

Minutes of the Council
of the Test Valley Borough Council
held in Main Hall, Crosfield Hall, Broadwater Road, Romsey
on Wednesday, 17 January 2024 at 5.30 pm

Attendance:

Councillor P Lashbrook (Chairman) **Councillor G Bailey (Vice-Chairman)**

Councillor N Adams-King
Councillor I Andersen
Councillor C Borg-Neal
Councillor Z Brooks
Councillor J Budzynski
Councillor P Bundy
Councillor J Burnage
Councillor D Cattell
Councillor G Cooper
Councillor M Cooper
Councillor C Donnelly
Councillor A Dowden
Councillor C Dowden
Councillor D Drew
Councillor K Dunleavey
Councillor M Flood
Councillor A Ford
Councillor S Gidley
Councillor A Gillies

Councillor L Gregori
Councillor N Gwynne
Councillor I Jeffrey
Councillor A Johnston
Councillor R Kohli
Councillor L Lashbrook
Councillor M Leech
Councillor N Lodge
Councillor S MacDonald
Councillor L Matthews
Councillor J Neal
Councillor K North
Councillor P North
Councillor J Parker
Councillor J Sangster
Councillor T Swain
Councillor A Warnes
Councillor S Yalden

396

Prayers

Prayers were led by the Chief Executive.

397

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Brooks, N Daas, S Hasselmann and R Hughes.

398

Public Participation

Mr Burley had registered to speak in accordance with the Council's Public Participation Scheme under item 13 – Notice of Motion – Rule 12.

399

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Gidley wished it to be noted that she was a publicly elected governor for the University of Southampton Hospital and that her son worked at Winchester Hospital; however, she was satisfied that this did not represent an interest in Motion 1 under agenda item 13; Notice of Motion – Rule 12.

Councillor Linda Lashbrook declared a Personal Interest in respect of Motion 2 under agenda item 13; Notice of Motion – Rule 12 as she had an association with an organisation owned by Aster.

Councillor Philip Lashbrook declared a Personal Interest in respect of Motion 2 under agenda item 13; Notice of Motion – Rule 12 as his wife had an association with an organisation owned by Aster.

400

Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Council meeting and Special Council meeting held on 25 October 2023 were proposed by Councillor Adams-King and seconded by Councillor Flood.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meetings of the Council and Special Council held on 25 October 2023 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

401

Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor reflected on a number of community events he and the Mayoress had been privileged to attend over recent weeks to celebrate cultural festivals.

The Mayor invited councillors to attend his Mayoral Charity Dinner which would be held in May. Councillor Katie Brooks was helping to facilitate the event and would be able to provide more information to those who wished to attend.

402

To receive and adopt Committee reports

Minutes of Meetings

The minutes of meetings were proposed by Councillor Phil North and seconded by Councillor Adams-King.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the following Committees and Cabinet meetings be received:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 11 October 2023
Northern Area Planning Committee - 12 October 2023
General Purposes Committee - 16 October 2023
Southern Area Planning Committee - 17 October 2023
Southern Area Planning Committee - 7 November 2023
Licensing Committee - 9 November 2023
Cabinet - 15 November 2023
Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 22 November 2023
Northern Area Planning Committee - 23 November 2023
Southern Area Planning Committee - 28 November 2023
Audit Committee - 12 December 2023
Northern Area Planning Committee - 14 December 2023
Southern Area Planning Committee - 19 December 2023
Cabinet - 20 December 2023

To adopt recommendations from the following:

Cabinet – 15 November 2023

Asset Management Plan.

Resolved:

- 1. That the revised 2023/24 and original 2024/25 Asset Management Plan, as shown in Annexes 1 and 2 to the report, be approved.**
- 2. That the Head of Finance and Revenues, after consultation with the Finance and Resources Portfolio holder and Head of Service responsible for any project, be authorised to amend the Asset Management Plan during the year, as discussed in paragraph 7.3 to the report.**

Capital programme Update.

Resolved:

- 1. That the new capital schemes with a total cost of £2,009,000, as shown in Annex 2 to the report, be added to the 2023/24 to 2025/26 Capital Programme.**
- 2. That the revised estimates and financing for the 2023/24 to 2025/26 Capital Programme, as shown in Annex 1 to the report, be approved.**

Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25.

Resolved:

- 1. That the Council Tax Support scheme for 2024/25, as shown in the Annex to the report, be approved.**
- 2. That the Head of Finance and Revenues, in consultation with the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder, be authorised to make any necessary changes to the Scheme that are required by the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) Regulations 2024 when they are confirmed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.**
- 3. In the event that any new government initiatives are introduced that result in receipt of a grant or an increase in Universal Credit or other government benefits, that the Head of Finance and Revenues, in consultation with the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder, be authorised to disregard these awards as income in accordance with government guidelines.**

Authority to Spend for New Theatre/Cultural Hub Architectural Services.

Resolved:

- 1. That £3.74M be added to the Capital Programme to deliver the project outlined in the report, to be funded from the Capital Receipts Reserve.**
- 2. That the transfer of £1M to the Capital Receipts Reserve for the reasons set out in paragraphs 7.4 and 7.5 of the report, be approved.**

403

Questions under Rule 11.1

Councillor Mark Cooper asked a question in relation to the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 22 November 2023, minute number 320 – Water Pollution Infrastructure.

Councillor Mark Cooper asked whether such issues as recently experienced in Romsey and the surrounding areas in relation to loss of water pressure, sewerage as a result of the recent extreme rain, and water supply and sewerage capacity for new planned dwellings would form part of the conversation with Southern Water when they attended a future Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting?

Councillor Jeffrey, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, responded to confirm that he noted the comments made by Councillor Mark Cooper and that they would be actioned.

404

Questions under Rule 11.2

No questions on notice had been submitted by Councillors.

405 Test Valley Borough Local Plan - Regulation 18 Stage 2 Public Consultation

Consideration was given to a report of the Planning Portfolio Holder which sought approval for public consultation on the Council's proposed Local Plan 2040 Regulation 18, Stage 2 document.

The Local Plan was a key policy document for the Council setting out the policies and principles by which planning decisions would be made, and development undertaken up to 2040, across the Borough.

The plan balanced the requirements of development required to provide jobs and sustainable housing for residents, with the need to provide the necessary supporting infrastructure, and at the same time protect the countryside and the environment.

A public consultation would be held for a period of eight weeks on the draft Local Plan from early February.

Councillor Bundy proposed an alteration to the motion to include additional wording at the end of recommendation 1 in reference to the replacement wording for paragraph 3.43 and insert map 47 of the Local Plan, as set out in Annex 3 to the report which had been circulated. The meeting's consent was signalled without discussion.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Bundy and seconded by Councillor Phil North.

Councillor Gwynne proposed that a recorded vote be undertaken which was supported by more than 10 councillors present at the meeting. Councillors voted as follows:

For	Against	Abstained
Adams-King	Burnage	
Andersen	G Cooper	
Bailey	M Cooper	
Borg-Neal	A Dowden	
Z Brooks	C Dowden	
Budzynski	Dunleavey	

For	Against	Abstained
Bundy	Ford	
Cattell	Gidley	
Donnelly	Gregori	
Drew	Gwynne	
Flood	Kohli	
Gillies	Parker	
Jeffrey	Sangster	
Johnston	Warnes	
L Lashbrook	Yalden	
P Lashbrook		
Leech		
Lodge		
MacDonald		
Matthews		
Neal		
K North		
P North		
Swain		

Resolved:

- 1. That the Test Valley Borough Local Plan 2040 Regulation 18 Stage 2, attached as Annexes 1 and 2 to the report, be published for public consultation, subject to the replacement of paragraph 3.43 and Inset Map 47 of the draft with the amendments tabled as Annex 3 to the Report.**
- 2. That the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development, in consultation with the Planning Portfolio Holder, be authorised to make changes of a minor nature, or to improve the presentation in Annexes 1 and 2 to the report prior to publication.**

406

Polling District Review

Consideration was given to a report of the Democracy and Governance Portfolio Holder which set out details of a review of all polling districts and polling places within Test Valley.

Most polling districts, polling places and polling stations had been in place for many years with most of the buildings currently used as polling stations considered to be fit for purpose, accessible to the majority of the electorate which the venue served, and accessible for those with a disability.

A public consultation had been undertaken, with a Councillor panel established to consider representations received from the public. A number of recommendations were proposed for changes as set out in the report.

Councillor Lodge proposed an alteration to the motion to provide for an update to proposals for polling district UA. The meeting's consent was signalled without discussion.

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

Resolved:

- 1. That the changes to polling districts for Test Valley Borough, as set out in the Annex to the report ((Acting) Returning Officer's Recommendations), be approved, save that the words "Split polling district into UA and UA1 (see attached map)" for polling district UA be deleted.**
- 2. That an order pursuant to Section 18A of the Representation of the People Act 1983 be made to amend the polling districts in Test Valley Borough in accordance with the approved changes.**

407

Reporting of Urgent Decision

Consideration was given to a report of the Democracy and Governance Portfolio Holder which set out details of an urgent decision taken by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader to benefit from a grant award and planting of trees across the borough.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Lodge and seconded by Councillor Phil North.

Resolved:

That the urgent decision set out in the Annex to the report, which was taken by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, be noted.

408

Notice of Motion - Rule 12

Councillor Gidley proposed an amendment to the first motion as set out in the agenda. The meeting signalled its consent to the amendment without discussion.

Council considered the following motion moved by Councillor Gidley and seconded by Councillor Gregori:

This council notes that the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board (ICB) is consulting on proposed changes to acute hospital services in and around Basingstoke and Winchester.

The favoured Option is to provide a new specialist acute hospital near Junction 7 of the M3 and changes to the services currently provided by Winchester Hospital.

Given the significant impact on many of the residents of Test Valley, this Council makes representations to the ICB, outlining the concerns of Test Valley residents, including longer travel times, downgrading of Winchester A and E dept and the reduced birthing choices available.

Each political group is invited to nominate two councillors to assist the CEO in formulating a response.

Upon being put to the vote the Motion was carried.

Having declared a Personal Interest in the second motion Councillors L Lashbrook and P Lashbrook left the room for consideration of the next motion.

Deputy Mayor, Councillor Bailey took the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

In accordance with the Council's Public Participation Scheme, Mr Burley made a statement on the second motion as set out in the agenda.

Council considered the following motion moved by Councillor Adams-King and seconded by Councillor Mark Cooper:

This Council notes:

- *At the time of Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of Council Housing in 2000, Test Valley Borough Council transferred its housing stock to Testway Housing Association (later Aster Housing Association).*
- *At this time approximately 350 homes at 19 locations in Test Valley where sewerage was provided through communal sewerage treatment plants were included in the transfer. Of these 263 are privately owned, where the owners are required to pay a proportionate amount toward the cost of maintenance and management of the sewerage treatment plants.*
- *At the time of transfer all communal sewerage treatment plants were in working order and were compliant with environmental warranty standards.*
- *Concerns about lack of maintenance and consequently rising costs were raised by Alderman Tony Ward, when a councillor between 2009 and 2014. Aster at this point agreed to resolve these issues in return for TVBC relinquishing any nomination rights to the Aster Communities Board. Work was undertaken to independently assess the work needed to resolve the issue, resulting in reports on the condition of each site being commissioned through Ridge Consultants.*
- *The recommendations of the Ridge reports do not appear to have been implemented.*
- *In 2021 Aster let a new contract for management of their sewerage services to Willow Pumps Ltd, based in Kent, who charge on an hourly basis for their work - resulting in significantly higher costs than those charged by local sewerage contractors.*
- *At this point in time none of the sewerage treatment plants are working as they should. Most are stoppered off and waste is being removed from them by tanker. As a result costs have increased exponentially in the last three years, resulting in monthly charges as high as £496.36 being levied to home owners. Conversely, Aster tenants are charged around £60 per month (with Aster paying any additional amounts on the tenants' behalf).*

- *The owners of the 263 former council homes include single parents, young families, widowed residents living on single person state pension, carers; their income levels are not greatly different and in many cases less than Aster's tenants.*

Therefore, this Council calls upon Aster to:

- *Recognise its responsibility to both tenants and homeowners and also to the wider community by addressing their failing sewerage treatment plants as a matter of urgency.*
- *Re-tender its sewerage treatment service contract for Test Valley, appointing a contractor whose costs are comparable to those charged by local suppliers.*
- *Review the charges made to homeowners since 2015, identifying where costs have been higher than might reasonably be expected had the recommendations of the 2015 Ridge reports been implemented.*
- *Create a plan to bring all sewerage treatment plants into fully working, environmentally compliant, order. The cost of which should recognise their failure to maintain the plants or plan for their replacement, and not place undue financial burdens on homeowners and tenants alike.*

Furthermore Council requests the Chief Executive write to Mr B Howard, CEO of Aster Group:

- *Requesting detail of the maintenance and management of the Sewerage Treatment Plants at all 19 Test Valley locations between 2000 and 2023.*
- *Reminding him of their 2016 statement that Aster will be investing to improve and maintain assets.*
- *Expressing this Council's dismay that, after almost ten years, the solution has not been identified and passing on the outcomes noted by this motion and reserving this Council's position in relation to any future action.*

Upon being put to the vote the Motion was carried.

(The meeting terminated at 7.25 pm)