

## **Corporate Plan 2015-2019 and beyond**

# **Investing in Test Valley**

## Welcome

### **Welcome to Test Valley Borough Council’s Corporate Plan 2015 – 2019 – *Investing in Test Valley***

You might be surprised that we have called our new plan *Investing in Test Valley* at a time when local government budgets continue to be cut and the demand for our services is ever increasing.

But our ambition to be an investing council is about more than money; it is about devoting our energy, skills and resources to achieving the best results for our residents and communities across the Borough.

There is no doubt that, with a decreasing pot of funding and greater pressure on our services, we shall have to make some very tough, and no doubt brave, decisions. But our goal over the coming years will be to do the best we can with what we have - and to ensure the Borough remains a great place to:

- ❖ work and do business
- ❖ live, with the supply of homes reflecting local needs
- ❖ enjoy the natural and built environment, and
- ❖ contribute and be part of a strong community.

It isn’t surprising that these were the issues our residents identified as being of the greatest importance when councillors went out and spoke with them last summer. They are each key to ensuring our communities and businesses are able to thrive. As we focus our efforts on achieving them, we aim to make a real difference to people’s lives. Good quality jobs and homes lie at the core of our residents’ quality of life – as does access to open spaces, the countryside and recreational facilities. Equally, our residents tell us that involvement in their community helps them to become more self sufficient, and more successful as a result. These are the issues which must drive our policies and activities.

We will deliver the priorities of this plan through our **Corporate Action Plan**, which will also run from 2015 to 2019 and will be updated annually. This will show how we intend to make progress by detailing the specific actions we will take forward against each of the priorities.

This plan has been built on the strong foundations of the last plan. Just as elements of the previous document live on in our new corporate priorities, we recognise that much of what we are working on now will still require focus beyond the next four years. And there is another constant issue, namely the need to ensure that we continue to achieve value for money. Prudent financial management is at the heart of our operating model and an imperative in everything that we do.

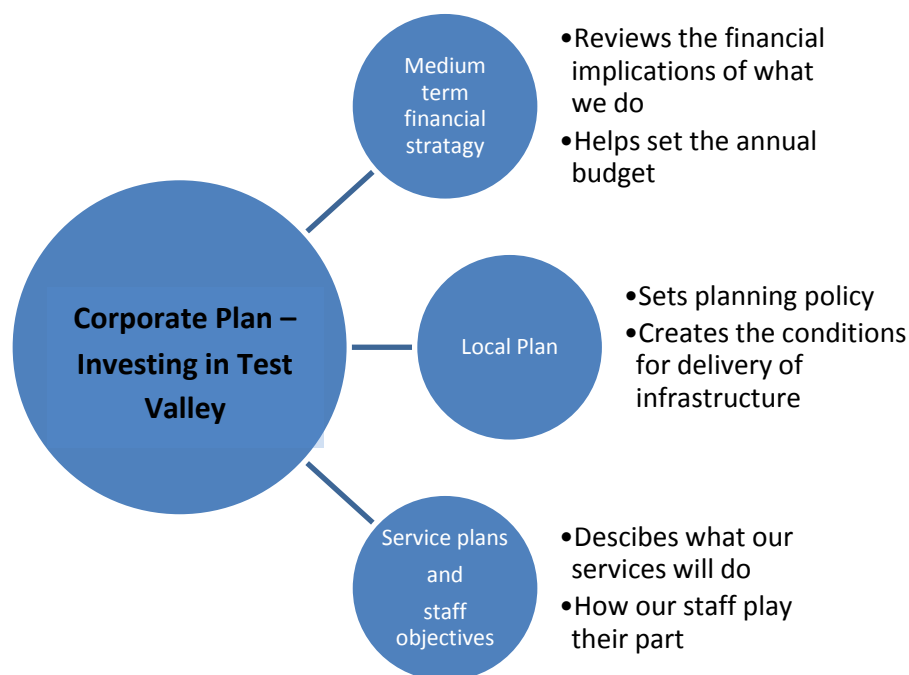
We know the coming years will pose challenges, but we shall meet them with an ambition and a willingness to find innovative ways of approaching the issues and opportunities which come our way. We do not have unlimited resources, but we will invest those we do have wisely to make the Borough of Test Valley the best it can be for its residents and businesses.

## What is the Corporate Plan?

The Corporate Plan outlines the Council's vision and priorities for Test Valley over the next four years. It sets our direction and provides a focus for all our activities and services. As a result, it informs decision making and the allocation of resources across the Council.

## The Corporate Plan in context

The Corporate Plan is an important link in the Council's overall strategic planning framework. It describes the links between the key planning documents which together will help us to deliver our priorities.



We also use the Corporate Plan as our contribution towards meeting the long term aspirations for the borough that we share with our partner organisations through the Test Valley Partnership.

# How we develop the Plan and our priorities

## 1. We start with four important principles:

**We are vision led** – We aim to be an organisation of excellence committed to improving the quality of life of all the people of Test Valley.

**We are values driven** – We are committed to high standards in everything we do, shaping our behaviours and building our reputation in the eyes of our residents. Our five values are:

Accountability / ambition / empowerment / inclusiveness / integrity

**We are democratically accountable** – Our councillors, elected by local people, shape what we do and bring together the needs and expectations of the communities they represent in order to make balanced decisions.

**We use evidence-based decision making** – We seek to understand the issues and then we take a full assessment of what's needed and why.

## 2. We build the evidence base:

- by reviewing the priorities outlined in the previous corporate plan, *Doing things differently 2011-2015*, to see where we have made an impact and where things have changed over time
- by taking into account the views of local people, statistical information about the borough and external influences, such as government policy

During the summer of 2014, local councillors spoke to more than 1,000 local people right across the borough to ask them what issues were important to them. Councillors went out to towns and villages to meet people at local events and markets. Members of the public were also invited to give feedback via the website and we used creative methods to engage with local families such as the *Great Test Valley Trout Hunt*. Undertaking these important activities has enabled our councillors to consider the issues that matter most to our residents as part of the process for setting our priorities.

### **3. We ask Councillors to consider and balance the evidence gathered**

Our councillors set the priorities for the next four years and beyond. Their role has been to set the priorities of the plan by considering and balancing the evidence and information collected in order to inform what the Council will do over the next four years and beyond.

# Looking forward - the next four years and beyond...

## The Challenges and Opportunities

In developing this plan we have been looking ahead to understand the big challenges we will face over the next four years and beyond. Understanding these challenges means that we can also view them as opportunities and can continue our programme to do things better for our residents.

1. Test Valley is seeing a growth in population, economic activity and residential and commercial developments. The challenge this presents is that it will place additional pressures on the services our residents and businesses need and expect from us. However, it also brings opportunities that our communities will benefit from, such as jobs, homes and new infrastructure.
2. The financial environment remains a significant challenge. Over the past four years we have seen the money we receive from central government grants reduce by 40 per cent and it is anticipated that the next four years will be even more challenging as the grants we receive continue to fall. However, our track record in facing this challenge is strong. In order to provide the best deal for our council tax payers, the Council has delivered budget reductions over the last eight years totalling £8.517million equivalent to £1million per year. This is as a result of using our assets better, sharing resources and services where it makes sense, investing in ways to generate income through enterprise and focusing on efficiency and effectiveness in all that we do. Looking ahead to the next four years, we will continue to be innovative and make the most of opportunities to invest in new ways of working that achieve the best results for our communities and make financial sense.
3. People in Test Valley feel a close association to the local communities in which they live. Many groups and organisations exist at this local level, including parish councils and community associations. Their work and grass roots knowledge is extremely valuable. This highlights that a “one size fits all” approach will not always be appropriate. The opportunity to work with these organisations is key to ensuring that we meet the aspirations of our many communities.

# How we do business – our operating model

Our operating model describes the way we do business and how we pursue the ambitions of this plan. It enables us to undertake a full business assessment of all our activities and opportunities that come forward, so we can make the right decisions about where to invest our energy, skills and resources. This means we can be confident that we are taking an efficient and effective approach and delivering value for money for our residents. Our operating model focuses on:

## Having a clear business case

- Understanding the challenge or issue
- Taking a full assessment of what's needed and why
- Assessing the risks and resources required
- Assessing the potential benefits

## Open to all options

- Not relying on one model of delivery - for example, sharing resources and facilities, utilising new technology to make it easier to do business with us, initiating enterprising activities to generate income and using our skills and resources differently through our organisational agility.
- Focusing on what works and who is best placed to deliver what is needed

## Delivers the right results

- Being confident that we'll get the best outcomes for our residents
- Ensuring the right approach at the right price that delivers value for money

## Continuous review

- Ensuring ongoing delivery of efficient and effective services
- Measuring the right things at the right time through our performance boards
- Looking at every pound spent in every service against the backdrop of what people need through Corporate Challenge
- Learning from our successes and failures



# **Our priorities for 2015 to 2019 and beyond**

Our last plan focused on meeting people's basic needs: a job; a decent environment; a roof over their head and a supportive community. This plan builds on these strong foundations. It is about investing in Test Valley to be a great place to:

- **Work and do business**
- **Live, where the supply of homes reflects local need**
- **Enjoy the natural and built environment**
- **Contribute and be part of a strong community**

## Investing in a great place to... **work and do business**

### Over the next four years and beyond we will invest in:

- opportunities that help support businesses in Test Valley
- securing delivery of the right infrastructure so people can work and do business locally
- developing the skills that are needed to develop the local economy
- our town centres
- building on our reputation of being “open for business” to welcome and retain businesses in the borough.

### ***What's going to happen as a result?***

- We will develop practical initiatives in partnership with the business community to help small businesses. Initiatives such as pop-up shops, start up accommodation at Walworth Enterprise Centre and Basepoint, and business grants are all ways we shall support local businesses.
- Our business parks will be enhanced as locations that meet commercial demand, access to superfast broadband will increase and we will pursue delivery of key infrastructure through the planning system.
- We will facilitate the coming together of businesses and education providers to develop the skills needed to enhance our local economy.
- Our town centre environments will improve, making the most of their important market town heritage. We will also work with our communities through the Romsey Future and Andover Encounters projects to identify and develop new initiatives.
- We shall work with the EM3 Local Enterprise Partnership in pursuance of their strategic aim to “unlock Andover’s latent economic potential” as a designated “Step-up-town”.
- We shall work with the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership in pursuance of their strategic aim to “support innovation-led growth”. This will look to the continuing role the Science Park in southern Test Valley can play in developing this industry.

- The next review of the Local Plan will also provide a long term strategic overview of what is needed to support economic development and we will make our offer clearer by developing an economic development strategy.

## Investing in a great place to... **live, where the supply of homes reflects local needs**

### Over the next four years and beyond we will invest in:

- our communities, so they have the tools, confidence and means to be able to work with us to deliver their local housing needs
- maintaining and developing the safety net for those who have the greatest housing need and are most vulnerable
- making best use of existing housing and improving standards
- ensuring that new housing developments provide residents with a quality environment in which to live

### ***What's going to happen as a result?***

- A new housing strategy will be produced setting out a new housing offer, which will improve the deliverability of local homes that reflect local needs.
- Communities will be supported to play their part in helping to deliver more local homes that reflect the needs of their community. Neighbourhood planning will be a force for good to help take this forward.
- The first review of the Local Plan will present an opportunity to work more closely with communities around the future allocation of housing sites.
- The Council will explore practical ways in which it could help to deliver more homes that reflect the different needs of the Borough. This will also include maximising the supply of affordable homes.
- New developments will meet the highest quality standards with the homes they provide and the environment they create. We will use the planning system to help deliver this.

## Investing in a great place to... **enjoy the natural and built environment**

### Over the next four years and beyond we will invest in:

- keeping our parks, nature reserves and recreational spaces in good order and well maintained
- protecting and improving access to the countryside
- delivering new outdoor spaces which people can enjoy
- improving and delivering new leisure facilities for the borough
- increasing our green credentials and showing leadership in green energy initiatives where it makes good business sense to do so
- increasing recycling and reducing the amount of household waste.

### ***What's going to happen as a result?***

- Our existing parks, nature reserves and recreational spaces will continue to meet high quality standards.
- We will deliver a new nature reserve at Fishlake Meadows and support the development of the Forest Park as a recreational space.
- We will let a new leisure management contract in 2017. During the life of the plan we will start redevelopment of Andover Leisure Centre and put forward plans for the enhancement of Romsey Rapids.
- We will deliver on our Local Plan aspiration to see Ganger Farm developed into an important outdoor sports facility for the borough.
- We will encourage greater use of green energy within our own buildings, through a range of community initiatives and commercial opportunities.
- A full review of our Waste Strategy will take place which will consider all the options and costs for how we could increase current levels of recycling.

## Investing in a great place to... **contribute and be part of a strong community**

### Over the next four years and beyond we will invest in:

- our communities to help them plan for their own needs
- helping our communities to be more resilient and do more for themselves
- local democracy to ensure all views within communities are heard.

### ***What's going to happen as a result?***

- We will strengthen the knowledge and skills of local councillors to enable them to work with their communities to get things done that matter most to residents.
- Communities will be able to access the financial support they need to get their projects off the ground through the Community Asset Fund and Councillor Community Grant schemes.
- Councillors will work with their local communities to draw together local action plans. This will help communities to plan ahead, pinpoint where they need help and support and influence future allocation of resources.
- Local communities and organisations will work together more closely to address issues as a result of community planning initiatives such as Romsey Future, the Encounters project in Andover and local action plans.
- Communities will be encouraged to develop their own action plans and initiatives in order to be more self sufficient. Examples could include preparing plans to deal with flooding in their communities, improving the green credentials of their area, looking out for those who are more vulnerable, tackling nuisance problems such as dog fouling and keeping areas clean.

## **Looking forward – delivering our priorities and understanding the impact we make**

The Corporate Plan sets out our priorities, which provide the direction and focus for our activities and guide how we will allocate resources over the next four years. It also outlines the impact we hope to have as a result of our actions so that we can demonstrate to residents how we are continuing to work towards our vision to improve quality of life in Test Valley and be an organisation of excellence.

The Corporate Plan is underpinned by a **Corporate Action Plan** which will run for the lifetime of the plan and be updated annually. This will show, in detail, how we intend to make progress by focusing on the specific actions we will take forward against each of the priorities.

Each of our services will also produce an annual service plan. This describes the things they do and how they will contribute to the Corporate Plan priorities.

We will monitor our progress by understanding the impact of our work, which will show the difference we've made as a result. This will be done by having a range of performance and satisfaction based indicators against which our progress can be judged.

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### **Back page – detail of values designed in**

**Accountability** – We are accountable to all of the people of Test Valley for our actions and how we use resources, ensuring that we provide value for money

**Ambition** – We are a dynamic organisation committed to achieving, improving and innovating

**Empowerment** – We are an organisation committed to continuous learning, enabling and motivating all of our people to do their best work

**Inclusiveness** – We value diversity, promote equality of opportunity for all, and ensure that our services are accessible to everyone in Test Valley

**Integrity** – We ensure that as an organisation, our communities can trust us to act fairly and honestly, and so can our staff