will also be an important point of reference for Her Majesty’s Inspector of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services when it commences a further round of inspections in the spring of 2020.

Budget

24. I welcome the outcomes of the Chancellor’s 2019 spending round which has provided a funding package of more than £3.5 billion for vital council services. Whilst it does only offer certainty for one year it does provide the opportunity across the sector for £2.5 billion of funds to support social care, £700 billion for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and a further £300 billion in additional revenue support grant.

25. We are still unclear how this money will be allocated across local authorities, so we are not yet able to say what the impact will be on the council's own financial position. However, I can only see this as having a positive effect on our current position in our ongoing commitment to be financially balanced and sustainable.

Environment

26. Following the decision of the July meeting of the Full Council in respect of climate change, we have revised the terms of reference of the Environment and Sustainability Group. This will allow us to make best use of this stakeholder group in identifying potential actions that could be adopted in response to the council's motion. I am also aware that arrangements have been made for the first meeting of the task and finish group of the Policy Scrutiny Committee for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration on this issue.
27. Through my report to full council I continue to highlight the range of activities of this administration which support our drive towards our vision of ensuring our Island is an inspirational place to grow up, live, work and visit. I also recognise the hard work by our council staff to deliver our corporate plan and thank all those involved for their commitment and hard work.

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