

## Item 13

## Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

Report of Councillor Stallard, Chairman (Portfolio: Corporate)

### Recommended:

**That the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report be approved.**

#### SUMMARY:

- To consider the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### 1 Introduction

1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report is attached as an Annex.

#### Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)

#### Confidentiality

It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.

No of Annexes:

1

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Overview & Scrutiny

Date:

17 May 2012

# Overview & Scrutiny Committee

## Annual Report

2011/2012



*“Effective scrutiny and accountability can hold services to account and create opportunities for communities and decision-makers to improve the quality of services by producing solutions to problems together.....”*

**From the web site [www.cfps.org.uk](http://www.cfps.org.uk)**

**Centre for Public Scrutiny, May 2012**

## **Background**

When central government put the decision making process for local government into the hands of cabinets they also established the need for overview and scrutiny to counterbalance this shift to executive authority. Although the scope and modus operandi has changed since its conception in year 2000 the principles of the scrutiny activity have remained the same:-

- Provide a critical friend challenge to Cabinet and external authorities
- Reflect the voice and concerns of the public
- Take the lead and own the scrutiny process on behalf of the public
- Make an impact on the delivery of public services

In Test Valley Borough Council overview and scrutiny is carried out by a single committee of seventeen councillors whose membership represents the political party representation in the Council. For annual reviews and task/finish projects there were, in 2011/2012, Lead Members and Panels drawn from the main committee. These mirrored the activities of the Cabinet portfolios.

The purpose of this report is to review and evaluate the work undertaken by the Test Valley Borough Council Overview and Scrutiny function in 2011/2012 and to look forward to the changes and developments planned for the forthcoming year.

## The Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2011/2012



Back row from left: Councillors Jan Lovell, Celia Dowden, Karen Hamilton, Phil Bundy, Alison Finlay, Ian Robin, Kath Tilling, Ben Few Brown, Gordon Bailey, Katherine Bird, Carl Borg-Neal and Iris Andersen.

Front row from left: Councillor Graham Stallard (Chairman), Senior Committee Officer Christine Hastings and Councillor Phil North (Vice Chairman).

Committee Members not pictured: Councillors Dorothy Baverstock, Ellie Charnley and Brian Page.

## **2011 / 2012 Report**

If the health of The Test Valley Borough Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSCOM) were to be measured by enthusiasm and attendance, the final meeting of the year (18 April 2012) showed the committee to be thriving, with 16 out of its 17 members present and participating; the 17<sup>th</sup> member, always a regular attendee and contributor, happened to be away from Test Valley on the day, and sent apologies. Overall, OSCOM met 11 times during the year, and these meetings are covered fully in the Agenda Papers and Minutes; the programme has been a full one, with most meetings extending beyond an hour and a half. Some 38 agenda items have been reported and debated; the full list, in chronological order, was as follows:-

Andover's Economy

Adoption of a new Corporate Plan for 2011-15

Olympics Update

Performance Management Arrangements

Elections Feedback

Complaints Handling 2010-11

Report of the Audit Panel (three times)

Annual Performance Management Report

Local Strategic Partnership

The Test Valley Rural Economy

Key Business Risks (three times)

Southampton University Study of Romsey Town Centre / Romsey's Economy

Grants Review

Draft Budget and Fees & Charges - Economic Panel Report

The Big Society (twice, including guest Professor G Stoker from Southampton University)

Cemetery Rules and Regulations – Panel Report

Ward Profiles

Test Valley Community Services (TVCS)

Accommodation Review

Planning Policy and Transport Service Fees and Charges

Value for Money Review and Setting of Management Fee - Valley Leisure

Shared Services Update

Housing Strategy 2012- 2015

Economic Portfolio Review – Panel Report

Arrangements for Council Meetings

Planning Obligations and Community Infrastructure Levy

Environmental Panel Portfolio Review – Waste and Recycling – Panel Report

Review of the Panel Structure

Walworth Business Park

Annual Review of Community Facilities

Car Park Strategy & Management 2012-2017

Leader's Portfolio Review – Panel Report

In addition to internal OSCOM resolutions – to note, endorse, praise or comment on an item – there were 33 Recommendations to Cabinet resulting from the debates of the above items, which were received by Cabinet as follows:-

Accepted in full – 25 recommendations

Accepted in part (for example, by authorising further investigation) – 7 recommendations

Not Accepted – 1 recommendation

(a recommendation to increase investment in recycling awareness)

It can be seen from the quotation at the front of this report (Centre for Public Scrutiny) that “effective scrutiny” is best done “together” – **with** the “decision makers”. This has been very true in Test Valley in the past year. The above Recommendations to Cabinet include 9 that came from one single piece of work – the Cemetery Rules and Regulations Panel; this work was requested by the Portfolio Holder, who stayed involved throughout, and authorised Officer involvement when necessary. The panel process even included a meeting on site at one of TVBC’s cemeteries to view the issues first hand, and also some external bench marking against procedures in other local authorities. The 9 recommendations, all accepted in full, did more than produce a new set of Cemetery Rules and Regulations – they included a comprehensive communications and enforcement strategy, with details such as a new explanatory leaflet.

The concept of “effective scrutiny **together**” also led us to focus yet again on public participation, and our meeting of 12 October 2011 was held outside Council premises, in a rural setting, to consider “Test Valley’s Rural Economy”. We were grateful to three participants from the public for their contributions:-

Ian Welland, Test Valley Representative of Hampshire Chamber of Commerce

Jonathan Kamm, Member of the Federation of Small Businesses

Mark Griffiths, County Landowners Association and Senior Associate of Carter Jonas

The Council’s new web site further encourages residents to submit topics for scrutiny, and we have received our first request this year.

In addition to the formal programme of work, there was an AwayDay in Kings Somborne Village Hall on 5 August 2011, which was well attended and well received; four subjects were debated, as follows:-

1. Performance Management and the new Corporate Plan / Corporate Priorities
2. Measurement using SROI (Social Return on Investment)
3. Localism – Its Impact on Scrutiny
4. The Role of Scrutiny in the Big Society

As a direct result of the last item, we invited Professor Gerry Stoker of Southampton University to visit OSCOM later in the year; when he came, he so enthused us with “nudge” strategies and other Big Society thinking that we set up a workshop for all Councillors at Longstock Village Hall for 8 February 2012; productive and well attended, the outcome of this workshop was adopted by Cabinet without further OSCOM scrutiny, and has evolved into the Council’s involvement in the “Keep it Real” programme.

Other specific additional responsibilities of OSCOM have included counter signing urgent decisions, such as the urgent release of skills training funding from the Goodman Section 106, and also replacing the 2010/2011 Audit Committee with an Audit Panel, of which I personally have been Lead Member. I have also represented the Council at the National “Local Democracy and Accountability Network”.

### **Future Challenges & Opportunities**

A further result of the AwayDay described above was to consider how OSCOM might better align its activities with the new Corporate Plan “Doing Things Differently”, and its four priorities:- a competitive local economy, enhancing and preserving our natural and built environment, improving access to a decent home, and encouraging all of our communities to reach their full potential.

Since 2009, there have been seven standing OSCOM panels, one for each Portfolio Holder, with seven Lead Members. These panels have met as required to scrutinise portfolio performance, and to prepare reports for full OSCOM to consider. At the OSCOM meeting of 21 March it was resolved to replace these panels with a Corporate Priority Lead Member system in which full OSCOM would decide which issues it wished to scrutinise under each priority, and would request reports to full OSCOM on these issues from a Portfolio Holder or Portfolio Holders.

Full details of these changes are in the eight page report submitted to and approved by OSCOM on 21 March; Task and Finish Panels will continue to be an option for OSCOM to perform scrutiny of the kind described in the Cemeteries example earlier. The Economic Panel has been placed on a formal, structured and calendarised basis similar to the Audit Panel. The Economic Panel will now focus purely on the Council’s financial issues, and receive the relevant Cabinet reports from the Head of Finance; economic development issues will of course be the remit of the Competitive Economy Corporate Priority Lead Member.

The challenge for OSCOM in the above is similar to one of culture change. Since 2009, small groups of Councillors have decided what to scrutinise, and have prepared recommendations and reports, which have then been accepted by full OSCOM. In the future, with the guidance of Lead Members for Corporate Priorities (as distinct from Service based Portfolios), full OSCOM will decide specific areas of scrutiny, and the Leader and Portfolio Holders will be asked to report back to full OSCOM rather than to a smaller panel group.

### **Recognition and Thanks**

The work of the Committee is only feasible with the full support of the Officers and in particular:

Christine Hastings, Senior Committee Officer, Tom van der Hoven, Head of Administration, and our two Corporate Directors, Andrew Ferrier and Carol Moore. Caroline Lovelock has also given valuable administrative support to the Committee. The Portfolio Holders and Officers who prepared reports and/or attended the Committee/Panels also deserve the Committee’s thanks for their professionalism and patience.

Thanks also to the Portfolio Panel Lead Members in 2011/2012 - Cllrs Bailey, Bundy, Few Brown, Finlay, Lovell, North, and Page. Cllr North has also done an excellent job in supporting me as Vice Chairman.

There are also some who attend OSCOM regularly without being committee members, and they often make a valuable contribution from the "floor". I would particularly like to name and thank Cllrs Giddings and Hawke for their guidance, and Cllr Cooper for his regular attendance (5 of the 11 full OSCOM meetings) despite not being an OSCOM committee member. Cllrs Giddings and Cooper have also served as co-opted members of the new Audit Panel.

Finally I would like to thank all the members of the Overview & Scrutiny committee for their support and input. By the time this report is presented to Committee and to Full Council, OSCOM will have a new Chairman. I trust that he or she will find the role as challenging, as enjoyable and as rewarding as I have myself, and I wish the Committee continued success in 2012 / 2013.

Cllr Graham Stallard

Chairman, Overview & Scrutiny Committee

15 May 2012