

# **Corporate plan 2023-27**

**A Place for Everyone – Supporting our Communities to Thrive**

# Welcome and introduction

## ANNEX 1

*A Place for Everyone – Supporting our Communities to Thrive*, reflects our passion and commitment to work with our communities that celebrates their uniqueness, sense of belonging and the ambitions people have for the places where they live. We have invested significantly over the last decade to work in an ever more place-based way, reflecting that one size does not fit all, and that we must continue to develop a deep understanding of what matters most to local communities in order to help shape our strategic priorities.

The four-year timeframe of this plan provides the stability for us to look ahead and put our priorities into action over a longer period of time. The plan is underpinned by the collaborative approach we have taken in developing it: evidence-led, grounded in cutting-edge community engagement, and with the involvement of our councillors throughout the process. This has provided us with a clear focus and consensus on where we can make our greatest impact. Alongside our financial stability and organisational resilience, it means that we have the capability to deliver long-lasting benefits for our communities.

It is also important that, as an organisation, we can respond and adapt to new challenges, whilst remaining true to our values, that lay the foundation for how we work. The last four years have brought into sharp focus how unprecedented global events can have a real impact within communities at the most local level. The pandemic, global economic conditions leading to a cost-of-living crisis, refugee crises and the effects of climate change are all presenting challenges that will continue to factor in the years ahead. Experience to date, however, shows that we can be optimistic about how we play our part in addressing the challenges we all face. Our commitment to community resilience, partnership working and innovation, mean we can adapt and bring resources together where and when they are needed most.

Our previous plan, 'Growing our potential', was about how we could develop our approach to work beyond the organisation as a community leader. *A Place for Everyone – Supporting our Communities to Thrive*, is about taking the next important step forward. It is about making the wider opportunities for our communities a reality, progressing long-term strategic projects such as the regeneration of town centres and our approach to climate change, and being able to influence our partners so that together we can deliver the best outcomes and quality of life across Test Valley.

To achieve this, we are proud to announce our five new strategic priorities: sustainability, connection, prosperity, inclusion, and environment and, within the context of this plan, share what they mean not only for the council, but for our residents and communities across Test Valley.

## Our priorities and approach

Based on the results of our Community Engagement with residents from across the borough, this Corporate Plan outlines five strategic priorities that will provide the focus for our activities over the next four years.

As part of our ongoing commitment to work in a way that recognises the varying needs of our borough communities, we will tailor our approach to where needed, to make sure it is relevant and appropriate.



### **1. A clear vision**

We work collaboratively, to deliver high quality services that support all communities in Test Valley to thrive.

### **2. Our values, that lay the foundation for how we work**

We are committed to high standards in everything we do, which shapes our behaviours and builds trust with our residents.

Our five values are:

- Accountability, Inclusion, Empowerment, Integrity, Ambition

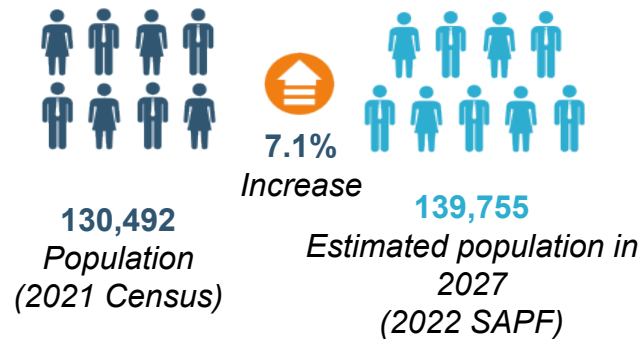
### **3. Respect for democracy and making sure everyone is included**

Our councillors, elected by local people, understand the needs and expectations of the communities they represent, which informs our actions and helps us make balanced decisions.

### **4. A community focus based on good evidence**

Our engagement with the communities we serve is central to the way we work. Using a range of techniques to recognise their strengths, aspirations and priorities provides us with the data and evidence to fully understand the issues and how best we can support them.

- **Population**



- **More than 70 languages** spoken across the borough
- **Age:** 20% under 18, 25% 18-39, 34% 40-64, 21% 65 and over
- **54,708 households** (Detached homes – 38%, semi-detached – 27%, terraced - 22%, flats – 11%, other – 2%)
- **59,400 jobs** in Test Valley (census 2021 data) across a range of industries and major employers.
- **Four local nature reserves**
- **More than 6,000 veterans** living in the borough who have served either in regular or reserve armed forces

**Andover** – located in northern Test Valley, 39% of the borough's population lives in Andover

**Rural** – 28% of our population live in villages and other settlements right across the borough

**Romsey** – a historic market town in the south of the borough, 17% of the borough's population live in Romsey and its surrounding area

**Chilworth, Nursling & Rownhams, North Baddesley and Valley Park** – 16% of our population lives in these urban areas outside Romsey, in the south-east of the borough

## About Test Valley Borough Council *(to be developed into info-graphics)*

## ANNEX 1

- Collects over **2.9 million waste and recycling bins** from households across the borough each year
- Maintains and manages **more than 90 public open spaces** for residents to enjoy recreation and sport – three with the prized **Green Flag award**
- **20 electoral wards and 43 councillors**
- **528 employees**
- **Supports local community groups** and organisations (approx. £4 million spent between 2019 and 2023)
- **Works with local groups** like parish councils to make sure our communities can cope with **emergencies like flooding and pandemics**
- Management and funding of **The Lights theatre in Andover** – over 100 professional shows and **100,000 visitors** each year.

# How we developed this plan – Community Engagement

## ANNEX 1

Community engagement is at the heart of how we work. It provides us with a rich understanding of what matters most to our residents and helps us gain a unique insight into community aspirations. This includes using this approach as a key part of developing our corporate plan.

Our approach to this piece of public engagement was delivered over two phases:

### Phase one: Survey

We invited residents to express their views on several themes, that focussed on services and products provided by the council, and on how we can play a role in helping to improve residents' quality of life.

Councillors and council staff visited a range of community events and markets as well as village and school fetes, so that residents could meet them in person and share their thoughts. We engaged with over **1,500 people**. **1,458** completed the survey.

### Phase two: Deliberative engagement

Survey results provide a strong evidence base of headline issues. To delve deeper into the survey responses and get underneath the issues raised, we worked with the Involve Foundation to host a series of deliberative workshops during November 2022. These involved around 100 residents (approximately 35 at each of four events) reflecting the demographic make-up of residents in the borough. At the events we invited residents to discuss: ***What makes communities work well as thriving places, where people can live fulfilled lives?***, and, ***What role should the council be playing to help make this a reality in Test Valley?***

Through facilitated debate, sharing their lived experience and considering a range of evidence (including the survey results), participants developed 12 statements. These were developed to help us consider where we can add value as we set our strategic priorities for the next four years and beyond. This feedback, combined with the survey results and more focused discussions, provided a robust evidence base and enabled extensive discussion and analysis with councillors and staff, to create the strategic priorities that are in this plan.

# What makes communities work well as thriving places, where people can live fulfilled lives?

ANNEX 1

What role should the council be playing to make this a reality in Test Valley?

## A summary of what our residents said:

### **Building thriving communities, so that people want to stay living in the area.**

#### **A sense of belonging, where they are invited to participate and be involved in playing their part in their communities.**

- Support volunteering and make it easier for people to take part. Build upon the experience of the pandemic where a new community spirit was created and not to let this fade away
- Be accessible and reach out to the community. Enable residents to become more involved in the decisions that affect them, by sharing a common vision and goals within their community
- Focus on improving the local economy, recognising that transport and infrastructure are an issue, particularly in rural areas.

### **Making the most of existing facilities that bring the community together, where people can meet.**

- Make sure that town centres, as central locations, are accessible, safe, attractive and offer a diverse and affordable programme of events, which engage and appeal to all ages
- Make sure that community facilities are affordable and accessible, and offer usable, well-maintained, multi-purpose spaces
- Provide clear communication and information for residents and groups about what is available.

### **Protecting local wildlife and nature for the future, whilst also providing access to local green spaces and parks:**

- Conserve green spaces and nature for future generations, getting the right balance between access and protection
- Value outdoor spaces as places to exercise, look after mental wellbeing and to meet others
- Live in an environmentally-responsible way, to make sure that we tackle the climate emergency and reduce emissions.

### **Valuing and celebrating inclusivity and diversity, creating a welcoming environment for people to take part in and value as a community:**

- Provide engagement opportunities that offer a voice for all and encourage cohesion, belonging, shared values and good communication - so that people know what is happening in their community
- Promote opportunities to celebrate cultural diversity with communities, using arts and cultural programmes
- Value opportunities that bring people together to meet, such as events, cafes and community groups.

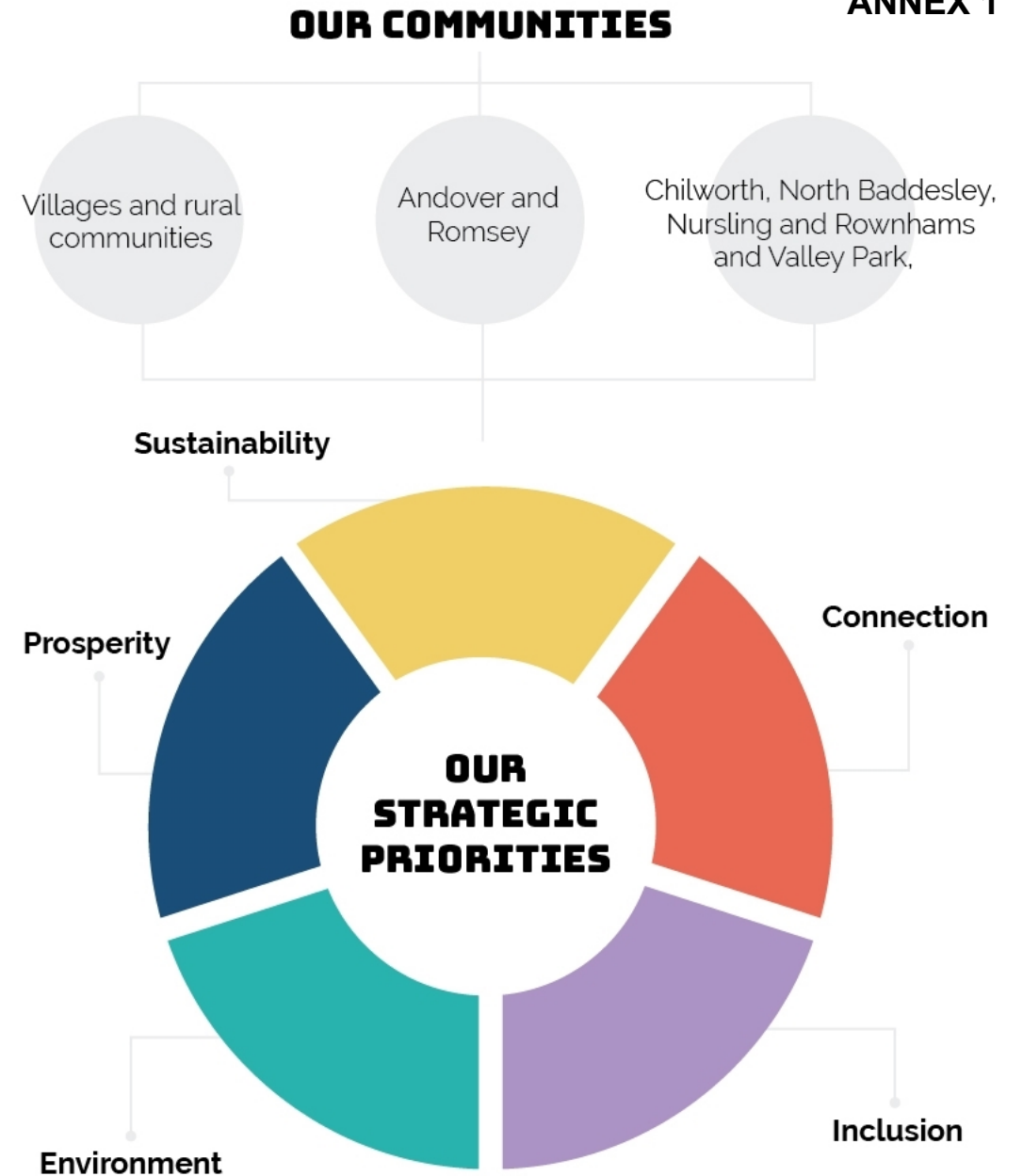


# Our priorities and approach

Informed by the collaborative approach to developing this Corporate Plan: evidence-led, grounded in cutting-edge community engagement, and with the involvement of our councillors throughout the process, this has provided us with a clear focus on where we can make our greatest impact.

The Corporate Plan outlines our five strategic priorities that will provide the focus for our activities over the next four years.

As part of our ongoing commitment to work in a way that recognises the varying needs of our borough communities, we will tailor our approach to where needed, to make sure it is relevant and appropriate.





## **Delivering lasting benefits for our communities**

Delivering long-lasting benefits for our communities is what matters most. We will put sustainability and resilience at the centre of how we deliver our services, our major projects and how we work with communities, to help meet their varying needs. This requires taking a long-term view and making sure that the council invests its energy, skills and resources in the right way, to achieve our vision.

As we continue to make progress, we must make sure that our plans are financially viable, and that we continuously develop as an organisation in order to deliver results in a complex environment.



## **Building upon the identity, strengths and ambitions of our communities**

Test Valley is a borough made up of many different communities, each with their own unique identity, strengths and challenges. We recognise how important this is to residents and the pride they have in their communities – both in terms of where they live, but also around shared interests and the many connections that bring people together. Creating opportunities to develop new connections where people feel welcome and are able to share their experiences, is important to local people and enables communities to thrive as vibrant places.

Building on our track record of working with communities, we will continue to harness the skills and strengths that exist, so that people can contribute and play an active role in making things happen. This will be at the heart of how we work strategically as an organisation, enabling communities to influence our understanding of what matters, and providing a focus on how we can achieve the greatest impact through the resources we have available.

We will continue to support our councillors in their democratic role as community champions working through the Andover Vision and Romsey Future partnerships and in other areas, alongside parish councils and other locally based organisations.



## Working together to create opportunities for our communities

Working with communities in an inclusive way, that makes a real difference to people's lives, is at the heart of supporting them to thrive. This means making sure that different perspectives, experiences and ideas can be heard and understood. Our approach is not about treating everyone the same, it is about making sure that access to opportunity celebrates the diversity within Test Valley. Inequalities can often be hidden. Enabling the lived experience of people to be shared, where their voices would otherwise go unheard, is a powerful force for good. This approach is central to our strategic decision-making in order to meet the needs of all our communities, both now and in the future.

We will champion the needs of communities with a clear aim to deliver impactful outcomes for all. Access to future services will mean different things to different people, so we will bring an inclusive approach to service design and delivery as we continue to innovate. This will also play an important part in the renewal of our Equality Objectives. When working with our most vulnerable residents and dealing with complex issues such as tackling homelessness, isolation, and poor health, we will do this by working collaboratively with partners to tackle wider underlying inequalities that exist within communities.

Our commitment to inclusion is a key focus of our organisational development, ensuring that we have the right skills, behaviours and values to deliver in the best way possible.



## **Economic growth that impacts positively on our communities**

In a borough where a range of economic opportunities and challenges exist, we will take an approach that is aligned to the current and future needs of the population, to make sure that the benefits of growth impact positively on all of our communities.

Our focus will be to support economic growth and prosperity through securing the right land and infrastructure, at the right scale, to deliver homes, employment and connectivity, and enable communities to fulfil their aspirations.

We will continue to promote economic development by taking opportunities that support local enterprise and business, develop skills, attract new jobs and encourage innovation. We will use our influence through existing strategic policies such as the Local Plan, our new economic development strategy and our wider partnerships sub-regionally, to promote the borough, secure inward investment and develop our existing businesses.



## A greener borough for our communities

The natural environment is for everyone to enjoy. This, and tackling climate change, really matters to the people of Test Valley.

We recognise that we have an important community leadership role to play, in supporting our communities to adapt to the challenges presented by climate change. We will take positive action to become a carbon neutral organisation as soon as possible through delivery of our Climate Emergency Action Plan. This will include creating opportunities to innovate in how we deliver our services – which will support more environmentally-friendly working practices, increase energy efficiency within our buildings and make the council's vehicle fleet more eco-friendly. We will also enable residents to recycle a greater range of materials from the kerbside, including food waste.


We will work with communities and businesses to help Test Valley become a greener borough, to improve the quality of life for all our residents. We will open up opportunities for communities to play their part in this, by offering access to community funding, advice and support, for projects that will help them to decarbonise.

We will take opportunities to further invest in and nurture the natural environment and biodiversity across Test Valley, to enhance and protect our fantastic local environment. This will include delivering a new local nature strategy and continuing to invest in a network of accessible green spaces and facilities that everyone can enjoy – be it for nature, recreation and sport, and events – to improve the quality of life for residents both now and in the future.

# Delivering our priorities through a community focus

We have invested significantly over the last decade to work in an ever more place-based way, reflecting that one size does not fit all, and that we must continue to develop a deep understanding of what matters most to local communities in order to be able to fully support them.

This plan renews our long-standing commitment to empower local communities through the way the we work. The plan sets out how the council will deliver our priorities through a community focus so that they can be tailored to make sure they are relevant and appropriate to local circumstances. The framework used to describe this in the corporate plan is through the lens of a number of communities across the borough:



Villages and rural  
communities

Andover and  
Romsey

Chilworth, North Baddesley,  
Nursling and Rownhams  
and Valley Park,

# Villages and Rural Communities

## Key Facts:

- Around a quarter of our population lives in rural communities across the borough. These are made up of many separate villages and settlements.
- From Vernham Dean in the north to Wellow in the south, Barton Stacey in the East to Shipton Bellinger in the west; these are many individual communities with their own aspirations, ambitions and priorities.
- The largest rural parish is Wellow, which has around 3,400 residents, followed by Over Wallop with 2,400. However, most rural parishes have a population of less than 1000 people.
- Of the borough's rural population, around one in four people is retired (above average), and almost twenty percent of the borough's rural residents are under eighteen.
- Around three-quarters of Test Valley's rural population own their own homes.



# Villages and Rural Communities

## ANNEX 1



### What we will do over the next four years and beyond:

- Work with village and rural communities to identify and plan for their future priorities, building upon their strengths, connections and sense of pride in the place where they live. We will offer community planning support and help communities access funding to deliver on their local priorities, where there is clear evidence of need.
- Support villages and rural communities to plan for their future development and housing needs, to ensure the long-term sustainability of their communities. We will develop an inclusive approach to this, so that the needs of all are understood through neighbourhood plans and the ongoing development of our Local Plan.
- Work with local people and partners to build better connectedness and resilience, that enable people to live well, and to mitigate the impacts of rural isolation. We will work with rural communities and with partners to grow volunteering capacity, improve access to services and support communities to develop their local networks.
- Champion the needs of our village and rural communities within the wider region, to make sure that opportunities for future investment in infrastructure, connectivity and economic development reflect the unique and important role that rural communities play. We will proactively support rural economic development, in order to deliver prosperity, and enable communities to thrive by supporting rural businesses, skills development and helping to unlock future investment.
- Explore opportunities to work with villages and rural communities on important environmental projects such as habitat restoration. We will also continue to invest in and provide access to spaces for recreation and sport that are so important for residents' wellbeing.

# Andover and Romsey

## ANNEX 1



Andover and  
Romsey

### Key Facts:

- Over half of the borough's population live in its two main towns – Andover and Romsey.
- Located in the north of the borough, Andover is the larger of the towns. With a population over 50,000, many people who live in the town also work there too. Andover's population has grown in recent years; the development of new communities at Augusta Park, Picket Twenty and Picket Piece, to the town's east and north, have contributed to this.
- Andover's town centre includes the historic St Mary's Church and Guildhall, a state of the art leisure centre, Andover College, the Lights Theatre and a number of shops and businesses.
- The River Anton flows through the town's heart with places like Rooksbury Mill, Anton Lakes and Ladies Walk providing places for local residents to enjoy the great outdoors.
- Romsey is situated in the south of the borough and is home to over 20,000 people.
- Centred on its historic town centre, Romsey is a thriving market town with highlights including Romsey Abbey, War Memorial Park and a large number of independent retailers.
- With the River Test running through its heart, Romsey also is home to Fishlake Meadows, a wetland nature reserve. There are also numerous sports facilities in and around the town including Romsey Rapids, Romsey Sports Centre and Ganger Farm Sports Park.
- Both towns have a good range of facilities and services for their residents and those living in surrounding areas.

# Andover and Romsey

## ANNEX 1



### What we will do over the next four years and beyond:

- Work proactively with key partners to enhance the economic, social and cultural prosperity of both Andover and Romsey. We will promote our towns as great places to visit that are welcoming, safe and attractive, in a way that draws upon their strengths and identities as communities.
- Deliver projects that bring forward the regeneration of Andover town centre and South of Romsey Town Centre, as set out in the community-led masterplans for each of these towns. This will involve playing our part to support the changing nature of town centres and investing in new public realm, cultural initiatives and events, alongside major redevelopment schemes.
- Focus on meeting future needs that result from changing and growing populations within both Andover and Romsey. Through our strategic plans we will make sure that a range of homes, including affordable, and related infrastructure, is provided. Access to the services people need, both now and in the future, will be planned for, delivered, and tailored to the needs of each town.
- Work creatively with Andover Vision and Romsey Future, as the community partnerships for these towns, to support the delivery of their local strategies and action plans. We will help strengthen connections across local communities and provide the catalyst for working together to deliver priorities that are shaped by local people. This will include finding opportunities to support improved health and wellbeing, so that people can live well within their communities for longer, make the most of the assets and facilities within the towns, support local businesses to thrive and play their part in addressing climate change.
- Continue to invest in the range of open and accessible green spaces that exist within both Andover and Romsey, recognising the important benefits to wellbeing they provide for local communities. We will enable people to take part in sport and recreation opportunities within their local community and create links to access the countryside, so that people can enjoy the benefits of the natural environment in a sensitive and sustainable way.

# Chilworth, North Baddesley, Nursling and Rownhams, and Valley Park

## ANNEX 1

Chilworth, North Baddesley,  
Nursling and Rownhams  
and Valley Park,

### Key Facts:

- Chilworth, North Baddesley, Nursling and Rownhams, and Valley Park are the other main communities in the borough where people live. Each is distinct though they are all located in the south-east of the borough.
- Chilworth is home to just over 1,000 residents. Nursling and Rownhams is home to almost 6,000 people. Both are located on the edge of Southampton, close to the M27 and M3 motorways.
- Valley Park meanwhile has a population of 7,000 and is on the edge of Chandlers Ford and Eastleigh, surrounded by the historic Valley Park Woodlands.
- North Baddesley has 7,000 residents and is close to Romsey.
- Many of the people who live in these areas travel out of the borough to work. Conversely, the University of Southampton Science Park is a hub that has drawn in business and innovation into this part of the borough

# Chilworth, North Baddesley, Nursling and Rownhams, and Valley Park

ANNEX 1



## What we will do over the next four years and beyond:

- Work with residents and the parish councils in Chilworth, North Baddesley, Nursling and Rownhams, and Valley Park to identify and plan for their future priorities, and take forward community initiatives. This process will draw upon their unique identities, strengths and connections to other places.
- Promote the important economic role this part of the borough plays as an area for the inward investment of high-tech and science-based companies. We will work closely with the University of Southampton Science Park, in taking forward its future aspirations and making sure that good links with the local community are forged.
- Work collaboratively with partners across south Hampshire and Southampton, to promote the wider area of southern test valley as a culture and tourism destination, in order to enhance the prosperity of the area.
- Work with relevant partners to deliver green infrastructure, to make sure that local nature reserves continue to exist as important and much-loved assets for these communities across southern Test Valley. This will deliver ongoing long-term benefits to health, well-being and the ecology of the area.

# Next steps and measuring our progress

## ANNEX 1

The Corporate Plan sets out our priorities, providing the direction and focus for our activities and guiding the allocation of resources over the next four years. It also outlines the impact we hope to make as a result of our actions, so that we can demonstrate to residents how we are working towards our vision.

The Corporate Plan is underpinned by the Corporate Action Plan (CAP) which runs for the lifetime of the plan and is updated annually. This shows, in detail, how we intend to make progress and focuses on the specific projects we will take forward against each of the priorities.

The Cabinet reviews the performance of the CAP on an annual basis. This enables the active performance management of the CAP and ensure that the Council is allocating resource in the most effective way. Each year, the Leader of the Council will make a presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to report on progress made during the year. This will form the basis of an annual update report and will be published on the Council's website.

We monitor our progress against a range of indicators, as part of a broad suite of operational management tools. This helps us to ensure that the things that matter most to residents are being delivered in an efficient and effective way.

In addition, each of our services produces an annual Service Plan which describes the things they do and how they contribute to the Corporate Plan priorities.

## Further reading

- To read the full Involve report, which details how our deliberative engagement with residents was carried out, go to: *(link and short URL to be added)*
- For updates on news, events and our consultations etc, join our mailing list: [testvalley.gov.uk/emails](https://testvalley.gov.uk/emails)
- Visit our website for more information on what we do, and to read documents like our Climate Emergency Action Plan: [testvalley.gov.uk](https://testvalley.gov.uk)

You can also follow us on:

**Facebook** Test Valley Borough Council

**Twitter** @TestValleyBC

**Instagram** @TestValleyBoroughCouncil

**LinkedIn** Test Valley Borough Council