

Minutes of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
of the **Test Valley Borough Council**  
held in The Annexe, Crosfield Hall, Broadwater Road  
on 19 January 2022 at 5.30 pm

Attendance:

**Councillor N Lodge (Chairman)**

Councillor G Bailey  
Councillor D Baverstock  
Councillor C Borg-Neal  
Councillor Z Brooks  
Councillor T Burley  
Councillor C Dowden  
Councillor N Gwynne  
Councillor K Hamilton

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

Councillor V Harber  
Councillor M Hatley  
Councillor J Neal  
Councillor J Parker  
Councillor T Swain  
Councillor A Ward  
Councillor A Warnes

Also in attendance  
Councillor M Flood

402

**Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Meyer.

403

**Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

404

**Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

405

**Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

406

**Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2021**

Councillor C Dowden wished an additional sentence to be added to the minutes at minute 358 third paragraph penultimate sentence to read;

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 *and also to encourage all members to take part and recognise the value of the process.*

**Resolved:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2021 be confirmed and signed as a true record subject to the addition proposed by Councillor C Dowden.**

407

**Call in Items**

There were no call in items.

408

**Urgent decisions taken since last meeting**

There were no urgent decisions.

409

**Budget Update from Budget Panel**

Consideration was given to a verbal report of the Lead Member for the Budget Panel which updated Members on changes to the 2022/23 budget forecast, including the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, New Homes' Bonus provisional allocations, the impacts of Coronavirus, revenue savings and budget pressures. It also provided an updated Medium Term Financial Forecast covering 2022/23 to 2024/25. In order to achieve a balanced budget, it will be necessary to close the remaining gap of £62,000 before figures are finalised in February 2022.

The Budget Panel discussed a range of options to close the budget gap and noted that there are a number of factors that will impact on the completion of the estimates for 2022/23 that still retain a degree of uncertainty.

The Head of Finance and Revenues gave an update on;

- 2022/23 budget forecast
- Local Government Finance Settlement
- Council Tax increase – referendum threshold
- Income from Council Tax
- Government Grants in Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement
- Inflation
- Investment Income
- Savings options, income generation proposals and budget pressures
- Transfers to and from reserves

- New homes bonus
- Localisation of non domestic rates
- Medium term financial forecast

One of the areas of concern was the loss of parking revenue which was around £500,000 lower than target. This is the only budget pressure relating to the pandemic which will continue into the next financial year. It is not expected that income will return to pre pandemic levels and therefore a budget pressure has been included in the budget.

The remaining parts of the budget process still to be completed are service estimates and the forecast income to be generated from retained business rates.

Members discussed;

- Council Tax increases
- Additional properties being built

The Budget Panel Lead Member expressed thanks to the Head of Finance & Revenues and the team for all their efforts and a very comprehensive report.

The recommendation from this Committee will be considered by Cabinet on 23 February 2022 with the final budget being considered by Council on 25 February 2022.

**Resolved:**

**That the Budget Update be endorsed.**

**Recommended:**

**That Cabinet notes that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received and approved a Budget Update and endorsed the work undertaken to deliver a Budget for 2022/23.**

**410      Informal Procedure for Improving the Efficiency of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Portfolio Reviews**

Consideration was given to a report of the Chairman which set out findings from trialling a new approach to the review of Portfolio Holders and their portfolios and incorporated them into a final revision of the earlier draft procedure.

Throughout most of 2021 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been trialling a new approach to the review of Portfolio Holders and their portfolios. In order to inform the focus of each review, the new procedures foresaw the appointment of coordinators from within the Committee who will keep informed on each individual portfolio and who will advise the Committee on the most valuable topics to explore during the review of their particular portfolio.

The report outlined the reasons for a revision of the practices employed in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee portfolio reviews. It also proposed a procedure which improves efficiency both in the use of time and in the targeting of effort towards the most salient issues affecting the performance of each individual portfolio. Furthermore, the approach seeks to place a greater emphasis on the examination of strategic issues and encourages a forward-looking analysis to ensure that future threats and opportunities are being properly anticipated.

The approach has been trialled across several portfolio reviews and generally found to provide the benefits which were hoped for. Some useful lessons have been learnt from the trial and these have been included in the present revision.

Members were keen that once the co-ordinators have decided on which area of the portfolio should be reviewed that they share any questions with other members so that the questions are not repeated. The Chairman will circulate an updated list of coordinators especially as the Portfolios have recently changed.

Following the review, the Coordinators will ensure that any actions arising, either by the Portfolio Holder, Head of Service, or the Committee itself, are recorded in the appropriate action tracking document and subsequently carried out.

The Chairman also reported that this process will be included in the review of the Overview and Scrutiny Handbook.

**Resolved:**

1. **That the Committee endorses the informal procedure set out in this report for improving the efficiency of portfolio reviews.**
2. **That Committee approves the inclusion of this informal procedure in the next revision of the Overview and Scrutiny Handbook.**

411

**Updates on Panels**

**Budget Panel –** Covered earlier in the meeting.

**Audit Panel –** The next meeting will be 14 March 2022.

**Review of Outside Bodies –** A report will be considered by the Member and Community Development Group on 2 February 2022. The panel will meet on 8 February 2022 to consider a final report for the Overview and Scrutiny Meeting on 2 March 2022.

**Enforcement Panel –** The meeting due to be held on 17 January 2022 was cancelled due to covid restrictions and will be rescheduled.

**Communications Panel** – The panel met on 19 January 2022 where they discussed template letters from across the Council that are sent out to residents. The next meeting will be held on 9 February 2022.

**S106/CIL Panel** – The Lead Member has met with the Head of Planning and Building, Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development and the Head of Community and Leisure who will put some information and then the panel can move forward. If anyone is interested in joining the panel then to let Councillor Hamilton know.

**Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill Panel** – The panel had made significant progress in looking at the proposed terms of the Bill and what it might mean for existing legislation and how it might apply locally. The next panel meeting will look at deliberative democracy.

**Process for selection of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee** – Councillor C Dowden requested that the process for the selection of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee is added to the Overview and Scrutiny Handbook. The Chairman acknowledged that this will be included.

#### **412 Programme of Work for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

It was suggested that an update be provided on recycling specifically in light of the Environment Bill currently working its way through parliament so that some pre planning work can be undertaken.

The Chairman reminded members that there will be a presentation on local policing at the next meeting on 2 March and encouraged them to send in any questions/areas that they would like to discuss prior to the meeting so that the presentation can cover those areas.

The Head of Strategy and Innovation reported he would like to hold a round table discussion in February on emerging process for the development of the next Corporate Plan.

- Add round table discussion on the emerging process for the development of the next Corporate Plan – February
- Update on recycling/Environmental Bill – March
- Plan in Portfolio Holder reviews.
- Outside Bodies final report in March
- Update on Andover and Romsey regeneration projects – date to be confirmed
- Test Valley Partnership briefing note – June

The Head of Strategy and Innovation updated the committee on the Welcome Back Fund relating to Covid recovery which was raised at the last meeting. The Council has received £112,000 from the government to support the reopening the high street. This funding has been split into three chunks, £30,000 for Romsey, £20,000 for Stockbridge and £60,000 for Andover. In Romsey £15,000 has been allocated and spent and the Head of Community and Leisure is speaking to Romsey Town Council to identify any further projects as the funding will need to be spent by 31 March 2022. In Stockbridge £18,000 has been spent and in Andover £40,000.

**Resolved:**

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

(The meeting terminated at 7.10 pm)