

Minutes of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
of the **Test Valley Borough Council**  
held in The Annexe, Crosfield Hall, Broadwater Road, Romsey  
on Wednesday 14 April at 5.30 pm

Attendance:

<b>Councillor C Lynn</b> <b>(Chairman)</b>	(P)	<b>Councillor P North</b> <b>(Vice Chairman)</b>	(P)
Councillor I Andersen	(P)	Councillor G Bailey	(P)
Councillor D Baverstock	(P)	Councillor K Bird	(P)
Councillor C Borg-Neal	(P)	Councillor P Bundy	(A)
Councillor C Dowden	(P)	Councillor B Few Brown	(A)
Councillor A Finlay	(P)	Councillor K Hamilton	(P)
Councillor B Page	(P)	Councillor I Robin	(A)
Councillor K Tilling	(P)	Councillor J Whiteley	(A)
Vacancy	(-)		

Also in attendance:

Councillor P Giddings  
Councillor S Hawke

327

### Minutes

#### Resolved:

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2015 be confirmed and signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendment on item 311 A New Draft Corporate Plan:**

The Committee discussed the draft plan and had a full and wide ranging debate on its contents. Points mentioned included the role of the Council in the delivery of housing and the role of Councillors in neighbourhood planning.

328

### Economy Review Scoping Template

The Committee considered the draft Template for a Corporate Priority review of a competitive local economy submitted by the Lead Member for Economy, Councillor Hamilton.

Councillor Hamilton introduced the item for review with reference to the Corporate Priority Review Template. She had consulted with the Head of Service and officers prior to submitting the proposal.

The Lead Member outlined the rationale for the suggested topic and explained why it was timely to undertake the review now. As the current Corporate Plan draws to a close, the review will look back over the last four years to understand the impact the Council has made in being able to support the local economy across Test Valley. It will review what has worked well and whether there are things we could do differently within the context of the new corporate plan once it has been approved by Council.

The Committee discussed the proposal and made a number of suggestions which were taken on board by the Lead Member. She assured the Committee that all the lessons learned from the Romsey Future, Andover Vision, ongoing plans for the rejuvenation of the Borough's High Streets and all schemes available to support business would be included.

Relevant partner organisations would be consulted and the possibility of a survey of partner organisations would be considered.

The Economic Portfolio Holder added his support to the reviews proposed scope.

**Resolved:**

**That a review of a competitive local economy be approved as the topic for review.**

329

**Review of Council Tax Support**

The Acting Head of Revenues, Carl Whatley, introduced the report which updated the Committee on the Council Tax Support scheme, which gave the committee an opportunity to contribute to the review at an early stage.

Council Tax Benefit (CTB) was replaced with a local Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme from 2013-14. At the same time the Council introduced changes to the Council Tax discounts and exemptions relating to second home and empty properties. The CTS Scheme remained largely unchanged for both 2014-15 and 2015-16. Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested a further update to be provided in April 2015.

The Committee noted that the national welfare reform programme was on-going with significant changes being implemented currently and further reform planned. The programme for Universal Credit (UC), which would have a significant impact on the CTS Scheme, was currently scheduled to be rolled out in the Test Valley area from September 2015 to be completed by the end of 2019.

Based on the first two years of operation the current Scheme can be funded from the income generated by the changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions alone. This meant that no additional budget pressure has been created by the fact that a transitional grant was made for 2013/14 only.

The Acting Head of Revenues reminded the Committee that any changes to the scheme would require a minimum of 12 weeks public consultation.

The Vice-Chairman informed the Committee that he had discussed the matter with officers and suggested that an OSCOM Task and Finish Panel would be appropriate to look at the future provision for 2017/18. The scheme was very complex and required a good model to ensure that no residents were disadvantaged as a result of any changes. This proposal was supported by the Committee.

The Committee also welcomed the proposal for the Panel to consider other authorities schemes in order to learn from their experiences to ensure the best scheme and model was achieved.

**Resolved:**

1. That Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the information presented in the report.
2. That the Committee identify options of officers to work up in respect of the local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/17 and 2017/18, to be considered at a future meeting.
3. That an Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Panel be established after the Election to review the options in detail.

330

**Affordable Housing Written Report**

The Chairman introduced the item which was presented to the Committee as a written report only. He reminded the Committee that written reports were not on the agenda to generate questions at the meeting.

Any questions associated with the report should be referred direct to the Committee Officer by 1 May 2015. She would co-ordinate all responses received from Members and send them to the Head of Housing and Environmental Health to answer. All questions and the responses would be collated and circulated to the Committee.

**Resolved:**

**That the Head of Housing and Environmental Health be congratulated on a comprehensive briefing paper.**

331

**Draft OSCOM Annual Report**

The Chairman thanked the Lead Scrutiny Members for their contributions to the annual report and asked the Committee for their views on the draft.

The Vice-Chairman would be writing a short addition on the work of the Budget and Audit Panels for inclusion. A reference would also be made to the Task and Finish Panel chaired by Councillor Anderson and the round table discussions. The draft report would be reviewed to ensure a consistent style was followed. The final report would be submitted to the next meeting for final approval by the Committee.

**Resolved:**

**That the draft OSCOM Annual Report be amended and presented to the next meeting for approval.**

332 **Programme of Work for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

A Member made a suggestion to be considered as part of the forthcoming OSCOM Away Day "Review of the OSCOM work programme". It would give Members an opportunity to discuss how items become part of the OSCOM agenda; determine what was required, for whom and by when. This would achieve a more structured approach to agenda-setting which would assist OSCOM in working with others within the Council. This proposal was welcomed and accepted by the Committee.

The Committee considered and updated the Work Programme as follows:

- The Community Safety Panel report would be deferred to the 23 June meeting.
- The initial report on the review of a competitive local economy would be submitted to the 27 May meeting.
- An OSCOM Task and Finish Panel to review the Council Tax Support Scheme to be established at the 27 May meeting.
- A review of the implementation of the proposals agreed by Cabinet to improve the Role of Members in Planning Policy to be scheduled for the 7 October meeting.

**Resolved:**

**That the outcomes of the OSCOM Actions Update be noted and the future work programme be approved.**

(Meeting terminated at 6.45 pm)