

Minutes of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
of the **Test Valley Borough Council**
held in The Annexe, Crosfield Hall, Broadwater Road, Romsey
on Wednesday 3 January 2024 at 5.30 pm

Attendance:

Councillor I Jeffrey (Chairman)

Councillor G Bailey

Councillor K Brooks

Councillor D Cattell

Councillor S Gidley

Councillor N Gwynne

Councillor S Hasselmann

Councillor J Neal (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor S MacDonald

Councillor L Matthews

Councillor J Parker

Councillor A Warnes

Councillor S Yalden

Also in attendance

Councillor P Bundy

Councillor T Swain

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Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Borg-Neal, Gillies, Gregori, Hughes and Leech.

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Public Participation

There was no public participation.

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Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

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Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

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Minutes

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 22 November 2023 were proposed by Councillor Jeffrey and seconded by Councillor Neal.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2023 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

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Call in Items

There were no call in items.

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Urgent decisions taken since last meeting

There were no urgent decisions.

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Authority Monitoring Report 2022-2023

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development which considered the findings from the annual Authority Monitoring Report 2022/23.

Section 113 of the Localism Act 2011 required that a monitoring report be published annually, assessing the implementation of policy and progress of the Local Development Scheme. It was noted that the report represented a snapshot in time and that more detailed documents in relation to planning policy and progress on specific areas were available on the Council's website.

In 2022/23, 396 dwellings were completed in Test Valley, 257 in Northern Test Valley and 139 in Southern Test Valley. Housing completions had reduced compared to 2021/22 and was below the 588 Revised Local Plan's annualised average requirement, however overall cumulative total completions for recent years, still exceeded the Revised Local Plan's annualised average requirement, when the significant surplus from higher levels of delivery in previous years was taken into account.

There had been a reduction in the number of affordable housing units completed during the reporting year with a total of 140 affordable homes delivered against an annual target of 200, but this followed higher completions above the target in recent previous years.

The Borough was performing well in terms of development of employment floorspace, but the amount delivered is variable on an annual basis, reflecting the construction of individual developments, which can be large in scale and completed in one go in a single year, compared to housing sites built out over a number of years.

Members of the Committee asked a number of questions regarding the Authority Monitoring Report and discussed matters including the provision of Gypsy and Travellers site in the borough, work being undertaken to promote available Community Infrastructure Levy and s106 funding, and inclusion of a headline housing land supply figure in future versions of the report.

It was noted that the Recycling and Environmental Service Portfolio Holder is due to attend the Committee's next meeting which would be an opportunity to further discuss the Council's recycling rates.

Councillor Gwynne noted that the report, as shown, did not contain some final figures and therefore he could not support endorsement of the report. Officers confirmed that once the information became available it would be included in the final document. The Committee noted that the final report would be published on the Council's website.

Councillor Jeffrey proposed, and Councillor Neal seconded, the recommendation as set out in the report.

Resolved:

That the Test Valley Borough Council's Authority Monitoring Report for 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 (Annex 1 to the report) be endorsed.

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Improving Engagement and Participation

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Strategy and Innovation which provided an overview of the Council's work undertaken so far, to engage and involve local people as part of the Council's commitment to work with communities at a place level.

The Chief Executive and Head of Community and Leisure gave a presentation which set out the journey the Council had been on over the last ten years or so in developing its approach to, and support for, the community councillor model, and how the new Corporate Plan reinforced the Council's long-term commitment to working with the communities of Test Valley at place level. A key aspect to the approach was to identify community priorities and, with partners, access funding such as the Community Infrastructure Levy, in order to deliver on the ground.

Test Valley Borough Council was known nationally for being a leading local authority in respect of engagement and participation, with councillors as elected representatives being key to the approach.

The role of the community councillor in Test Valley had grown and developed with councillors working collaboratively to develop the approach and ensure support was in place to facilitate councillors in their role as local leaders; bringing together all voices in local communities to understand the local area, evidence and prioritise need, and take action to make a difference.

The current work being undertaken by all councillors across the borough demonstrated the commitment of the Council in understanding how to support communities to thrive and including signposting to resources to take forward projects and initiatives.

The Committee discussed a number of key themes arising from the work including; recognising the strengths and roles of people and groups within communities, the range of support available from officers as well as a range of financial resources.

It was noted that the Council had undertaken a number of deliberative engagement exercises such as the Romsey Citizens' Assembly and deliberative youth engagement in Andover. The outcomes from these had been captured and would continue to be used to inform future deliberative engagement at a range of scales across the borough.

Councillors were invited to contact Emma Silverton, Democratic Services Manager, with any further feedback on the approach to engagement and participation as well as support the Council could seek to develop to further enhance the work of councillors in their communities.

Councillor Jeffrey proposed, and Councillor Neal seconded, the recommendation as set out in the report.

Resolved:

That the Committee notes the progress of the work undertaken so far and provides feedback to inform its ongoing development.

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Updates on Panels

Overview and Scrutiny Budget Panel

Councillor Neal, Lead Member of the Budget Panel advised that the Panel had not met since the update provided to the Committee at its meeting on 22 November 2023. The next meeting of the Budget Panel would take place on Thursday 11 January.

Regeneration Task and Finish Panel

Members were sought to join the Regeneration Task and Finish Panel. Councillors K Brooks and Cattell would join the Panel along with Councillors Gwynne (Lead Member) Gidley, Gregori and Hasselmann. Councillor Gwynne advised that the first meeting to consider the scope of the Panel would take place in February.

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

The Committee discussed its work programme for 2024.

The Committee noted that the items included on the provisional agenda for the meeting on 7 February were important and required additional time for full consideration. It was agreed that the item on Cost of Living would be moved back to the meeting scheduled to take place on 6 March.

Councillor Gwynne suggested that the Committee hold a future round table to consider the effectiveness of recommendations it made to Cabinet. The Chairman advised that this would be considered for the future.

It was noted that following the Committee's item on Water Pollution Infrastructure on 22 November 2023, a date was being arranged with the Environment Agency and Southern Water to attend a future Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee endorsed its work programme subject to the change in date for the Cost of Living item as set out above.

(The meeting terminated at 6.51 pm)