

Minutes of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
of the **Test Valley Borough Council**  
held in Main Hall, Crosfield Hall, Broadwater Road, Romsey  
on 15 December 2021 at 5.30 pm

Attendance:

**Councillor N Lodge (Chairman)**

**Councillor N Matthews (Vice-Chairman)**

Councillor D Baverstock  
Councillor C Borg-Neal  
Councillor Z Brooks  
Councillor C Dowden  
Councillor N Gwynne

Councillor J Neal  
Councillor J Parker  
Councillor T Swain  
Councillor A Warnes

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**Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Bailey, Burley, Hamilton, Harber, Hatley, Meyer and Ward.

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**Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

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**Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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**Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

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**Minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2021**

**Resolved:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2021 be confirmed and signed as a true 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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**Community, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Holder  
Presentation**

The Community, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Holder gave a presentation on leisure facilities including facilities at sports and leisure venues and how leisure facilities and sports facilities are progressing financially through the pandemic and post pandemic recovery.

Discussions with Places Leisure around support and post pandemic recovery have been extensive. The Council have received a detailed report covering the restrictions period from March 2020 to July 21. The support period has now ended however there is still an impact on customer confidence and levels of activity and it is understood that levels of activity will take time to return to pre pandemic levels.

Places Leisure's service and financial performance is monitored closely. Since the reopening in 2021 the return towards pre-pandemic footfall levels varies by activity areas.

Swimming lesson numbers have recovered very well for example, however Health and Fitness activities are likely to take longer. Costs have returned to near pre pandemic levels

Places Leisure have diversified their membership offer in a bid to attract more members to return. For example, in September 2021 they launched a younger persons membership and a covid recovery programme.

Covid 19 has had a major impact on leisure centres and the Council are continuing to discuss with Places Leisure a realistic timeline for recovery to pre pandemic levels. The Council are also continuing to work closely with Places Leisure to ensure that the programme meets the level and requirements of the local population.

Ganger Farm is still in the ownership of the developer however once a timeline for adoption has been confirmed with the developer, the Council will commence with mobilisation, recruitment and work towards opening the site to the public in 2022. Members asked to be kept apprised of progress.

The Lights had a soft reopening throughout September with the start of professional performances on 21 September. This enabled staff to adhere to covid guidelines and for customer facing covid guidance to be communicated. The Lights has been awarded the Society of London Theatres See it Safely kitemark in recognition of measures taken to keep the public safe. The Lights have seen an increase in bookings over the Autumn period.

The Community, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Holder reported that he would be happy to discuss accessibility at a future meeting.

Members discussed the following:

- More detailed information about the future transfer of Ganger Farm Sports Ground was discussed in detail (particularly as a number of Clubs were keen to make use of the facilities as soon as possible). The Head of Community and Leisure was asked to prepare a statement.
- Details for Places Leisure contract monitoring was discussed, this included how customer satisfaction was canvassed and monitored, and how they retain and attract good staff in the current market.
- The Head of Community and Leisure agreed to explore with his colleagues, the process in handing over the sports pavilion at Picket Piece.

The Chairman thanked the Community, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Holder for an interesting and informative presentation.

### 355 **Report on the work of the Test Valley Community Safety Group**

Consideration was given to a report of the Community Engagement Manager (on behalf of the Test Valley Partnership) which gave an overview of the work of the Test Valley Community Safety Group over the past twelve months and the priorities for the year ahead.

The report followed previous reports the last of which was in November 2020, in regard to specific elements of work undertaken by the Community Safety Management Group (CSMG).

The impact of Covid-19 has made the past year one with unique challenges and issues. It has put new and increased pressures on many partner agencies and has made it impossible to assess longer-term trends across this period. However, close partnership working has continued to ensure co-operation and co-ordination between services to cover issues and prevent duplication or confusion during this time.

Overall Test Valley reported crime fell in each quarter of the year, with the largest fall coinciding with the first lockdown period. However, notable Increases were recorded in some crimes, such as domestic abuse, locally and nationally during lockdown periods in particular, and have been prioritised. The same restrictions also saw decreases in levels of violence, thefts, residential burglaries and vehicle offences as people were locked down at home. Other crime types such as drug related crimes may have become more visible due to the restrictions but it is not clear that these have been more prevalent than before, and work continues.

Covid restrictions have also resulted in new offences, such as the breaking of lockdown measures which saw increased reports of public order offences and levels of anti-social behaviour during the lockdown periods, although overall levels of ASB continued to reduce in the district annually.

Similarly these restrictions have prohibited much of the preventive and early intervention work from being undertaken with projects such as ICE and Big Band Buffet being suspended, and partners being unable to undertake home visits. However, where possible new ways of working have been introduced to help offset these and continue partnership working. The time has also been utilised to review these partnership projects and plan for their resumption in 2022, alongside new scheme to address newly identify concerns, including innovative domestic abuse plans.

Members discussed the following:

- Anti social behaviour and the lack of confidence in 101 as they don't understand that the police use reported incidents to target their resources.
- PCSOs being trained.
- Drug figures are up due to police targeting around county lines and it is more visible as there are less people around.
- There have been some incidents of anti social behaviour around the old Marks and Spencers building in Andover which is known by the Council and they and the Community Safety Partnership are working together to address this.
- Domestic abuse cuts across different issues so the crime data breakdown doesn't distinguish the figures for domestic abuse.
- Figures on how many prosecutions there has been for sexual offences and how many convictions. This can be asked of the police when they attend to give an update to the Committee.
- 'Ask Angela and Ask Annie (code for 'please help me'/'I need help') is now widely recognised throughout pubs, clubs and pharmacies. Working with Hampshire domestic abuse Partnership which are coordinating a county wide promotion.

**Resolved:**

- 1. That the report be acknowledged and partnership approach be endorsed.**

2. **That Officers bring a report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in autumn 2022 to give an annual update on the work of the Community Safety Management Group.**

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### **Authority's Monitoring Report 2020-2021**

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development which considered the findings from this year's annual Authority Monitoring Report 2020/21. Since the end of March, there have been further developments within the Borough. Therefore the document also included summary updates on the key topics that have occurred between 1 April 2020 and 31 October 2021.

The Borough is continuing to perform well in a number of areas, in the context of Core Output Indicators as shown in Appendix 1 of the AMR. Affordable housing completions in 2020/21 are higher than the annual Corporate Plan target compared to completions in 2019/20. Housing completions overall, have decreased compared to the previous year but still surpassed the Local Plan housing requirement. The amount of employment land being lost to residential development has increased. There has been a recent decrease in the number of vacant units in the town centres, as many businesses opened up after the two national lockdowns. Actions on the future of our town centres will be taken forward through both the Andover and Romsey Masterplans.

The Principal Planning Officer (Strategy) referred to the update paper which contained information not available at the time that the report was written.

- Five Year Housing Land Supply – figures (and housing trajectories)
- Employment Completions – updated to take account of losses not previously included
- Biodiversity – updated to take account of 2020/21 data now received from the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC)

The AMR will be published on the Council's website prior to Christmas

Members discussed the following:

- It was suggested that future editions of the report should contain information on climate change. Indicators can be reviewed and those that are appropriate to be included in future years.
- The carbon footprint figures for Test Valley are higher than the Hampshire average due to the number of main road networks and the fact that Test Valley is a rural area and therefore results in the use of more powered transport.

#### **Resolved:**

**That the Test Valley Borough Council's Authority Monitoring Report for 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 be noted and endorsed.**

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## **Covid-19 Recovery and Resilience Update**

The Head of Strategy and Innovation gave an update on Covid-19 recovery and resilience. The recovery plan has evolved during the pandemic and the recovery response has been driven by work through key strategic partnerships through the Test Valley Partnership and through the Hampshire LRF.

It is important to continue work with the 'Everybody In' programme which supported homeless people and those at risk of homelessness due to the impact of covid. Continuing to administer track and trace self isolation payments, some 300 cases have been supported and it is anticipated that there will be an increase due to the omicron cases.

With regards to town centres and the local economy Environmental Health Protection Officers are under Plan B playing a supporting role in the enforcement of mask wearing etc in shopping centres and the main role of the Council is to look at recovery and how people can feel confident whilst shopping. The Council are working with the BID in Andover and the Town Centre Manager in Romsey to build confidence and promote events. A key element is the Welcome Back Fund allocated by Government to aid recovery. The parameters to allocate that fund was agreed by Cabinet and £62,000 was allocated to Andover, £30,000 and £20,000 to Stockbridge.

The Community Safety Manager has circulated a briefing note following a request from the Committee for information on the impact on community groups. The Council are not seeing any trends that Community groups are not able to operate or are struggling for volunteers but there will be local issues and the Council can ask partners to help out.

The Head of Strategy and Innovation highlighted the importance of community networks and the benefits from the Community Resilience Partnership.

From a service point of view the Council has continued to deliver all functions throughout the pandemic however there are some challenges around recruitment and skills. Most direct financial losses is recovering however car parking levels have not increased to pre pandemic levels.

The Council has played an important part in supporting the campaign around facilities for vaccinations.

Test Valley isn't much different from anywhere else in the country. The rises in infections are in line with the national level. There has however been a large gap in the number of infections and hospitalisation. Boosters have been given to around 43% of the population in Test Valley.

The situation is evolving but we are in a better place to respond and support residents and businesses than this time last year. The Community Team are checking up on local support groups to ensure they are still running and available over Christmas with the projection of a high number of infections in the next few weeks.

There is also a targeting campaign around boosters in communities.

The recovery continues to go well and the Council are in a good place to manage the impact of the new variant together with their partners based on lessons learnt and existing networks.

Members discussed:

- The Head of Strategy and Innovation will find out how much of the Welcome Back funding has been spent in Andover, Romsey and Stockbridge and how much remains.
- Walk in centres for booster vaccinations.
- The Chantry Centre vaccination centres are opening for longer hours and are doubling up on the number of vaccinations each day.
- Romsey has lost two groups from the support for the elderly and it was suggested that the Community Team can help support.

### **358 Final report of the review of the informal process for selecting the Chairman of OSCOM**

Consideration was given to a report of the Chairman of the Panel, Councillor C Dowden which brought together the final conclusions of the panel that has reviewed the informal process for selecting the candidate for Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee following the piloting of a new approach in 2021.

The purpose of the panel was to explore options for how the informal process for the selection of Chairman could be enhanced to enable members to learn more about prospective candidates and how they will meet the qualities of the role description and what they will bring to the role of chair if selected. The rationale for this is in recognition of the important role that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairman fulfils in enabling the committee to meeting its overview and scrutiny responsibilities. The proposals of which the recommendation refers to will provide a practical and proportionate way in which to undertake the informal process.

Councillor C Dowden reported that following feedback from members it would be helpful if the presentations could be videoed so that anyone that was unable to attend the presentations may view them in their own time. Feedback also showed that the majority of responses were supportive of the proposal which allowed them to get a better understanding of the person applying for the role. This will then allow members to appoint the best person for the role at Annual Council.

It was also reported that the same process should be followed for the role of Vice Chairman of the Committee who will be appointed by the Committee at its first meeting after Annual Council.

**Resolved:**

**That the final conclusions of the panel and that the informal process for the selection of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman piloted in 2021 be adopted for use in future years.**

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**Updates on Panels**

**Budget Panel** – The next meeting of the Budget Panel will be held on 10 January 2022.

**Audit Panel** – Meeting held on 22 November 2021. The Auditors have recommended that the Audit Panel ceases and an Audit Committee be created and would be responsible for the signing off of the annual audit. The panel reviewed the selection process for appointing external auditors.

**Review of Outside Bodies Panel** – The Member and Community Development Group are scheduled to meet in the New Year and will discuss the preliminary conclusions from the panel.

**Process for the selection of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee Panel** – This was covered earlier in the meeting.

**Enforcement Panel** – The panel recently met and the focus was to explore the performance of the planning enforcement function. There has been a lot of information and advice on how the Council has to work within legislation and this needs to be explained to residents.

**Communications Panel** – The panel met on 11 November where they discussed IT and the website. It was anticipated that a new website would be in place in the spring. There had been a lot of discussion on communication between officers and members and residents. The next meeting will be held on 19 January 2022.

**S106/CIL Panel** – This has been delayed until the New Year.

**Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill** – The panel are tracking the Bill through Parliament, the second reading has been delayed until 21 March. Officers have recently analysed the topics contained within the draft CEE Bill and have also updated the work plan. The next meeting will be held mid January 2022.



360 **Programme of Work for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

The Chairman reported a couple of changes to the work programme as follows:

- Round table discussion on The Green Economy delayed from January to April 2022.
- Climate Emergency Action Plan 6 monthly report delayed from March to April 2022.

**Resolved:**

**That the Work Programme as amended be agreed.**

(The meeting terminated at 7.57 pm)