

Minutes of the **Council**
of the **Test Valley Borough Council**
held in Crosfield Hall, Broadwater Road, Romsey, Hampshire SO51 8GL
on 16 October 2024 at 5.30 pm

Attendance:

Councillor I Jeffrey (Chairman)

Councillor L Lashbrook (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor P Lashbrook
Councillor G Bailey
Councillor I Andersen
Councillor K Brooks
Councillor Z Brooks
Councillor J Budzynski
Councillor P Bundy
Councillor J Burnage
Councillor D Cattell
Councillor G Cooper
Councillor M Cooper
Councillor A Dowden
Councillor C Dowden
Councillor D Drew
Councillor K Dunleavey
Councillor M Flood

Councillor A Ford
Councillor S Gidley
Councillor L Gregori
Councillor N Gwynne
Councillor S Hasselmann
Councillor R Kohli
Councillor M Leech
Councillor N Lodge
Councillor S MacDonald
Councillor J Neal
Councillor K North
Councillor P North
Councillor J Parker
Councillor T Swain
Councillor Dr A Warnes
Councillor S Yalden

221

Prayers

Prayers were led by Reverend Wharton.

222

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N Adams-King, C Borg-Neal, N Daas, C Donnelly, A Gillies, R Hughes, A Johnston, L Matthews and J Sangster.

223

Public Participation

There was no public participation.

224

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

225

Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 24 July 2024 were proposed by Councillor P North and seconded by Councillor Flood.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 24 July 2024 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

226

Mayor's Announcements

The Worshipful The Mayor of Test Valley advised Councillors that with the agreement of both Group Leaders, the Council meeting scheduled to take place on 4 December would be moved back a week to Wednesday 11 December to follow the Mayors Annual Christmas Reception.

The Mayor was saddened to advise Councillors of the passing of Madeline Edmonds MBE, a resident of Test Valley who had been instrumental in the development of the Test Valley Arts Foundation.

227

To receive and adopt Committee reports

227.1

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 – 10 July 2024

General Purposes Committee -15 July 2024

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 17 July 2024

Southern Area Planning Committee – 23 July 2024

Northern Area Planning Committee – 8 August 2024

Southern Area Planning Committee – 13 August 2024

Cabinet – 21 August 2024

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 28 August 2024

Southern Area Planning Committee – 3 September 2024

Audit Committee – 23 September 2024

Cabinet – 2 October 2024

227.2

To adopt recommendations from the following:

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

Cabinet – 21 August 2024

227.2.1 Corporate Financial Monitoring

Resolved:

That the ‘Upper limit for total principal sums invested for over 364 days’ be updated as detailed in paragraph 4.11 of the report.

Cabinet – 2 October 2024

227.2.2 Gambling Act 2005 – Statement of Licensing Principles

Resolved:

- 1. That the revised Statement of Licensing Principles, annexed to the report, be approved.**
- 2. That the Statement of Licensing Principles, annexed to the report, be effective for a three-year period commencing 31 January 2025 subject to it being kept under review and Council making any changes at such times as it considers appropriate.**

227.2.3 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 – 2027/28

Resolved:

- 1. That the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2025/26 to 2027/28 be approved.**
- 2. That the reallocation of earmarked reserves, as set out in paragraph 4.2.9 of the report, be approved.**

228

Questions under Rule 11.1

In relation to the minutes of the Council meeting held on 24 July 2024 minute number 130, Councillor Gwynne noted that work to make the audio streaming more accessible to the public was positive and asked whether the issue that meant the Cabinet meeting on 2 October 2024 could not be streamed had been resolved?

Councillor Phil North responded to confirm that the wi-fi connectivity issue had now been resolved and that whilst the Cabinet meeting had not been live streamed, the meeting had been recorded and was available on the Council's website for anyone who wished to listen to it.

229

Questions under Rule 11.2

There were no questions on notice under Rule 11.2.

230

Revised Contract Standing Orders

Consideration was given to a report of the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder which outlined the Government's decision to delay implementation of the Procurement Act 2023 until 24 February 2025.

Given the benefits of the new Contract Standing Orders (CSOs) agreed by Council at its meeting on 24 July 2024, it was recommended that revised CSOs be brought into effect from 28 October 2024 before the legislation which was referred to in them was in force, with changes to the new CSOs proposed to manage the interim.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Flood and seconded by Councillor P North.

Resolved:

That the updated Contract Standing Orders approved by Council on 24 July 2024 be brought into effect on 28 October 2024, subject to the changes set out in paragraph 6.2 of the Report (Option 4).

231

Notice of Motion - Rule 12

Council considered the following motion moved by Councillor Flood and seconded by Councillor Gwynne.

Councillor Yalden, seconded by Cllr Geoff Cooper, indicated a wish to move an amendment to the motion to add the following words to recommendation three of the motion '*which would include targeted communications, if possible*'. Councillor Flood proposed an alteration to the motion in those terms and the meetings consent of the alteration was signalled without discussion.

Changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance and Protecting Pensioners from Fuel Poverty

Test Valley Borough Council notes:

- The Government's recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of means-tested benefits like Pension Credit.
- The estimated impact of this decision, which Age UK says will mean 2 million pensioners who badly need the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it.
- The significant role the Winter Fuel Payment plays in helping older residents of Test Valley afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health.
- The additional strain this decision will place on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible, further exacerbating their financial hardship.

Test Valley Borough Council believes:

- That the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship.
- That while some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, there are many across Test Valley that sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit who will now lose their allowance.
- The decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures for the most vulnerable, is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and older residents unable to afford the basics of food and warmth.
- That the government's approach fails to consider the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.

Test Valley Borough Council further notes:

- That towards the end of 2022, the Council, in partnership with Unity and Citizens Advice Test Valley, launched a Winter Fuel Payment scheme whereby anyone who received a Winter Fuel Payment, but didn't need it, was able to donate it to help other pensioners in the area struggling with the rising cost of living. The Council match funded donations from members of the public and as a result, was able to support vulnerable pensioners in Test valley with the cost of their bills.
- Over the past two years, in an environment where all pensioners have received a winter fuel payment, the scheme has raised around £9,000 and made in excess of £3,000 worth of payments to nearly 40 households. This winter, with so many households losing their winter payments, we expect many more to need help.

Test Valley Borough Council recommends:

1. That the Council write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who are just above the threshold for Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty.
2. That on behalf of Test Valley Borough Council, the Leader signs the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK and that all borough councillors sign the petition themselves.
3. That a Council-led local communications campaign be developed, which would include targeted communications, if possible, to promote Pension Credit uptake through council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Test Valley are alerted to, and supported in, claiming their entitlement to Pension Credit and to the Winter Fuel Payment.
4. That building on the success of the previous scheme administered by Unity and Citizen's Advice, that the Council provides further funding of £20,000 to enable the continuation of the Test Valley Winter Fuel Payment Scheme for those of pensionable age in the Borough who need assistance with paying their bills. Helping over 200 of the most vulnerable pensioner households in Test Valley.

5. That the Head of Finance and Revenues in consultation with the Leader, the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder and the Leader of the Opposition be authorised to make available an additional £20,000 to top up the scheme if required.

Upon being put to the vote the Motion was carried.

Council considered the following motion moved by Councillor Mark Cooper and seconded by Councillor Parker.

1. The Council believes strongly in a plan led system to provide housing, employment land and appropriate infrastructure and is concerned by the implications contained within the revised NPPF, in particular the inadequate transitional arrangements, and which will lead instead to a speculative development system.
2. The Council thus strongly supports the letter written by the Council Leader and Planning Portfolio holder to the Deputy Prime Minister to express Test Valley Borough Council's concern about the implications of having to halt our draft Borough Local Plan at the Regulation 18 stage 2 as a consequence of being required to move from providing 524 dwellings per year in the next plan period to 921 dwellings per year. This would mean that our housing land supply would fall from over six years to less than three years resulting in developers making speculative planning applications on the land they either own or on which they have options. The location of those applications will thus be decided by the developers and not the local planning authority leading to piecemeal and ad hoc developments.
3. This Council believes that once developers get their planning permissions because of our lack of HLS, they may then land bank their permissions in order to constrict housing supply and thus maintain high prices and their profit margins.
4. Council thus supports:-
 - a) That the housing provision stays at 524 p.a. until such time as Test Valley Borough Council has had time to progress a revised BLP to an advanced stage which allocates sites for the required 921 p.a. thus allowing the Council to retain a plan led system.
 - b) That once a permission is issued there should be a set timeline to bring the houses to market and further that if an agreed timeline is not adhered to, then the land be subject to financial penalties (which may include an annual Site Value Tax) as a disincentive for land-banking and in order for the Council to continue to meet its five year housing land supply.
 - c) Notes that the creation of a financial disincentive for land-banking will require legislation at a national level and requests that the Council writes to the appropriate Ministers urging that Parliamentary time be given to facilitate housing delivery.

Upon being put to the vote the Motion was carried.

(The meeting terminated at 6.36 pm)