

## OSCOM: CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

### Introduction

The last twelve months have been immensely productive for Test Valley Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. May 2019 saw the Borough Council elections and a number of new members joining the committee. Those new members have settled in very well and have made a very positive contribution to the business of the committee.

We came into 2019 with high praise from the Local Government Association's Peer Challenge Review team. The way in which the Committee collectively plan and prioritises its work programme through its away day, had particularly impressed the team. They were also very complimentary about the focus that gives to our work and resultant impact that OSCOM has had on the way the Council operates. Finally they indicated that collaborative way in which the Committee worked with Cabinet was a model of good practice.

The Committee used this strong platform to become involved in one of the largest and most important reviews in its history. The Committee has been central to the Council's response to the Climate Change Emergency. We played a significant role in scoping, co-ordinating and conducting the research involved. It was an extensive piece of work that has helped create a draft Action Plan for the Council to consider. I would like to thank all of the Members who took such an active part in this work, some of whom were non OSCOM members. I would like to thank the Council for having the foresight to invite OSCOM to lead this important piece of work.

### Away Day

The OSCOM Away Day is central to the operating model of the committee. It is the arena in which we generate ideas and start the process of prioritising reviews for the forthcoming year. In addition it gives us the time and space, outside of the formal committee arena, to plan and undertake our learning and development.

This year's Away Day was held on 13 July 2019 at Longstock Village Hall. The day included a development session led by the Policy Manager on the issues that helped shape the Corporate Plan and key facts about TVBC. This provided a platform for the Committee to hold a workshop on the potential areas for inclusion in the annual work programme.

We also took the opportunity to review our working processes and looked at areas which could be further developed. We concluded with a session for Members to look at their own individual development needs and those of the Committee as a whole.

As a result, several one-day courses were undertaken by Members at the Centre for Public Scrutiny. Additionally, the results provided the basis for some of the "roundtable" sessions held during the year.

## Round Table discussions and Briefing Notes

Seven Round Table discussions have been held during the year including:

Draft Corporate Action Plan  
Community Planning with Rural Emphasis  
Communications  
Housing Strategy  
Youth provision  
Climate Emergency  
Romsey Future

Briefing Notes continue to be circulated to OSCOM Members including a briefing note on Risk Management with further briefings scheduled on affordable housing, Test Valley Partnership Annual Review and the yearly report on Risk Management.

## Items and Meetings

There have been 11 meetings held since the last Chairman's Annual Report, and 19 items of business discussed. A number of items have been considered by OSCOM on their way to Cabinet and Council including Council Tax Support Scheme the Corporate Plan and Climate Emergency Action Plan.

Overview and Scrutiny also reviewed the Corporate Action Plan 2015-19 and agreed to endorse the overall progress made during the period of the last Corporate Plan 2015-19.

## Presentations

A number of presentations were received during the year from both internal and external presenters, including:

- Councillor Ward, the then Portfolio Holder for Community and Leisure gave a presentation on his Portfolio. He covered the scope and organisation of the Portfolio, budget, corporate aims, key achievements from the 2017/18 Service Plan, how success is measured and future challenges.
- Councillor Drew, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Tourism explained that his Portfolio was responsible for a wide range of services and initiatives to support business, especially new and small enterprises and skills. This included town centres, tourism, manufacturing and rural businesses in particular.
- Councillor Bundy, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health reported that his Portfolio covered Housing, Environmental Health, staff structure, service budget, Corporate Plan links, action plan links, measuring success, examples of KPIs, key challenges and risks, consultation, changes and future plans.

- Councillor Adams King, Portfolio Holder for Planning covered Transport and Engineering, Planning and Building and Planning Policy areas. The presentation covered service functions, staff structure, Corporate Plan and Corporate Action Plan links, measuring success and Service budgets, challenges and risks, changes and future plans.

## Panels

As well as the permanent OSCOM Panels of the **Budget Panel** (led by Councillor Brooks) and the **Audit Panel** (led by Councillor Borg Neal), the following temporary Task and Finish Panels have been progressed:

**Armed Forces Covenant** The Panel is being led by Councillor Borg Neal and is reviewing what has worked well within the Covenant and what opportunities there are in the future to continue to strengthen the strong partnerships between the Council and the military community. Councillor Borg-Neal has liaised with relevant organisations including 11 Brigade's Army Civilian Liaison Officer.

**Future of Health Provision in Andover and Romsey** The panel was led by Councillor Baverstock and the aim of the panel was to review health provision in Romsey and Andover including the hospitals, allied services such as surgeries, hubs and their opening hours, position with other hospitals, Southern Health, planning provision with the demand for new housing/push from central government and the anticipated increase in population.

Consultation was carried out with both the Hampshire Hospital NHS, Family Clinical Support Service, Mid Hampshire and NHS West Hampshire CCG to get a better level of understanding of the current and future direction of the various organisations which make up the 'NHS family'. The panel also looked at establishing an evidenced approach to forecasting future demand for facilities and investigating the processes and funding which are available to deliver future improvements. The parking standards for health facilities was also reviewed. The panel also undertook to meet with Southern Health to learn their future plans for Romsey hospital and to look at the role of pharmacists.

**Council Tax Support Scheme** Options for changes to the Council's CTS scheme were debated by the OSCOM panel in August 2019. The panel's recommendations were agreed by OSCOM on 5 September and reported to Cabinet on 11 September. A public consultation had taken place on those options and the results of that consultation exercise were considered by the panel. The four options consulted on were

- Set a fixed reduction for non-dependants living in a property
- Restrict the maximum eligible capital level to £6,000
- Remove Second Adult Rebate (sometimes known as Alternate Maximum Council Tax Reduction) from the Council's scheme
- Remove Extended Payments from the Council's scheme

Having considered the results of the public consultation exercise, the panel recommended that the four proposals were all implemented with effect from 1 April 2020. Cabinet agreed the recommendations on 18 December 2019 and this was agreed at Council on 29 January 2020.

**Climate Emergency Working Group** Following the resolution of Council on 4 September 2019 Overview and Scrutiny set up a working party to '*draw together existing work of the Council in reducing the impacts of climate change and develop an action plan that identifies the steps the Council can take to achieve carbon neutrality as quickly as possible*' within a 6 month period. The working group also had a role in informing the Council in terms of working with communities and partners.

7 work streams were identified to aid in focusing progress of the working group around various themes that can influence carbon neutrality of both the organisation, and the Borough as a whole. All members, not just those on OSCOM, had the opportunity to be part of the work streams. They, along with officers, provided their own experiences and knowledge and explored existing practices and future possibilities. The officer involvement was multi-disciplinary and helped to identify processes and projects already implemented by the Council to reduce emissions. This confirmed that the Council was not 'starting from scratch' but had begun the journey.

The outputs of the work streams were brought together to inform the preparation of draft recommendations to Council. The work streams were;

- Digital and Smart Working
- Working with our Business and Communities
- Premises and Asset Management
- Reducing, Reusing and Recycling
- Transport, Fleet and Plant
- Enhancing the Natural Environment
- Infrastructure and the Built Environment

In the relatively short window, OSCOM had been able to propose a draft action plan which will move the Council towards being a carbon neutral organisation. The actions plan set out seven themes. Each work stream identified a series of actions for both implementation and further investigation. OSCOM agreed the action plan at its meeting on 18 March 2020 for onward submission to Council.

### Conclusion

It has been an exceptional year for OSCOM and I wish to commend this report to Council. I would like to thank all of the Committee members for their continued support to both myself and the former Chairman, Councillor Ian Jeffery. The Panel leads have done the 'heavy lifting' in driving forward the Committee's work programme and deserve particular praise.

I would like to give my thanks to all of the officers who have contributed to our work over the year. The officers involved in the Climate Change worked deserve huge credit. Of particular note were the exceptional efforts of Karen Eastley and Graham Smith. Finally, I would like to thank Caroline Lovelock and Andy Ferrier for their continued support and guidance.

Zilliah Brooks  
Chairman  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee