

Minutes of the Council
of the Test Valley Borough Council
held in Conference Room 1, Beech Hurst, Weyhill Road, Andover
on 24 July 2024 at 5.30 pm

Attendance:

Councillor I Jeffrey (Chairman)

Councillor G Bailey	Councillor L Gregori
Councillor N Adams-King	Councillor N Gwynne
Councillor I Andersen	Councillor S Hasselmann
Councillor C Borg-Neal	Councillor R Hughes
Councillor Z Brooks	Councillor A Johnston
Councillor J Budzynski	Councillor R Kohli
Councillor P Bundy	Councillor M Leech
Councillor J Burnage	Councillor N Lodge
Councillor D Cattell	Councillor S MacDonald
Councillor M Cooper	Councillor L Matthews
Councillor N Daas	Councillor J Neal
Councillor A Dowden	Councillor K North
Councillor C Dowden	Councillor P North
Councillor D Drew	Councillor J Parker
Councillor M Flood	Councillor J Sangster
Councillor A Ford	Councillor T Swain
Councillor S Gidley	Councillor Dr A Warnes
Councillor A Gillies	

122

Prayers

Prayers were led by the Reverend Sharland.

On behalf of the Council, the Mayor thanked Reverend Bradish for his service as Chaplain to Mayors' of Test Valley Borough Council over the years, and for his outstanding service to the Council and its communities as he was moving to a parish in the Isle of Wight.

Reverend Bradish returned thanks and led prayers.

123

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Brooks, G Cooper, Donnelly, L Lashbrook, P Lashbrook and Yalden.

124

Public Participation

Mr Burley had registered to speak in accordance with the Council's Public Participation Scheme under item 11 – Appointments to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

125

Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 17 April 2024 and the Annual Council meeting held on 22 May 2024 were proposed by Councillor P North and seconded by Councillor Flood.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 17 April 2024 and the Annual Council held on 22 May 2024 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

126

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

127

Mayor's Announcements

The Worshipful The Mayor announced that one of his mayoral charities for his civic year would be the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance Trust. Details of his other charities would be announced at a future meeting.

The Mayor asked Councillors to save the date for his Burns Night Mayoral Charity event which would be held on Saturday 25 January 2025.

128

To receive and adopt Committee reports

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:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 10 April 2024
Southern Area Planning Committee – 23 April 2024
Northern Area Planning Committee – 16 May 2024
Southern Area Planning Committee - 21 May 2024
Cabinet – 29 May 2024
Licensing Committee – 30 May 2024
General Purposes Committee – 3 June 2024
Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 5 June 2024
Northern Area Planning Committee – 10 June 2024
Southern Area Planning Committee – 11 June 2024
Audit Committee – 17 June 2024
Northern Area Planning Committee – 27 June 2024

There were no recommendations to consider from Cabinet or Committees.

129

Questions under Rule 11.1

There were no questions under Procedure Rule 11.1.

130

Questions under Rule 11.2

Councillor Gwynne asked the Democracy and Governance Portfolio Holder the following Question:

‘At the February 29th 2024, Council meeting – on page 127 of the meeting papers, para. 1.4 – it was stated that a broadcasting system should “*allow footage to remain online for later viewing by the public*”. Subsequent to that, it was agreed that recording would only be audio, rather than video. However, it would also appear to be the case that the requirement to keep recordings available for use after the day of the meeting itself has been dropped. Can it be clarified whether this is the case and, if it is, what the reasons are?’

Councillor Lodge responded to confirm that at the Council meeting on 29 February 2024 an amendment to the recommendation was made with Council resolving that ‘the Council commits to install an audio only solution in all 4 current meeting venues’.

The audio only solution had now been in place since the Annual Council meeting held on 22 May this year, providing a ‘live’ stream of meetings for anyone who wished to access them. Now that the system had been embedded and fully tested across all venues to ensure a good quality audio stream and following direct from the Leader to the Chief Executive before the submission of Councillor Gwynne’s

question, the Council would from this meeting be publishing the audio streams following the end of meetings.

This meant that recordings of meetings would be available for members of the public to access at any time should they wish to do so from the Council's website. The published audio streams would be available in-line with the Council's retention schedule for a period of 6 year plus current.

Councillor Gwynne asked a supplementary question enquiring as how the recordings could be easily accessed and how they would be communicated to the public?

Councillor Lodge responded that recordings would be available on the website and welcomed Councillor Gwynne's views on their accessibility and the development of appropriate communications outside of the meeting.

Councillor Parker asked the Community and Leisure Portfolio Holder the following question:

'Towards the end of last year, the Council received the report on tourism that was commissioned from Blue Sail. That report recommended the TVBC develop a clear tourism strategy and tourism town plans for Andover, Romsey and Stockbridge.

Can the portfolio holder advise whether TVBC has agreed to follow this advice and, in particular, what progress has been made on developing the three town-based tourism plans?'

Councillor Swain responded that the tourism sector was a small but important one for the economy of Test Valley.

One of the actions within the adopted Economic Development Strategy (2024 – 2029) was to develop Destination Management, Marketing and Development activities for Test Valley in line with the Tourism Review and that the Andover, Romsey and Stockbridge town plans were identified as a potential action as part of this work.

The economic strategy set out that those activities were scheduled to be investigated, considered and implemented by the end of 2025 and that work was underway to bring forward the recommendations of the Tourism review. Councillors would be updated on progress in due course.

Councillor Swain advised that it was important to note that any improvement to the destination management, marketing and development activity would build upon existing relationships the Council had with the tourism sector and through the Council's strong community partnerships, such as Romsey Future.

Councillor Parker asked a supplementary question requesting clarification on the timescales for the work being undertaken?

Councillor Swain advised that there was a staged approach to the end of 2025. The tourist information points would be one of the first elements coming forward and as soon as more information was available it would be shared with Councillors. Updates on the other elements linking where appropriate with the Economic Development Strategy would be shared with Councillors as they were developed.

Councillor Gidley asked the Democracy and Governance Portfolio Holder the following question:

'How many voters in Romsey and Southampton North could not vote at the recent General Election because of lack of suitable ID?'

Councillor Lodge responded to confirm that data had been collected across the whole constituency and that 18 people did not vote on 4 July due to not meeting the voter ID requirements. Out of 117 electors initially turned away, 99 returned with suitable ID and were able to vote.

Councillor Gidley asked a supplementary question to state that some people were still not aware of the mechanisms that would enable them to vote if they did not have a passport or driving license. Councillor Gidley asked if the Portfolio Holder would be prepared to make representations that forms of ID could be widened so more commonly available forms of ID could be used instead, appreciating it was not within his gift but asking if he had concerns?

Councillor Lodge responded to say the Council was obliged by law to check ID according to the mechanisms specified and therefore it was not within the authority of the Council to change this.

Councillor Gidley asked the Democracy and Governance Portfolio Holder the following question:

'How many tendered ballot papers were issued and what further investigations have been made as a result?'

Councillor Lodge advised that tendered ballot papers are only to be issued in prescribed circumstances. Those circumstances included where an elector claimed not to have applied for a postal vote; that the postal vote they had applied for had been lost, spoilt or not received or an elector appeared on the register of electors at the polling station as already having voted.

At the July 2024 General Election, a total of 6 tendered ballot papers were issued. The Electoral Services manager was establishing the reasons for the issue of the tendered ballot papers.

Councillor Gidley asked a supplementary question to express concern that the reasons for the issue of all tendered ballot papers were not yet known in all cases and that she was aware of an incident where an elector was told she could not vote as she had already voted and that she was adamant that she had not and was issued a tendered ballot paper. Councillor Gidley noted that surely with voter ID

requirements in place this should not happen, and could Councillors be informed about how this happened?

Councillor Lodge responded to say that he was aware of the incident to which Councillor Gidley referred to which was due to human error which was taken very seriously. If the wrong name was accidentally marked as is what then a tendered ballot paper would be issued.

Councillor Lodge advised that the Council was not obliged to record the reasons for the issue of tendered ballot papers but would continue to investigate the reasons for those issued.

Councillor Gidley asked the Democracy and Governance Portfolio Holder the following question:

'Is the portfolio holder satisfied that every postal voter who wished to was able to cast their vote?'

Councillor Lodge responded that 88% of the postal votes sent out for the Romsey and Southampton North constituency were returned. This was a high percentage and consistent with the 2019 General Election's 89% return rate. Whilst there were highly publicised issues with printers and Royal mail nationally, these issues did not appear to have had anywhere near the same level of impact on voters within this constituency.

Electoral Services kept a regular dialogue with the team at the Royal Mail throughout the election period and no reports of undelivered mail were received.

Councillor Lodge further advised that where electors had not received their postal votes, they were able to apply for a replacement ballot pack to be sent to them four working days before the election. Therefore, the Council could be satisfied that the majority of people who wished to vote by post were able to do so.

Councillor Gidley asked a supplementary question advising that she was aware of numerous cases of postal votes arriving late and noted that where staff were able to help, they had been very good in responding. Councillor Gidley asked whether the Portfolio Holder was satisfied that Royal Mail was the most appropriate means of distributing postal votes given the national picture and whether other organisations could be considered?

Councillor Lodge responded that he was not aware of any other organisation capable of undertaking a service of the scale required during an election.

Councillor Jeffrey, as Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2023/24, presented the Annual Report which set out an overview of work undertaken from May 2023 to May 2024.

During 2023/24, the Committee had contributed to policy development and had engaged with external partners on key issues affecting communities in Test Valley. Areas the Committee's work programme had focussed on included water pollution, progress on Andover Vision and Romsey Masterplan, Anti-Social Behaviour, youth services and amenities, cost of living and Climate Action in the community.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Jeffrey and seconded by Councillor Dass.

Resolved:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Chairman's Annual Report 2024 be received and endorsed.

132 **Appointments to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

In accordance with the Council's Public Participation Scheme, Mr Burley made a statement in respect of Appointments to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Consideration was given to a report of the Democracy and Governance portfolio Holder which proposed a reduction in the size of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A smaller Committee would allow for a more streamlined committee that would be able to operate in a more efficient and effective manner to consider items of business and engage in task and finish reviews.

It was noted that should the Overview and Scrutiny Committee require additional support, it was able to appoint Councillors from the wider membership to particular reviews with agreement of the Committee.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Lodge and seconded by Councillor Daas.

Resolved:

- 1. That the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be reduced from 18 to 15 seats.**
- 2. That Councillors Borg-Neal, K Brooks, Budzynski, Cattell, Daas (Chairman), Gidley, Gillies, Gregori, Hasselmann, Hughes, Leech, Matthews, MacDonald (Vice Chairman), Parker and Yalden be appointed to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

133

Changes to Contract Standing Orders

Consideration was given to a report of the Finance and Resources which introduced changes required to the Contract Standing Orders, contained within the Council's Constitution, as a result of new legislation that would come into effect in October 2024.

The report proposed further changes to Contract Standing Orders to update thresholds and purchasing requirements for different levels of procurement values to reflect the inflationary impact on existing value thresholds; managing procurement using email; and, more generally, to make the content more accessible.

It was confirmed that a track-changed version of the CSO would be circulated to Councillors.

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

Resolved:

- 1. That the updated Contract Standing Orders, as shown in the Annex to the report, be approved with effect from 28 October 2024.**
- 2. That the Head of Legal & Democratic Services be authorised to make the required changes to the Constitution.**

134

Notice of Motion - Rule 12

There were no Motions to consider under Procedure Rule 12.

135

Exclusion of the public

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

Resolved:

That, pursuant to Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following reports on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the following Paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended, indicated below. The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the Public interest in disclosing the information for the reason given below:

Estate Property Matters

Paragraph 3

It is considered that this report contains exempt information within the meaning of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended. It is further considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information because the report and annexes necessarily disclose commercially sensitive financial and commercial information, relating to the Council and other third parties.

136

Estate Property Matters

Consideration was given to a report of the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder in respect of Estate Property Matters.

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

Resolved:

That Council approves the sum of £600,000 to be added to the Capital Programme for the works described in the report, to be funded from the Capital Receipts Reserve.

(The meeting terminated at 6.23 pm)