

## Notice of Meeting

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** Wednesday 7 February 2024

**Time:** 5.30 pm

**Venue:** Conference Room 1, Beech Hurst, Weyhill Road, Andover,  
Hampshire, SP10 3AJ

**For further information or enquiries please contact:**

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**Legal and Democratic Service**

Test Valley Borough Council,  
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The recommendations contained in the Agenda are made by the Officers and these recommendations may or may not be accepted by the Committee.

### **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.*

### **Membership of Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

<b>MEMBER</b>	<b>WARD</b>
Councillor I Jeffrey (Chairman)	Mid Test
Councillor J Neal (Vice-Chairman)	Andover Millway
Councillor G Bailey	Blackwater
Councillor C Borg-Neal	Andover Harroway
Councillor K Brooks	Andover Romans
Councillor D Cattell	Andover St Mary's
Councillor S Gidley	Romsey Abbey
Councillor A Gillies	Andover Winton
Councillor L Gregori	Andover Harroway
Councillor N Gwynne	Romsey Cupernham
Councillor S Hasselmann	Anna
Councillor R Hughes	Andover Harroway
Councillor M Leech	Andover Millway
Councillor S MacDonald	Mid Test
Councillor L Matthews	Andover Winton
Councillor J Parker	Romsey Tadburn
Councillor A Warnes	North Baddesley
Councillor S Yalden	Ampfield & Braishfield

## **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Wednesday 7 February 2024

### **AGENDA**

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

- 1 Apologies**
- 2 Public Participation**
- 3 Declarations of Interest**
- 4 Urgent Items**
- 5 Minutes of the previous meeting 5 - 9**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 3 January 2024.
- 6 Call in Items**
- 7 Urgent decisions taken since last meeting**
- 8 Improvement and Sustainability to Listed Buildings 10 - 17**

To explore within the planning framework the policies relating to listed buildings (within the context of climate change) and what can be done to support and improve their sustainability (20 minutes)
- 9 Council Tax Support Scheme 2025/26 18 - 25**

To consider the proposals for the review of the Council Tax Support Scheme (15 minutes)
- 10 Updates on Panels**

Lead Members to update the Committee on the progress of their Panels (10 minutes)

<b>11</b>	<b><u>Programme of Work for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee</u></b>	<b>26 - 36</b>
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To enable Members to keep the Committee's future work programme under review (10 minutes)

**ITEM 5** 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

379 **Apologies**

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

380 **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

381 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

382 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

383 **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)

## **ITEM 8           Improvement and Sustainability to Listed Buildings**

Report of the Head of Planning and Building

### **Recommended:**

**That the Committee considers the attached briefing note and provides guidance relating to how the Council could look to improve the sustainability of heritage assets across the Borough within the framework of the planning system.**

#### **SUMMARY:**

- The briefing note attached at Appendix A sets out the existing national and local context regarding the sustainability of heritage assets, including listed buildings, in relation to the planning system. A recent Government report has identified a range of issues that can constrain the improvement of the sustainability of these assets and has identified actions nationally to address this.
- There are a number of issues that can potentially make the greening of heritage assets more challenging. The briefing note considers, within the planning framework, what could be undertaken to support the improvement of the sustainability of our heritage assets.
- These issues can be addressed locally by considering the nature of the building in question, and its setting, and using this information to develop bespoke solutions, and to engage with the planning service, to obtain advice on proposed alterations, and new development, before formal applications are made. Work could also be undertaken to improve knowledge and awareness of existing guidance available to those responsible for historic properties.

### **1       Introduction**

- 1.1     At the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Away Day in July 2023 one of the topics raised was supporting improvement and sustainability to listed buildings.

### **2       Background**

- 2.1     Members were keen to know what support there is to upgrade/green proof old buildings and those in conservation areas.
- 2.2     This would add value by improving our climate change actions, improving financial state and wellbeing of individual householders and improving housing stock.

- 2.3 As set out in the appended briefing note this can potentially be addressed by a range of means, such as enhancing awareness of how these matters can be addressed in an historic context, including offering advice and support to individuals and businesses which will enable them to develop solutions that are appropriate to their premises. This also enables making progress through the planning system easier for example.

### **3 Legal Implications**

- 3.1 None other than alterations to Listed Buildings require Listed Building Consent under the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and permitted development rights are more restricted for listed buildings and within conservation areas. The impact of development proposals, which affect the historic environment, also need to be considered when planning decisions are made on applications.

### **4 Equality Issues**

- 4.1 None

### **5 Other Issues**

- 5.1 Community Safety - none
- 5.2 Environmental Health Issues – none
- 5.3 Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate  
(See attached briefing note which includes a summary of the Council's current position).
- 5.4 Property Issues  
The Council's portfolio of buildings includes some listed buildings, including Andover Guildhall (Grade II\*) and the Italianate Romsey Cemetery Chapel (GII). There may be opportunities, in partnership with the Council's Property and Asset Management Team, to improve the energy efficiency of these buildings.
- 5.5 Wards/Communities Affected  
All

### **6 Conclusion**

- 6.1 Members are invited to consider and discuss the issues identified in the Appended briefing note and to consider possible next steps and actions that the Council could take.

<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:	1		
Author:	Margaret Bennett	Ext:	8469
File Ref:	N/A		
Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Date:	7 February 2024

## APPENDIX A - IMPROVEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY TO LISTED BUILDINGS

Introduction and context.	<p>In September 2019, Test Valley Borough Council declared a climate emergency and committed to identifying steps to achieve carbon-neutrality as soon as possible. In June 2020, as a step towards this, the council approved and published its Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP). This action plan is a living document and is reviewed in line with changes to technology, government policy and other local trends. The council is working towards refreshing the CEAP.</p> <p>The CEAP focuses on actions that direct the council towards being a carbon neutral authority by looking into the council's assets and assessing how emissions can be reduced. Examples include undertaking the retrofit and decarbonisation of our Romsey depot, and introducing electric fleet vehicles and HVO fuel. It also seeks to support the local community and businesses. Examples include the funding of support for a local community energy initiative working with Community Energy South, including training on how make homes more energy efficient.</p> <p>The actions outlined within the CEAP include that the emerging local plan policies should account for and help respond to the climate emergency.</p> <p>Councillors have expressed a desire to understand more about the planning framework and policies relating to listed buildings and properties in conservation areas within the context of climate change in order to improve their sustainability.</p> <p>Within the Test Valley there are c.2,500 Listed Buildings (not including curtilage listed buildings) and 36 Conservation Areas. There are also numerous non-designated heritage assets.</p> <p>It is most likely the case that there is an issue, both nationally, and locally within Test Valley with people thinking that no changes may be made to listed buildings and properties located inside conservation areas in order to improve their energy efficiency. Whilst this is not the case it is perhaps unsurprising that this is some people's perception given the additional controls that apply to historic buildings which are statutorily protected.</p> <p>These controls mean that approval may be needed for measures that would otherwise not need the Council's permission. For example, changes to a listed building, such as replacing windows or adding solar panels to a roof, usually require listed building consent. The impact on the historic environment is also an important consideration when planning applications are assessed, and decided, including where a proposed development would affect a listed building, its setting or conservation area.</p>
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	<p>It is true therefore that solutions may need to be more creative and inventive, and appropriate regard needs to be given to conserving the special interest of listed buildings when considering alterations and additions, but in many cases, it is possible to make often quite simple changes which can improve their performance.</p> <p>Frequently issues actually arise from ignoring traditional measures, such as ensuring window frames fit properly, and with details such as blinds and awnings. It should be born in mind that listed buildings are inherently sustainable by virtue of their longevity.</p> <p>It is important to encourage discussion and the Council's pre-application service is particularly helpful for facilitating this. However, Design and Conservation do not seem to receive very many enquires about green measures for historic buildings beyond wholesale replacement of windows. This indicates that any misconceptions are unlikely to be based on informed discussion with the Council.</p> <p>Solutions are often feasible but need to be bespoke to the listed building in question. This is because an adaptation which may not be appropriate for one building, could be suitable for a different building. For example, it can be possible to install solar panels on historically important buildings (such as Kings College, Cambridge) because they can be concealed behind parapets, where this option may not be acceptable on a vernacular thatched cottage.</p> <p>The key therefore, is the nature of the heritage asset, and considering this carefully when exploring what may be appropriate to improve its sustainability, and seeking professional guidance, both from heritage specialists and sustainable energy advisors to enable informed options to be identified. A whole building approach is also important.</p> <p>Consideration of this matter by OSCOM at this point is timely given the Government's recent review of the barriers that hold back the greening of historic buildings, which is cited below, and was only published in January this year. The report identifies a number of factors which have constrained improvements to historic buildings, and those located in conservation areas, and steps being taken nationally to address the situation. This report can be used therefore to inform how we consider these matters in Test Valley.</p>
National Policy context	<p>National Government has produced guidance for local planning authorities regarding treatment of heritage assets within the planning process. This also includes climate change policies.</p> <p>National Planning Policy Framework December 2023:</p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/121241/nppf-2023.pdf">National Planning Policy Framework - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a></p> <p>Section 14 (paragraphs 157 to 179) deals with managing the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change.</p>

	<p>Section 16 (paragraphs 195 to 214) deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment.</p> <p>The Government's Planning Practice Guidance includes a section specifically relating to climate change:</p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/climate-change">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/climate-change</a></p> <p>and one relating to the historic environment:</p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment</a></p>
National Guidance and Government Review:	<p>National Government have very recently produced a review relating to: Adapting historic homes for energy efficiency: a review of the barriers <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adapting-historic-homes-for-energy-efficiency-a-review-of-the-barriers/adapting-historic-homes-for-energy-efficiency-a-review-of-the-barriers">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adapting-historic-homes-for-energy-efficiency-a-review-of-the-barriers/adapting-historic-homes-for-energy-efficiency-a-review-of-the-barriers</a></p> <p>The report highlights next steps across a number of areas connected to improving the green credentials of our historic buildings as set out below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Local authority skills, training and capacity, guidance and information,</li> <li>• Construction industry skills, training and capacity</li> <li>• Affordability and financial incentives</li> </ul> <p>A suite of guidance documents has been produced by Historic England which is the Government body that is responsible for heritage across the country.</p> <p>These may be found at:</p> <p><a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/retrofit-and-energy-efficiency-in-historic-buildings/">https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/retrofit-and-energy-efficiency-in-historic-buildings/</a></p> <p>(also linked to TVBC webpage: <a href="https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/planning-and-building/heritage/listedbuildings">https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/planning-and-building/heritage/listedbuildings</a>)</p> <p><a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/your-home/energy-efficiency/generating-energy/">https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/your-home/energy-efficiency/generating-energy/</a></p> <p>They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: How to Improve Energy Efficiency (2018)</li> <li>- Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Insulating pitched roofs at ceiling level-cold roofs (2016)</li> <li>- Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Insulating thatched roofs (2016)</li> <li>- Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Open fires, chimneys and flues (2016)</li> <li>- Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Insulating solid walls (2016)</li> <li>- Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Insulating timber-framed walls (2015)</li> </ul>

<p>Wider context – Other authorities' approaches.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Traditional Windows: their care, repair and upgrading (2017)</li> <li>- Installing heat pumps</li> <li>- Solar water heating</li> <li>- Biomass boilers</li> <li>- Photovoltaics</li> <li>- Small-scale wind turbines.</li> </ul> <p>Advice can also be found on the Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance website:  <a href="https://stbauk.org/">https://stbauk.org/</a></p> <p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Responsible Retrofit Guidance Wheel</li> <li>- The STBA Whole House approach – looking at a holistic approach to improving the whole building.</li> </ul> <p>National Amenities Societies, such as the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) also provide guidance:  <a href="https://www.spab.org.uk/advice/search-our-knowledgebase?category_type=153&amp;keywords=">https://www.spab.org.uk/advice/search-our-knowledgebase?category_type=153&amp;keywords=</a></p> <p>Other councils have produced guidance:  <a href="#">Historic Buildings and Energy Efficiency - Winchester City Council</a>  <a href="https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/historic-environment-energy-efficiency">https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/historic-environment-energy-efficiency</a></p> <p>(there is a significant resource implication associated with producing this type of guidance)</p>
<p>The Local Plan</p>	<p>The current Local Plan (2011-2029) was adopted in January 2016  <a href="https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planningpolicy/local-development-framework/dpd">https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planningpolicy/local-development-framework/dpd</a></p> <p>Due to its date, it does not include a specific policy relating to climate change, but the need to respond to this does run through the document, particularly paras 7.49-7.51.</p> <p>Policy E9, and its supporting paragraphs, deals with the management of the historic environment.          Para 7.74 states:  <i>Heritage assets are irreplaceable and should be retained wherever possible. For listed buildings, the Council will have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any historic features of interest. The Council recognises that some change may be necessary to ensure the asset is continued to be used and retained in its current or alternative appropriate use that is compatible with the conservation of its significance. However, such changes will need to be undertaken sensitively having fully recorded, understood and appreciated the significance of the heritage asset.</i></p>



<p>Discussion regarding the nature of the issues identified, and possible next steps and actions the Council could take.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Raise awareness of existing advice, guidance and providing targeted briefing sessions to increase knowledge of how sustainability could be achieved for historic buildings (resource implication).</li> <li>- Encourage engagement with Council Officers (through the pre-application service) to seek solutions and bespoke guidance.</li> <li>- Information sharing</li> <li>- Update and expand links to existing guidance on website</li> <li>- Consider whether any bespoke documents are needed (resource implication)</li> <li>- Consider additional resources where required. The Council could, for example, explore whether to provide financial support to the owners of heritage assets to help deliver sustainability measures. This has significant resource implications in terms of providing grant assistance and managing that process. Most councils do not now offer such types of support if they ever did. It would be important to consider whether such intervention was justifiable and appropriate, in terms of the outcomes it might help to secure, including whether the funding might be used in another way, which would provide greater impact and benefit, from a climate emergency point of view.</li> <li>- Consider the findings set out in the Government's recent review – Adapting historic homes for energy efficiency: a review of the barriers January 2024 -to identify any further actions the Council could consider, in addition to those cited above, which may help to encourage enhancement to the sustainability of our historic buildings and premises in conservation areas.</li> </ul>
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## **ITEM 9 Council Tax Support Scheme 2025/26**

Report of the Head of Finance and Revenues

### **Recommended:**

- 1. That options related to a review of the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme for 2025/26, be considered.**
- 2. That a panel be established to develop potential options for any new scheme.**

#### **SUMMARY:**

- The report sets out the background to the Council's Council Tax Support scheme and considers options for making changes to the way that the support is calculated for the 2025/26 financial year.

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Council is required to have a Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme to assist residents with their liability to pay Council Tax. The scheme must meet the prescribed requirements published by central government for pension-age residents.
- 1.2 Since 2013, the Council has had significant control over the design of what is now a local scheme in respect of working-age residents.
- 1.3 The purpose of CTS is to assist residents on a low income to meet their Council Tax liability. Though it is means-tested, it is a Council Tax discount rather than a welfare benefit.
- 1.4 CTS is a discount to Council Tax and so changes to entitlement can increase or reduce the Council Tax payable. CTS is not a payment that is made to households.

### **2 Background**

- 2.1 Council has recently approved a scheme for 2024/25 that is largely similar to the current scheme. Changes from the last full review of the scheme came into effect in April 2019.
- 2.2 Our current CTS scheme broadly follows the central government designed Council Tax Benefit scheme which was in place prior to 2013. The scheme is complex for customers to understand and requires significant officer resource to input the details into a specialist software system for the assessment and calculation of the following:

- Household composition and assessment of the household's 'applicable amount' (a standard national figure which the government believes reflects the basic living needs of an individual). There are rules around who is and is not considered a member of the household for this purpose, and the applicable amount is based on age and family make-up, with additional premiums for those on qualifying disability benefits.
- Household income. Earned and unearned income is assessed differently. Different types of income may be disregarded in part (based on household composition, number of hours worked per week, and disability or lone-parent status) or in full (for child benefit and qualifying disability benefits).
- Household capital. Different forms of capital are assessed differently and some capital may be disregarded, either permanently or for a period of time, or can be converted to income for the purpose of the CTS assessment.
- The applicable amount is compared to income to calculate entitlement to CTS. Maximum entitlement is given to those with income equal to or below their applicable amount. A tapered award is given to those with excess income.
- Maximum entitlement is capped at 90% of the claimant's Council Tax bill for most working-age claimants. There is no cap for those who receive qualifying disability benefits.
- Claimants must report changes in their circumstances so CTS may be reassessed. To prevent weekly or monthly recalculations in CTS, where there is a change in income of less than £30 per week, there is no change to CTS entitlement until such time as any further changes cumulatively amount to £30 per week or more.
- There are complex rules around start dates for new claims for CTS, and for the dates from which a change in circumstances takes effect.

### **3 Drivers for change**

#### Impact on recipients

- 3.1 Change of income is often reported monthly for claimants who are employed or in receipt of Universal Credit. For each change in income, the current scheme requires a reassessment of entitlement. Where a change affects the amount of CTS entitlement, the Council Tax account is recalculated and instalments are amended.
- 3.2 Due to the requirements in the notice period we must give customers to changes in instalments for Council Tax, regular reassessments can cause difficulty in collection of amounts owed, in effect delaying payment due dates and potentially shortening the amount of time households have to pay, depending on the months remaining in the financial year. This can also be confusing for customers to understand with regularly changing bills.

- 3.3 There is an opportunity to simplify the CTS scheme with an objective of making the calculation easier to understand and requiring fewer changes to bills to be processed.

#### Universal Credit

- 3.4 A further factor affecting CTS is whether the claimant is on Housing Benefit or Universal Credit (UC). The current CTS scheme is similar to Housing Benefit, so both schemes are administered at the same time by the same team. As more of the Housing Benefit caseload transfers across to UC, there is more scope (and benefit) from introducing a simpler CTS scheme.
- 3.5 In December 2023, the government set out plans to take forward the managed migration of households in receipt of Housing Benefit across to UC throughout the 2024/25 financial year. This makes the timing of changes to the CTS scheme relevant for consideration at this time.
- 3.6 The current working-age CTS caseload is approximately 2,600, split as 1,600 on Universal Credit and 1,000 on Housing Benefit.

### **4 Corporate Objectives and Priorities**

- 4.1 The Corporate Plan sets out how we want to help our communities to thrive.
- 4.2 A clearer, more easily understood scheme would support this goal and could help our residents manage their finances and financial welfare more effectively. It would also make it easier for residents to apply for what they are entitled to and know in advance what their discount is likely to be.

### **5 Consultations/Communications**

- 5.1 Any material changes to the CTS scheme will require a minimum 8-week public consultation period. A potential timetable is set out below, though there is some opportunity to amend some of the dates.

Feb-May	Officers and OSCOM panel to review and develop options for recommended new scheme.
05/06/2024	OSCOM - discuss options and consider scheme to consult on
10/07/2024	Cabinet - agree draft scheme to consult on
22/07/2024 to 27/09/2024	Consultation on possible options (minimum of 8 weeks) This allows 10 weeks
Week commencing 30/09/2024	Review of consultation responses and update Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA)

27/11/2024	OSCOM - present findings from consultation, EQIA, proposed new scheme and agree recommendations to Cabinet
From 28/11/2024	Finalise new scheme document
15/01/2025	Cabinet - recommend scheme to Council
29/01/2025	Council - approve final scheme
February 2025	Publicity of scheme
February / March 2025	System testing to ensure accuracy of billing

## 6 Options

- 6.1 There is an opportunity to review the basis on which the scheme is calculated and administered. OSCOM's views on this are being sought to consider the parameters of any such review and to assist in the developing a new scheme.
- 6.2 There are numerous ways that the CTS scheme could be updated. A summary of several of these, together with some of the advantages and disadvantages are shown in the annex to the report.
- 6.3 When changes were last made to the scheme in 2019, a panel of OSCOM was established, led by Cllr Baverstock. This was an effective method of involving OSCOM throughout the policy development stages which allowed progress on the different options to be made at an efficient speed. A similar approach could be adopted for any changes to be made from 2025/26. The committee's views are sought on how best to take this forward for this review.

## 7 Resource Implications

- 7.1 The full impact of the current CTS scheme is built into the Council's budget. The total forecast cost of this in 2024/25 is estimated to be £5.62M, of which the Council's share is approximately £550,000.
- 7.2 Any new scheme that is developed could;
- Retain a similar net cost and be budget neutral
  - Become more generous to residents and create a budget pressure
  - Becomes less generous to residents and create a budget savings.
- 7.3 These options would be discussed in more detail as part of the development of potential new scheme designs.
- 7.4 If it is recommended that a new scheme be consulted on, there would be cost associated with that consultation exercise. Those costs are expected to be contained within existing resources and will be discussed in more detail later in the review process.

## 8 Legal Implications

8.1 Schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, when preparing or revising a CTS scheme the Council must (in the following order):

- consult the major precepting authorities
- publish a draft scheme
- consult such other persons as the Council considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme (such as CTS claimants and council taxpayers)
- approve the scheme by no later than 11 March in the financial year preceding that for which the replacement scheme is to have effect
- publish the approved scheme

## 9 Equality Issues

9.1 A full equalities impact assessment would need to be prepared as part of the development of any new scheme.

## 10 Conclusion

10.1 The current CTS scheme has been in place since 2019. The report presents options for OSCOM to consider to review how the scheme is calculated from the start of the 2025/26 financial year.

<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:	1		
Author:	Carl Whatley and Darren Everett	Ext:	8540 / 8564
File Ref:	N/A		
Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Date:	7 February 2024

## Potential Options for changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme

### Scope of Options

When designing the CTS scheme, there are several options which could achieve a reduction in the resource spent on administration and/or the impact of change in circumstances on Council Tax collection. Below is a summary of some of the options available and their potential advantages and disadvantages.

<b>Scheme Change</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
Option 1: Income Banded Scheme	Income bands are set to determine the percentage of CTS that is awarded to the claimant.  (See example below)	Income bands can be set by the Council as deemed appropriate.  Transparent and clear – simple for claimant to understand.  Simple for officers to administer.  Tried and tested by councils across the country.  Results in fewer changes in Council Tax liability.	Potential for 'cliff edges'. Claimants whose income is one penny higher than an income band could receive significantly less CTS, depending on the width of CTS bands.  Significant change which will require training for officers, changes to system parameters and thorough testing.
Option 2: Increase to the tolerance for changes in circumstances.	The current scheme has an income tolerance of £30 per week. This means that if the cumulative change of income is less than £30, the CTS award is unchanged. This tolerance could be increased by a determined amount.	Only a simple change to system parameters required.  Little training needed for officers.  Fewer changes in Council Tax liability and therefore instalment dates etc.	The concept of income tolerances have been difficult for some customers to understand.  Limited impact. No decrease in the administration of CTS claims. Though the award may not change, any change in circumstances will still need to be reviewed by an officer.

Option 3: Tax Credit-like scheme	The amount of CTS awarded can be based on a claimant's total annual income from the previous financial year. This would result in a single assessment for the current financial year and would not be recalculated during the financial year.	Only one assessment required per year, significantly reducing administration.  Clear criteria which leave little room for error.  Fewer changes in Council Tax liability.	Does not reflect the claimant's current financial circumstances. Could result in residents who are currently in financial hardship being unable to claim support due to having received higher income in previous years, or in claimants receiving support they currently do not require. Potentially not supporting our residents when they need it the most.  Potential for a large number of claims needing to be reviewed at one time.
Option 4: Snapshot Scheme	CTS is calculated as per the existing, complex scheme, but then set for a determined period of time and reviewed periodically, ignoring any changes in circumstances. Reviews could be set, for example, by the date of application or date of birth.	The period of the award can be set depending on risk factors (for example, income or household composition).  More control over the review period than a Tax Credit-like scheme, avoiding bottlenecks of work.  Fewer changes in Council Tax liability.	Does not allow for significant changes in the claimants' circumstances such a pay increase / decrease or starting / losing employment.  Unlikely to significantly reduce the amount of administration required.
Option 5: Maintain current scheme	Broadly in line with the default 2013 scheme. Continue to award CTS based on the factors listed earlier including household	No changes in system parameters.  Scheme is known by officers and claimants.	No reduction in the amount of administration required.  No reduction in the number of changes to Council Tax liability.



	makeup, income and allowances.	Similar to the scheme administered for pension age customers.	
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Example Income Banded Scheme (illustrative only, not costed or based on our caseload)

Income figures are weekly.

<b>Discount Band</b>	<b>CTS Discount</b>	<b>Single person</b>	<b>Single person with one or more children</b>	<b>Couple</b>	<b>Couple with one or more children</b>
<b>Band 1</b>	<b>100%</b>	£0-£100	£0 - £226.00	£0 - £140.00	£0 - £276.00
<b>Band 2</b>	<b>75%</b>	£100.01 - £180.00	£226.01 - £316.00	£140.01- £228.00	£276.01 - £364.00
<b>Band 3</b>	<b>45%</b>	£180.01 - £245.00	£316.01- £381.00	£228.01 - £293.00	£364.01 - £429.00
<b>Band 4</b>	<b>25%</b>	£245.01 - £310.00	£381.01 – £446.00	£293.01 - £358.00	£429.01 - £494.00
	<b>0%</b>	Over £310.00	Over £446.00	Over £358.00	Over £494.00

## ITEM 11

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

Report of the Chairman

#### **Recommended:**

- 1. The Committee is requested to approve the future work programme.**
- 2. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agrees to hold an annual Away Day in 2024.**

#### **SUMMARY:**

- The purpose of this report is to enable members to keep the Committee's future work programme and recommendations update under review.
- The Committee is requested to discuss the options provided and ideas for the Away Day.

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee approves a work programme every year, detailing selected issues that affect Test Valley or its residents. The work programme represents the work of scrutiny throughout the municipal year and is managed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The work programme is a rolling plan of in-depth reviews alongside standing items such as finance and performance.

#### **2 Corporate Objectives and Priorities**

- 2.1 Effective processes are used when selecting and prioritising review topics to ensure meaningful outcomes and tangible improvements. This involves including topics that are of community concern, contribute to the Council's Corporate Priorities, add value to the Council's overall performance, and have defined objectives and clear outcomes.

#### **3 Conclusion and reasons for recommendation**

- 3.1 Effective processes are used when selecting and prioritising review topics to ensure meaningful outcomes and tangible improvements. This involves including topics that are of community concern, contribute to the Council's Corporate Priorities, add value to the Council's overall performance, and have defined objectives and clear outcomes. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme is presented at Annex 1 for review and approval.

- 3.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for examining decisions made by the cabinet as a whole, and individual Portfolio Holders, as well as key decisions delegated to Senior Officers. With each agenda, the Committee receives copies of the Cabinet Work Programme. The Committee can then decide or use pre-scrutiny for forthcoming decisions on the Cabinet Work Programme. The Cabinet Work Programme is attached at Annex 2 for the Committee to consider.
- 3.3 Task and Finish Groups (panels) are small groups of members set up to examine specific issues in detail and report back to the Committee. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Panels update is attached at Annex 3.
- 3.4 For Overview and Scrutiny to have an impact, it is important that recommendations to Cabinet and Council are followed up. At each meeting the Committee considers follow up action on recommendations to Cabinet and Council as part of the review of the Work Programme. Also as part of the Work Programme the Committee considers actions arising from the previous meeting.
- 3.5 The Committee hold an annual away day and it is suggested that an away day is held for 2024 to allow the Committee to consider areas of development and its work programme. The Committee are requested to discuss options and ideas for the Away Day.

<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:	3		
Author:	Councillor I Jeffrey	Ext:	8014
File Ref:	N/A		
Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Date:	7 February 2024

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FEBRUARY 2024**

	*Scrutiny Indicator	Requested by	Purpose of Report (Responsible Officer / Member)
<b><u>7 FEBRUARY 2024</u></b>			
Round table on Anti Social Behaviour	2		To consider the topic of Anti Social Behaviour in terms of the underlying causes, and how partners can work with local communities in addressing the issue <b>(Head of Community and Leisure)</b>
Improvement and sustainability to listed buildings	3		To explore within the planning framework the policies relating to listed buildings (within the context of climate change) and what can be done to support and improve their sustainability <b>(Head of Planning and Building) (20 minutes)</b>
Council Tax Support Scheme	3		To consider the proposals for the review of the Council Tax Support Scheme <b>(Head of Finance and Revenues) (15 minutes)</b>
<b><u>6 MARCH 2024</u></b>			
Round Table on Economic Development Strategy	4		Support development of the Economic Development Strategy with consideration to the different economic characteristics across the borough <b>(Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development)</b>
Presentation from the Recycling and Environmental Services Portfolio Holder	2		To receive a presentation from the Recycling and Environmental Services Portfolio Holder <b>(Councillor Drew, Recycling and Environmental Services) (45 Minutes)</b>
Cost of Living	2		To review the approach taken by the Council and its partners reflecting on lessons learnt and the impact this support has had on people and communities <b>(Head of Community and Leisure/Head of Housing and Environmental Health) (20 minutes)</b>
Update on actions from the Communications Panel	3		To provide a 12 month update on the outcomes of the review that was reported to Committee in April 2023 <b>(Head of Strategy and Innovation) (20 minutes)</b>

# ANNEX 1

	*Scrutiny Indicator	Requested by	Purpose of Report (Responsible Officer / Member)
<b><u>10 APRIL 2024</u></b>			
Round Table on Youth Services/Amenities	3		To explore the provision of services and amenities for young people within local communities <b>(Head of Community and Leisure)</b>
Presentation by the Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships (South) Portfolio Holder	2		To receive a presentation from the Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships (South) Portfolio Holder on the progress and plans for the Romsey Regeneration <b>(Councillor Adams King) (45 minutes)</b>
S106/CIL Presentation	2		To receive a presentation on S106 and CIL money <b>(Head of Planning and Building) (30 minutes)</b>
<b><u>5 JUNE 2024</u></b>			
Chairman's Annual Report	2		To consider the Chairman's Draft Annual report prior to Council <b>(Councillor Jeffrey (20 minutes))</b>
Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults	2		To look at the policy of safeguarding adults and children <b>(Community Engagement Manager) (20 minutes)</b>
<b><u>17 JULY</u></b>			
Test Valley Partnership	2		To provide members of the Committee with an update on the work of the Test Valley Partnership <b>(Head of Strategy and Innovation) (20 minutes)</b>
Corporate Action Plan	2		Presentation by the Leader on the Corporate Action Plan <b>(Councillor North) (45 minutes)</b>

**BRIEFING NOTES**

TOPIC			DATE CIRCULATED
Briefing Note on Affordable Housing <b>(Head of Housing and Environmental Health)</b>			
Briefing Note - Neighbourhood Plans <b>(Head of Planning Policy/Head of Planning and Building and Head of Community and Leisure)</b>			
<b><u>TO BE INCLUDED IN WORK PROGRAMME</u></b>			
Round Table on Climate Action in the Community	4		To explore the role that communities can play in tackling climate change <b>(Head of Planning Policy)</b>
Round Table on the efficiency of recommendations to Cabinet	2		<b>(Head of Strategy and Innovation)</b>

\* Scrutiny Indicator Key:

1 : Holding to Account	2 : Performance Management	3 : Policy Review	4 : Policy Development	5 : External Scrutiny
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# Cabinet Work Programme

February 2024

## Further information

1. This is a formal notice under Regulation 9 of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Meetings and Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012. This edition supersedes all previous editions.
2. Documents submitted to the Cabinet or Cabinet Member(s) for decision will be in the form of a formal report, which if public and non-urgent, will be available for public inspection on this website at least 5 clear working days before the date that the decision is due to be made.
3. Background papers for such reports are listed in this Programme where their identity is known in advance of the report being written.
4. Documents shown will be available from the Democratic Services Manager at Test Valley Borough Council, Beech Hurst, Weyhill Road, Andover, Hants, SP10 3AJ. They can also be contacted at [admin@testvalley.gov.uk](mailto:admin@testvalley.gov.uk).
5. Please note that additional documents relevant to those matters mentioned in the Work Programme may be submitted to the decision maker.
6. Whilst the majority of the Cabinet's business at the meetings listed in this Work Programme will be open to the public and media organisations to attend, this is formal notice under the above regulations that part of the Cabinet meetings listed in this Work Programme may be held in private because the agenda and reports for the meeting will contain exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.
6. To view details of the members of the Council's Cabinet who will be making these decisions, please click the link below:  
[Cabinet Members](#)

## KEY DECISIONS

A key decision is one which is likely

1. to result in the local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates;
- or
2. to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the local authority.

The Council's thresholds are

- |    |   |   |                  |
|----|---|---|------------------|
| a. | Decisions on spending which are within the annual budgets approved by the Council                         | NO THRESHOLD  | NOT KEY DECISION |
| b. | Decisions on cash flow, investments and borrowings.   | NO THRESHOLD  | NOT KEY DECISION |
| c. | Decisions for spending or savings outside the budget, or included in the annual budget with reservations. | SPENDING EXCESS OF £75,000 PER ITEM IS A KEY DECISION |                  |

### **Arrangements for making representations to the cabinet regarding decisions contained within the work programme**

A member of the public may address the Cabinet in accordance with the Public Participation Scheme. Notice must be given to the Democratic Services Manager by noon on the day before the meeting.

Members of the public are welcome to write to the appropriate Head of Service as listed in the Work Programme on any matter where a decision is to be made.



## ANNEX 2

Date of Decision	Item	Key Decision	Decision maker	May include information which is not to be made public*	Documents to be submitted for consideration	Head of Service	Notice of proposed decision first published
28 Feb 2024 Andover	Allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Funds - Community Projects Reserve	Yes	Cabinet	Open	Report of the Planning Portfolio Holder	Head of Planning and Building	4 Sep 2023
28 Feb 2024 Romsey	Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2026	No	Cabinet	Open	Report of the Housing and Environmental Health	Head of Housing and Environmental Health	20 Jan 2023
28 Feb 2024 Andover	2024/25 Revenue Budget	Yes	Cabinet	Open	Report of the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder	Head of Finance and Revenues	18 Jul 2023
28 Feb 2024 Andover	Capital Programme Update	No	Cabinet	Open	Report of the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder	Head of Finance and Revenues	18 Jul 2023
28 Feb 2024 Andover	Capital Strategy	No	Cabinet	Open	Report of the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder	Head of Finance and Revenues	18 Jul 2023
28 Feb 2024 Andover	Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy Statement	No	Cabinet	Open	Report of the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder	Head of Finance and Revenues	18 Jul 2023

**ANNEX 2**

28 Feb 2024 Andover	Equalities Objectives	No	Cabinet	Open	Report of the Democracy and Governance Portfolio Holder	Head of Legal and Democratic	9 Aug 2023
28 Feb 2024 Andover	King John's House Grant 2024/25	No	Cabinet	Open	Report of the Community, Leisure and Tourism (including Diversity and Inclusion) Portfolio Holder	Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development	14 Nov 2023
28 Feb 2024 Andover	Councillor involvement in Strategic Planning	No	Cabinet	Open	Report of the Planning Portfolio Holder	Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development	11 Jan 2024
3 Apr 2024 Romsey	Adoption of the Economic Development Strategy 2024-2029	No	Cabinet	Open	Report of the Leader	Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development	15 Jan 2024
3 Apr 2024	Corporate Action Plan Review	No	Cabinet	Open	Report of the Leader	Head of Strategy and Innovation	18 Jan 2024
2 Oct 2024 Romsey	Gambling Act 2005 - Statement of Licensing Principles	No	Cabinet	Open	Report of the Democracy and Governance Portfolio Holder	Head of Legal and Democratic	15 Jan 2024

Panel	Lead Member	Progress Update	Report back to OSCOM
Budget Panel	Councillor Neal	<p>The budget panel looked at three main areas, which were the mid-year current financial position; the principles included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the draft fees and charges for 2024/25.</p> <p>The mid-year financial reporting has since been reported to Cabinet and the MTFS approved by full Council. Whilst a large variance has been reported in the year to date, it is not surprising that the two biggest contributors are investment income (due to rates increasing faster than expected) and salary costs which are our largest expenditure.</p> <p>Most focus was given to the draft fees and charges that services are proposing for the coming financial year. Three areas were closely scrutinised and they were; pest control; sports pitch bookings; and room hire charges. After careful consideration the panel were in agreement with the proposals that had been put forward by services.</p> <p>The overall conclusion of the panel was that the budget setting work for 2024/25 is progressing well and the next update in January is eagerly awaited.</p> <p>The Panel has not met since the update provided to the Committee at its meeting on 22 November 2023. The next meeting of the Budget Panel will take place on Thursday 11 January.</p>	

Panel	Lead Member	Progress Update	Report back to OSCOM
Regeneration Panel	Councillor Gwynne	<p>The scope was agreed on 22 November 2023 and membership is being compiled.</p> <p>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.</p>	