

Minutes of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
of the **Test Valley Borough Council**
held in Conference Room 1, Beech Hurst, Andover
on 19 September 2018 at 5.30 pm

Attendance:

Councillor I Jeffrey (Chairman)	(P)	Councillor Cockaday (Vice Chairman)	(P)
Councillor G Bailey	(A)	Councillor I Hibberd	(P)
Councillor D Baverstock	(P)	Councillor P Hurst	(A)
Councillor C Borg-Neal	(A)	Councillor J Lovell	(A)
Councillor P Boulton	(P)	Councillor P Mutton	(P)
Councillor C Dowden	(P)	Councillor J Neal	(P)
Councillor B Few Brown	(-)	Councillor T Preston	(A)
Councillor A Finlay	(P)	Councillor I Richards	(-)
Councillor K Hamilton	(P)	Councillor C Thom	(P)

Also in attendance:

Councillor Z Brooks
Councillor S Hawke

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Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2018 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

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Update on Panels

Planning Panel – this was covered as a separate item.

Council Tax Support Scheme – Councillor Baverstock reported that the Acting Head of Revenues (Benefits and Customer Services) was undertaking a survey and that Councillor Baverstock would report back to a future meeting of the Committee on the current position.

Parking (Car Park and Streets) Panel – this was covered as a separate item

Audit Panel – Councillor Neal reported that the Internal Audit team were now fully staffed and catching up on the backlog of audits.

Budget Panel – nothing to report

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Policing in Test Valley

Chief Inspector Thorne gave a presentation on local Policing in Test Valley and was supported by Inspector Taylor.

The performance picture from 1 April 2017 to end March 2018 compared to the previous year showed crime had increased in Test Valley by 6.9% across all categories. It was however a complex picture. There had been an increase in crime with violence with physical bodily harm and actual bodily harm by 13.5% and robberies against business properties by 9%. However there had been a decrease in the number of burglaries to businesses and communities by 53% and a reduction in arson by 42%. Drug related offences had decreased by 10.07%.

Performance from 1 April 2018 to August 2018, compared to the previous year, showed there had been a significant reduction in vehicle offences down by 21%, a decrease in drug trafficking by 21% and possession of drugs down by 40%. Home burglaries were down 17%.

Chief Inspector Thorne explained that during the year April 2016-March 2017 there had been an increase in crime in Andover East of 27.87%, increase of 40% in North Andover, increase of 11% in South Andover and increase of 7.1% in Andover Town. In Romsey, Romsey East had increased by 6.6%, Romsey North down by 9% and Romsey Town had an increase of 4.03%.

There had been a significant increase in calls to 999 and 101 which was having a direct impact on response times. Resource levels were critically low whilst demand was increasing which could lead to a serious delay in responding to incidents. Hampshire Constabulary had had no option but to bid for mutual aid from surrounding forces which had never happened before. It would be a challenge to maintain services over the next 12 months.

Inspector Taylor explained that the number of police officers across the Constabulary had reduced by one third over recent years. Operations were in place to deal with drug trafficking and carrying of weapons. Over the summer an operation had been carried out on anti social behaviour in Andover town centre. Inspector Taylor also reported that rural crime was being targeted as was a crack down on un-roadworthy vehicles.

Following questions, the following matters were noted:-

- Special Constables were an integral part of the policing team and supplements patrol officers. PCSOs were used for community engagement and had less powers than Special Constables.
- Feedback from Councillors and the community had highlighted the long waiting times when reporting issues on the 101 number. Chief Inspector Thorne asked Members to encourage their residents to continue to report issues and as this helped to collate data used to target key areas and bid for resources. 101 was being reviewed and other channels of reporting non urgent incidents were being investigated.
- Members were requested to lobby their MPs and the Home Office for fairer funding for the Police.
- The Police run regular campaigns about the misuse of 999 and would carry out a campaign on the 101 number once it had been relaunched.
- There were currently 14 neighbourhood police officers in Test Valley and that the establishment would return to its full number of 17 in the near future. Out of a possible 20 PCSO there were currently only 9.5 PCSOs in post. This would be addressed once the current review was complete.
- Unauthorised encampments should be reported on 101. In order for the Police to act there needed to be a series of statutory tests met and then they can issue a Section 61 Notice. The Council could issue a Section 77 Notice to leave their land and if it was not adhered to then the Police could issue a Section 61 Notice.

- The Corporate Director and the Chief Executive would meet with Chief Inspector Kory Thorne to discuss the amount of resources used over the summer on the dispersal of unauthorised encampments to see if there was anything that could be changed to speed up the process.
- Community Orders were restructured in 2014/15 and a discussion was ongoing with TVBC about the future administration.
- A large number of properties belonging to the Constabulary had been sold which had resulted in the closure of a number of Police Stations.
- There had been a large drop in the number of domestic burglaries due to more effective targeting.
- There were more burglaries at night when there were fewer officers around.

The Chairman thanked Chief Inspector Thorne and Inspector Taylor for attending the meeting. He felt that it was very important to maintain a good working relationship with the Police in order to better serve the community.

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Annual Report on Complaints

Consideration was given to a report by the Complaints Communications Officer which set out the annual summary of complaints dealt with under the Council's formalised procedure 2017/18 for consideration.

In the year 2017/18 there were 189 service level complaints and from those complaints 12 were escalated to the Chief Executive and 8 were the subject the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) enquiries. This year saw a significant decrease of 77 complaints in the number of complaints received from the previous year (266 in 2016/17).

The report also broke down the number of complaints and compliments received by individual services and reported on the 8 initial complaint enquiries from the LGSCO of which only 3 were investigated plus the two complaints counted on the 2016/17 report as they were under investigation but were not completed within that year.

Complaints at service level had significantly decreased this year after remaining largely static over the past three years. Complaints raised via social media, including Twitter and Facebook continued to be monitored by the Communications Team with both the Customer Services Unit and the Communication Team responding to Twitter enquiries and monitoring Facebook messages.

The consistency of complaints reporting suggested that the complaints process continued to work effectively.

Resolved:

That the Annual Report on Complaints be endorsed.

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Planning Panel's Final Report

Consideration was given to a report of the Planning Panel Lead Member, Councillor Hibberd. A Member Panel had been appointed to review the role and operation of the Planning Control Committee and the two area Planning Committees and to gain a better understanding of how the Planning Committees operated and produce recommendations for their future role, structure and composition.

A Task and Finish Panel had been set up in 2016 to review the Council's Plans and Planning Process to examine the role of the Plans Panel, the area Planning Committees and the Planning Control Committee.

That Panel submitted its report to the Committee on 16 October 2016 and a number of recommendations on the Planning Advisory Panel and on how Planning Committees operate were recommended to Cabinet.

The Panel at that time did not review the role and operation of the Planning Control Committee and the two area Planning Committees and therefore a Phase 2 of the Panel was to review those areas.

The Planning Panel met to review whether the three Committees;

- Still had a valid role to play in the Borough Council's planning process in their current form.
- Fulfilled their function.
- Had a structure and composition which reflected the knowledge of planning required and
- Produced outcomes which stood up to robust scrutiny

Whilst reaching their conclusion and recommendations the Panel were aware that the Planning Advisory Service would be undertaking an independent review of the Council's Planning Committees in the autumn. The Committee were keen for the Panel's recommendations to be considered by the Planning Advisory Service during their review.

Councillor Hibberd and the Panel were congratulated for all the hard work, time and commitment that they had put in to conclude the Panel.

Recommended to Cabinet:

- 1. That Members are encouraged to meet with new Planning Officers in order to build a rapport.**
- 2. That a programme of planning training for Members be compiled and regular updates be received.**
- 3. That the composition of Planning Control Committee comprise of a Chairman, Vice Chairman and 12 other Members made up of The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of each of the two Area Committees plus the Portfolio Holder and nine members to balance northern and southern members as far as possible, as from Annual Council in May 2019.**
- 4. That the area Committees continue as currently.**

141 Parking (Car Park and Streets) Panel Scoping

The Committee were requested to consider the draft scoping template for the Parking (Car Park and Streets) Task and Finish Panel and comment thereon.

Councillor Baverstock explained that the Panel had met with the Planning Policy Manager and the Engineering and Transport Manager to consider the scope of the Panel.

Resolved:

That the Parking (Car Park and Streets) scoping template be approved.

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

The Chairman reported that an informal discussion would take place for all OSCOM Members to discuss the items/suggestions put forward at the Away Day. Details of this discussion would be circulated to OSCOM Members.

The Chairman would also lead a group of OSCOM Members to review the longer term strategic work programme at a later date.

Resolved:

That the future work programme be approved.

(Meeting terminated at 7.06pm)