

Minutes of the **Council**  
of the **Test Valley Borough Council**  
held in Crosfield Hall, Broadwater Road, Romsey, Hampshire SO51 8GL  
on 17 April 2024 at 5.30 pm

Attendance:

**Councillor P Lashbrook**  
**(Chairman)**

**Councillor G Bailey (Vice-Chairman)**

Councillor N Adams-King  
Councillor I Andersen  
Councillor K Brooks  
Councillor Z Brooks  
Councillor J Budzynski  
Councillor P Bundy  
Councillor J Burnage  
Councillor G Cooper  
Councillor M Cooper  
Councillor C Donnelly  
Councillor A Dowden  
Councillor C Dowden  
Councillor D Drew  
Councillor K Dunleavy  
Councillor M Flood  
Councillor A Ford  
Councillor S Gidley  
Councillor A Gillies  
Councillor L Gregori

Councillor N Gwynne  
Councillor S Hasselmann  
Councillor R Hughes  
Councillor A Johnston  
Councillor R Kohli  
Councillor L Lashbrook  
Councillor M Leech  
Councillor N Lodge  
Councillor S MacDonald  
Councillor L Matthews  
Councillor J Neal  
Councillor K North  
Councillor P North  
Councillor J Parker  
Councillor J Sangster  
Councillor T Swain  
Councillor A Warnes  
Councillor S Yalden

545

**Prayers**

Prayers were led by the Chief Executive.

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**Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors C Borg-Neal, N Daas and I Jeffrey.

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**Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

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**Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations on interest.

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### **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 29 February 2024 were proposed by Councillor Flood who advised of an alteration to the minutes to correct a spelling error in the motion and to show that Councillor Neal was not present, and Councillor Hasselmann was present for both recorded votes. The meeting's consent was signalled without discussion.

Clarity would be sought on the attendance time of Councillor Z Brooks and updated if necessary.

The minutes were seconded by Councillor Adams-King.

#### **Resolved:**

**That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 29 February 2024 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.**

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### **Mayor's Announcements**

The Worshipful The Mayor of Test Valley reflected on the service given to the Council and communities of Test Valley by former councillor Sandra Hawke who had sadly died.

The Mayor thanked Mr Lynn and the Sofa Club who had arranged for a Mayor's charity event held on Saturday 13 April and had been an enjoyable evening as well as raising funds for the mayoral charities.

The Mayor looked forward to welcoming those councillors who were attending his mayoral dinner this coming Saturday 20 April to raise money for the mayoral charities.

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### **To receive and adopt Committee reports**

#### **551.1 Minutes of meetings**

The minutes of meetings were proposed by Councillor P North and seconded by Councillor Flood.

#### **Resolved:**

**That the minutes of the following Committees and Cabinet meetings be received:**

**Cabinet – 28 February 2024**

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 6 March 2024**

**Southern Area Planning Committee - 12 March 2024**

**Audit Committee - 18 March 2024**

**Northern Area Planning Committee – 28 March 2024**

**Southern Area Planning Committee - Southern Area Planning Committee – 2 April 2024**

**Cabinet – 3 April 2024**

**551.2 To adopt recommendations from the following:**

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor P North and seconded by Councillor Flood.

Audit Committee – 18 March 2024

**551.2.1 Annual Governance Statement 2023/24**

**Resolved:**

**That the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24 be approved and that the Leader and Chief Executive be authorised to sign it on behalf of the Council.**

Cabinet – 3 April 2024

**551.2.2 Allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Funds – Community Projects Reserve**

**Resolved:**

- 1. That £467,910 be allocated to the following projects, as set out in section 3 of the report:**
  - **Picket Piece Village Hall Extension - £245,000**
  - **Ampfield Recreation Ground Cricket Training Facilities – £46,639**
  - **Broughton Sports Pavilion Additional Funding – £100,000**
  - **Wellow Men’s Shed – £76,271**
- 2. That the projects identified in recommendation 1, be added to the Council’s Capital Programme, to be funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy Community Projects Reserve.**

**552 Questions under Rule 11.1**

Councillor Gidley asked a question in relation to the minutes of the Council meeting held on 29 February 2024, minute number 474 – Broadcasting Committee meetings.

Councillor Gidley asked the Leader when the audio broadcasting of democratic meetings would commence?

The Leader responded to confirm that it was the intention to begin broadcasting meetings from the Annual Council meeting in May 2024.

Councillor Celia Dowden asked a question in relation to the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6 March 2024, minute number 485 – Cost of Living. Councillor Celia Dowden noted that the minutes referred to the lessons learnt by the Council and its partners however did not set out what those lessons learnt were. Councillor Celia Dowden asked for confirmation of what the lessons learnt from the work undertaken to support residents with the increased cost of living were.

The Leader responded to confirm that details of the lessons learnt would be sent to all councillors outside of the meeting.

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### **Questions under Rule 11.2**

Councillor Gidley asked Recycling and Environmental Services Portfolio Holder the following question on behalf of Councillor Daas:

*‘This Council has committed to deliver food waste recycling by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024. If the County Council is not ready to process food waste in County by 2024, will this Council investigate the schemes that Eastleigh and Portsmouth Council use by processing food waste out of county?’*

Councillor Drew responded to confirm that position had not changed since he had responded to a question of similar nature last November. The Council was committed to the delivery of waste service changes as required by the Environment Act.

Last autumn, the Council was planning for service changes when the Government announced, ‘Simpler Recycling’. This was an unexpected change in policy direction at a national level and meant that the new county-wide twin stream system was no longer an absolute requirement. A Government consultation followed which the Council responded to however outcomes from this were still awaited.

As a result of ‘Simpler Recycling’ it is likely the Council will introduce a fully commingled waste collection system. This means all recyclable materials, including glass, will be contained within one bin, making recycling much easier for residents.

At the same time as announcing the change in policy direction, the Government pushed back the date for introducing weekly food waste collections to April 2026. Although confirmation of capital funding for purchasing vehicles and food waste caddies has been received, this is yet to be the case for ongoing funding for these collections. The introduction of weekly food waste collections would result in a significant ongoing annual cost however, the Government had yet to confirm they would fund this from the 1 April 2026.

Councillor Drew assured Council that the authority was keen to bring in changes at the appropriate time having given due consideration to operational and affordability matters.

Councillor Gidley asked a supplementary question enquiring as to whether 'Simpler Recycling' was just an excuse not to bring in the changes to collection of food waste. Councillor Gidley advised that 115 other local authorities already undertook this kind of collection and that the only reason the Council was not proceeding was due to the potential to lose funding from Government. Councillor Gidley asked whether the Council should proceed to move forward with the collection of food waste now given its benefits for residents and the environment.

Councillor Drew responded that it would cost in the region of £800,000 a year to undertake food waste collection so it was not an insignificant cost. He advised that without understanding the outcomes from the Government consultation or the full potential cost to the authority it would not be wise to proceed at this time. As soon as further details were known the Council would look to move forward with changes to waste and recycling collection services.

Councillor Gwynne asked Housing and Environmental Health Services Portfolio Holder the following question:

*'At last month's briefing on the Corporate Action Plan, Councillor Phil North - in responding to a question from Councillor Mark Cooper - advised that there were no actions within the Corporate Action Plan designed to bring about a re-entry of this Council to the provisioning of new council homes. Can I ask if there have been any Cabinet discussions about the circumstances under which such a re-entry might be undertaken?'*

Councillor Kirsty North responded to note that the current Housing Strategy ran from 2020 to 2025 with an ambitious target to deliver 1000 new affordable homes over that period. At the end of the strategy's fourth year, over 950 affordable homes had already been built. This success had been achieved, in the main, through the allocation of strategic sites in the Local Plan. The Council did also take advantage of other delivery vehicles, such as the Local Authority Housing Fund, as and when they arise.

The Council transferred its housing stock, and staff associated with providing housing management functions, to Testway Housing Association, now known as Aster, in 2000. As a result, the Council no longer has a housing management staff structure or systems in place to act as a landlord. Existing housing staff functions were very different to that of housing management. Assembling a new housing management team, IT provisions and managing a Housing Revenue Account, required when the Council owns and manages over 200 homes, would be a huge task which would not necessarily deliver more affordable homes than are being provided at present. The Local Plan process was delivering high levels of affordable housing and as result the Cabinet had no current plans to re-provide Council housing moving forward.

Councillor Gwynne asked a supplementary question to urge the Council to play a more proactive role in the provision of affordable housing and Council housing directly or via strategic partnerships.

Councillor Kirsty North responded to thank Councillor Gwynne for his views and to confirm that these would be considered by the Cabinet but that there was no indication that the Council directly providing social housing would deliver more affordable homes than it currently did.

Councillor Warnes asked the Planning Portfolio Holder the following question:

*'As the Planning Department are aware the Gypsy site in Bracken Road/Rownhams Lane in North Baddesley has been given by the Planning Inspector up to the 21st September 2024 to remove everything from the site. At present this appears to be wishful thinking, due to the fact that their service work is still being carried out and nothing has been done to remedy the situation in that no work has begun on removing materials from the site. Therefore, could the Enforcement team inform us of what proactive action they will be taking to ensure the site is cleared by the owners by the 21st September.'*

Councillor Bundy responded to advise that the appeal decision had upheld the Enforcement Notice but made variations to it, including increasing the timescales for compliance. The first timescale in relation to ceasing residential use and removing all associated items from the land was extended to 12 months from 20 September 2023. The second timescale in relation to the planting of trees across the entire site was increased to 18 months.

The Enforcement Notice contained no more specific timescales than those set out, meaning that the Council could not compel the landowner to commence remedial works on a specific date. Whether the landowner chooses to comply with the Enforcement Notice days, weeks or months before the deadline was their prerogative and was usually reflective of the complexity of the remedial actions required, and the resources available to the landowner.

Should the steps of the Enforcement Notice not be complied with, the Council had several options available to it which includes prosecution, direct action or injunctions for non-compliance with the Enforcement Notice. At this stage it would be inappropriate to determine the necessity or the course of any enforcement action but if the notice is not complied with by the required date, officers will review the position and take such action as is considered appropriate in the light of the circumstances which exist at that time.

Councillor Warnes asked a supplementary question and advised that residents had been in contact to ask when the clearance would take place as they had witnessed more items being brought onto the site. Councillor Warnes asked when the removal would take place?

Councillor Bundy responded to confirm the Council was not able to take any action until the deadline had passed and confirmed that should this be the case appropriate action would be taken.

Councillor Geoff Cooper asked the Climate Emergency and Countryside Portfolio Holder the following question:

*'At the Pan Parish River Pollution Forum on Tuesday 9th April, Cllr Drew was asked to provide an update on action taken by Test Valley Borough Council, following the full Council meeting of 29th Feb 2024. The general feeling amongst those attending the Pan Parish meeting was that the update did not show a great deal of action has yet been taken. So, please could you provide an update on exactly what action has this Council taken as a result of the Motion passed under Rule 12 at our last Full Council meeting?'*

Councillor Johnston responded to confirm that the Pan Parish Forum had been working effectively now for a number of years with the support of local Borough and County Councillors. These efforts had resulted in a positive dialogue with Southern Water and the Environment Agency, the agencies responsible for the water quality in the Test.

The Environment Agency did give a written update to the recent Forum about the Fullerton Wastewater Treatment Works and the elevated levels of dilute untreated sewage effluent entering the River Test. The Agency had directed Southern Water to take actions, which, had significantly reduced the storm discharges. The Environment Agency would also continue to monitor the water quality in the River Test, upstream and downstream of the outfall.

The motion passed by the Council helped keep the pressure up on Southern Water and ensure that the matter of water quality in the Test was kept in the public eye. However, the Council had no formal statutory authority to intervene. The Council would nonetheless continue to support the Pan Parish Forum.

Councillor Geoff Cooper asked a supplementary question to ask for clarification of the number of incidents of river pollution and whether they had been reported and passed on to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the Motion agreed by Council in November 2022.

Councillor Phil North responded to advise that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were sponsoring a round table for all Councillors on 30 April to which the Environment Agency would be attending and he welcomed Councillor's involvement in this.

Councillor Adams-King further advised that it was considered that the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health was the most appropriate Cabinet Member for incidents to be reported to and that as he had previously advised, two incidents had been reported with an additional report being received by the Chief Executive which had been passed on. Clarity would be sought from the Environment Agency on why the Council had not been informed of other incidents.

Councillor Geoff Cooper asked the Climate Emergency and Countryside Portfolio Holder the following question:

*'Houghton Parish Council has purchased water monitoring equipment from watr.tech. The unit costs £6,000. Would Test Valley Borough Council be willing to buy more of these devices to provide greater testing and data collection and show firm action on the monitoring of pollution in our chalk streams?'*

Councillor Johnston responded that as indicated at the last Council meeting, the Council could assist organisations such as Parish Council's to purchase this type of equipment through existing grant schemes. However, given the Council's existing work alongside the Environment Agency who have responsibility for monitoring and enforcing this area of water quality, she would like to seek their advice first on the best equipment to purchase and the amount/quality of data needed to obtain reliable results to ensure that any testing done, was effective.

Councillor Geoff Cooper asked a supplementary question as to how much the Council would ring-fence for the purchase of equipment and how many units would be purchased.

Councillor Johnston responded that before making any commitment the information from the Environment agency was required and that evidence was required that there were groups of volunteers that were committed to using and managing the equipment.

Councillor Yalden asked the Leader the following question:

*'As the Council and Leader will be aware, most of Test Valley's roads are blighted with potholes and surface defects. I am fully aware that local highway maintenance is a matter for Hampshire County Council, but it does not stop our residents from venting their frustrations and concerns to us as their Borough Councillors.*

*With scientists warning that climate change will worsen the problem with heavier and persistent rainfall, combined with a backlog of £billions of local repairs and rising costs, what are the current plans to ensure that money is spent equitably in Test Valley as a matter of priority?'*

Councillor Phil North responded to note that it was incumbent on all Councillors to report potholes and highway issues to Hampshire County Council who were the responsible authority. Councillors regularly did so and lobbied the responsible Cabinet Member at the County Council to ensure that Test Valley received its share of highway maintenance funding. Councillor Phil North noted that a number of Borough Councillors were also County Councillors and was certain that they too lobbied their County colleagues on behalf of the Borough.

Councillor Yalden asked a supplementary question to advised that she had written to the Government regarding the backlog of highway maintenance in the Borough. Councillor Yalden asked whether the Leader could ask Hampshire County Council whether a condition survey had been undertaken and whether there was a timetable for repair in place.

Councillor Phil North responded to support Councillor Yalden's letter to Government and to reiterate that all Councillors should be reporting highway issues to the County



Council. He confirmed that the County Council were constantly monitoring road conditions.

Councillor Adams-King further responded to confirm that the County Council were constantly monitoring and reviewing road conditions and that timescales for this were dependant on the type of road. The County was anticipating a further grant from Government for highway maintenance next year which would help in addressing some of the most pressing highway maintenance issues.

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**Notice of Motion - Rule 12**

There were no motions to consider.

(The meeting terminated at 6.28 pm)