

Minutes of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
of the **Test Valley Borough Council**  
held in Conference Room 1, Beech Hurst, Weyhill Road, Andover  
on 21 September 2022 at 5.30 pm

Attendance:

**Councillor N Lodge (Chairman)**

Councillor C Borg-Neal

Councillor T Burley

Councillor D Coole

Councillor Cooper

Councillor N Gwynne

Councillor K Hamilton

Councillor V Harber

Councillor J Parker

Councillor T Swain

Councillor A Warnes

203

**Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Bailey, Brooks, Hatley, Matthews and Neal.

204

**Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

205

**Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

206

**Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

207

**Minutes**

**Resolved:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 August 2022 be confirmed and signed as a true record.**

208

**Call in Items**

There were no call in items.

209

### **Urgent decisions taken since last meeting**

There were no urgent decisions.

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### **Democracy and Governance Portfolio Presentation**

Councillor Jeffrey, Democracy and Governance Portfolio Holder gave a presentation on his portfolio focusing on IT. The presentation gave a high-level view across a broad range of IT areas including;

- Background of the IT shared service including governance arrangements
- Desktop equipment and officer access to systems
- Description of systems and applications and how they are delivered
- General data protection regulations compliance and data retention
- Hardware and server estate details including backup arrangements and data replication
- Cyber security and resilience
- Insight as to what we might expect from a future IT strategy.

Members discussed and commented on;

- Expected life of hardware is at least 5 years which includes servers.
- Contingency on site is active active and backups are replicated to and from Winchester City Council and also mirrored on site.
- There are over 200 applications most of which are held on site with some held in the cloud.
- Cyber protection is to industry standard and there is a qualified cyber security engineer on site with back up support.
- There is dedicated training for staff on security online and also training provided by the police.
- Back ups are taken daily and weekly to three locations one of which is off site.
- Data protection schedules are built around what data is held, how long it needs to be kept for arrangements for destruction, this also applies to Members. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services is responsible for Data Protection within the Council and will be requested to hold a briefing session for Members.
- Third party mail filter blocks virus emails and scam emails are caught and quarantined until either released or deleted by the intended recipient.
- Training for Members on IT equipment will be given post election. There is currently a review being held on the type of equipment that members are currently using and what the future requirements are.
- The New Ways of Working project is looking at how people want to access services in the future and this will underpin the future IT Strategy.
- IT estate

- Consultancy company is undertaking a review of the council's future IT needs linked to our modernisation programme. This will provide a future roadmap for the IT service.
- Looking at accessibility and requirements for a new website including customer engagement to ensure right investment.
- Access to Member's emails.
- Pentagal Members' case management system.
- Single points of failure.

The Chairman thanked the Democracy and Governance Portfolio Holder for his interesting presentation.

## 211 **Update on the progress of the development of the Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027**

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Strategy and Innovation that gave an update on the actions completed to date, and those outstanding, to develop a new Corporate Plan that will be implemented in Spring 2023, to cover the four-year 2023 to 2027, at the natural end of the current Corporate Plan 2019-23, Growing Our Potential, which was adopted by Council in April 2019.

As the Council comes to the end of the four-year cycle of the current corporate plan, work has begun to prepare for the new plan, including extensive public engagement across the summer months, which will support members in being able to consider a wide range of evidence when developing the new plan in 2023.

A 10 question public consultation survey was launched on 16 May 2022 based around Town Centre regeneration; arts and leisure; green space and countryside; sports, exercise and leisure facilities and community halls and ran for a 15 week period of public consultation. The survey closed on 21 August 2022 and an analysis of the data was undertaken. The analysis of the survey responses will inform the discussions that will take place during the next, and new, phase of public consultation.

A Deliberative Engagement project will be held involving the hosting and facilitation of four workshops, involving up to 120 residents who reflect the demographic composition of the Borough to gain a greater understanding of people's aspirations and priorities. Three events will be held one in Andover, one in Romsey and one in the middle of Test Valley. A fourth event will be held with participants drawn from the three previous events to bring the recommendations together. Once these events have concluded, a report will be produced which will provide recommendations for further discussion and consideration amongst Councillors and Officers, as part of the ongoing development of the Corporate Plan. This will be followed by a period of the drafting of the Corporate Plan, with the production of a number of reports and supporting documentation to the relevant committee meetings in the winter and into Spring 2023.

All members will be invited to an Overview and Scrutiny sponsored Teams meeting to take Members through what those events will look like.

The Head of Strategy and Innovation responded to a question about the Romsey responses to the survey linking into the Romsey Future and if there are any discrepancies. The Policy Manager also responded to a question about the response rates to the survey and demographics.

**Resolved:**

**That Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorse and note the progress made to date, in developing the new Corporate Plan for 2023 to 2027.**

212      **Budget Panel Report draft Budget and Draft Fees and Charges**

The Head of Finance and Revenues gave an update on the Budget Panel which was held prior to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

There were three main areas of discussion at the Panel meeting around the performance against budget for all Services in the first four months of the financial year, the principles around the fees and charges setting for next year due to the current high levels of inflation and the main changes in assumptions that underpin the medium term financial strategy and how they will affect the budget next year.

There is a variance of £500,000 below budget due to the increase in base rates in the base interest rate, salary costs and one off increase in income from recyclable materials. This information will be used when looking at the forecast for next year.

Fees and charges will be deferred until December due to the high level of inflation. The panel felt that everyday charges i.e. car parking charges, pitch bookings etc should be held and only increase where the cost of providing those services has increased. It might be more appropriate to increase larger one off costs more. There are some fees and charges that are not in control of the Council.

The Head of Finance and Resources informed the Committee that the resetting of the business rates is not expected to change until at least 2024/25. The main changes in assumptions are around high levels of inflation around the services that are procured, particularly utilities, and investment income.

Taking everything into account there is an estimated budget gap of £550,000 down from £3.6m.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Finance and Revenues for his contribution.

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## **Cost of Living**

Consideration was given to a report on the work that the Council has undertaken through the Test Valley Partnership to assist residents dealing with the increased cost of living prior to understanding any initiatives that might be implemented by the new Prime Minister in the near future.

The Government has introduced a number of measures to try and support households during the crisis and it is likely that the new Prime Minister will implement further measures over the forthcoming weeks.

A special meeting of the Test Valley Partnership was convened and co hosted by Councillor North and Councillor C Dowden on 10 August which sought to identify what support is already provided in Test Valley and what gaps in provision there are and what the partnership can do to help. The partnership agreed that a cost of living grant scheme be introduced that could be quickly implemented for local organisations supporting people with cost of living related challenges. The funding available in the scheme is £50,000 which was the underspend from the Covid fund. The next meeting of the Partnership will be held on the 7 October 2022.

A dedicated page has been created to sign-post people and organisations to the support already available and the Communications Team is running a campaign so that the information is disseminated across various social media platforms, the Council's email newsletter and will feature in the forthcoming edition of Test Valley News. Members were requested to look at the page and feed any comments back to the Head of Strategy and Innovation.

A further meeting of the Partnership will be held on the 7 October 2022 to reflect on any announcements of further support and see if any further local initiatives need to be implemented. Partners will continue to work closely together over the coming weeks and months to jointly address the impacts and develop localised actions that can support communities in Test Valley.

Members discussed and commented on;

- The funding for the cost of living grant scheme
- Inflation on food, fuel, mortgage and rental costs
- Statistics on the web page
- Signpost to budgeting tool and links to cheap recipes on the web page
- Single point of contact on the web page

### **Resolved:**

**That Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes and endorses the preliminary and proposed work of the Test Valley Partnership in supporting residents with the increased costs of living.**

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### **Updates on Panels**

**Budget Panel** – Update given at this meeting. Next meeting on 17 January 2023.

**Enforcement Panel** – Councillor Burley will meet with the Head of Strategy and Innovation to discuss the next stage. The topic will feature at the next meeting of the Test Valley Association of Town and Parish Councils.

**Communications Panel** – The Head of Strategy and Innovation reported the last meeting of the panel was cancelled due to the passing of the late Queen. Another meeting will be scheduled.

**CIL/S106 Panel** – Councillor Hamilton reported that the report was currently being written and will come to the next meeting of the Committee.

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

The Chairman referred to the prioritisation of the Away Day topics. The topics have been ranked and suggested methods of delivery identified. Some of the topics will need to have further discussion. The Chairman requested the committee to let him know if they have any comments or suggestions on the prioritisation.

The Committee discussed and agreed changes to the Work Programme as follows:

- Briefing Note/Report on the future of IT following a review from third party company at a date to be agreed.
- S106/CIL Panel report – add to November.
- Round table on the flexibility of planning call-ins – add to December.
- New Ways of Working - add to December.
- Business Parks and Industrial Estates – add to December.

The Chairman reminded members that there will be an Overview and Scrutiny sponsored workshop in King's Somborne on 4 October looking at New Neighbourhoods.

#### **Resolved:**

**That the future work programme be agreed.**

(The meeting terminated at 7.40 pm)