

Notice of Meeting

Council

A meeting of the Test Valley Borough Council will be held on

Date: Wednesday 5 April 2023

Time: 5.30 pm

Venue: Crosfield Hall, Broadwater Road, Romsey, Hampshire SO51 8GL

when your attendance is required to consider the business set out in the agenda.



Head of Legal and Democratic Services

For further information or enquiries please contact:

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Legal and Democratic Service

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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SCHEME

If members of the public wish to address the meeting they should notify the Legal and Democratic Service at the Council's Beech Hurst office by noon on the working day before the meeting.

Council

Wednesday 5 April 2023

AGENDA

**The order of these items may change as a result of members
of the public wishing to speak**

- 1 Prayers**
- 2 Apologies**
- 3 Public Participation**
- 4 Declarations of Interest**
- 5 To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Council
held on 23 February 2023**
- 6 Mayor's Announcements**
- 7 To receive and adopt Committee reports 4 - 22**

To receive and, where necessary, adopt reports of
Committees.
- 8 Questions under Rule 11.1**
- 9 Questions under Rule 11.2**
- 10 Corporate Plan 2023-2027 23 - 61**

To consider the draft Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027.
- 11 Waste Service Changes 62 - 69**

To consider the capital and revenue funding required in
order to deliver the strategic direction for the waste service
changes approved by Cabinet in June 2022.

12 Rural England Prosperity Fund 70 - 73

To consider incorporating the Rural England Prosperity Fund projects identified in the report within the Council's Capital Programme.

13 Reporting of Urgent Decision 74 - 79

This report contains details of an urgent decision made by the Chief Executive and the Leader, which Council is asked to note.

14 Notice of Motion - Rule 12

There are no Motions to consider submitted under Council Procedure Rule 12.

ITEM 7 To receive and, where necessary, adopt reports of Committees

(Some reports may involve the disclosure of exempt information. If the Council wishes to debate them, for each individual case the Council will need to adopt a suitable motion).

7.1 To receive the minutes of the following meetings:

- 7.1.1 Northern Area Planning Committee – 16 February 2023
- 7.1.2 Cabinet – 22 February 2023
- 7.1.3 Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 1 March 2023
- 7.1.4 Southern Area Planning Committee – 14 March 2023
- 7.1.5 Audit Committee – 27 March 2023
- 7.1.6 Northern Area Planning Committee – 30 March 2023

(Note: in relation to item 7.1.5 and 7.1.6 these minutes are not included in the minute book and will be presented at the next Council meeting but members are able to ask questions on resolved items.)

7.2 To adopt recommendations from the following:

- 7.2.1 Audit Committee – 27 March 2023 (Annex)
- 7.2.1.1 Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

Recommended:

That the Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23 be approved and that the Leader and Chief Executive be authorised to sign it on behalf of the Council.

Audit Committee – 27 March 2023

Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

Report of the Head of Finance and Revenues

Recommendation:

That the Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23 be approved and that the Leader and Chief Executive be authorised to sign it on behalf of the Council.

Recommendation to Council

SUMMARY:

- The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the Annual Governance Statement, which will accompany the 2022/23 Statement of Accounts.
- Best practice requires that the approval of this Statement is considered separately from the Statement of Accounts, although both are published together each year.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Test Valley Borough Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and used economically, efficiently and effectively.
- 1.2 The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

2 Background

- 2.1 As part of its responsibilities outlined above, the Council is required to produce an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) and publish the Statement alongside its Annual Statement of Accounts. The format of the statement is based on guidance produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance (CIPFA) in conjunction with the Society of Local Chief Executives (SOLACE) titled “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework”.

ANNEX

- 2.2 The Statement is attached as an Annex to this report and covers the following areas:
- (a) Scope of responsibility
 - (b) The purpose of the Governance Framework
 - (c) The impact of Covid-19 on the governance framework
 - (d) The Governance Framework in place at the Council
 - (e) A review of its effectiveness
 - (f) A separate Annex of best practice actions that have been identified and will be implemented during 2023/24.
- 2.3 The Review of Effectiveness (item 2.2 (e)) has been carried out by the Internal Audit Manager, who has reviewed all of the internal audit work carried out during the year. To inform this work, a self-assessment of the internal audit function's conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) has been carried out.
- 2.4 On the basis of Internal Audit work completed in 2022/23, the Internal Audit Manager has provided a "substantial assurance" opinion in respect of the Council's risk management, control and governance arrangements.
- 2.5 The report is being presented to the Audit Committee ahead of the end of the financial year to which it relates. However, to receive the Council approval that will enable the AGS to be published alongside the Statement of Accounts, it needs to be considered at this meeting. An update to Councillors will be provided if any material events occur between the date of the meeting and 31 March.

3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 3.1 In addition to its legal responsibilities, approval of an AGS is considered to be best practice and will ensure that proper arrangements are in place to deliver the aims of the Council's Corporate Plan.

4 Consultations/Communications

- 4.1 The Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and all Heads of Service have been asked to review the AGS and consider whether there are any areas which they felt are appropriate for disclosure. All comments received have been incorporated in the Statement.

5 Options and Options Appraisal

- 5.1 The Council has a statutory duty to approve an AGS. In view of this, if the annexed AGS is not recommended for approval, the Audit Committee should provide a clear indication as to what changes are needed in order for a revised version to be presented as soon as possible.

6 Risk Management

- 6.1 The research and preparation of the 2022/23 AGS has not identified any significant red or amber risks that need addressing.

ANNEX

- 6.2 Three areas have been identified where improvements can be made to existing controls to further strengthen the Council's governance arrangements. These are summarised as an appendix to the AGS.

7 Resource Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct resource implications in approving the AGS. The publication costs can be met within existing budgets.

8 Legal Implications

- 8.1 The Council is required by the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 to approve, and subsequently publish, the AGS with the Statement of Accounts.

9 Equality Issues

- 9.1 This report has not identified any equalities matters.

10 Conclusion and reasons for recommendation

- 10.1 The AGS is part of the framework for delivering good governance in local authorities. The Statement is a high profile document signed by the Leader and Chief Executive and is published with the Statement of Accounts each year to demonstrate a commitment to the continuous review and development of the Council's governance arrangements.

Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)

[The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

Confidentiality:

It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.

No of Annexes:

1

File Ref:

N/A

(Portfolio: Finance and Resources) Councillor M Flood

Officer:

Carl Whatley

Ext:

8540

Report to:

Audit Committee

Date:

27 March 2023

Audit Committee – 27 March 2023**Test Valley Borough Council****Annual Governance Statement 2022/23****1 Scope of responsibility**

- 1.1 The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 1.2 In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.3 The Council has approved and adopted a local code of corporate governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*. A copy of the Local Code of Corporate Governance is on the Council's website at: <http://www.testvalley.gov.uk/aboutyourcouncil/corporatedirection/local-codecorporate-governance>, or can be obtained from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services. This statement explains how the Council has complied, and continues to comply, with the principles underlying this code and also meets the requirements of regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, which requires all relevant bodies to prepare an annual governance statement.

2 The purpose of the governance framework

- 2.1 The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the Authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, value for money services.
- 2.2 The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk at a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.

- 2.3 The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks occurring and the impact should they happen, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.
- 2.4 The governance framework that has been in place at the Council for the year ended 31 March 2023 is explained in the following section along with changes that have been implemented in the year. It will continue to be developed during the coming year.

3 The impact of Covid19 on the governance framework

- 3.1 During the course of 2022/23 the Council's governance arrangements have become less impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. This reflects the national picture of moving towards a strategy of living with covid and moving away from a direct response and recovery phase.
- 3.2 The Council delivered the key elements of its Covid-19 Recovery Plan due to being focused on the response and immediate recovery phase aligned to the national picture around Covid19. Priorities such as the safety of our population, sustainable recovery and reviewing future working practices have become embedded within the organisation and are being delivered within services as part of their ongoing projects or business-as-usual practices. Therefore the Corporate Action Plan project focusing on recovery was closed down and brought off the Corporate Action Plan at its last update in April 2022.
- 3.3 The Council has sought to draw the lessons learned from the pandemic to inform its future work on responding to unforeseen incidents through strengthening its approach to community resilience, building capacity within communities and ensuring the council has agility in the way that it works to call upon the skills and resources needed from across services when such incidents occur. Examples in 2022/23 which required this approach include responding to the cost-of-living crisis and supporting refugees as a result of the war in Ukraine.

4 The governance framework

- 4.1 The key elements of the systems and processes that comprise the Council's governance arrangements are as follows:
- The Council has fulfilled the following key roles (now formally adopted as part of the Local Code of Governance):
 - To promote the well-being of the area and provide leadership to the community;

- To ensure the provision of high quality services provided in-house, by private sector companies, (where the ability to influence exists), jointly with other Councils or agencies, or by the voluntary sector;
- To be accountable and provide stewardship for the use of public funds and resources;
- To build a strong sense of community.

4.2 In fulfilling these roles the Council is committed to following the six core principles of good corporate governance identified in the CIPFA/SOLACE Guidance.

Partnership Working

- 4.3 A single strategic partnership for the Borough is in place called the Test Valley Partnership. It brings together the key partner agencies from across the public and voluntary and community sector. It meets twice a year and provides a place in which the key strategic issues facing the borough can be discussed, joint work developed and statutory duties met.
- 4.4 The Test Valley Partnership and its umbrella groups (community safety management group, community resilience forum and the civilian military forum) all continued to meet during 2022-23. The partnership has reviewed its programme of work in-light of where evidence is demonstrating a focus is required.
- 4.5 During this year the partnership has continued to demonstrate its added value by bringing partners together to work on key issues affecting communities in Test Valley by aligning work and resources and taking a focused and targeted approach to where it can make its greatest impact. A good example of this in practice has been the response to the Cost of Living crisis.
- 4.6 The partnership held a special meeting in August with approximately 40 delegates in attendance from across the public and voluntary sector. As a result, the partners were able to pool knowledge on existing support and explored who would be in most need of that support map where the gaps were and to think about how the partnership can work together to help in response to these challenges.
- 4.7 The headline outcomes were:
- Established a cost-of-living **information hub** on the Council website with input from a host of agencies.
 - Established a £50,000 **cost-of-living grant** for organisations supporting households through that crisis that was later increased to £100,000.
 - Establishment of a weekly **stakeholder** meeting to touch base and enable organisations to share any early warning signs, any insight in to what the story behind the headlines is for people living in Test Valley, and to check whether we need to mobilise the wider partnership to identify further support.

- 4.8 As the Council's place-based approach has grown, partnership websites such as Andover Vision and Romsey Future have been developed, where appropriate, due to the collaborative nature of the projects e.g. Romsey South of Town Centre. Consultation and project information has been posted to these websites with clear links back to relevant Council Services.

Community Working and the Corporate Plan

- 4.9 The Council has a clear vision of its purpose and desired outcomes for the short, medium and long term. These are encapsulated in its Corporate Plan and in its delivery vehicle, the Corporate Action plan through a range of corporate and service strategies and through four areas of focus as part of the Council's commitment to the Test Valley Partnership.
- 4.10 There has been considerable consultation and stakeholder involvement in the development and progression of these plans and strategies and they are made available to the public through a variety of means including the Council's website and Test Valley News.
- 4.11 The Council has published a Corporate Plan for 2019 / 2023 "Growing Our Potential" which was approved by the Council on 10th April 2019. It has four main aims and an action plan detailing how these aims will be delivered. In developing the plan, previous priorities were reviewed, extensive consultation was undertaken with local people and elected Councillors whilst also considering external influences on the borough, such as government policy.
- 4.12 Work commenced in Summer 2022 to prepare the evidence for the development of the new Corporate Plan which will come into effect from April 2023. This is an extensive process which seeks to bring together evidence that reflects the strategic influences facing the authority and is built upon a robust package of public engagement over two phases. The development of the plan includes the active engagement of the council's overview and scrutiny committee throughout the process and will be considered by Full Council in April 2023.
- 4.13 The Council has a longstanding strategic commitment to work with its communities collaboratively. At the centre of this is the democratic role elected councillors play in bringing communities together to ensure inclusivity when undertaking local action planning and priority setting. The Council's Member and Community Development Group, chaired by the Leader of the Council, supports community councillors to engage more effectively with local residents and communities.
- 4.14 Building upon the practice and learning gained as part of the council's participation in the Innovation in Democracy Programme, further opportunities to embed and develop our approach to innovative engagement practice through the use of deliberative engagement has taken place in 2022/23.

- 4.15 As part of the development of the new Corporate Plan, the Council has worked with the Involve Foundation (a leading national organisation on public engagement) to design and deliver a series of deliberative events across the borough to enable a representative group of the borough's population to come together to explore the future focus of the council's corporate plan priorities. Drawing upon lived experience, data and insights and facilitating deliberation amongst participants has culminated in a series of robust outcome statements for the council to consider which will help shape our future strategic focus.
- 4.16 Embedding this practice has included specialist training from Involve to TVBC staff to be able the council to facilitate this form of engagement practice on an onward basis and builds upon earlier development work as a result of the workshop in 2021 held with senior managers which was hosted by the Southern Policy Centre. In addition the Council has also undertaken deliberative activities with young people as part of the Andover Youth Assembly partnering with a local voluntary organisation to deliver this work.
- 4.17 The Council formally reviews its progress and performance against its corporate priorities through an Annual Corporate Action Plan Report <https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/aboutyourcouncil/corporatedirection/corporate-plan-for-2019-to-2023> which is presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSCOM) and the Cabinet.
- 4.18 The Council's Consultation Portal provides a single link to all our current 'live' consultations, giving residents the opportunity to get involved, as well as access to details of the feedback from previous consultations.
- 4.19 There are a number of tools in place to enable the Council to hear the widest range of views from local communities, in a consistent way, as part of an evidence led approach to decision making. These include:
- Statement of community involvement.
 - Community Planning Toolkit.
 - Specialist advice and support through Community Engagement Officers and policy Team.
 - Equality objectives which set out how the Council will ensure an inclusive approach to consultation.

Committee Role in Governance

- 4.20 The Corporate Plan is supported by a performance management framework (including performance indicators) to measure progress and performance against the Corporate Action Plan is reported annually to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- 4.21 At its meeting on 6 April 2022 Council resolved to form an Audit Committee in April 2022 with effect from 18th May 2022 replacing the arrangements previously undertaken by the OSCOM Audit Panel. This committee met four times during the year. The terms of reference for the Audit Committee can be found here:
<https://democracy.testvalley.gov.uk/documents/g3494/Public%20reports%20pack%20Monday%2020-Jun-022%2017.30%20Audit%20Committee.pdf?T=10>
- 4.22 Full Council is ultimately responsible for approving amendments to the Council's Constitution. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the Constitution which is undertaken at least annually to ensure that it is up to date with current legislation and best practice.
- 4.23 The Cabinet has responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the Council's business unless that business is delegated specifically to another committee (e.g. Planning, Licensing) and ensuring that governance arrangements and compliance is adequate for the conduct of that business.
- 4.24 As part of the Council's open and transparent approach, Overview and Scrutiny Committee has responsibility for scrutinising the decisions of the Cabinet and reviewing the Council's policies and functions and making recommendations to the Cabinet as appropriate.
- 4.25 The Council's Audit Committee takes responsibility for audit and risk management issues, reviewing the Council's work in these areas and monitoring the progress and performance of both Internal and External Audit.
- 4.26 The Council's General Purposes Committee together with the General Purposes Employment Appeals and Ethics Sub-Committee have the role of promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct amongst Members and assisting them to observe the Authority's Code of Conduct. The work of the Sub-Committee is supported by the appointment of three Independent Persons and Parish representatives as required by the Localism Act 2011. The General Purposes Committee may receive reports as to the operation of the Code of Conduct. In addition, the General Purposes Employment Appeals and Ethics Sub-Committee will be required to determine complaints which are referred to it by the Monitoring Officer following investigation and direct or recommend any further action required consistent with the Localism Act 2011 and associated regulations.
- 4.27 Members of OSCOM undertake task and finish panel reviews. Once an area for review has been identified, the lead member/chairman of the panel presents the draft scoping document for the review to the full committee for consideration.

- 4.28 A full report is then subsequently presented to OSCOM once the review has been completed or reached an appropriate stage. This process has ensured more effective and focused reviews and a clear line of responsibility to the main committee. In addition, there is a standing Budget Panel which meet regularly throughout the year and covers the budget setting process of the Council. This panel reports to OSCOM on a regular basis and brings any issues of concern to the attention of the Committee.
- 4.29 The roles of the Cabinet, OSCOM, and other committees of the Council as well as specific roles assigned to the Leader, Deputy Leader, Portfolio Holders and senior officers of the Council are defined and documented within the Council's Constitution.
- 4.30 The Constitution clearly identifies the powers, duties and responsibilities delegated to the Leader, Deputy Leader, Portfolio Holders and Officers, and includes rules for how Council and committee meetings should operate and the relationship between Members and Officers.
- 4.31 The conduct of Members and Officers is regulated by separate codes of conduct within the Council's Constitution. The Council's General Purposes Committee together with the General Purposes Employment Appeals and Ethics Sub-Committee promote high standards of conduct by Members and the latter considers allegations of breach of the Code of Conduct by Members where referred to them.
- 4.32 Having regard to the benefits of remote meetings, the Council responded to the Government's consultation/call for evidence on the subject. The Council has been able to continue to avail itself of the ability to conduct non-committee business remotely or in a hybrid fashion where appropriate. Officers are investigating the potential for live streaming Council meetings.

Supporting the Committee Role

- 4.33 The Council has a Strategy and Innovation Service to strengthen the Council's ability to develop and manage its corporate planning processes. The Service leads on key projects and programmes including the Council's approach to modernisation in its ways of working.
- 4.34 The quality and value for money of services provided to users is measured through the Authority's performance management system. This includes the measurement and review of performance against national and local performance indicators and actions taken to address areas for improvement. Performance is monitored regularly throughout the year.
- 4.35 The conduct of day-to-day Council business is regulated through policies and procedures such as Contract Standing Orders and Financial Procedure Rules. The delegations to Members and Officers are kept continually under review and revised as appropriate. These documents were updated during the 2022/23 financial year.

- 4.36 A comprehensive set of Human Resources policies ensures compliance with employment legislation and promotes good personnel practices. These include disciplinary and capability processes to deal with conduct or performance which is unacceptable. These policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and revised.
- 4.37 A People Strategy was produced in 2020/21 which shapes the cultural direction and people management practices for the future to enable the Council to achieve its ambitions over the next 3-5 years. Whilst being able to respond to the changing needs of local government and the borough's residents this forms part of the Council's Corporate Framework with close links to the Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy. Work has also been undertaken during the year to identify and review hard-to-recruit-to posts.

Finance & Risk Management

- 4.38 The Council has in place a Medium Term Financial Strategy, updated annually, which supports the aims of the Corporate Plan. The Medium Term Financial Strategy has been materially affected by macro-economic factors of high inflation and rapidly increasing interest rates. The greatest risk to the MTFS is the uncertainty surrounding the potential for a business rates re-set which could see a material reduction in a key income stream, the timing and extent of which is beyond the Council's control.
- 4.39 Risk management is outlined in its Risk Management Strategy. Corporate and Service specific risks are reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Council's Service Performance Boards and progress in managing the corporate risk register is reported to the Audit Committee on 6 monthly basis.
- 4.39.1 Risk management is embedded within the Council's processes e.g. reports to decision-making committees use a template which includes a section on risk assessment which must be completed before the report can be considered.

Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion

- 4.40 Elected Members and all officers are aware of their obligations under equality legislation, as well as the standards of behaviour and language which are expected from representatives and employees of the Council. Ongoing training is provided for both Members and officers.
- 4.41 Equality impact assessments are built into the Council's decision making process. The Council has reviewed its corporate equalities objectives, alongside its duties under the new gender pay gap publication requirements. The Council continues to deliver training on the Equality Act 2010 to new members of staff and to Members.

- 4.42 There is an area of Portfolio responsibility focused on “Diversity and Inclusion”. The responsibility for being the Council’s lead for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion has been allocated to the Head of Legal & Democratic. The Council has published information that demonstrates compliance with the Equality Duty as defined by the Equality Act 2010 on its website.
(<https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/aboutyourcouncil/corporatedirection/equality---diversity/equalities>)
- 4.43 The Council has established Disability Focus Groups that contributed towards the development of the new Corporate Plan. The groups are helping the Council and its partners on an ongoing basis.
- 4.44 The Council is a statutory partner with regards safeguarding its residents of all ages under both The Children Act 2004 and The Care Act 2015. The Council has in place a Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy and this and the associated procedures are monitored regularly to ensure compliance with these duties. The Council also liaises with both the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and Hampshire Safeguarding Adults Board to ensure this.
- 4.45 On an annual basis the Council is required by the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership to complete the required Section 11 audit which is a self-assessment of its position with regards its safeguarding duties. The last full audit which took place in 2021 was reviewed in 2022 and identified that the Council is compliant with Section 11 of the Children Act.
- 4.46 On a bi-annual basis the Council is also required by the Hampshire Safeguarding Adults Board to undertake an audit of its position with regards its safeguarding duties, the last audit was undertaken in 2020 however due to pressures on organisations as a result of the pandemic the 2022 assessment was delayed and will take place in 2023.

Environmental and managing a changing climate

- 4.47 The Council approved a Climate Emergency Action Plan in 2020 to identify the steps it will be taking to work towards achieving carbon neutrality. Evidence has been gathered to provide information on greenhouse emissions, decarbonisation and how the Council can deliver its services in a more environmentally friendly way.
- 4.48 The requirement to achieve nutrient neutrality from new residential development continues to affect the Council’s strategic priority to deliver housing. To help unlock housing delivery the Council has approved a mitigation framework which includes the purchase of nitrate credits for onward purchase by developers within the Borough.

- 4.49 Measures to secure the use of land to provide off-site mitigation solutions necessary to protect the internationally designated nature conservation sites in and around the Solent have included the purchase of nitrate credits from a third party which can be purchased from the Council directly through an approved mitigation framework. The Council is investigating the amount of nitrate credits arising from recent land purchases and how any credits could be used. Work has also continued with the Environment Agency, Southern Water and other partners to review permit limits at Wastewater Treatment Works serving the Borough.

Officer structure

- 4.50 The Chief Executive is the Council's Head of Paid Service and has overall corporate management and operational responsibility for the way in which the Council delivers its services. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services is designated as the Council's Monitoring Officer and has responsibilities under section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 for ensuring that the Council complies with relevant laws and regulations and internal policies such as Contract Standing Orders. The Head of Finance and Revenues is designated as the Council's Section 151 Officer with responsibility for ensuring the "proper administration of financial affairs".
- 4.51 The Head of Finance and Revenues also has responsibility under section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 for reporting to the Council and the external auditor if the Council has made, or is about to make, expenditure which is unlawful.
- 4.52 These three statutory officers meet regularly throughout the year (plus as required on an ad hoc basis) to discuss significant corporate issues.
- 4.53 The CIPFA statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government requires the Chief Finance Officer to report directly to the Chief Executive and be a member of the 'Leadership Team', of equal status to other members. The Council does not strictly comply with this requirement in that the Head of Finance and Revenues reports to the Deputy Chief Executive. However, in practice, the Head of Finance and Revenues is able to report directly to the Chief Executive and Members as and when required, is a member of the Management Team, and is involved and consulted in all matters which have financial implications for the Council.

Complaints & Whistleblowing

- 4.54 The Council's Constitution contains a Confidential Reporting Code for Employees which safeguards "whistle-blowers" who raise legitimate concerns about the Council's actions and specifies how their concerns should be addressed. The Code is monitored by the Audit Committee.

- 4.55 Financial Procedure Rules require all staff to raise concerns about the use or misuse of Council resources with the Head of Finance and Revenues or Internal Audit who will carry out an independent investigation of the circumstances. Internal Audit also actively encourages staff to raise matters of concern through “Speak Up” campaigns. A form is available on the Council’s intranet for staff to raise concerns (anonymously if desired) about the use of Council resources and this facility has been extended to the website so that members of the public can raise concerns in this area.
- 4.56 The Council also has a formal complaints procedure for members of the public to raise issues, e.g. where they are dissatisfied with the service they have received, and an annual report is prepared for the Audit Committee summarising these complaints and how they were resolved.
- 4.57 The Council has a detailed Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy which sets out the roles, responsibilities of officers and Members and actions to be taken when fraud or corruption is discovered. In addition, an Anti-Bribery Policy has been approved to address the requirements of the Bribery Act 2010.

Training and awareness

- 4.58 The Democratic Services Manager is responsible for identifying and providing for Councillors’ training needs. The Council has a cross-party Member and Community Development Group which is supported by officers from a range of services.
- 4.59 This Group has continued to work to promote an enhanced role for Councillors that focuses on them acting as a catalyst for change to encourage communities to reach their full potential. This work has brought together the needs and expectations of our communities in order to make balanced decisions, and has ensured a culture of democratic accountability is embraced throughout the Council.
- 4.60 The Group assists the Council in developing a programme of Councillor training and development that is shaped by the Councillors themselves, ensuring that training and development activities offered is tailored to individual Councillor needs as well as the needs of Councillors generally, the council and communities. This work has been shared with the Councillor Commission and has become a key part of the ongoing work that supports this national project.
- 4.61 All new Councillors are provided with induction training to assist them with understanding and successfully carrying out their different roles, with an ongoing programme of training and development provided on specific issues where appropriate e.g. planning, and to build key skills and knowledge.
- 4.62 All officers also receive induction training and appropriate professional and skills training and development identified, for instance, through annual performance discussions.

- 4.63 Publications such as Test Valley News are sent to all households and the Council's website is an important source of information about the Council and its services. The Council's website has been designed to make it more accessible to residents and businesses of Test Valley and to make it easier to undertake transactions online. An External Communications Strategy has been produced to support the emerging Corporate Plan.

5 Review of effectiveness

- 5.1 The Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the senior managers within the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the annual report of the Internal Audit Manager, and also by comments made by the external auditor and other review agencies and inspectorates.
- 5.2 The Council's Internal Audit team, located within the Finance & Revenues Service, carries out a continuous review of the Council's systems to provide independent assurance that the control environment is effective in achieving the Council's objectives. The team objectively examines, evaluates and reports on the adequacy of the control environment as a contribution to the proper, economic, efficient and effective use of the Authority's resources.
- 5.3 The performance of the Internal Audit team is monitored by the Council's Audit Committee and Section 151 Officer. The Internal Audit Manager presents the Internal Audit Charter, Strategy and Annual Audit Plan to the Audit Committee and produces an Annual Report giving an opinion of the adequacy of the Council's systems of internal control.
- 5.4 A self-assessment of the internal audit function's conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) was carried out in March 2023. The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards are a mandatory requirement, the objectives of which are to:
- define the nature of internal auditing within the UK public sector,
 - set basic principles for carrying out internal audit in the UK public sector,
 - establish a framework for providing internal audit services, which add value to the organisation, leading to improved organisational processes and operations, and
 - establish the basis for evaluation of Internal Audit performance to drive improvement planning.
- 5.5 The self-assessment concluded that the function "generally" conforms to the standards.

- 5.6 There is evidence that the work the Internal Audit function has delivered is effective; especially around risk and performance. It contributes to and has influence in the Authority on these areas. It is a highly respected service that is engaged with the organisation and which provides ongoing support in key areas, as well as effective assurance on controls.
- 5.7 The Internal Audit Manager has provided substantial assurance in respect of the Council's risk management, control and governance arrangements. "Substantial Assurance" means that systems in place are generally sound, but some best practice developmental areas have been identified to strengthen the Council's governance arrangements. These form the basis of the action plan appended to this Statement.
- 5.8 The Council is regularly audited by the External Auditor (Ernst and Young LLP) who independently examines the Council's accounts and financial systems and who presents an [Annual Audit Report](#) to Members, the latest available covering the financial year 2020/21. This was a positive report with an unqualified opinion on the Council's accounts, system of internal control and arrangements to achieve value for money.

6 Declaration

- 6.1 We have been advised on the implications of this review of the effectiveness of the governance framework and of any significant governance issues. A plan to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the system is in place as shown in the attached annex.
- 6.2 We propose over the coming year to take steps to address these matters to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

Signed:	Signed:
Leader of the Council	Chief Executive

Governance Actions for 2022-23

No significant governance issues have been identified. The following are best practice developmental areas to strengthen the Council's governance arrangements.

Issue	Action to be Taken	Timescale	Lead Officer
Contract Standing Orders: Strengthen the knowledge and understanding of procedure rules that underpin procurement of goods and services by the Council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide in-house refresher training for all authorised signatories on Contract Standing Orders and to update them on changes made to the Contract Standing Orders in 2022. To enhance the initial training and awareness of Contract Standing Orders as part of the induction process for officers who will have procurement responsibilities as part of their role. 	30/09/23	Head of Finance & Revenues
Performance Management Framework: To update the council's performance management framework in light of the new Corporate Plan being developed.	<p>To ensure an integrated approach to performance management, the preparation and monitoring of the Corporate Action Plan, Service Planning, Performance indicators/ impact measures and risk.</p> <p>To review and update the Council's approach to the management and monitoring of risk.</p>	31/03/24	Head of Strategy & Innovation and Head of Finance & Revenues

APPENDIX

BCP and Cyber security/response and implementation of the new approach: To implement an updated approach to preparation and management of corporate and service business continuity plans.	To ensure the continued delivery of services following a major incident based around the principles of Resilience, Recovery and Contingency through review and update of the Council's approach to disaster recovery.	31/03/24	Head of Strategy & Innovation
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ITEM 10

Corporate Plan 2023-2027

Report of the Leader

Recommended:

1. That the Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027, as shown in Annex 1 to the report, be approved.
2. That the Head of Strategy and Innovation, in consultation with the Leader, be authorised to make changes of a minor nature prior to publication.
3. That the Council places on record its thanks to the residents who took part in the deliberative engagement workshops, the outcomes of which have played a key role in informing the priorities of the Corporate Plan.

SUMMARY

- The Council's current Corporate Plan "Growing our Potential" was approved in 2019 and adopted for a four-year period to April 2023. A new recommended Corporate Plan has been developed for the next four years, 2023 to 2027. (Annex)
- The recommended Corporate Plan outlines the Council's priorities for the next four years and provides a focus for the services provided by the Council, informing decisions and the allocation of resources. The delivery of the corporate plan will be through the Corporate Action Plan. A new Corporate Action Plan will be prepared during the summer and considered by Cabinet in July 2023.
- The Corporate Plan has been prepared using a robust evidence base which includes extensive public engagement and a full analysis of the external environment to shape the Council's strategic priorities.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Corporate Plan is one of the key documents that forms the Council's policy framework. The Corporate Plan sets out the council's key priorities and can be used in conjunction with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and the Local Plan as part of the overarching strategic plans for the council.
- 1.2 The current Corporate Plan "Growing our Potential" ends in April 2023. A new recommended Corporate Plan, **A Place for Everyone – Supporting our Communities to Thrive**, has been developed for the council cycle 2023-2027. The plan is attached at Annex 1 to this report.

- 1.3 The Corporate Plan is underpinned by a Corporate Action Plan (CAP) which runs for the lifetime of the Corporate Plan. The CAP details the key projects that will be delivered in pursuit of the strategic priorities of the Council. A new CAP is to be prepared this year alongside the draft proposed Corporate Plan; this will be considered by Cabinet in July 2023 and updated thereafter on an annual basis each spring.

2 Background

- 2.1 The recommended Corporate Plan has been developed using a detailed and thorough evidence base. This includes a review of statistical data, extensive public engagement, and an analysis of the external environment to ensure that key strategic influences have been considered.
- 2.2 During the summer and autumn of 2022, the Council undertook an extensive and innovative programme of public engagement engaging with more than 1600 people across two phases of engagement. This included a wide-ranging survey available online, engaging and surveying people attending local events, and the delivery of cutting-edge deliberative engagement workshops in partnership with the Involve Foundation. This has enabled a detailed insight of what matters to local people to be gained and has informed the development of the plan.
- 2.3 The recommended Corporate Plan has been developed in a collaborative way, with councillors playing an active role throughout alongside the extensive public engagement. This has included sessions with members of Cabinet, several roundtable sessions with members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and an all-member briefing.

3 New Corporate Priorities

- 3.1 The recommended Corporate Plan, **A Place for Everyone – Supporting our Communities to Thrive**, builds on the focus of the current plan “Growing our Potential”. It is about making the wider opportunities for our communities a reality, progressing long-term strategic projects such as the regeneration of town centres and the Council’s approach to climate change, and being able to influence partners so that together we can deliver the best outcomes and quality of life across Test Valley.
- 3.2 The proposed strategic priorities are as follows:
- **Sustainability**, delivering lasting benefits for our communities.
 - **Connection**, building upon the identity, strengths and ambitions of our communities.
 - **Inclusion**, working together to create opportunities for our communities.

- **Prosperity**, economic growth that impacts positively on our communities.
- **Environment**, a greener borough for our communities.

3.3 As part of the ongoing approach to work in a place-based way that recognises the varying needs of our borough's communities, the draft plan renews the long-standing commitment to empower local communities through the way the Council works. The plan sets out how the Council will deliver the priorities through a community focus so that they can be tailored to make sure they are relevant and appropriate to local circumstances. The framework used to describe this in the plan is viewed through the lenses of a number of communities:

- Village and rural communities
- Andover and Romsey
- Chilworth, North Baddesley, Nursling, Rownhams and Valley Park

4 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 4.1 The Corporate Plan is a key policy framework document at the heart of the Council's strategic planning. The Corporate Plan sets out the medium-term priorities and can be used in conjunction with the Local Plan and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 4.2 The plan has been built on the strong foundations of the last plan. Elements of the previous plan live on in the new corporate priorities, recognising that some of the major projects we are working on will still require a focus beyond a four-year cycle. These will be considered through the development of the new Corporate Action Plan during the summer of 2023 following the adoption of a new corporate plan.
- 4.3 In developing the plan, we have looked closely at internal and external influences on the Borough which may provide challenges and opportunities in the lifetime of the corporate plan. New wide-ranging legislation such as the introduction of the Environment Act, the pressure of increased demand on front line services to support our most vulnerable residents, and the challenging financial environment in which local government operates, all reflect the complex environment the new plan will exist within.
- 4.4 The last four years have brought into sharp focus how unprecedented global events can also have a real impact within communities at the most local level. The pandemic, global economic conditions leading to a cost-of-living crisis, refugee crises and the effects of climate change are all presenting new and unique challenges that will continue to factor in the years ahead.

- 4.5 Our experience to date, however, shows that the Council can be optimistic about how we play our part in addressing the challenges our communities face. Our commitment to community resilience, partnership working and innovation, mean we can adapt and bring resources together where and when they are needed most. This agility alongside our financial stability and organisational resilience, means that we have the capability to deliver long-lasting benefits for our communities that deliver impactful outcomes and value for money.

5 Consultations and Communications

- 5.1 Community engagement and consultation has been at the heart of the development of the recommended Corporate Plan with the views of around 1,600 local people being gathered.
- 5.2 In May 2022, a public survey was launched inviting residents to express their views on several themes, focussed on services and assets provided by the council to give the Council a deeper understanding of community aspirations. Councillors and Officers attended community events, markets and fetes across the summer to engage with residents and to undertake the survey with as many people as possible. In addition, surveys were undertaken with a range of targeted groups to gain a wide range of views and to ensure an inclusive approach for those groups who are harder to reach. Analysis of the results show that a statistically significant number of people took part in the survey broadly reflecting the geographical and demographic make up of the borough. This means that we can be confident that the insights gathered provide a consistent view of public opinion.
- 5.3 The survey results provided a strong evidence base of headline issues. To delve deeper into them and get underneath the issues raised, the Council worked with the Involve Foundation to host a series of cutting-edge deliberative workshops during November 2022. These involved around 100 residents (approximately 35 at each of four events) reflecting the demographic make-up of residents in the borough. At the events residents were invited to discuss: ***What makes communities work well as thriving places, where people can live fulfilled lives?*** and, ***What role should the council be playing to help make this a reality in Test Valley?***
- 5.4 Through facilitated debate, sharing their lived experience and considering a range of evidence (including the survey results), participants developed a set of statements for the Council to consider as part of developing its next Corporate Plan. The Involve Foundation have produced an independent report of this work and an executive summary is attached at Annex 2 to this report. The full report will be published alongside the new corporate plan once adopted.
- 5.5 A summary of the outcomes of this work is detailed in the recommended plan and broadly falls across four key areas, namely:
- Building thriving communities, so that people want to stay living in the area. A sense of belonging, where they are invited to participate and be involved in playing their part in their communities.

- Making the most of existing facilities that bring the community together, where people can meet.
- Protecting local wildlife and nature for the future, whilst also providing access to local green spaces and parks.
- Valuing and celebrating inclusivity and diversity, creating a welcoming environment for people to take part in and value as a community.

5.6 Working with the Involve Foundation, a nationally renowned leader in public participation and deliberative engagement, ensured an impartial approach and enabled the council to draw upon expert knowledge and experience. This gave confidence in the process and has enabled the Council to continue to build its expertise in facilitating this form of engagement.

5.7 It is proposed that given the extensive nature of the public engagement undertaken to inform the Corporate Plan, that the insights gathered should be used as an ongoing evidence-base to inform the development of other future council strategies.

6 Options and Option appraisal.

6.1 For Council to consider the draft Corporate Plan as presented in this report and agree to either:

- a. Approve the Corporate Plan (Recommended).
- b. Approve some other iteration of Corporate Plan.
- c. Not approve a Corporate Plan.

6.2 The Corporate Plan is a key policy framework document setting out the Council's priorities for the coming four years. Proceeding in the absence of a Corporate Plan as contemplated in Option C is therefore not recommended. Council could adopt a Corporate Plan in some other form than the draft attached. As set out in the preceding paragraphs, the recommended Corporate Plan as annexed to this report has been produced as a result of an exhaustive piece of work by professional officers. Officers have carried out extensive and innovative public engagement and canvassed the views of elected members. The recommended plan therefore reflects to the fullest extent the Borough residents' wishes, priorities and aspirations for the next four years.

7 Risk Management

7.1 An evaluation of the risks indicates that the existing controls in place mean that no significant risks have been identified at this time.

8 Resource Implications

8.1 There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

8.2 The recommended Corporate Plan will guide the extent to which resources are allocated to future projects that form the Corporate Action Plan and will be a key consideration when the Medium Term Financial Strategy is updated in the Autumn.

8.3 Projects will be subject the Council's corporate project management framework which will assess and consider resourcing applications.

9 Legal Implications

9.1 The Corporate Plan forms part of the Council's policy framework and as such must be approved by full Council.

10 Equality Issues

10.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been undertaken in relation to the Corporate Plan including its development. The EQIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken.

10.2 The evidence-led and collaborative approach taken to developing the Corporate Plan is in accordance with the Council's Equality Objectives. The objectives set out a commitment to ensure engagement is inclusive and that our evidence base should reflect the lived experience people have of the Council.

10.3 Officers have undertaken a detailed process to review and understand the emerging needs of communities across Test Valley as part of developing the draft priorities for the next four years. The new approach of using Deliberative Engagement has ensured the way in which the Council engages with a wide variety of residents is inclusive and reflective of the wider population and those who are seldom heard. This has allowed us to understand more clearly some of the barriers and inequalities faced by certain groups of residents and will inform our onward approach through the delivery of the Corporate Action Plan.

11 Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate

11.1 The draft proposed Corporate Plan sets out a strategic priority for the environment in which addressing a changing climate is a key focus. This will influence the future development of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan both in terms of the role the Council can play in reducing its own emissions and the community leadership role it can play in supporting local communities.

12 Other Issues

12.1 Wards/Communities Affected – All

13 Conclusion and reasons for recommendation

- 13.1 The recommended Corporate Plan outlines the Council's vision and priorities for the Borough over the next four years of the newly elected council. It sets the direction and provides a focus for all the Council's projects and services. As a result, it informs decision making and allocation of resources across the Council.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u>			
None			
<u>Confidentiality</u>			
It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.			
No of Annexes:	2	File Ref:	N/A
(Portfolio: Leader) Councillor P North			
Officer:	James Moody	Ext:	8130
Report to:	Council	Date:	5 April 2023

Corporate plan 2023-27

A Place for Everyone – Supporting our Communities to Thrive

Welcome and introduction

ANNEX 1

A Place for Everyone – Supporting our Communities to Thrive, reflects our passion and commitment to work with our communities that celebrates their uniqueness, sense of belonging and the ambitions people have for the places where they live. We have invested significantly over the last decade to work in an ever more place-based way, reflecting that one size does not fit all, and that we must continue to develop a deep understanding of what matters most to local communities in order to help shape our strategic priorities.

The four-year timeframe of this plan provides the stability for us to look ahead and put our priorities into action over a longer period of time. The plan is underpinned by the collaborative approach we have taken in developing it: evidence-led, grounded in cutting-edge community engagement, and with the involvement of our councillors throughout the process. This has provided us with a clear focus and consensus on where we can make our greatest impact. Alongside our financial stability and organisational resilience, it means that we have the capability to deliver long-lasting benefits for our communities.

It is also important that, as an organisation, we can respond and adapt to new challenges, whilst remaining true to our values, that lay the foundation for how we work. The last four years have brought into sharp focus how unprecedented global events can have a real impact within communities at the most local level. The pandemic, global economic conditions leading to a cost-of-living crisis, refugee crises and the effects of climate change are all presenting challenges that will continue to factor in the years ahead. Experience to date, however, shows that we can be optimistic about how we play our part in addressing the challenges we all face. Our commitment to community resilience, partnership working and innovation, mean we can adapt and bring resources together where and when they are needed most.

Our previous plan, 'Growing our potential', was about how we could develop our approach to work beyond the organisation as a community leader. *A Place for Everyone – Supporting our Communities to Thrive*, is about taking the next important step forward. It is about making the wider opportunities for our communities a reality, progressing long-term strategic projects such as the regeneration of town centres and our approach to climate change, and being able to influence our partners so that together we can deliver the best outcomes and quality of life across Test Valley.

To achieve this, we are proud to announce our five new strategic priorities: sustainability, connection, prosperity, inclusion, and environment and, within the context of this plan, share what they mean not only for the council, but for our residents and communities across Test Valley.

Our priorities and approach

Based on the results of our Community Engagement with residents from across the borough, this Corporate Plan outlines five strategic priorities that will provide the focus for our activities over the next four years.

As part of our ongoing commitment to work in a way that recognises the varying needs of our borough communities, we will tailor our approach to where needed, to make sure it is relevant and appropriate.



1. A clear vision

We work collaboratively, to deliver high quality services that support all communities in Test Valley to thrive.

2. Our values, that lay the foundation for how we work

We are committed to high standards in everything we do, which shapes our behaviours and builds trust with our residents.

Our five values are:

- Accountability, Inclusion, Empowerment, Integrity, Ambition

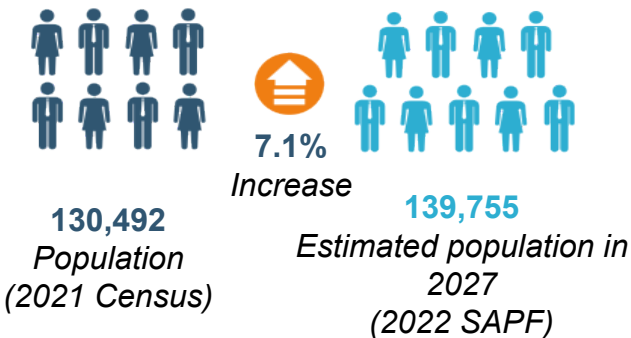
3. Respect for democracy and making sure everyone is included

Our councillors, elected by local people, understand the needs and expectations of the communities they represent, which informs our actions and helps us make balanced decisions.

4. A community focus based on good evidence

Our engagement with the communities we serve is central to the way we work. Using a range of techniques to recognise their strengths, aspirations and priorities provides us with the data and evidence to fully understand the issues and how best we can support them.

• **Population**



- **More than 70 languages** spoken across the borough
- **Age:** 20% under 18, 25% 18-39, 34% 40-64, 21% 65 and over
- **54,708 households** (Detached homes – 38%, semi-detached – 27%, terraced - 22%, flats – 11%, other – 2%)
- **59,400 jobs** in Test Valley (census 2021 data) across a range of industries and major employers.
- **Four local nature reserves**
- **More than 6,000 veterans** living in the borough who have served either in regular or reserve armed forces

- **Andover** – located in northern Test Valley, 39% of the borough’s population lives in Andover
- **Rural** – 28% of our population live in villages and other settlements right across the borough
- **Romsey** – a historic market town in the south of the borough, 17% of the borough’s population live in Romsey and its surrounding area
- **Chilworth, Nursling & Rownhams, North Baddesley and Valley Park** – 16% of our population lives in these urban areas outside Romsey, in the south-east of the borough

- Collects over **2.9 million waste and recycling bins** from households across the borough each year
- Maintains and manages **more than 90 public open spaces** for residents to enjoy recreation and sport – three with the prized **Green Flag award**
- **20 electoral wards and 43 councillors**
- **528 employees**
- **Supports local community groups** and organisations (approx. £4 million spent between 2019 and 2023)
- **Works with local groups** like parish councils to make sure our communities can cope with **emergencies like flooding and pandemics**
- Management and funding of **The Lights theatre in Andover** – over 100 professional shows and **100,000 visitors** each year.

How we developed this plan – Community Engagement

ANNEX 1

Community engagement is at the heart of how we work. It provides us with a rich understanding of what matters most to our residents and helps us gain a unique insight into community aspirations. This includes using this approach as a key part of developing our corporate plan.

Our approach to this piece of public engagement was delivered over two phases:

Phase one: Survey

We invited residents to express their views on several themes, that focussed on services and products provided by the council, and on how we can play a role in helping to improve residents' quality of life.

Councillors and council staff visited a range of community events and markets as well as village and school fetes, so that residents could meet them in person and share their thoughts. We engaged with over **1,500 people**. **1,458** completed the survey.

Phase two: Deliberative engagement

Survey results provide a strong evidence base of headline issues. To delve deeper into the survey responses and get underneath the issues raised, we worked with the Involve Foundation to host a series of deliberative workshops during November 2022. These involved around 100 residents (approximately 35 at each of four events) reflecting the demographic make-up of residents in the borough. At the events we invited residents to discuss: ***What makes communities work well as thriving places, where people can live fulfilled lives?***, and, ***What role should the council be playing to help make this a reality in Test Valley?***

Through facilitated debate, sharing their lived experience and considering a range of evidence (including the survey results), participants developed 12 statements. These were developed to help us consider where we can add value as we set our strategic priorities for the next four years and beyond. This feedback, combined with the survey results and more focused discussions, provided a robust evidence base and enabled extensive discussion and analysis with councillors and staff, to create the strategic priorities that are in this plan.

What makes communities work well as thriving places, where people can live fulfilled lives?

ANNEX 1

What role should the council be playing to make this a reality in Test Valley?

A summary of what our residents said:

Building thriving communities, so that people want to stay living in the area.

A sense of belonging, where they are invited to participate and be involved in playing their part in their communities.

- Support volunteering and make it easier for people to take part. Build upon the experience of the pandemic where a new community spirit was created and not to let this fade away
- Be accessible and reach out to the community. Enable residents to become more involved in the decisions that affect them, by sharing a common vision and goals within their community
- Focus on improving the local economy, recognising that transport and infrastructure are an issue, particularly in rural areas.

Making the most of existing facilities that bring the community together, where people can meet.

- Make sure that town centres, as central locations, are accessible, safe, attractive and offer a diverse and affordable programme of events, which engage and appeal to all ages
- Make sure that community facilities are affordable and accessible, and offer usable, well-maintained, multi-purpose spaces
- Provide clear communication and information for residents and groups about what is available.

Protecting local wildlife and nature for the future, whilst also providing access to local green spaces and parks:

- Conserve green spaces and nature for future generations, getting the right balance between access and protection
- Value outdoor spaces as places to exercise, look after mental wellbeing and to meet others
- Live in an environmentally-responsible way, to make sure that we tackle the climate emergency and reduce emissions.

Valuing and celebrating inclusivity and diversity, creating a welcoming environment for people to take part in and value as a community:

- Provide engagement opportunities that offer a voice for all and encourage cohesion, belonging, shared values and good communication - so that people know what is happening in their community
- Promote opportunities to celebrate cultural diversity with communities, using arts and cultural programmes
- Value opportunities that bring people together to meet, such as events, cafes and community groups.

Our priorities and approach

Informed by the collaborative approach to developing this Corporate Plan: evidence-led, grounded in cutting-edge community engagement, and with the involvement of our councillors throughout the process, this has provided us with a clear focus on where we can make our greatest impact.

The Corporate Plan outlines our five strategic priorities that will provide the focus for our activities over the next four years.

As part of our ongoing commitment to work in a way that recognises the varying needs of our borough communities, we will tailor our approach to where needed, to make sure it is relevant and appropriate.

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Delivering lasting benefits for our communities

Delivering long-lasting benefits for our communities is what matters most. We will put sustainability and resilience at the centre of how we deliver our services, our major projects and how we work with communities, to help meet their varying needs. This requires taking a long-term view and making sure that the council invests its energy, skills and resources in the right way, to achieve our vision.

As we continue to make progress, we must make sure that our plans are financially viable, and that we continuously develop as an organisation in order to deliver results in a complex environment.



Building upon the identity, strengths and ambitions of our communities

Test Valley is a borough made up of many different communities, each with their own unique identity, strengths and challenges. We recognise how important this is to residents and the pride they have in their communities – both in terms of where they live, but also around shared interests and the many connections that bring people together. Creating opportunities to develop new connections where people feel welcome and are able to share their experiences, is important to local people and enables communities to thrive as vibrant places.

Building on our track record of working with communities, we will continue to harness the skills and strengths that exist, so that people can contribute and play an active role in making things happen. This will be at the heart of how we work strategically as an organisation, enabling communities to influence our understanding of what matters, and providing a focus on how we can achieve the greatest impact through the resources we have available.

We will continue to support our councillors in their democratic role as community champions working through the Andover Vision and Romsey Future partnerships and in other areas, alongside parish councils and other locally based organisations.


 Inclusion

Working together to create opportunities for our communities

Working with communities in an inclusive way, that makes a real difference to people's lives, is at the heart of supporting them to thrive. This means making sure that different perspectives, experiences and ideas can be heard and understood. Our approach is not about treating everyone the same, it is about making sure that access to opportunity celebrates the diversity within Test Valley. Inequalities can often be hidden. Enabling the lived experience of people to be shared, where their voices would otherwise go unheard, is a powerful force for good. This approach is central to our strategic decision-making in order to meet the needs of all our communities, both now and in the future.

We will champion the needs of communities with a clear aim to deliver impactful outcomes for all. Access to future services will mean different things to different people, so we will bring an inclusive approach to service design and delivery as we continue to innovate. This will also play an important part in the renewal of our Equality Objectives. When working with our most vulnerable residents and dealing with complex issues such as tackling homelessness, isolation, and poor health, we will do this by working collaboratively with partners to tackle wider underlying inequalities that exist within communities.

Our commitment to inclusion is a key focus of our organisational development, ensuring that we have the right skills, behaviours and values to deliver in the best way possible.



Economic growth that impacts positively on our communities

In a borough where a range of economic opportunities and challenges exist, we will take an approach that is aligned to the current and future needs of the population, to make sure that the benefits of growth impact positively on all of our communities.

Our focus will be to support economic growth and prosperity through securing the right land and infrastructure, at the right scale, to deliver homes, employment and connectivity, and enable communities to fulfil their aspirations.

We will continue to promote economic development by taking opportunities that support local enterprise and business, develop skills, attract new jobs and encourage innovation. We will use our influence through existing strategic policies such as the Local Plan, our new economic development strategy and our wider partnerships sub-regionally, to promote the borough, secure inward investment and develop our existing businesses.



A greener borough for our communities

The natural environment is for everyone to enjoy. This, and tackling climate change, really matters to the people of Test Valley.

We recognise that we have an important community leadership role to play, in supporting our communities to adapt to the challenges presented by climate change. We will take positive action to become a carbon neutral organisation as soon as possible through delivery of our Climate Emergency Action Plan. This will include creating opportunities to innovate in how we deliver our services – which will support more environmentally-friendly working practices, increase energy efficiency within our buildings and make the council's vehicle fleet more eco-friendly. We will also enable residents to recycle a greater range of materials from the kerbside, including food waste.


We will work with communities and businesses to help Test Valley become a greener borough, to improve the quality of life for all our residents. We will open up opportunities for communities to play their part in this, by offering access to community funding, advice and support, for projects that will help them to decarbonise.

We will take opportunities to further invest in and nurture the natural environment and biodiversity across Test Valley, to enhance and protect our fantastic local environment. This will include delivering a new local nature strategy and continuing to invest in a network of accessible green spaces and facilities that everyone can enjoy – be it for nature, recreation and sport, and events – to improve the quality of life for residents both now and in the future.

Delivering our priorities through a community focus

We have invested significantly over the last decade to work in an ever more place-based way, reflecting that one size does not fit all, and that we must continue to develop a deep understanding of what matters most to local communities in order to be able to fully support them.

This plan renews our long-standing commitment to empower local communities through the way the we work. The plan sets out how the council will deliver our priorities through a community focus so that they can be tailored to make sure they are relevant and appropriate to local circumstances. The framework used to describe this in the corporate plan is through the lens of a number of communities across the borough:



Villages and rural communities

Andover and Romsey

Chilworth, North Baddesley, Nursling and Rownhams and Valley Park,

Villages and Rural Communities

Key Facts:

- Around a quarter of our population lives in rural communities across the borough. These are made up of many separate villages and settlements.
- From Vernham Dean in the north to Wellow in the south, Barton Stacey in the East to Shipton Bellinger in the west; these are many individual communities with their own aspirations, ambitions and priorities.
- The largest rural parish is Wellow, which has around 3,400 residents, followed by Over Wallop with 2,400. However, most rural parishes have a population of less than 1000 people.
- Of the borough's rural population, around one in four people is retired (above average), and almost twenty percent of the borough's rural residents are under eighteen.
- Around three-quarters of Test Valley's rural population own their own homes.

Villages and Rural Communities

ANNEX 1



What we will do over the next four years and beyond:

- Work with village and rural communities to identify and plan for their future priorities, building upon their strengths, connections and sense of pride in the place where they live. We will offer community planning support and help communities access funding to deliver on their local priorities, where there is clear evidence of need.
- Support villages and rural communities to plan for their future development and housing needs, to ensure the long-term sustainability of their communities. We will develop an inclusive approach to this, so that the needs of all are understood through neighbourhood plans and the ongoing development of our Local Plan.
- Work with local people and partners to build better connectedness and resilience, that enable people to live well, and to mitigate the impacts of rural isolation. We will work with rural communities and with partners to grow volunteering capacity, improve access to services and support communities to develop their local networks.
- Champion the needs of our village and rural communities within the wider region, to make sure that opportunities for future investment in infrastructure, connectivity and economic development reflect the unique and important role that rural communities play. We will proactively support rural economic development, in order to deliver prosperity, and enable communities to thrive by supporting rural businesses, skills development and helping to unlock future investment.
- Explore opportunities to work with villages and rural communities on important environmental projects such as habitat restoration. We will also continue to invest in and provide access to spaces for recreation and sport that are so important for residents' wellbeing.

Andover and Romsey

ANNEX 1

Andover and
Romsey

Key Facts:

- Over half of the borough's population live in its two main towns – Andover and Romsey.
- Located in the north of the borough, Andover is the larger of the towns. With a population over 50,000, many people who live in the town also work there too. Andover's population has grown in recent years; the development of new communities at Augusta Park, Picket Twenty and Picket Piece, to the town's east and north, have contributed to this.
- Andover's town centre includes the historic St Mary's Church and Guildhall, a state of the art leisure centre, Andover College, the Lights Theatre and a number of shops and businesses.
- The River Anton flows through the town's heart with places like Rooksbury Mill, Anton Lakes and Ladies Walk providing places for local residents to enjoy the great outdoors.
- Romsey is situated in the south of the borough and is home to over 20,000 people.
- Centred on its historic town centre, Romsey is a thriving market town with highlights including Romsey Abbey, War Memorial Park and a large number of independent retailers.
- With the River Test running through its heart, Romsey also is home to Fishlake Meadows, a wetland nature reserve. There are also numerous sports facilities in and around the town including Romsey Rapids, Romsey Sports Centre and Ganger Farm Sports Park.
- Both towns have a good range of facilities and services for their residents and those living in surrounding areas.

Andover and Romsey

ANNEX 1



What we will do over the next four years and beyond:

- Work proactively with key partners to enhance the economic, social and cultural prosperity of both Andover and Romsey. We will promote our towns as great places to visit that are welcoming, safe and attractive, in a way that draws upon their strengths and identities as communities.
- Deliver projects that bring forward the regeneration of Andover town centre and South of Romsey Town Centre, as set out in the community-led masterplans for each of these towns. This will involve playing our part to support the changing nature of town centres and investing in new public realm, cultural initiatives and events, alongside major redevelopment schemes.

Focus on meeting future needs that result from changing and growing populations within both Andover and Romsey. Through our strategic plans we will make sure that a range of homes, including affordable, and related infrastructure, is provided. Access to the services people need, both now and in the future, will be planned for, delivered, and tailored to the needs of each town.
- Work creatively with Andover Vision and Romsey Future, as the community partnerships for these towns, to support the delivery of their local strategies and action plans. We will help strengthen connections across local communities and provide the catalyst for working together to deliver priorities that are shaped by local people. This will include finding opportunities to support improved health and wellbeing, so that people can live well within their communities for longer, make the most of the assets and facilities within the towns, support local businesses to thrive and play their part in addressing climate change.
- Continue to invest in the range of open and accessible green spaces that exist within both Andover and Romsey, recognising the important benefits to wellbeing they provide for local communities. We will enable people to take part in sport and recreation opportunities within their local community and create links to access the countryside, so that people can enjoy the benefits of the natural environment in a sensitive and sustainable way.

Chilworth, North Baddesley, Nursling and Rownhams, and Valley Park

ANNEX 1

Chilworth, North Baddesley,
Nursling and Rownhams
and Valley Park,

Key Facts:

- Chilworth, North Baddesley, Nursling and Rownhams, and Valley Park are the other main communities in the borough where people live. Each is distinct though they are all located in the south-east of the borough.
- Chilworth is home to just over 1,000 residents. Nursling and Rownhams is home to almost 6,000 people. Both are located on the edge of Southampton, close to the M27 and M3 motorways.
- Valley Park meanwhile has a population of 7,000 and is on the edge of Chandlers Ford and Eastleigh, surrounded by the historic Valley Park Woodlands.
- North Baddesley has 7,000 residents and is close to Romsey.
- Many of the people who live in these areas travel out of the borough to work. Conversely, the University of Southampton Science Park is a hub that has drawn in business and innovation into this part of the borough

Chilworth, North Baddesley, Nursling and Rownhams, and Valley Park

ANNEX 1



What we will do over the next four years and beyond:

- Work with residents and the parish councils in Chilworth, North Baddesley, Nursling and Rownhams, and Valley Park to identify and plan for their future priorities, and take forward community initiatives. This process will draw upon their unique identities, strengths and connections to other places.
- Promote the important economic role this part of the borough plays as an area for the inward investment of high-tech and science-based companies. We will work closely with the University of Southampton Science Park, in taking forward its future aspirations and making sure that good links with the local community are forged.
- Work collaboratively with partners across south Hampshire and Southampton, to promote the wider area of southern test valley as a culture and tourism destination, in order to enhance the prosperity of the area.
- Work with relevant partners to deliver green infrastructure, to make sure that local nature reserves continue to exist as important and much-loved assets for these communities across southern Test Valley. This will deliver ongoing long-term benefits to health, well-being and the ecology of the area.

Next steps and measuring our progress

The Corporate Plan sets out our priorities, providing the direction and focus for our activities and guiding the allocation of resources over the next four years. It also outlines the impact we hope to make as a result of our actions, so that we can demonstrate to residents how we are working towards our vision.

The Corporate Plan is underpinned by the Corporate Action Plan (CAP) which runs for the lifetime of the plan and is updated annually. This shows, in detail, how we intend to make progress and focuses on the specific projects we will take forward against each of the priorities.

The Cabinet reviews the performance of the CAP on an annual basis. This enables the active performance management of the CAP and ensure that the Council is allocating resource in the most effective way. Each year, the Leader of the Council will make a presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to report on progress made during the year. This will form the basis of an annual update report and will be published on the Council's website.

We monitor our progress against a range of indicators, as part of a broad suite of operational management tools. This helps us to ensure that the things that matter most to residents are being delivered in an efficient and effective way.

In addition, each of our services produces an annual Service Plan which describes the things they do and how they contribute to the Corporate Plan priorities.

Further reading

- To read the full Involve report, which details how our deliberative engagement with residents was carried out, go to: *(link and short URL to be added)*
- For updates on news, events and our consultations etc, join our mailing list: testvalley.gov.uk/emails
- Visit our website for more information on what we do, and to read documents like our Climate Emergency Action Plan: testvalley.gov.uk

You can also follow us on:

Facebook Test Valley Borough Council

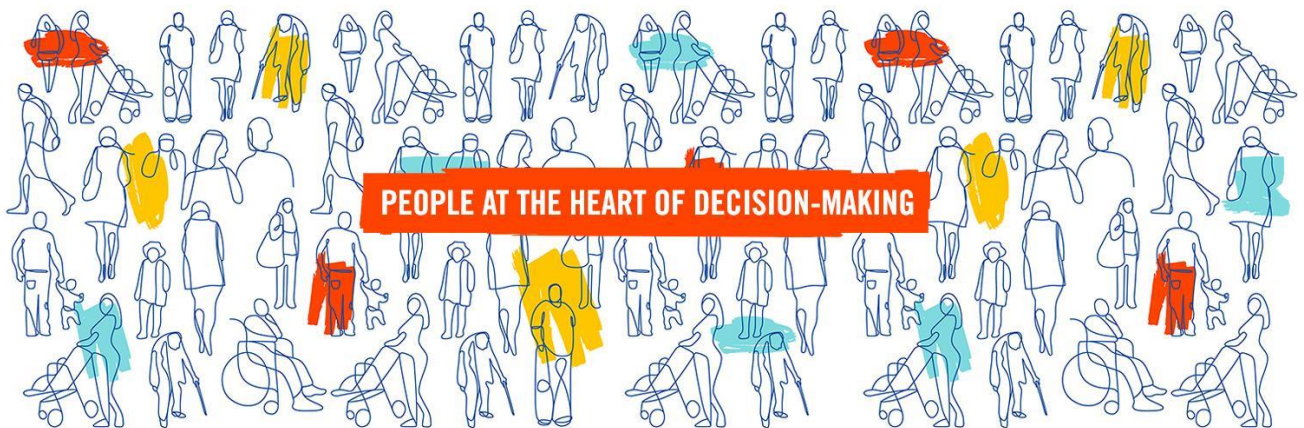
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What do people in Test Valley value?

Report on findings from deliberative
workshops with residents in November
2022



January 2023

AUTHORS: Kaela Scott, Christabel Tuke, Frances Osborne – Involve
January 2023



About Involve

The Involve Foundation is the UK's leading public participation charity, with a mission to put people at the heart of decision-making with offices in Belfast, Edinburgh and London. Involve delivered the workshops – designing and facilitating the process through which the participants learned, considered, and came to recommendations on the topics.

Involve play a vital role in the design, governance and delivery of deliberative events, research and engagement processes that we provide. We also provide quality advice and guidance to our partners to help them delivery quality participation. This enables participants of deliberative and democratic practices to feel confident and enabled to make their contributions fairly and feel listened to.

We support participants to get involved and take part, by removing barriers and improving access and confidence, which in turn enables a more distributed and fair voice to influence decision making. We can also enable commissioners and funders to take a step back from direct control of processes so that they can be reassured they get high quality, independent and informative insights, decisions and recommendations from participants.

We demonstrate how citizens can help solve our biggest challenges. We believe that decision-making in the UK needs to be more:

Open - so that people can understand, influence and hold decision-makers to account for the actions and inactions of their governments;

Participatory - so that people have the freedom, support and opportunity to shape their communities and influence the decisions that affect their lives; and,

Deliberative - so that people can exchange and acknowledge different perspectives, understand conflict and find common ground, and build a shared vision for society.

Our recent projects have included:

- Local Climate Engagement – training, mentoring, peer-learning and hands-on support to assist local authorities engaging communities on climate change.
- The People's Plan for Nature – the People's Assembly for Nature, building a public mandate for actions we can all take to protect and restore nature.

A series of independently facilitated, deliberative workshops were held with residents in Autumn¹ to help inform the Test Valley Borough Council's new Corporate Plan, due to be published in spring 2023. The Council were particularly interested in hearing residents' views on:

And what role should the Council be playing to help realise this in Test Valley?

A set of key principles for 'supporting a thriving test valley in the future', and 12 final recommendations for the Council were developed over three workshops and finalised over the fourth event. Participants from the final workshop also provided a 'vote' on their degree of support' for each the final recommendations.

A set of key principles for 'supporting a thriving Test Valley' in the future developed by participants on the final workshop, are summarised below – these acted as a 'reference' for the participants, about how issues should be approached:

- a. Accessible to all
- b. Considerate of local needs
- c. Considerate of the environment & sustainability
- d. Protect & conserve nature & greenspaces
- e. Community involvement & Societal wellbeing
- f. Value Diversity
- g. Community cohesion
- h. Inclusive spaces
- i. Enabling Mobility & Connections across Test Valley
- j. Two-way dialogue
- k. Financial Viability
- l. Shared events across Test Valley & Connecting Communities
- m. Healthy democracy



¹ Further information on the Corporate Plan and how it was developed is available here: <https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/aboutyourCouncil/corporate-plan-2023-2027>

Final Statements

Final statements were presented to Councillor Phil North, the Leader of the Council, and other managers of TVBC on the 26th November 2022, by the participants. Councillor North gave a response at the time and committed to taking all the recommendations for deeper consideration back to the Council to help shape the Corporate Plan and other activities of the Council.

The final statements that the participants developed and the level of support for them in the final vote by participants, are listed below.

‘...Made me feel my opinions matter’ - participant feedback

‘WOW! As I read and rated each statement it slowly developed into an appreciation of what was actually achieved...’ - participant feedback

Statement 1: Central Locations - 100% Support

To add the most value to our communities & support ... central locations that bring the community together & where people can meet	
The Council should...	ensure town centres are accessible, safe, attractive, offer a diverse & affordable programme of events, which engage & appeal to all ages.
In order to...	draw residents in & to create a sense of pride & belonging.
This will...	give residents an opportunity to meet, bring in visitors & increase spending in the local economy, & increase accessibility.
Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...	improving toilet facilities & infrastructure, including help & support at events, the Council being present in town centres, having a central information hub for events & volunteering, having a monthly newsletter via post, having events that focus on specific groups, giving Community Interest Groups free or subsidised memberships, getting people together with new & intergenerational activities, highlighting points of interest & the area's history to improve people's knowledge, & encouraging business sponsorship.

Statement 2: Communication & Connectedness - 100% Support

To add the most value to our communities & support ... communication & connectedness	
The Council should...	support consistent, two-way multiplatform communication.
In order to...	provide the possibility of greater involvement & spread awareness of what's happening.
This will...	give communities a voice, a sense of ownership & equal opportunities across the Borough.
Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...	inviting local communicators, having a central communication hub such as a Test Valley app or using QR codes.

Statement 3: Building Thriving Communities - 100% Support

To add the most value to our communities & build thriving communities so people want to stay living in the area	
The Council should...	improve the local economy by encouraging business & industry, & provide affordable housing with commutable transport links.
In order to...	encourage diverse demographics to stay in Test Valley & contribute to the local economy without the need to go elsewhere.
This will...	achieve a vibrant community with more balanced demographics & improved quality of life.
Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...	encouraging mix of industries and job opportunities, encouraging neighbourhood development plans and reconsidering transport needs to be sustainable and commutable.

Statement 4: Strong communities & Belonging - 100% Support

To add the most value to our communities & create strong communities with a sense of belonging	
The Council should...	have an in depth understanding of the community & its demographics.
In order to...	tailor the actions & decisions to meet the needs of the community.
This will...	engender a sense of pride & bring people together.
Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...	building data from surveys about the demographics of the communities, personalising communication and increasing awareness of how communities can be supported eg. Grants.

Statement 5: Local Facilities - 97% Support

To add the most value to our communities & ensure local community facilities are affordable & accessible	
The Council should...	improve information for residents & support facilities to thrive.
In order to...	improve participation & affordability.
This will...	increase wellbeing, a sense of belonging & community cohesion.
Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...	transparency on financial contributions to facilities like S106 or grants, making the Test Valley Borough Council website a one stop shop for all local events and facilities, & working with social newsletters and local media.

Statement 6: Diversity & Inclusivity - 97% Support

To add the most value to our communities & celebrate diversity & inclusivity	
The Council should...	develop & encourage open engagement with all members of our community.
In order to...	offer a voice for all that everyone feels welcome.
This will...	encourage cohesion, belonging & a sense of shared values.
Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...	engaging community leaders, increasing community engagement officers, have early years education that is reflective of community demographics, have multi-cultural events that celebrate similarities & create welcome packs for new residents.

Statement 7: Making the most of existing facilities, venues & spaces - 94% Support

To add the most value to our communities & make the most of existing facilities, venues & spaces	
The Council should...	offer usable & well-maintained, affordable, multi-purpose spaces.
So that...	community groups, small businesses & individuals utilise them.
This will...	increase attractiveness & pride in the area, reduce wasted space & encourage people to the area.
Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...	clear communication about what's available or Council owned, offering free short term usage like shop hire, and having an information centre for the use of spaces.

Statement 8: Participation & Involvement - 94% Support

To add the most value to our communities & invite participation & involvement	
The Council should...	Be accessible & continually reach out to all members of the community.
In order to...	enable residents to become more involved in decisions that affect them. The Council should explain its responsibilities & what it does to fulfil them.
This will...	empower everyone in our community to buy into & have ownership of Council decisions, have common vision & shared goals.
Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...	continuing deliberative engagement, using diverse methods, language & platforms, celebrating successful initiatives that inspire, signposting residents to relevant authorities and measuring the success of processes such as these workshops.

Statement 9: Local Wildlife & Nature - 94% Support

To add the most value to our communities & protect local wildlife & nature for the future	
The Council should...	protect & enhance an environment policy specific for Test Valley
In order to...	preserve Test Valley's unique chalk stream habitat & countryside
This will...	ensure the survival of our environment for the long-term future.
Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...	education, monitoring & liaising with other agencies to support enforcement.

Statement 10: Access to Green spaces and Parks - 94% Support

To add the most value to our communities & support access to local green spaces & parks	
The Council should...	put access to green spaces at the top of all planning & decision making processes.
In order to...	preserve & protect for current & future generations. Every Test Valley resident should have access to green spaces that meet their needs.
This will...	improve community wellbeing & make Test Valley a more desirable place to live.
Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...	having business sponsored environmental wardens, a central point like an app or website for communicating what's available, having sufficient funding and improving pathways and accessibility.

Statement 11: Volunteering - 91% Support

To add the most value to our communities & support volunteering	
The Council should...	provide leadership, expertise, a central volunteering register & practical support to make it easier to volunteer.
In order to...	expand awareness of the scope & extent of opportunities available, advance & enrich community involvement, & encourage others to help.
This will...	increase the wellbeing of people & communities, promote connectedness & community spirit, & create a caring community all can be proud of.
Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...	training (eg first aid, disability) for volunteer leaders so volunteers feel valued, an E-learning hub, a pride in the community award or dinner, publicly thanking volunteers, having regular volunteering events like a market stall where individuals can go round & talk to people about volunteering opportunities, communicating how to get into volunteering, recording & utilising volunteers' skills, bringing respect for all with equality, engaging international, national, regional charities, joining up volunteering, and encouraging donations to support volunteering.

Statement 12: Culture - 91% Support

To add the most value to our communities & support a cultural identity for people to take part in & appreciate as a community	
The Council should...	make sure overarching principles about diversity & accessibility are considered when developing Test Valley as a cultural centre.
In order to...	build on Test Valley's historic identity & to broaden access to a range of diverse arts & cultural programmes.
This will...	broaden cultural horizons, develop a sense of belonging & open up opportunities that boost economic growth.
Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...	promoting a broader range of events to celebrate cultural diversity, having human libraries to share first hand experiences & understanding, having free & affordable events accessible to all, and supporting the enhancement of educational programs.

INSIGHTS

A summary from the discussions

The 12 priority 'themes'

After the discussions over the first three workshops twelve 'themes' emerged about what was important to people² - these were used as a basis for the Statements:

1. Protecting local wildlife and nature for the future
2. Valuing and celebrating diversity and inclusivity
3. Supporting volunteering
4. Ensuring local community facilities are affordable and accessible to all
5. Central locations that bring the community together and where people can meet
6. Building thriving communities so people want to stay living in the area
7. Accessing local green spaces and parks
8. Making the most of existing facilities, venues and spaces for more impact
9. Communication & connectedness
10. Cultural identity for people to take part in and value as a community
11. Creating strong communities with sense of belonging
12. Inviting participation and involvement

What's important for Thriving Communities

Participants discussed things that they thought were important for thriving communities:

- Wellbeing in communities is about good infrastructure and facilities; good services, in particular health and education; a sense of belonging in the community; getting involved in the community & being inclusive/accessible.
- Participants valued things that brought people together to meet, such as community events like carnivals, or local businesses like cafes and pubs.
- Outdoor spaces were valued for being places to exercise, to look after mental wellbeing and to meet others. More could be done for protecting outdoor spaces.
- People were also positive about initiatives for supporting the local economy.
- There was a feeling that COVID-19 & lockdown created a new community 'spirit' and better connections, although for some this seems to have faded.
- Good communication so people know what is happening in the community.
- Transport and infrastructure were also an issue across the regions, but particularly in rural areas.

² After the discussions over the first three workshops, the insights were analysed by Involve into twelve 'themes' about what was important to people, and 'snapshots' were created to support Workshop 4

ITEM 11

Waste Service Changes

Report of the Recycling, Environmental Services and Car Parking Portfolio Holder

Recommended:

1. That the funding as detailed in section 8 of this report be approved in order to deliver the waste service changes referred to in this report.
2. That £3.25M be added to the capital programme as set out in paragraph 8.8.1.
3. That £278,000 be added to the Environmental Services revenue budget as set out in paragraph 8.8.2.

SUMMARY:

- The purpose of this report is to detail the next steps the Council must take, and the funding required, in order to deliver the waste service changes approved by Cabinet on 22 June 2022.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 In November 2021, the Environment Act 2021 ('the Act') became law with waste reduction as one of its priority areas. Essentially, the Act requires Test Valley Borough Council (as the Waste Collection Authority) to collect a wider range of recyclable materials and for Hampshire County Council (the Waste Disposal Authority), to make arrangements to deal with them.
- 1.2 Within Hampshire, the Project Integra (PI) partners worked through the implications of the Act. The Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS), which sets the strategic direction for service change, was revised and approved by all authorities by early 2022, but by Test Valley Borough Council in October 2021.
- 1.3 One of the most important key objectives in the JMWMS is Recyclable Material Management and in particular, the introduction of twin stream collections. This approach to collecting recyclable materials has the lowest whole system costs (collection and treatment) and lowest carbon impact when compared to other types of collection systems.
- 1.4 In June 2022, Cabinet approved 'Option B' as the most appropriate direction for the Council in terms of improving its waste and recycling collections in line with the Environment Act and the JMWMS. With this option, residents will have their black bin (non-recyclables) emptied on week 1, their brown bin (fibres) emptied on week 2, and their blue bin (containers) emptied on week 3. Their food waste bin will be emptied weekly.

- 1.5 This report outlines the next steps the Council must take, in order to introduce the new waste collection service, and details the funding required to do so.

2 Background

- 2.1 In June 2022, Cabinet approved that:

- 2.1.1 In order to respond to the Environment Act 2021, and the recently approved Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy, the Council makes the necessary changes and subsequent investment in its waste and recycling collection service.

- 2.1.2 The future of waste and recycling collections will take the direction as introduced as 'Option B' within the report – specifically the introduction of a weekly collection of food waste and an alternating collection of 'fibres' (paper, magazines and cardboard), 'containers' (glass bottles and jars, plastic bottles, plastic pots, tubs and trays, cans and tins, aerosols and cartons), and 'non-recyclable household waste' from as early as 2024.

- 2.2 Since Cabinet's approval, there have been delays outside of the Council's control:

- 2.2.1 Hampshire County Council was delayed in getting its new Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) approved at Chickenhall Lane in Eastleigh. The MRF is necessary in order to sort all the new materials required to be collected at the kerbside. The MRF will now be constructed and operational from mid-2025 - around a year later than originally anticipated.

- 2.2.2 The Government has been slow to release its consultation responses in response to the Environment Act. At this point, the 'consistency' response remains outstanding. It is this response which will confirm the materials the Act requires all local authorities to collect at the kerbside.

- 2.3 Taking these delays into consideration, the Council is still working towards delivering the waste service changes. It is anticipated that the waste service changes will be introduced by the Council in 2024. A more detailed delivery timetable will be produced within the next six to twelve months.

- 2.4 This report sets out the funding required in order to progress with these plans in the desired timeframe.

3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 3.1 Growing Our Potential – the Corporate Plan 2019-2023, sets out in 'The Local Environment' priority, that the Council is committed to develop opportunities, through the Hampshire Waste Partnership, to increase the range of materials that can be recycled. The Council also committed to encourage people to recycle more through education and making recycling easier.

- 3.2 The Council has produced successive Corporate Plans where the green agenda is a continuing theme within its priorities.

- 3.3 The Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan, published in June 2020, commits to improving recycling behaviours in the theme 'Supporting Communities and Businesses'.
- 3.4 It should be noted, that in addition to these corporate documents, the Council is being mandated to change. Food waste collections and consistent collections must be provided by 2025. National waste and recycling targets will be set and monitored by the Office for Environmental Protection.

4 Consultations/Communications

- 4.1 The Act and JMWMS have been extensively discussed – through Hampshire County Council meetings, PI meetings and Hampshire Waste Partnership meetings.
- 4.2 Within Test Valley Borough Council, the JMWMS was discussed at the OSCOM Round Table in October 2021. A presentation and discussion about the Council's response to the Environment Act was held during an OSCOM sponsored all member workshop on 15 June 2022. On 22 June 2022, Cabinet approved the recommendations within the report 'Review of Waste and Recycling Services in Light of the Environment Act 2021'. Extensive discussions have also been held throughout with the Portfolio Holder and the Leader of the Council.
- 4.3 Furthermore, representatives from the borough's parish and town councils were invited to attend a presentation and discussion about the Council's response to the Environment Act in July 2022.
- 4.4 The approved waste service changes have been promoted within Test Valley News (Autumn 2022), news releases, online (on the Council's website) and on the Council's social media apps. A specific email account was also set up for residents to ask questions or make comments about the waste service changes.

5 Options

- 5.1 The waste service changes are a key priority for the Council. They are approved and they must be delivered by 2025, at the latest, to be compliant with the Environment Act.
- 5.2 The options are therefore limited to the method and timing of the procurement of the necessary vehicles, bins and implementation costs.

6 Option Appraisal

- 6.1 It should be noted that by approving the waste service changes in June 2022, the option has already been agreed ('Option B') as detailed in section 2.1.2.
- 6.2 This report is recommending that capital and revenue funds are approved for procurement (and other associated activities) to commence. Approval of funding now has two benefits: Firstly, limiting the impact of long lead times, particularly for vehicles, which can be up to 12 months (currently) and, secondly, as changes are being mandated countrywide, procuring early will help avoid any extended lead times or delays due to national congestion.

- 6.3 The Government is expected to support the introduction of food waste collections with three funding tranches. Capital funding for vehicles and caddies etc. is expected to be available from April 2023. Transitional funding is expected to assist with the roll out of the schemes and new burdens funding is expected to cover the ongoing costs of collections, from April 2025. The Council should expect full funding for its food waste collection service, but should note the funding is yet to receive ministerial approval.
- 6.4 There are two main ways to procure new vehicles; outright purchase or by lease. For many years the Council has preferred the outright purchase option. There are several reasons for this, including; the financing costs built into leases are more expensive than the Council's own cost of capital; there is no requirement to return vehicles at the end of a primary lease period; there is more flexibility to manage change in operational requirements etc.
- 6.5 These reasons remain valid and are coupled with the expectation that government funding for the implementation of food waste will be for capital expenditure (i.e. for purchase rather than lease).
- 6.6 The recommendation of this report, therefore, is that funding for the items set out below is approved for immediate use.
- 6.7 Food waste collection vehicles:
- 6.7.1 Comprehensive data analysis has been conducted by the Environmental Service. It has been determined that eight food waste collection rounds will need to be introduced boroughwide, in order to provide a suitable weekly food waste collection service. Ten food waste vehicles (7.5T in size) will need to be procured: eight frontline vehicles for the rounds, plus two spare vehicles to cover servicing, breakdowns or any other general vehicle downtime. Currently, food waste vehicles have an 8 to 12 month lead time, however, this could change significantly as more councils bring forward their plans to introduce food waste collections.
- 6.8 Blue bins:
- 6.8.1 It is anticipated that in the region of 53,000 blue two wheeled bins (likely to be 240 litre in size) will need to be purchased for individual households, or those few who share the smaller sized bins in communal bin stores.
- 6.8.2 It is anticipated that in the region of 605 new blue 1100 litre four wheeled bins are purchased for those households who share the larger bins in communal bin stores.
- 6.8.3 Consideration will be given to the small number of properties who cannot accommodate the standard bin provision listed in sections 6.8.1 and 6.8.2.

6.9 Food Waste Caddies:

6.9.1 It is anticipated that in the region of 59,000 new 5/7 litre food waste caddies (for all kitchens) and 53,000 new 23 litre food waste caddies (for individual kerbside collections) are purchased. Not everyone will have a kerbside food waste collection - it is estimated that more than 6000 properties will be serviced by communal food waste bins. Around 1000 food waste collection bins will need to be purchased for this purpose. Finally, all households will be provided with an initial supply of 100 caddy liners.

6.10 Bin Delivery:

6.10.1 It should not be underestimated how complicated and intensive bin deliveries can be – especially when introducing a new scheme boroughwide. The Council will procure the services of a specialist bin delivery company. It is expected that they will deliver the food waste caddies and liners and two-wheeled blue bins to all individual properties. It is expected the Council's Environmental Service team will deliver the 1100 litre blue bins, with the specialist bin company delivering the 5/7 litre food waste caddies to the shared bin properties.

6.11 Support:

6.11.1 Planning for, managing, administering and supporting the waste service changes will be carried out by the Environmental Service. In order to support this work, two additional Recycling Development Officers will be recruited for 24 months, with an anticipated start date of June 2023. They will work alongside the service's two existing Recycling Development Officers and Waste and Recycling Officer. In June 2024, it is anticipated the service will recruit a further two Recycling Development Officers for 12 months to assist with the launch and roll out of the service in 2024. An additional Business Support Officer will be recruited to assist with the development and roll out of the service for a period of up to 24 months.

6.12 Further one-off spending will be required in two areas:

6.12.1 Funding will be needed for a dedicated communications campaign and civil engineering - for instance, providing space within our existing depots for new vehicles and staff parking. These requests will be made through future reports.

6.12.2 Further reports will also follow for service revenue expenditure to cover the ongoing costs of providing the new waste services. This will include staff costs, fuel etc.

7 Risk Management

7.1 An initial assessment of the risks has been carried out. In summary the risks are:

7.1.1 The funding does not meet our requirements and leads to net cost to the Council. If this risk does materialise, the Council will use its own reserves to fund any shortfall. See Resource Implications section, below.

- 7.1.2 Market supply will not meet demand. For example, the production and provision of vehicles and receptacles, during a period of national supply congestion.

8 Resource Implications

- 8.1 It is anticipated that the cost of introducing the waste collection service changes are as follows:

Food Waste Collections	
£925,100	10 x 7.5T food waste collection vehicles including all required additional specified items
£103,400	59,000 x 5/7 litre kitchen caddies
£253,900	53,000 x 23 litre kerbside caddies
£141,800	caddy liners (c.100 per household)
£20,900	1000 x communal food waste collection bins
£97,400	Delivery of food waste caddies and liners
£1,542,500	TOTAL

- 8.2 It is expected that government funding will be provided to meet the majority, or all, of the above costs. However, until such time as the actual amount of funding is confirmed, there is a risk that there will be a net cost to the Council.
- 8.3 It is recommended that any shortfall be drawn from the New Homes Bonus Reserve.

Twin Stream Collections	
£1,107,700	53,000 x blue two wheeled bins
£214,400	605 x blue 1100 litre wheeled bins
£88,500	Delivery of blue two wheeled bins
£1,410,600	TOTAL

- 8.4 The full cost of this change to waste collections will fall to the Council. The above cost is recommended to be funded from the Environment Act Reserve (currently £382,000), with any residual shortfall funded from the New Homes Bonus Reserve.

Staffing Implications for Planning and Delivery Phase	
£189,900	Additional temporary Recycling Development Officer posts
£63,300	Additional temporary Business Support Officer post
£253,200	TOTAL

NB. These are revenue costs.

- 8.5 It is expected that government funding will be provided to meet these costs. Any shortfall would be funded from the Environment Act Reserve, with any residual shortfall funded from the New Homes Bonus Reserve.
- 8.6 Economic forecasts suggest that inflation is set drop across the rest of 2023; however, inflation does remain high and the report has set out the risks that market supply may not keep up with demand. Both of these factors may lead to higher costs than forecast being encountered.
- 8.7 A contingency of 10% is recommended to be added to all the estimates above.
- 8.8 It is therefore recommended the Council approves:
 - 8.8.1 £3.25M for the purchase of vehicles, bins and bin deliveries linked to this project.
 - 8.8.2 £278,000 for the staffing implications of the planning and delivery phase.
- 8.9 Government funding will be used to the fullest extent possible to reduce the burden on the Council's revenue budget and capital programme.

9 Legal Implications and Statutory Authority

- 9.1 The implications of the recommended actions enable to Council to comply with the waste collection requirements of the Environment Act 2021 within the timescale required.

10 Equality Issues

- 10.1 The EQIA has been carried out and has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken.

11 Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate

- 11.1 The introduction of weekly food waste collections and collecting an increased number of materials at the kerbside for recycling will significantly improve the borough's recycling rate.

12 Other Issues

- 12.1 Community Safety – None.
- 12.2 Environmental Health Issues – None.
- 12.3 Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate – referred to within the report.
- 12.4 Property Issues – None.
- 12.5 Wards/Communities Affected – None.

13 Conclusion and reasons for recommendation

- 13.1 Cabinet has already approved the changes to the Council's waste and recycling collection service.
- 13.2 Significant changes to our waste and recycling collection service must be made by 2025. The Council is working to introduce these changes in 2024.
- 13.3 Procurement needs to commence shortly, in order to secure the vehicles, bins and caddies ready for the waste service changes.
- 13.4 Procuring early will help avoid any extended lead times or delays, especially as these waste service changes are a national requirement. The food waste vehicles currently have an 8-12 month lead time.
- 13.5 Recruitment needs to commence shortly too, in order for the team to properly assess the borough's needs and plan for the waste service changes.
- 13.6 It is recommended that the capital and revenue funding is approved, with the understanding that the Council will be subject to procurement rules and requirements and the anticipated costs could increase, or decrease.
- 13.7 It should also be noted that the Government is yet to provide further information on the capital or new burdens funding for food waste collections. It is anticipated that launching a mandated scheme in 2024, before the 2025 deadline, will receive all due funding.

Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)

Cabinet Report - 'Review of Waste and Recycling Services in Light of the Environment Act 2021'. Approved on [22 June 2022](#)

Confidentiality

It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.

No of Annexes:	0	File Ref:	N/A
(Portfolio: Recycling, Environmental Services and Car Parking) Councillor N Adams-King			
Officer:	Paul Wykes	Ext:	8351
Report to:	Council	Date:	5 April 2023

ITEM 12

Rural England Prosperity Fund

Report of the Climate Emergency and Countryside Portfolio Holder

Recommended:

That the Rural England Prosperity Fund projects be incorporated within the Council's Capital Programme for 2023/24 and 2024/25.

SUMMARY:

- The Government's Rural England Prosperity Fund provides capital funding for rural business and rural communities.
- The report recommends that the Rural England Prosperity Fund projects identified in the report be incorporated within the Council's Capital Programme.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to recommend the incorporation of the potential grant, arising from the Rural England Prosperity Fund, of £514,097 for 2023/24 – 24/25 within the Council's Capital Programme.

2 Background

- 2.1 To complement the UK Shared Prosperity Fund the Government has launched the Rural England Prosperity Fund (Rural Fund) worth up to £110 million for 2023/24 and 2024/25. It is the domestic replacement for the European funded LEADER Programme used to support the development of rural economies. The rural fund was launched on 3 September with Councils required to submit an Investment Plan by 30 November in order to access their allocation. It is not a competitive process and no match funding is required to access the grant.
- 2.2 At the Cabinet on 26 October 2022 delegated approval was given, in consultation with relevant portfolio holders, to complete and submit the Council's Investment Plan. The submitted Investment Plan contained proposals which were consistent with Government guidance in that the fund would help:-
- To fund small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas, look to help support innovation and developing new business, and promoting the visitor economy.
 - To fund local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities, improvements to local rural green spaces as well as supporting volunteering and social action projects.

- 2.3 The Borough's total allocation combined for the two years (2023/24 and 2024/25) is £514,097. This is broadly split 25% in the first year and 75% in the second. At the time of writing the Government have not confirmed the date for releasing the Rural Fund although it is understood that this is likely to be in late March/ April. Given the scale of the fund and in order to be in a position to make progress with those projects identified in the Investment Plan it is recommended that this fund is incorporated within the Capital Programme.

3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 3.1 The projects contained within the Investment Plan reflect the objectives of the existing corporate plan (2019-2023) and complements the direction of the forthcoming corporate plan. There is also a significant connection with the objectives of Council strategies including the Climate Emergency Action Plan and the adopted interim Economic Strategy.

4 Consultations/Communications

- 4.1 Prior to submission, a stakeholder engagement session was undertaken with those organisations who understand the local rural economy and our communities. This helped refine the projects contained within the Investment Plan.

5 Options

- 5.1 The option to consider is whether to incorporate the Rural Fund within the Capital Programme, or not.

6 Option Appraisal

- 6.1 The Rural Fund is for capital schemes and therefore the scope of impact is a significant one. It has the potential to benefit a wide breadth of projects that support our rural economy and rural communities. It is envisaged that the scale of the grants available to applicants will be relatively small. Therefore, incorporating the fund within the Capital Programme allows these grants to be released in a timely way and follows the same approach of other grants the Council issues. This is the preferred approach.
- 6.2 Not including the Rural Fund in the Capital Programme would mean that expenditure on action plan projects could not be committed.

7 Risk Management

- 7.1 An evaluation of the risks indicates that the existing controls in place mean that no significant risk have been identified at this time.

8 Resource Implications

- 8.1 The October 2022 Cabinet (para 8.1) report indicated that the funding allocation would be added to the Capital Programme once the Investment Plan is approved. At the time of writing the Investment Plan has not yet been approved. It is anticipated that confirmation will be received in late March/April. It is recommended that rather than wait for the confirmation and a future Council meeting later in the summer it would be expedient to seek Council's approval now.
- 8.2 If, for any reason, the action plan is not accepted in full, the amount of capital expenditure approved will be capped at the amount awarded. There is no net cost to the Council in making payments under the Rural Fund scheme.

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 There recommended option will enable the grant funding to be spent in accordance with the grant scheme and approved Investment Plan.

10 Equality Issues

- 10.1 The EQIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have and will be taken.

11 Other Issues

- 11.1 Ward/communities affected
- 11.1.1 All parts of the Borough can potentially benefit from the rural fund with the exception of the Andover wards where Government restrictions prevent the fund being used on market or 'hub' towns with a population exceeding 30,000.
- 11.2 Sustainability and addressing climate change.
- 11.2.1 This fund can support projects that help address Climate Change.

12 Conclusion and reasons for recommendation

- 12.1 The Rural Prosperity Fund is an opportunity to support rural business and communities. Whilst the outcome of the submitted Investment Plan is not known it is considered expedient to seek agreement to incorporate the fund within the Capital Programme in order to facilitate grant applications in a timely fashion.

Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)

Cabinet report of 26 October 2022 'Rural England Prosperity Fund' and minute number 276. [Cabinet 26 October 2022](#)

Confidentiality

It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and can be made public.

No of Annexes:	0	File Ref:	N/A
(Portfolio: Climate Emergency and Countryside) Councillor A Johnston			
Officer:	Graham Smith	Ext:	8141
Report to:	Council	Date:	5 April 2023

ITEM 13

Reporting of Urgent Decision

Report of the Democracy and Governance Portfolio Holder

Recommended:

That Council notes the urgent decision set out in the Annex to this Report, which was taken by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader.

SUMMARY:

- The Council's Constitution delegates power to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader to take decisions in urgent or emergency situations.
- This power is subject to reporting those decisions back to Council, Cabinet or the Committee concerned.
- This report contains details of an urgent decision made by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader which Council is asked to note.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The need has arisen for an urgent decision to be taken by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader to grant authority to the Head of Housing and Environmental Health in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources and the Head of Finance and Revenues to;
- make decisions associated with the targeting and spending of the Local Authority Housing Fund,
 - make decisions associated with the targeting and spending of S106 affordable housing contributions, and
 - that the grant and any required S106 affordable housing contributions be added to the Council's capital programme.
- 1.2 These decisions must be reported back to Council and this report fulfils that requirement.

2 Background

- 2.1 Under the Constitution, the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader is delegated power to take urgent decisions.
- 2.2 Delegation (2) of the "Delegations to Chief Executive" reads:
- "To do anything, in consultation with the Leader, which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of the Council's functions subject to:

- (i) the matter being regarded as an emergency or urgent situation; and
- (ii) a report back to the Council, Cabinet or Committee concerned.

- 2.3 The requirement to make decisions associated with the targeting and spending of the Local Authority Housing Fund and S106 affordable housing contributions in a timely fashion can properly be considered an “emergency or urgent situation” for the purposes of the above delegation.
- 2.4 This decision was by its very nature urgent as the Council must sign up to the Memorandum of Understanding by 15 March 2023 to receive the first tranche of funding by 31 March and there was no Council meeting to which it could be brought.
- 2.5 A copy of the Written Statement of Decision is attached as an Annex to this report. The Statement sets out the full details of the decision made and the reasons for that decision.
- 2.6 All decisions are available on the Council’s website.

3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 3.1 The appended decision is necessary to enable the Council to continue to fulfil its functions, cutting across all of the Council’s corporate objectives and priorities at a time of national emergency.

4 Consultations/Communications

- 4.1 No consultation has taken place on this report. Any consultation undertaken was recorded in the Statement of Decision.

5 Options and Option Appraisal

- 5.1 This report is for noting only. The decision to delegate authority to the Head of Housing and Environmental Health in consultation with relevant Portfolio Holders and Officers has been agreed. The decisions made pursuant to the urgency delegation are required to be reported to Council.

6 Risk Management

- 6.1 A Risk Management questionnaire has been completed and indicates this report does not require a risk assessment because the changes/issues covered by this report are not significant in terms of risk or have previously been considered.

7 Resource Implications

- 7.1 There are no resource implications of this report. The resource implications of the decision, where appropriate, was considered in the Written Statement of Decision.

8 Legal Implications

- 8.1 Similarly, there are no legal implications of this report. Any legal issues which were taken account in the decision making are recorded in the Written Statement of Decision. The Council's Constitution requires those decisions to be reported back to Council, Cabinet or other Committee.

9 Equality Issues

- 9.1 No equality issues arise as a result of this report. Any equality issues arising as a result of the decision appended are addressed within the Statement of Decision.

10 Other Issues

- 10.1 No other issues are apparent.

11 Conclusion and reasons for recommendation

- 11.1 This document reports to Council the urgent taken by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader. Council is asked to formally note this report.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u> Written Statements of Decision as Annexed to this report.			
<u>Confidentiality</u> It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.			
No of Annexes:	1	File Ref:	N/A
(Portfolio: Democracy and Governance) Councillor I Jeffrey			
Officer:	Karen Dunn	Ext:	8401
Report to:	Council	Date:	5 April 2023

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DECISION BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

SECTION A**DATE OF DECISION:****22nd February 2023****PORTFOLIO AREA:****Housing & Environmental Health Portfolio****SUBJECT TITLE:****Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF)**

It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.

SECTION B – IDENTITY OF THE “DECISION-MAKER”**Name of Officer:****Andrew Ferrier****Title:****Chief Executive**

Pursuant to Delegated Powers as set out in paragraph (2) of “Delegations to Chief Executive” in Part 3 of the Constitution, namely

“To do anything, in consultation with the Leader, which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of the Council’s functions subject to:

- (i) the matter being regarded as an emergency or urgent situation; and
- (ii) a report back to the Council, Cabinet or Committee concerned. “

SECTION C – SUMMARY**Background**

In December 2022, the DLUHC announced the launch of the Local Authority Housing fund for a number of local authorities in England. The funding would be targeted to provide accommodation to families who are homeless, threatened with homelessness, or otherwise living in unsuitable temporary accommodation arrangements, and who arrived in the UK via Ukrainian and Afghan resettlement and relocation schemes. Through the application of a formula, DLUHC identified 182 local authorities nationally who would be offered the funding, providing those authorities agreed to target it in scope of the associated prospectus. The fund is intended to contribute to helping local authorities address accommodation pressures associated with the resettlement schemes, as well as building a sustainable stock of additional affordable housing units for the future.

The eligible cohort for support through the funding are those on the:

- Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (including eligible British Nationals under this scheme) (ACRS),
- Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)
- Ukraine Family Scheme (UFS),
- Homes for Ukraine (HFU),
- Ukraine Extension Scheme (UES)

TVBC has been awarded funding of £1,817,776 broken down as follows:-

‘Main element’: £1,560,000 - With this funding the council is expected to provide a minimum of 13 homes. Government anticipates these will be family sized homes to meet the needs of the eligible cohort.

‘Bridging element’: £257,776 - With this funding the council is expected to provide a minimum of 1 larger 4+ bed home(s) for Afghan households currently residing in Home Office bridging accommodation.

The DLUHC funding offered amounts to 40% of the expected total cost with local authorities or their registered

provider partners expected to fund the difference. It is anticipated that RPs will have a viable opportunity to purchase new properties with this funding and manage it within their funding models. However, it may be necessary to top-up the grant funding with an element of affordable housing s106 contributions to ensure the delivery of the project.

DLUHC require participating local authorities, as far as practicably possible, to deliver the programme by procuring all units of accommodation, by 30th November 2023. The LAHF programme requires very rapid mobilisation and delivery.

As required by DLUHC in order to be considered for the funding, on 25th January 2023, TVBC submitted a Validation Form, to confirm its commitment to delivering the number of homes required, and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by DLUHC and TVBC is required to be finalised by 15th March 2023.

Following submission of the Memorandum of Understanding, payment of the grant will be made in tranches as follows:-

Tranche 1 – 30% of allocation – paid by 31st Mar 2023 - £545,332

Tranche 2 – 70% of allocation – paid at 3 months and 5 months from payment of tranche 1. The local authority must have spent at least 60% of tranche 1 payment (£327,199) before receiving tranche 2.

TVBC has been in discussion with local Registered Providers (RPs) regarding the scheme, along with colleagues at Hart District Council and Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council. These conversations have resulted in the identification of VIVID housing association as the best positioned RP in the local area. They will seek to acquire new build homes on new developments, or suitable existing homes for sale on the open market securing them as affordable homes for the long term.

SECTION D – THE DECISION

"That authority is given to the Head of Housing & Environmental Health:-

1. In consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Environmental Health, the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources, and the Head of Finance & Revenues, to make decisions associated with the targeting and spending of the Local Authority Housing Fund, in accordance with the requirements of the funding prospectus, to enable the delivery of affordable homes for the eligible cohort in the short term, with a view to those homes adding to the existing affordable housing stock in the borough.
2. In consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Environmental Health, the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources, and the Head of Finance & Revenues, to make decisions associated with the targeting and spending of S106 affordable housing contributions towards delivery of these homes, in accordance with the conditions set out in the relevant S106 agreements.
3. That the grant and any required S106 affordable housing contributions be added to the Council's capital programme."

SECTION E – REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The decision-maker's reasons for making the decision recorded in Section D:

The LAHF does not fall within the scope of existing delegated authority and the government timelines are incredibly ambitious and pressing. The Council must sign up to the Memorandum of Understanding by 15th March 2023 to receive the first tranche of funding by 31st March 2023. The council is already working with a Registered Provider who is actively seeking suitable properties to purchase, and the ability to spend funds at any time after 31st March 2023, is essential. Therefore appropriate authority is urgently required to enable officers to proceed.

There is no convenient meeting of the Council to which this decision could be brought. Waiting to bring the decision to Committee would cause unacceptable delay and could result in the council failing to meet DLUHC milestones. This could ultimately result in funds being returned to DLUHC and re-distributed to other local authorities.

SECTION F – DETAILS OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

The options are:

1. to give delegated authority to the Head of Housing & Environmental Health (in consultation with specified members and the Head of Finance & Revenues where appropriate); or
2. to refer decisions around how this funding is targeted (or the issue of giving delegated authority) to Committee.

Option 2 would result in delays in acquiring properties and spending the grant within the required timeframe and could ultimately lead to the funds being returned to DLUHC. It would also delay the rehousing of vulnerable refugee households, some of whom are currently residing temporarily in bed and breakfast accommodation, and in the case of the Afghan refugee cohort, still residing in a bridging hotel. Delays in targeting this funding may also cause damage to the Council's reputation. Option 2 is therefore rejected.

SECTION G – OTHER RELEVANT MATTERS CONCERNING THE DECISION

None

SECTION H – BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were taken into consideration when making the decision:

1. Local Authority Housing Fund Prospectus

SECTION I – Any Conflict of Interest Declared and Dispensation Granted

None.

We certify that the decision this document records was made Pursuant to Delegated Powers as set out in paragraph (2) of "Delegations to Chief Executive" in Part 3 of the Constitution and is a true and accurate record or minute of that decision.

Chief Executive:



Dated:

6/2/23

The Leader of the Council:



Dated:

28/02/2023