

Minutes of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
of the **Test Valley Borough Council**
held in Conference Room 1, Beech Hurst, Weyhill Road, Andover
on Tuesday 17 May 2022 at 5.30 pm

Attendance:

Councillor N Lodge (Chairman)

Councillor G Bailey

Councillor D Baverstock

Councillor C Borg-Neal

Councillor Z Brooks

Councillor K Hamilton

Councillor V Harber

Councillor M Hatley

Councillor R Meyer

Councillor J Neal

Councillor A Ward

Also in attendance

Councillor M Flood

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Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Burley, C Dowden, Gwynne, Matthews, Parker and Swain.

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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

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2022 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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**OSCOM Review of Finance & Resources Portfolio -
Investment Properties**

Consideration was given to a presentation by the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder on the Council's investment property portfolio.

The Council has historically owned a large portfolio from which a rental income is received. Since 2014 significant investment (c£30M) has been made through the Project Enterprise initiative to increase and diversify the portfolio of investment properties held. Investment properties are those which are held primarily for rental income or capital appreciation and not used in the delivery of core Council Services.

In addition, two joint ventures have been completed with the Council's delivery partner, Kier Property Ltd, to rejuvenate derelict or previously undeveloped sites on Walworth Business Park.

The presentation provided an update on;

- The current market for commercial property investments
- A review of the TVBC portfolio
- How our business parks are managed
- A summary of Project Enterprise investments
- Factors affecting further growth in the portfolio
- Potential for future delivery arrangements
- The need for future income capital receipts.

The presentation provided members with an overview of the Council's approach to managing its investment property portfolio and the implications that the rental income from the portfolio has on the Council's overall budget.

Members discussed;

- Interest rates
- Capital assets
- Identifying potential tenants for recent developments at Walworth Business Park

The Chairman thanked Councillor Flood, Finance Portfolio Holder, the Head of Finance & Revenues and the Head of Property & Asset Management for a very interesting and detailed view of investments.

Resolved:

- 1. That the council's approach to managing the existing investment property portfolio be endorsed.**
- 2. That the approach to considering new investment opportunities be endorsed.**

615 Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Community and Leisure which summarised the work undertaken with regards to the Council's safeguarding duties as requested by the Committee as part of a bi-annual review of the safeguarding policy and practices of the Council. The Council are continually reviewing their practices to ensure that they are compliant with their safeguarding responsibilities and incorporate emerging issues under the following pieces of legislation;

- The Children Act 2004
- The Care Act 2014
- The Counter Terrorism & Security Act 2015
- The Modern Slavery Act 2015
- The Children & Social Work Act 2017 (Corporate Parenting)

The Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy (2020 update) along with staff and Member training has ensured the Council remains compliant with the above duties. The next review of the TVBC Safeguarding Policy will take place in September 2022.

The Community Engagement Manager explained that safeguarding training for staff continued online throughout the pandemic and she has been accredited to run City & Guilds Suicide First Aid training for staff. Members will receive refresher training on 21 June at 5pm via Teams.

The Community Engagement Manager also explained that the Multi Agency Risk Management Framework (MARM) forms part of the adult safeguarding toolkit as a method to 'hold and support' an adult at risk when the concern does not hit the trigger for Adult Health & Social Care Section 42 intervention.

Members discussed;

- Referral figures for children during lockdown
- Increase in domestic violence which correlates nationally
- Awareness campaigns
- Working with the Crisis Centre

- TVBC are part of a multi-agency support coordination group for refugees and their hosts

Resolved:

That the ongoing work, as set out in the report, to ensure that the Council is compliant with its safeguarding duties be endorsed.

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Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill

Consideration was given to a report of the Chairman (Lead Panel Member) setting out the findings of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill panel. The Climate and Ecological Emergency (CEE) Bill was put forward to assist the UK government to meet its legally binding target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050. In response to a motion to Council on 1 September 2021 seeking to support the Bill, it was agreed that an Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Panel be established to review the implications of the CEE Bill on Test Valley and consider whether to support the Bill or not. The CEE Bill was being considered through the House of Commons at the point the 2021-22 session of Parliament was brought to a close.

At the time of the final meeting of the panel, the CEE Bill was due its second reading at the House of Commons, which represents a relatively early stage in the legislative process. The Bill had been delayed on several occasions with the most recent date for the second reading having been scheduled for 18 March 2022, which was deferred until 6 May 2022. The parliamentary session for 2021-22 was brought to a close on 28 April, therefore it is indicated that there will be no further progress on the Bill. It is not known whether the Bill may be re-introduced in future parliamentary sessions, and if it is re-introduced whether it would have been subject to amendments. The panel anticipated that should the Bill have been enacted, the government would have needed to fill in many of the details of the requirements of the eventual Act by making regulations or orders.

Despite this, the panel has investigated, as best as possible: the connections between the expectation of the Bill and other legislation, how the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) and other potential local implications may arise, and what conclusions can be drawn. In reaching those conclusions the panel identified a number of general comments. They were mindful of the scale of the requirements and that the provisions within the Bill go beyond the remit of local authorities. In addition, the panel recognised the need for clarity on how any legally binding requirement would work, be measured and monitored. There were also issues with the language and terminology used in terms of being able to properly understand the purpose of the Bill and its implications.

The Task and Finish Panel has considered the CEE Bill as required by the Council motion. As the Bill is no longer progressing, it is recommended that the work of the Panel on whether to support the Bill be concluded. However, the Panel has highlighted elements of the Bill which it can support and which can add value to our existing CEAP. The recommendations of the panel for consideration as part of future reviews of the Council's CEAP comprise:

- Think about re-focusing on biodiversity (taking account of the forthcoming implications of the Environment Act 2021), including the link to the CEAP; and
- Add targets and milestones to the CEAP.

Recommended to Council:

1. That the findings of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill panel set out in Annex 2 to the report be noted.
2. That it is noted that the panel could not come to a firm conclusion on whether or not the motion (contained at Annex 1 to the report) relating to the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill could be supported; however as the Bill will not be progressing, as the 2021-2022 session of Parliament has prorogued, it is recommended that the work of the panel be concluded.
3. That the recommendations of the panel, as set out in paragraph 6.2 to the report, be considered as part of future reviews of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan.

617 **Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report**

Consideration was given to a report of the Chairman which sought approval for the Chairman's Annual Report which will be submitted to Council on 8 June 2022.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is required to report to full Council on an annual basis to inform all Members of the work undertaken over the previous 12 months. Following approval of the draft report at the previous meeting, amendments have been made and the final report was presented to the Committee for approval.

Resolved:

That the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be approved.

618 **Updates on Panels**

Budget Panel – The next meeting will be held on 27 June 2022.

Audit Panel – The Audit Panel has been disbanded and the work will transfer to a newly created Audit Committee.

Enforcement Panel – This panel has not met since the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

Communications Panel – The Focus Groups scheduled to take place in May were cancelled due to lack of interest. The Lead Member will meet with Councillor Baverstock, the Communications Manager and Head of Strategy and Innovation to discuss the next steps.

S106/CIL Panel – The first meeting of the panel will take place on 6 June 2022.

Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill Panel – This panel has now concluded.

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

The Committee discussed and agreed the work programme.

The Chairman informed the Committee that the Away Day will take place on Saturday 16 July 2022 at Broughton Village Hall. An invitation and agenda will follow in due course.

The Portfolio Holder Presentation due to take place on 29 June will focus on cyber security, IT infrastructure and business continuity.

(The meeting terminated at 7.30 pm)