Report to the Partnership for South Hampshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: **3 December 2025**

Report of: **Paddy May, PfSH Coordinator**

Subject: **PfSH Co-ordinator's Report**

SUMMARY

The Co-ordinator's report provides an opportunity for issues which are significant, but do not justify a full report in their own right, to be brought to the attention of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that will be presented to Joint Committee for decision or for information. The report is divided into Parts A and B accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION

It is RECOMMENDED that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:-

i) NOTES the contents of this report;

ii) NOTES that the Joint Committee will be asked to:-

(a) AGREE the original recommendation ii) of the Bird Aware Solent Report 'Bird Aware Partnership Revised Strategy' 30 September 2024 as drafted in this report at paragraph 1.3.

(b) AGREE the that supporting statement as drafted at paragraph 2.6 of this report can be used by PfSH local authorities in support of their local plan making as a way of demonstrating their ongoing commitment to the 'duty to cooperate' as part of the planning inspection process;

(c) AGREE that, following Hampshire County Council's decision to rescind its hosting responsibilities of The Solent Forum, PfSH assumes the role of host with Southampton City Council acting as accountable body and operational host (staff, human resources, accounting et cetera) on its behalf;

(d) AGREES that, on behalf of PfSH, the lead PfSH chief executive writes to the Chair of The Solent Forum immediately after the meeting of PfSH Joint Committee 9 December to confirm Joint Committee's agreement to assuming hosting responsibilities for The Solent Forum through Southampton City Council as accountable body; and

iii) CONSIDERS any comments to pass on to Joint Committee for its consideration.

PLEASE NOTE this report is a draft version of the PfSH Joint Committee report and is subject to change before being considered by the PfSH Joint Committee. The final report will be published ahead of the PfSH Joint Committee.

PART A: MATTERS FOR DECISION

1. Bird Aware Solent. Amendment to the recommendations of its 30 September 2024 report: 'Bird Aware Partnership Revised Strategy'.

1.1 At its meeting on 29 September 2024, Joint Committee considered a report submitted by Anna Parry, Bird Aware Solent Partnerships Manager, which, among other things, recommended that members:

iv) PERMITS Appendix B financial model of the revised [Bird Aware Solent] strategy to be updated over time, as required by emerging guidance, caselaw and local circumstances - through delegated authority to the PfSH lead chief executive in consultation with the Chair of Joint Committee with any significant changes to be reported to the Joint Committee.

1.2 For reference, a copy of the 30 September 2024 report 'Bird Aware Partnership Revised Strategy' that was presented to Joint Committee can be found on the PfSH website.

1.3 However, at some point the original and correct version of the recommendation ii (as considered by PfSH chief executives ahead of the 30 September 2024 Joint Committee meeting) was amended from the correct:

ii) PERMITS Appendix B of the [Bird Aware Solent] Revised Strategy to be updated over time, as required by emerging guidance, caselaw and local circumstances - through delegated authority to the PfSH Lead Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of Joint Committee with any significant changes will be reported to the Joint Committee.

1.4 Although the wording is very similar the resolution is fundamentally different. What Joint Committee agreed to, is for amendment of the financial model (which was also approved within a separate point that it considered) - but what has been omitted from official record and minutes is Joint Committee's agreement to Bird Aware Solent's ability to amend the text within Appendix B of the Revised Strategy. This is the part which lists the different charging advice for more unusual types of dwellings (hotels, HMOs, caravans etc). It's only now, with Bird Aware Solent proposing a change to the way HMOs are charged, that this erroneous alteration to the report has been identified.

1.5 The matter has been investigated. We would suggest that at some point between the report being considered presented to PfSH chief executives in early September, and publication of the PfSH website, a formatting error has taken place.

1.6 Joint Committee will therefore being asked to agree the original recommendation ii) of the Bird Aware Solent Report 'Bird Aware Partnership Revised Strategy' 30 September 2024 as drafted in this report at paragraph 1.3.

2. PfSH Spatial Position Statement 2023

2.1 At its meeting on 24 September, the PfSH Planning Officers Group met and was advised by colleagues at Portsmouth City Council that, during the course of discussions with the planning inspectorate (as part of local plan making), questions had been raised about the regularity of updates and reviews of the Spatial Position Statement (2023) as a demonstration of the duty to cooperate.

2.2 Officers agreed that there was no merit in updating the Spatial Position Statement given the twin and complex issues of local government reorganisation and devolution affecting the whole of Hampshire and the Solent area. The Mayoral Combined County Authority for Hampshire and the Solent will have new statutory responsibilities to address these strategic planning issues through a new Spatial Development Strategy.

2.3 Officers considered that progress in relation to the PfSH Spatial Position Statement continues to be discussed through the forums of the Planning Officers group and through the PfSH chief executives' group.

2.4 It was proposed that PfSH draft a short statement, for the purposes of supporting local authority local plan making. It should reiterate PfSH's commitment, through the PfSH Spatial Position Statement 2023 - to meeting the statutory duty to co-operate with each other on strategic matters, including unmet housing needs. It will also serve to reiterate that the PfSH Spatial Position Statement is our fundamental demonstration of meeting that duty. The statement drafted at paragraph 2.6 below, confirms that it is not proposed to seek to update the PfSH Spatial Position Statement 2023 given that the proposed Mayoral Combined Authority for Hampshire and the Solent will take on any new and existing statutory strategic planning responsibilities.

2.5 It is hoped that the supporting position statement will assist Portsmouth City Council (and other PfSH member local authorities) as part of their local plan making process.

2.6 The proposed draft PfSH supporting statement is recommended for approval by Joint Committee:

PfSH approved a Spatial Position Statement in December 2023. It sets out strategic principles to guide development. It also sets out the balance between the need and supply of new dwellings across the sub region, identifying a shortfall in supply still to be planned for of 11,771 dwellings to 2036. It recognises that some authorities are at an early stage in plan preparation, and that as part of this plan making work additional sites will be identified to meet unmet needs. The Statement sets out a two stage process to addressing needs, first identifying the authorities which should be able to meet or exceed their needs, and second by identifying broad areas of search for growth to be considered further through local plans.

Since this Statement was approved, the Government's standard method for calculating housing need has changed from a population based to a housing stock based algorithm, and the affordability ratio has also changed. As a result the housing need figures for the PfSH area as a whole have increased.

The national proposals to reintroduce statutory strategic planning will require the preparation of a Spatial Development Strategy by the proposed Mayoral Combined Authority for Hampshire and the Solent. A key output of this work will be meeting housing need. In light of this, PfSH do not intend to update the Spatial Position Statement. However, in the meantime PfSH continue to discuss the latest position to inform the preparation of each authority's local plan in accordance with the 'duty to co-operate'. This is supplemented by the preparation of Statements of Common Ground between individual authorities and groups of authorities as relevant.

ENDS.

2.7 Members should note that following the completion of the Spatial Position Statement work in December 2023, £145k unspent/residual funding remains and is being held in trust on behalf of PfSH by Portsmouth City Council. This has been reported to PfSH chief executives and there were no immediate spending proposals. Following discussion across the PfSH Planning Officers group and chief executives the decision has been made to that the funds should continue to be held and reviewed in Spring 2026. Planning officers are aware that, once an MCCA for Hampshire and the Solent has been established, a Spatial Development Strategy will need to be developed by the Mayor and the funding may very well be employed to support that work.

3. The Solent Forum

3.1 At the Joint Committee meeting on 14 July, members were notified via this report, of an approach made by the Solent Forum (Phil Horton (Chair) and Kate Ansell (Manager)) to discuss providing a hosting function. In response to ongoing financial pressures and its return to core purpose, Hampshire County Council has taken the decision to cease its role as host and accountable body for the Solent Forum. The Solent Forum is therefore exploring what options are available for its functions to be hosted elsewhere. A copy of the reporting on 14 July can be found on the PfSH website (section three refers).

3.2 A combined meeting of Portsmouth, Southampton, and PfSH officers was held on 12th June to discuss potential options for supporting the Solent Forum. The officials' preference would be for the Solent Forum to move under the auspices of PfSH with PfSH acting as an umbrella body and Southampton City Council acting as the accountable body. This is considered to be the least disruptive, for the Solent Forum, and most cost-effective option.

3.3 Following this meeting, Southampton has held internal discussions to consider the risks and benefits of accepting the role of accountable body and host. The conclusions drawn from these discussions are that the benefits are considered to significantly out-weigh the risks and Southampton is prepared to accept both roles.

3.4 Clarification of the legal basis of the new relationship was also sought, and advice has indicated that, provided PfSH doesn't overreach and exercise control or make decisions on the Solent Forum which properly fall within Solent Forum as a separate body, then PfSH can:

i) agree to provide support services (HR, finance etc) to the Solent Forum, and
ii) agree that Southampton City Council be the lead authority to discharge this function.

3.5 If the PfSH Joint Committee takes the decision to host the Solent Forum, this decision will also act to bind Southampton to delivery of the accountable body role, including acting as the host organisation. Such as decision will enable Southampton to use delegated powers relating to PfSH to implement the Joint Committee's decision.

3.6 Should PfSH agree to take on the Solent Forum, a new Partnership Agreement, setting out the relationship between PfSH, Southampton and the Solent Forum, will be developed to provide certainty for each party. The suggested length of this partnership agreement is five years which corelates with the Solent Forum's business plan period. Southampton will also initiate practical measures to move the Solent Forum Manager to Southampton's employment and transfer the Forum's finances and data.

3.7 The anticipated start date for the new arrangements will be 1 April 2026. However, it is recommended that confirmation of the intention to put in place the new arrangements be provided to Hampshire County Council before the end of December 2025 - in order to avoid initiation of the compulsory redundancy process for the Solent Forum Manager.

PART B: MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

4. PfSH Support for the Cultural and Creative Industries.

4.1 The activity of the PfSH cultural and creative strand of work is subject to a standalone report at this meeting in its own right.

5 Strategic Recreation and Mitigation Partnership (Bird Aware Solent) Key Performance Indicators.

5.1 The following covers the period 1 May to the end of October 2025. As this covers both our Winter and Summer operational seasons. The first sets of statistics have been split to reflect what was achieved during each.

The below covers the period 1 May 2025 till the end of August 2025 (Summer season). In this time period, the Rangers delivered 40 on-site engagement sessions[1] of which:

- 25 site patrols
- 15 site pop-ups

While on site, rangers had a minimum of 337 interactions with visitors, of which:

- 159 on site patrols
- 178 on site pop-ups

Additionally, rangers delivered 39 events in this time period, during which they had 3,488 interactions with members of the public.

The below covers the period 1 September till the end of October 2025 (Winter season[1]).

In this time period, the Rangers delivered 90 on-site engagement sessions[2], of which:

- 61 site patrols
- 21 site pop-ups
- 8 guided walks

While on site, rangers had 788 interactions with visitors, of which:

- 302 on site patrols
- 331 on site pop-ups
- 155 on guided walks

Additionally, rangers delivered 16 events in this time period, during which they had 1,280 interactions with members of the public.

[1] Figures for this period are provisional and may be subject to minor adjustments at the end of the winter season.
[2] An engagement session comprises a half day of a Ranger's time.

5.2 During the same 6-month period, our Comms Lead, supported by the Rangers, continued to encourage traffic to the Bird Aware website, run promotional campaigns and to grow our social media presence as follows:

- From the start of May until the end of October, Bird Aware Solent website achieved 68k pageviews, including promoted content. This is level with the same period in the previous year when 31K of the views were as a result of a viral corvid post. It is an increase of 164% on the same period in 2023.
- Blog posts continue to achieve heavy traffic with 12 features added to the website in this period. Despite mainly covering the quieter summer season, the events page performed well with 2.5k visits, as did the Great Coastal Birdwatch page.
- Our social media accounts saw rapid growth as a result of excellent content provided by the ranger team. The resulting engagement is as follows:
    - Instagram: followers 5,080 (up by 880), accounts reached: 52k, engagement: 15k
    - Facebook: followers 6,365 (up by 665), accounts reached 460k, engagement: 16k
    - LinkedIn: followers 223 (up by 35)
- The spring and autumn editions of the Bird Aware Solent newsletter were distributed to more than 2000 subscribers in May and September. These both achieved very high opening rates of 62% (industry norms are around 33% or less) with high click-to-open rates of 42% and 51%.
- Online promotional campaigns included the wildlife-with-watersports campaign which achieved over 5k clicks to learn more, and the Great Coastal Birdwatch promotion which resulted in 6.7k visits to the website, along with 32.7k views on YouTube of Great Coastal Birdwatch promotional videos and animations.
- During this period press releases were shared about the completion of the watersports map, the Mitigation Meet Up, and the launch of the Great Coastal Birdwatch which resulted in coverage in the Daily Echo, the Lymington Advertiser and Times, plus 2 television interviews on That's TV Solent and 2 radio interviews on BBC Radio Solent within the breakfast and the lunchtime shows.

5.3 This time period also saw activity across the Coast and Country Canines digital comms, led by the rRanger responsible for this project's comms:

- From the start of May until the end of October, Coast and Country Canines website achieved 8k pageviews. This is a substantial increase on the same period in the previous year when the website achieved 4k views.
- 6 blog posts were added to the website in this period. The events page performed well with 746 visits, as did the Dogs' Day Out webpage (a total of

1,962 views for the length of the late spring campaign) and the Where to Walk page (499).

- Our social media accounts saw growth across our two social media platforms. The resulting engagement is as follows:
    - Instagram: followers 865 (up by 295), accounts reached: 21.8k, engagement: 2.4k
    - Facebook: followers 504 (up by 141), accounts reached 85.3k, engagement: 2.4k
- Two editions of the Coast and Country Canines newsletter were released in this period – the first was sent in June, the second in August. There were 41 subscribers at the end of October. The June newsletter achieved an opening rate of over 62.5% (industry norms are around 33% or less) with a click-to-open rate of 70%.The August newsletter achieved an opening rate of over 65.85% with a click-to-open rate of 55.56%.
- Online promotional campaigns included: Dogs' Day Out, which resulted in 2k pageviews and a reach of 11k for the campaign. A total of 376 in person interactions were recorded at the event itself. The Dog Walker Survey achieved a total of 776 link clicks and a reach of more than 8k, with 199 survey responses.

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hosting responsibilities for The Solent Forum through Southampton City Council as accountable body; and

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Background Papers: None
Reference Papers: None
Enquiries: For further information on this report please contact:

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