

Minutes of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
of the **Test Valley Borough Council**
held in The Annexe, Crosfield Hall, Broadwater Road, Romsey
on 19 July 2023 at 5.30 pm

Attendance:

Councillor J Neal (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor K Brooks

Councillor D Cattell

Councillor S Gidley

Councillor A Gillies

Councillor L Gregori

Councillor N Gwynne

Councillor S Hasselmann

Councillor R Hughes

Councillor M Leech

Councillor S MacDonald

Councillor L Matthews

Councillor J Parker

Councillor A Warnes

Councillor S Yalden

Also in attendance

Councillor I Andersen

Councillor M Flood

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Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Bailey, Borg Neal and Jeffrey.

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Public Participation

There was no public participation.

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Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

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Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

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Minutes

Councillor Gwynne referred to the Cost of Living minute and asked about the procedure for obtaining additional grant funding. The Head of Strategy and Innovation will investigate and let the Committee know.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 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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Budget Panel Update

Councillor Neal, Lead Member for the Budget Panel gave an overview of the Budget Panel's meeting held on 3 July 2023.

The Panel reviewed three areas;

- revenue outturn position for 2022/23, including an analysis of the main reasons for budget variances in the year.
- summary of the Council's draft reserves position as at 31 March 2023 and the forecast for future use of those reserves
- set the scene for the budget setting process for 2024/25 and development of the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy, together with the most significant factors that will affect the budget setting

Councillor Parker updated the Committee on the amount the Council has in reserves. The Panel was concerned about the budget gap in 2025/26 if the Government resets the Business Rates and would like to hear more about the plans that are in place to address this

The next Budget Panel will be held on 2 October 2023 where the fees and charges will be discussed.

97

Test Valley Partnership

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Strategy and Innovation which provided a summary of key areas of work for the Partnership as well as their progress and continued focus. The Partnership continues to be an important mechanism in which to bring organisations together to focus on what is most important to communities across the Borough.

The Test Valley Partnership brings together decision makers across the borough to work together for the benefit of our communities. The Partnership strives to have a good understanding of the place and its communities, being able to respond to needs in a co-ordinated and organised way by sharing skills, resources and information. Specifically focussing on addressing areas affecting the quality of life for residents in Test Valley

The Partnership was first established in 2002. This was in line with government guidance following the Local Government Act 2000, which placed a duty on local authorities to prepare a community strategy with a strategic partnership being a recommended vehicle in which to do this. This duty was later repealed in 2015 as part of the Deregulation Act.

The Head of Strategy and Innovation presented some examples on how partners of the Test Valley Partnership are working together practically to take forward key strategic issues. The key areas of work of the Partnership are;

- Better Mental Health
- Community Resilience
- Cost of Living
- Civilian Military Forum
- Community Safety

Whilst there is no requirement for partners to engage (apart from those who are required to do so regarding specific community safety matters), the real value is on how the strength of the network builds trust which then enables a collective focus and use of resources to follow. Over recent years, as set out in the report, the Partnership has been able to focus on some of the most challenging issues faced by communities and as a result has been able to make a positive impact and deliver tangible benefits.

Members raised questions and discussed;

- The Council plays a leadership role within the Partnership and will engage with relevant partners where necessary.
- Better communication on the outcomes of the Test Valley Partnership through the Councillors' Information Bulletin.
- The membership of the Partnership is reviewed on a regular basis.
- Decision makers from each organisation are encouraged to attend if not then representatives would need to take the message back.
- Resources for the Partnership.
- Limited information about the Partnership on the website.
- The Test Valley Partnership Newsletter should be sent to all members.
- Action plan, targets and dates.
- Value and benefits of the Partnership.
- The importance of networking.
- Priorities.
- Lessons learnt.

Resolved:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes and endorses the work of the Test Valley Partnership.

98 Programme of Work for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Members discussed the Work Programme and the Head of Strategy and Innovation outlined the format of the forthcoming Away Day.

Resolved:

That the work programme be reviewed and approved.

(The meeting terminated at 6.30 pm)