

Minutes of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
of the **Test Valley Borough Council**
held virtually in Conference Room 1, Beech Hurst
on 9 December 2020 at 5.30 pm

Attendance:

Councillor Z Brooks (Chairman)

Councillor N Lodge (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor D Baverstock
Councillor T Burley
Councillor D Coole
Councillor C Dowden
Councillor N Gwynne
Councillor K Hamilton

Councillor V Harber
Councillor M Hatley
Councillor N Matthews
Councillor K North
Councillor J Parker
Councillor A Warnes

Also in attendance

Councillor N Adams-King
Councillor I Andersen

Councillor D Drew

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A Ward

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Declarations of Interest

Councillor Baverstock wished it to be noted that she was the Chairman of Unity.

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Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

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Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 November 2020

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2020 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

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Call in Items

There were no call in items.

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Urgent decisions taken since last meeting

There were no urgent decisions.

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Economic Development Portfolio Holder Presentation

Councillor Drew, Economic Development and Tourism Portfolio Holder gave a presentation on his portfolio. Councillor Drew reported that we are in an economic emergency and the content of the presentation will be taken forward as an interim update of the Economic Development Strategy which will go to Cabinet in January.

Councillor Drew's presentation covered:

- The National Context
- Importance of Government support for people and businesses in the Borough
- How Test Valley Borough Council responded to the new economic development services
 - Assess the structure of the local economy and its vulnerability to Coronavirus impacts
 - Identify local initiatives to mitigate the immediate impacts and promote recovery
 - Promote the competitive advantages of the local economy in the 'new normal' national and global economies.
- Green Shoots – supporting businesses
- What comes next

The key areas of focus were:

- The national economy
- UK unemployment
- Town Centre vacancy rates and footfall in Andover and Romsey
- Government Support
- Test Valley employers staff furloughed
- Government business grants and business rate relief
- Business grants, incentive grants and independent retailer grants
- The Lifestyle Card
- Andover Skills Training Fund 2011/19 and Survey of Impact 2020
- Andover Junior Graduation 2020
- Free support packages for Test Valley businesses
- Supporting local businesses
- PopUp business schools
- Kickstart scheme
- Department of Work and Pensions Youth Hubs
- Online Careers Event April 2021
- Rural funding
- Preparing for recovery

The Committee had sent a number of questions to the Portfolio Holder which he had answered and these will be uploaded to the website.

Councillor Drew then took questions on;

- The alternative to EU funding
- Test Valley's economic strengths and how we are playing to them
- Possible incentive awards for green issues
- Unity youth provision report
- Safety in Town Centres
- Research on what attracts start-ups in Test Valley
- Test Valley brand – visitors and attracting investment

The Committee's attention was drawn to the ending of the successful European Leader programme which has been delivering capital grants to enable rural business in Test Valley to grow and prosper. It was suggested that the Council could lobby Central Government to come up with some similar funding to support businesses.

The Committee also recognised the value of training support offered from the s106 agreement when the Andover Airfield and Adanac Park were given planning permission and would like to see this continue.

Councillor Drew would be happy to receive any other questions from members of the committee.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Drew for his excellent presentation.

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Authority Monitoring Report

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Planning Policy which provided a summary of the Council's latest Authority's Monitoring Report (AMR). The AMR reviews the effectiveness of the Council's planning policies and helps to ensure that progress is being made towards achieving the objectives set out in the Local Plan. The AMR is a statistical document, it is not for the AMR to provide commentary or solutions to issues, but to help guide the direction of travel for future corporate and planning policy.

The AMR reporting year covers the previous financial year, with a requirement to be published by December. There is a delay between publication and the end of the reporting year, due to the period for data collection, as well as waiting on data gathering and reporting from other external bodies. To help keep the information up to date, the AMR also aims to highlight any recent further developments that have happened since the end of the reporting period.

The latest AMR covers the reporting period of the financial year 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. This report is the sixteenth monitoring report for the Borough. The latest AMR will be published on the Council's website prior to Christmas.

The Authority's Monitoring Report has been prepared in line with section 35 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) (as amended). Local Authorities are no longer required to submit their monitoring reports to the Secretary of State. However, the Council has a duty to continue monitoring and collecting data.

Part 8, Town and Country Planning Regulations 2012 sets out the content of what must be covered within an AMR. AMR's are designed to monitor the performance of planning policies on the area in which they apply. The AMR is formed of two elements: a) monitoring the progress of the Local Development Scheme (LDS) and b) monitoring the performance of the Local Plan planning policies in the Borough.

At the time of writing, there are currently two pieces of data that are outstanding. This is data on planning applications where the Environment Agency has commented on, or objected to, applications due to flood risk being an issue. The other set of data is the figure for the number of Employment and Skill Plans obtained during the reporting period. This information will be included within the final published AMR.

The Borough is continuing to perform well in a number of areas, in context of Output Indicators as shown in Appendix 1 of the AMR. Affordable housing completions in 2019/20 are higher than the annual Corporate Plan target compared to completions in 2018/19. Housing completions overall, have increased compared to the previous year and surpassed the Local Plan housing requirement. The amount of employment land being lost to residential development has decreased. There has been a recent increase in the number of vacant units in the town centres, this is considered due to the popularity of online shopping and the economic impact of Covid 19. Actions on the future of our town centres will be taken forward through both the Andover and Romsey Masterplans.

The Head of Planning Policy answered a question about solar installations on industrial units and public buildings . The AMR is a planning document however there needs to be some synergy with the climate emergency action plan. This could be added if the information is available.

Resolved:

That the Committee notes and endorses Test Valley Borough Council's Authority Monitoring Report for 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

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Voluntary Sector Grant Funding

Consideration was given to a verbal presentation by the Community Manager which covered the revenue grants programme. For several years the Council has supported a number of third sector organisations through its revenue grants programme. The programme is a three year cycle of funding for organisations which contribute towards the Council's corporate priorities. The programme has existed in its current form since 2012 following a comprehensive grants review.

In 2018 Cabinet approved the three year funding cycle for the 12 organisations on the programme and the Community Manager took members through the current funding cycle and the currently funded organisations.

At the end of each three year cycle there is an opportunity to review the grants programme and reset the programme for the next three years. This is also an opportunity to engage with organisations and stakeholders to reflect on the current three year period and to consider demand for services over the next three years and consider whether to continue to apply funding. The review of the current programme was due in March 2021 however this has been impacted by the pandemic and similarly organisations have also been impacted. There is a need to provide stability to those organisations so the programme has been extended by 12 months on the same terms putting the review back by 12 months.

The review consists of funding for individual organisations and an opportunity to take a broader look at the programme itself.

Members discussed the following;

- Regular reporting from organisations and Council representatives that are appointed to sit on those organisations
- External match funding
- Unity report will be recirculated to Members

The Chairman thanked the Community Manager for his report and all the Councillors for the work they do for the organisations.

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Updates on Panels

Review of the Armed Forces Covenant Panel – Councillor Matthews reported that the review has now been completed. The draft report, findings and recommendations have been circulated to the panel for comment and responses are expected by Tuesday 15 December. It is anticipated that all responses will be collated by the 18 December and report will be published in the New Year prior to being discussed by the Committee at its meeting in January.

Budget Panel – Councillor Lodge reported that the next meeting of the Budget Panel will be held on 11 January 2021.

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

Councillor Baverstock reported that she hopes to take health panel forward in 2021.

Councillor C Dowden reported that she had circulated a briefing note on the current situation and focus on representations on outside bodies. She asked if anyone was interested in taking part in that panel to let her know.

This would need to be carried out in January in order for this to take effect following Annual Council in May. Councillor Hamilton would like to be part of the panel.

Councillor C Dowden also reported that she would like to review the process for the selection of the Overview and Scrutiny Chairman. She asked if anyone was interested in taking part in that panel to let her know. This would also need to be carried out in January in order for this to take effect following Annual Council in May. Councillor Coole would like to be part of the panel.

Members discussed how to proceed with Portfolio Holder presentations at Committee to make the best use of the time.

The Committee reviewed and agreed the Work Programme.

- Take Portfolio Holder presentation off in January.

Resolved:

That the work programme be approved.

(The meeting terminated at 7.15 pm)