

**Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
of the Test Valley Borough Council**  
held in The Annexe, Crosfield Hall, Broadwater Road, Romsey  
on 21 March 2018 at 5.30 pm

Attendance:

<b>Councillor C Lynn</b> <b>(Chairman)</b>	(P)	<b>Councillor I Jeffrey</b> <b>(Vice Chairman)</b>	(P)
Councillor D Baverstock	(-)	Councillor P Hurst	(P)
Councillor P Boulton	(P)	Councillor J Lovell	(P)
Councillor J Cockaday	(P)	Councillor P Mutton	(A)
Councillor C Dowden	(P)	Councillor J Neal	(-)
Councillor B Few Brown	(A)	Councillor B Page	(-)
Councillor A Finlay	(P)	Councillor T Preston	(P)
Councillor K Hamilton	(A)	Councillor I Richards	(P)
Councillor I Hibberd	(P)	Councillor C Thom	(-)

Also in attendance:

Councillor Adams King  
Councillor A Dowden  
Councillor P Giddings  
Councillor North  
Councillor Hawke

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**Minutes**

**Resolved:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2018 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.**

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**Public Participation**

In accordance with the Council's scheme of Public Participation the following spoke on the applications indicated:

Item No	Page No	Agenda Item	Speaker
8	5-16	Review of Council Tax Support	Mr D Coole
9	17-23	Public Involvement Panel Review	Mr D Coole
10	24-28	Developing the next Corporate Plan 2019-2023	Mr D Coole

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## **Review of Council Tax Support**

Consideration was given to a report by Councillor Baverstock, Lead Member of the Council Tax Support Review Panel. The Panel reviewed the current scheme and made recommendations for options to consult on changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2019/20.

The Council Tax Support scheme replaced Council Tax Benefit from 1 April 2013 and the Government reduced the funding for this scheme by 10%. The Council undertook extensive consultation in 2012 to develop a scheme and following the consultation and the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment the decision was made to leave the Council Tax Support scheme unchanged from the previous scheme but to offset the extra cost of this with the higher charges for empty properties.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee appointed a Member Panel to review the current scheme and make recommendations for options to consult on changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2017/18. The Panel considered the scheme and made recommendations for options to consult on changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2017/18 and at that time it was decided not to make any changes to the scheme and to review the position annually.

The Panel was re-established and met on 15 January 2018 and on 19 February 2018 to consider the scheme for 2019/20. The Panel has reviewed information regarding the current Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme including:

- The option appraisal document compiled from the last Panel review
- The CTS schemes in place in Hampshire and Wiltshire showing any changes over the last four years
- The number of customers impacted and estimated financial savings should the Council decide to apply a 5%, 10% or 15% cap on support for customers

In reviewing the options from the previous Panel the Panel recommended not to take forward options 1-4 but recommended consulting on options 5-7.

- Option 1 – Continue with the current level of support and review in 12 months time
- Option 2 – Leave the scheme unchanged until all working age cases have migrated to Universal Credit (Expected to complete in 2021)
- Option 3 – Reflect the changes that are being made to the Housing Benefit scheme and Tax Credits under the Governments programme of welfare reforms
- Option 4 - Restricting support by the Council Tax band
- Option 5 - Apply a 10%, 15% or 20% cap to the level of Support
- Option 6 - Simplification of the Scheme
- Option 7 - Increase minimum weekly CTS award from £0.50 to £1.00

The Acting Head of Revenues (Benefits and Customer Services), Mrs J Broomfield, explained that there would be a 12 week consultation period and the survey would be sent out to those residents currently in receipt of Council Tax Support working age benefits in hard copy. Details of how to undertake the survey online would also be provided and this information would be included in any Council Tax bills posted during the survey period. Once the consultation had been undertaken an equality impact assessment would be carried out to identify the financial implications for different groups. This information will enable Members to make an informed decision on future changes to the Scheme. In answer to a question, Mrs Broomfield would include some examples of the effect of the percentage caps in order to give residents information to choose which of the options they would prefer.

**Resolved:**

**That the information presented in the present be considered.**

**Recommended to Cabinet:**

**That consultation be undertaken on options 5, 6 and 7 as stated above.**

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**Public Involvement Panel Review**

Consideration was given to a report by Councillor Baverstock, Lead Member of the Public Involvement Panel which considered the findings from the Public Involvement Panel which had been reflecting on the progress the Council had made over recent years to engage and involve communities and the public more effectively in informing decision making.

The Panel has undertaken the review from the premise that public involvement forms an implicit part of the work councillors undertake on a daily basis within their communities. The scope of the review therefore has been focused on how councillors can more effectively engage with all parts of their community to inform decision making.

The Panel considered four areas namely:

- A place-based approach to public involvement.
- The changing role of the Councillor as an advocate and facilitator within communities and communicating and involving the public through targeted approaches to ensure the widest range of views are heard.
- The changing context for councillors resulting from the emerging digital landscape and the role it can play in engaging the public and the new demands and opportunities this brings with it.
- Future skills required for councillors.

The Panel recommended that the proposals contained with the report be initially referred to the Member and Community Development working group for further development. This would then be reported back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for onward submission to Cabinet.

The Lead Member and Councillor C Dowden were congratulated on their hard work and a very informative report.

**Resolved:**

**That the findings of the Panel be referred to the Member and Community Development working group to develop the proposals further and to report back to OSCOM with proposed actions for onward submission to Cabinet.**

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**Developing the next Corporate Plan 2019-2023**

Consideration was given to a report of the Policy Manager which outlined the proposed approach and considerations for developing the new plan.

The current Corporate Plan “Investing in Test Valley” expired in April 2019 and preparatory work now needed to begin towards the development of a new plan. The report outlined the proposed approach and considerations for developing the new plan in consultation with Members through a recent Overview and Scrutiny round table discussion with the Leader of the Council. The approach being taken sought to be evidence-led, inclusive and ensure the delivery of a clear and focused plan that would guide the allocation of resources from 2019.

Cabinet would consider the timetable for developing the next Corporate Plan which will include;

- Member engagement and project development (January – April 2018)
- Public engagement (May – August 2018)
- Reviewing the evidence base and developing emerging priorities (September – December 2018)

**Resolved:**

**That the proposed approach for developing the next Corporate Plan be endorsed.**

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**Work Programme**

The Committee considered and updated the Work Programme as follows:

- Add Community Engagement round table discussion to – 25 April 2018
- Move Planning Panel to 23 May 2018
- Move Annual Review of Corporate Action Plan to 23 May 2018

**Resolved:**

**That the future work programme, as amended, be approved.**

(Meeting terminated at 6:40 pm)