

## **Recommendations of Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

### **6.1 Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 24 April 2019**

#### **6.1.1 Review of Town Centres**

Councillor Hurst, the Lead Member for the Review of Town Centres presented his Panel's report on the future of the Town Centres. The review focused on the role that the Corporate Plan, Local Plan and Economic Development Strategy had in supporting Town Centres. The report recommended areas for further investigation particularly around the planning process and the promotion of town centres.

Town centres were facing significant challenges. The Council had a leading role in supporting them to adapt to the changing customer behaviour and economic challenges. The review explored how the Council could support town centres through developing collaborative partnerships, investing in the public realm, and exploring ways to secure external funding.

The Committee considered that it was a thorough and balanced report and that there is a need to investigate changing shopping habits and how to get local people to support their town centres.

Parliament's Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee had produced a report 'High streets and town centres in 2030' which had highlighted similar issues. It was hoped that Government would respond positively to that report.

Councillor Hurst thanked officers who had supported him with this review.

#### **Recommended:**

**That the Council continued to support Andover and Romsey town centre through the measures identified in the Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023 (2019), the Revised Local Plan (2016) and the Economic Development Strategy (2017); and**

- 1. That the Head of Planning & Building and the Head of Planning Policy investigate the application of Policy LE12 and Policy LE13 of the adopted Revised Local Plan (2016);**
- 2. That the Head of Planning & Building and the Head of Planning Policy investigate what measures could be introduced to help facilitate planning advice to those businesses whose premises are within the Borough's town centres;**
- 3. That the Council continued to explore opportunities to secure funds to deliver public realm improvements;**
- 4. That the merits of a potential Romsey Business Improvement District be explored in the future, once the experience of Andover's BID, as well as other BIDs, have been fully considered;**

5. **That the Council continued to investigate new ways to support existing town centre businesses;**
6. **That the merits of producing a town centre prospectus for each town be explored; and**
7. **To put in place measures to allow shoppers and visitors to provide ongoing feedback of their experience.**

#### 6.1.2 Disability Review

Councillor Hamilton the Lead Member for the Disability Review, presented the findings of this review. The programme of work sought to explore how the Council can further develop appropriate mechanisms in which to review equality issues, including those related to disability as part of an evidence-led approach to decision making.

The purpose of the review has been to initially focus on how the Council can most effectively engage with people with disabilities on a variety of issues, and to draw the lessons from this that can then be applied to working with groups from across the protected characteristics. In particular the review has explored what works best in terms of engagement practice, and to develop a deeper understanding of the range of issues that are of interest to people with disabilities. Engagement with both public and voluntary and community sector partners has also formed part of the review in order to take a more holistic view of wider issues.

The work undertaken through this review has helped to further shape the councils understanding and future approach it can take to meet its corporate priorities in keeping with the equality objectives that it has set itself. As a result, the Council's understanding of the experience of service users will therefore be strengthened and embedded ensuring the perspective of those who have a protected characteristic is heard.

The recommendations within the report will enable the Council to further embed and strengthen its approach aligned to the Equality Objectives.

#### **Recommended:**

**That Cabinet adopt the approach contained within the report as a way of working when reviewing equality issues with a range of groups.**