

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Council Offices, Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury on Tuesday, 12 April 2016 commencing at 4:30 pm

Present:

Chair
Vice Chair

Councillor P W Awford
Councillor Mrs G F Blackwell

and Councillors:

G J Bocking, K J Cromwell, Mrs J E Day, R D East, D T Foyle, Mrs R M Hatton, Mrs H C McLain, T A Spencer, Mrs P E Stokes, P D Surman, M G Sztymiak, H A E Turbyfield and M J Williams

OS.88 ANNOUNCEMENTS

88.1 The evacuation procedure, as noted on the Agenda, was taken as read.

OS.89 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

89.1 The Committee's attention was drawn to the Tewkesbury Borough Council Code of Conduct which was adopted by the Council on 26 June 2012 and took effect from 1 July 2012.

89.2 There were no declarations made on this occasion.

OS.90 MINUTES

90.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2016, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

OS.91 CONSIDERATION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN

91.1 Attention was drawn to the Executive Committee Forward Plan, circulated at Pages No. 14-16. Members were asked to determine whether there were any questions for the relevant Lead Members and what support the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could give to the work contained within the plan.

91.2 A Member questioned why there was nothing included in the plan beyond the meeting on 13 July 2016. In response, Members were informed that each service was required to produce a service plan which had been approved by the Executive Committee the previous week and was likely to generate areas which may need attention. Democratic Services had asked Group Managers to populate the plan so it would be updated by the next meeting. A Member noted that the Financial Inclusion Policy was due to be considered by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 13 July 2016 and he felt that this was something which should be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in advance of that. The Deputy

Chief Executive agreed that this was possible and the Revenues and Benefits

Group Manager confirmed that he would attempt to bring a report to the June meeting of the Committee, however, it may be later depending on the progress that could be made over the next month.

91.3 It was

RESOLVED

1. That the Executive Committee Forward Plan be **NOTED**.
2. That the Financial Inclusion Policy be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 14 June 2016, if possible, but, in any event, prior to consideration by the Executive Committee.

OS.92 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17

92.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Corporate Services Group Manager, circulated at Pages No.17-28, which attached, at Appendix 1, the draft Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2016/17. Members were asked to approve the Work Programme.

92.2 The Chair indicated that it was intended to invite Ann Reader from South West Councils to observe the meeting on 14 June 2016 in order to provide some feedback as to how the Committee was performing and highlight any potential areas for improvement. Ann had delivered the Overview and Scrutiny Committee induction training in 2015 and had recently held a session on charring skills. A Member noted that the Committee was due to receive a presentation on the systems review of Planning on 19 July 2016 and she queried whether the Lead Member for Built Environment could be asked to attend. The Democratic Services Group Manager indicated that this would be appropriate and she undertook to ensure that he was invited to the meeting. A Member queried when the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would receive a presentation from Healthwatch Gloucestershire and was informed that this was included in the 'pending items' section along with presentations from Severn Vale and Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service. The Corporate Services Group Manager explained that he needed to make contact with the appropriate representatives from those organisations to establish when they could attend and these items would then be built in the Work Programme accordingly.

92.3 A Member suggested that it might be more appropriate for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to meet the week before the Executive Committee as opposed to a week later under the current arrangements. In response, the Democratic Services Group Manager explained that the main reason for holding the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings after the Executive Committee was to facilitate the call-in procedure which gave Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to call-in decisions made by the Executive within a certain timescale. She advised that various different arrangements had been trialled in the past but holding Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings a week after Executive Committee meetings had worked best in her experience. A Member expressed concern that he knew very little about the call-in process. The Democratic Services Group Manager briefly outlined the procedure, which had been touched upon in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee induction training, and indicated that she would be happy to arrange some additional training in relation to that specific element now that Members were more established within the Committee. The Chief Executive provided assurance that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee worked in partnership with the Executive Committee which often requested that reviews be carried out in order to assist with important areas such as car parking, economic development and enviro-crimes. He stressed that call-in should be the exception rather than the rule; however, it was a tool which was available should Members feel that a particular decision needed to be re-examined. By engaging the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in policy

development and working with the Executive Committee and Council it ensured that any issues were kept to a minimum. Members were reminded that the Executive Committee Forward Plan was a standard item on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agenda and Members had the opportunity to request that items be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to the Executive Committee.

92.4 The Corporate Services Group Manager indicated that one of the particular strengths of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was its task and finish working groups which had added real value in the past. The Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Review Working Group was continuing to meet and would report back to the Committee later in the year. Some potential areas of review had been identified from the new Council Plan which would be brought forward at the appropriate time.

92.5 Having considered the information provided, it was

RESOLVED That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2016/17 be **APPROVED**.

OS.93 GLOUCESTERSHIRE HEALTH AND CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

93.1 Members received an update from Councillor Mrs J E Day, the Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, on matters discussed at the last meeting of the Committee held on 8 March 2016.

93.2 Councillor Day advised that the Committee had welcomed the Lead Inspector for the Care Quality Commission inspection of the NHS 2gether Trust to the meeting. The Trust had received an overall rating of 'good' and two service areas - acute wards for adults of working age and psychiatric intensive care units and mental health crisis services and health based places of safety – had been rated as 'outstanding'; '2G' was the only mental health trust in the country to have achieved outstanding ratings in these areas. The inspection had also identified areas where work was needed to bring the service up to the required standard and in total there were 15 'must do' actions and 58 'should do' actions. The Committee had congratulated the Trust on the outcome of the inspection and agreed that the ratings indicated that there was a strong leadership and a committed and motivated workforce at the Trust.

93.3 The Committee had received a detailed presentation on sexual health services in Gloucestershire. Going forward within the context of reduced funding it would be important to ensure that the services were identifying the groups of people most at risk, and targeting resources to those groups. In terms of adult social care and public health performance, Members had welcomed the fact that performance against targets relating to employment and settled accommodation for people with learning disabilities continued to improve; however, performance against reassessment targets was still struggling. Performance against drug and alcohol targets remained static. The Committee had been concerned that the adult social care budget continued to be overspent; there was currently a £4.1m overspend. It was explained that there was a possibility that funding previously set aside for the Care Act could be used to mitigate the position but this was not certain. Members were aware that the social care levy would be factored into the budget for 2016/17 but there was a doubt from some Members as to whether the budget set for this area was realistic. A significant area of concern going forward was the national shortage of domiciliary care workers. Locally, two providers of domiciliary care had recently chosen to step away from providing this service.

93.4 Demand on the Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (GCCG) system

continued to be high. The report showed that there was much good performance across the system, but concerns around cancer, strokes and accident and emergency remained, although it was acknowledged that the GCCG and the Hospitals Trust were working hard to address this. The important role played by pharmacies in the delivery of healthcare in the county had been a recurrent theme in the feedback from Healthwatch Gloucestershire. It had been agreed to write to the Secretary of State for Health to question why there was a proposal to cut funding in this area, given the role that pharmacies could play in prevention and delivery.

- 93.5 The Committee had expressed its concern with regard to the potential negative impact of the proposal for a West Oxfordshire Unitary Council on the health and social care of the residents of Gloucestershire. Members had heard from both the Council and the GCCG regarding their own concerns which had validated the Committee's view and a statement had been issued to that effect.
- 93.6 A Member indicated that he shared the concern about the national shortage of domiciliary care workers and suggested that the introduction of a proper working wage may help to attract new recruits. He felt Gloucestershire needed a contingency plan to ensure that people continued to be looked after correctly, particularly as Government advisors were now suggesting that in-house care was preferable to care homes. The Chair indicated that he also sat on the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee and it was fair to say that recruitment into any stream of care was difficult and this situation was not unique to Gloucestershire.
- 93.7 The Chair thanked the Council's representative for her presentation and indicated that the update would be circulated to Members via email following the meeting. It was

RESOLVED That the feedback from the last meeting of the Gloucestershire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee be **NOTED**.

OS.94 GLOUCESTERSHIRE FAMILIES FIRST UPDATE

- 94.1 Members were informed that Families First was the local name for the national troubled families programme and Gloucestershire had been one of the first localities to meet its targets and broaden out to become Families First Plus. Unfortunately, the Council's Community Development Officer who had been due to present the report had been called away at short notice so Helen Hayes, Manager for Stroud and Forest of Dean, and Fiona Ching from the County Team who specialised in employment advice, had attended the meeting to provide a six month progress update.
- 94.2 The following key points were raised during the presentation:
- Recap – Families First was originally a three year programme, starting in 2012, aimed at turning around the lives of an estimated 120,000 troubled families in the country, 900 in Gloucestershire and 90 in Tewkesbury Borough; original criteria: adult on out of work benefit, children not attending school, family members involved in crime and anti-social behaviour i.e. high cost to the public purse; local discretion would include other issues such as mental health, drugs and alcohol misuse and domestic abuse.
 - Aim of the Programme – To get children back into school, reduce youth crime and anti-social behaviour, put adults on a path back to work and bring down the amount public services currently spent on them; over time, to change the way

services were delivered – re-designing them for the longer term.

- Progress to Date – By the end of phase 1, over 900 families were engaged by intensive key workers and had commissioned services of existing agencies; 100% of families had achieved outcomes; 825 families had achieved the crime/education result, 75 families had achieved the employment result and 59 families had achieved the progress to work result; as a high performing area, Gloucestershire had been entered into phase 2 of the expanded programme early.
- Expanded Troubled Families Programme – Five year programme from 2015/16 with funding for the first year; additional 3,000 families for Gloucestershire; getting to a much wider group of families with multiple problems; greater flexibility to decide which families to work with but must prioritise highest need; payment by results based on ‘sustained and significant progress’; local authority to produce a ‘Troubled Families Outcomes Plan’ against which to measure progress.
- Criteria for the Expanded Programme – Parents and children involved in crime or anti-social behaviour; children not attending school, children who needed help e.g. young carers; adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion and young people at risk of worklessness; families affected by domestic violence and abuse; parents and children with a range of health problems including mental health.
- Becoming ‘Business As Usual’ – Developing early help and targeted support; bringing together Targeted Support teams and Families First to create Families First Plus; development of Early Help partnership - Tewkesbury was the pilot.
- Working in Tewkesbury – Locality Partnership Group: health, education, Police, probation, Council Services, housing, mental health, domestic abuse, substance misuse, Department of Work and Pensions, voluntary and community sector representation; Early Help Hub Allocations – Advice, Information, Support and Targeted Support e.g. family support, community support.
- Tewkesbury Families First Plus Team – Team Manager, Emma Trigwell; Assistant Team Manager, Rachel Shore-Nye; Community Social Worker, Isobel Nelson; Early Help Coordinators, Theresa Brown, Karen James; Family Support Workers, Hannah Oakshott, Lucy Holford, Susan Hatch, Kevan Consterdine; Social Work Student, Stephanie Hunt; Administrator Support, Susan Pope.

94.3 Members were provided with some case studies of families who had successfully used the Families First Plus programme.

94.4 A Member raised concern that he had been a Borough Councillor for Tewkesbury Prior’s Park Ward for almost 12 months but had not had any contact with the Families First Plus team. The representatives from Families First Plus apologised for this oversight but provided assurance that partnership working was ongoing. Members were advised that there were a number of ways that they could contact the Families First Plus team; the wider Locality Partnership Group included Council Officers, and was chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive, who would be happy to direct any issues.

94.5 A Member noted that the programme was based on ‘payment by results’ and she questioned how this would be impacted by the target number of families in Tewkesbury Borough being increased from 90 in phase 1 to 900 in phase 2. Members were advised that, from the employment advice perspective, it was about training lead professionals to talk about employment and giving them the

confidence and knowledge to discuss this with families and individuals. The main thrust of the programme was reducing the number of professionals involved with a family which could be quite a challenge; in one case there had been found to be 36 different professionals involved with one particular family. Moving forward it was critical to ensure that this became a normal way of working as opposed to an add-on to existing services. The Deputy Chief Executive indicated that the way in which the Council Offices building was used was very powerful, and one of the reasons why Families First had been so successful; by having several agencies located under one roof there was easy access to other Officers who were able to work together to fully investigate each case. A Member questioned how mental health was monitored and was informed that successful management included medication or joining a specialist programme. In response to a query, assurance was provided that Families First Plus worked closely with Green Square and Gloucestershire First. A Member questioned whether any work was undertaken with travellers, particularly in terms of school attendance, and he was advised that this was a sensitive issue but the main focus was on ensuring that children received some education and the team often worked with the Prince's Trust in that regard.

94.6 The Chair thanked the representatives from Families First Plus for their informative presentation and congratulated them on the success of the programme to date. It was

RESOLVED That the update on the Gloucestershire Families First Plus programme be **NOTED**.

OS.95 REVIEW OF UBICO

95.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Environmental Contracts Team Leader from the Joint Waste Team, circulated at Pages No. 29-37, which provided an update on key indicators and trends for the waste and recycling service following the transfer of recycling, refuse, street cleansing, grounds maintenance and ancillary services to Ubico on 1 April 2015. Members were asked to consider the information provided.

95.2 The Chair welcomed the Environmental Contracts Team Leader from the Joint Waste Team, Rachel Capon, to the meeting. She advised that the update would cover the period July 2015 to December 2015 and explained that an annual report was currently being prepared by Ubico and would be available after the next partnership meeting at the end of May. Members were advised that the last 12 months had been about ensuring that the services were operating efficiently and effectively following transfer to Ubico. From a customer perspective, the Achieve system had been put in place so the Customer Services team was able to log all service requests, which were then dealt with by Ubico staff, and this was part of the performance monitoring. The Joint Waste Team carried out monthly contract meetings with Ubico on behalf of the Council to monitor performance indicators, service delivery issues, customer service delivery issues etc. It also carried out health and safety monitoring of Ubico crews on a monthly basis to ensure that they followed the correct procedures. Any issues identified were fed back to the Ubico supervisors and actions recorded to ensure a closed-loop process was in place. Health and safety information was reported quarterly to the Council's 'Keep Safe, Stay Healthy' group. In terms of the ground maintenance element, this was monitored by the Tewkesbury Borough Council Licensing Team Leader within the Environmental Health service. The Environmental Services Partnership Board met on a quarterly basis and there had been three meetings to date.

95.3 With regard to performance indicators, health and safety was critical and attention was drawn to the table at Page No. 31, Paragraph 4.1.1 of the report, which set out the statistics for quarters 2 and 3. There had been two reportable accidents under

the Reporting of Incidents, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) in quarter 2, both involving relatively minor and unrelated slips; one loader had tripped over and fractured his wrist, another had sprained his ankle on uneven ground. There had been one reported “near miss” which related to a car which had mounted the pavement. There had been no work-related incidents in quarter 3 but there had been two “near misses” which had involved intimidation by another vehicle. Although very few near misses were reported, it was good practice to do so in order to prevent future accidents. Work was being done with Ubico to put a system in place to encourage crews to report more so it was likely that there would be an increase in near misses over the next quarter. Members were advised that 20 crew inspections were carried out per month and Ubico regularly communicated with crews on health and safety matters with recent topics including cab access and egress; hand hygiene; risk from used needles in bags; and manual handling.

- 95.4 The Ubico contract set a 99% target for household collections completed on schedule and this had been achieved each month. The type of issues that could impact upon this included adverse weather, vehicle breakdowns and shortage of crews due to sickness. In terms of service requests, there had been 801 missed bin collections during quarter 1 compared to 559 and 564 for quarters 2 and 3 respectively. The high number of missed collections in quarter 1 could be attributed to the Achieve system and the way the collections were monitored which had led to some missed collections being reported more than once. Members were reminded that missed collections need to be considered in context of the 36,000 collections that were made each week. There had been a general growth in residual waste per household which tended to happen when there was an improvement in the economic situation of a country. Notwithstanding this, it was anticipated that the figures would be only slightly higher for 2015/16 than for the previous year which was quite positive. It was noted that one particular issue was with diabetic needles being found amongst recyclate and work was being done to prevent this. The table at Page No. 35, Paragraph 4.5 of the Officer report, set out the percentage of household waste re-used, recycled and composted and the figures up to the end of February 2016 showed that a rate of 51% would be achieved, which was in line with the previous year.
- 95.5 In terms of human resources, the average number of days lost per full time equivalent within business support had reduced from 2.63 days in quarter 1 to 0.46 days in quarter 2 which was largely due to targeted intervention and firmer management by Ubico. The budget monitoring report to 31 December 2015 showed that a net underspend of £40,000 was forecast at year end; this was due to planned savings and a reduction in maintenance work to vehicles and plant pending their replacement. It was noted that Ubico had supported 28 community events from April to December 2015 and had carried out stickering of refuse bins for the Joint Waste Team as part of the food waste campaign as well as playing an integral part in the service review project and the vehicle procurement project in readiness for the expiry of the current contract in April 2017. Members were advised that there had generally been a seamless transition of the Council’s waste services to Ubico and, although there were always challenges and things which could go amiss, it was intended to continue to improve. Going forward, Members were asked to consider how often they wished to receive a report on the performance of Ubico and whether this should be combined with the report on the Joint Waste Action Plan progress or kept separate.
- 95.6 A Member raised concern that grounds maintenance and street cleansing were totally missing from the report. The Deputy Chief Executive clarified that this report was specifically about the waste service, although she recognised the need for more information on grounds maintenance and street cleansing. A number of big decisions had been made over the past year and generally it had been a very successful transition. A lot of work had been undertaken with the Customer

Services team and the Achieve system had helped staff considerably. Ubico was working hard to ensure that recycling rates were maintained, despite a national reduction, and there had been a 24% increase on the tonnage of food waste collected as a result of the food waste campaign. The Member questioned whether the human resources figures included grounds maintenance staff and was advised that all the human resources and financial figures included all elements of the service. The Environmental Contracts Team Leader accepted that more work needed to be done on grounds maintenance and how this was reported which would tie in with the new complaints procedure.

95.7 A Member noted that fly-tipping figures had reduced during quarter 3, however, this had certainly not been the case in his area and he raised concern that he was not being kept informed as to what was being done to address this. He also indicated that there was a “hardcore” of people who did not recycle any waste at all. Members were advised that addressing the “hardcore” was included in the Joint Waste Team Action Plan. These were often people who were hard to reach, or people who felt that they did not need to recycle, and Ubico intended to help the team to deliver projects arising from the action plan. The Environmental Health Manager advised that there had been a few concerns about specific fly-tipping cases and one of the key messages arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s Enviro-Crimes Review, which had been conducted 18 months earlier, was the need to increase enforcement. There was a very good way of working now that the Achieve system was in place and Environmental Health was able to get involved if evidence came back which supported action being taken.

95.8 A Member drew attention to the table at Page No. 33, Paragraph 4.3.1 of the report, which showed the service requests received during quarter 3. He felt that they were all very specific with the exception of ‘grounds maintenance reports’ and indicated that he would like to see a breakdown of the particular issues within grounds maintenance. In terms of the percentage of household waste being recycled, he hoped to see the figures built up over the next 12 months in order to allow proper comparisons and trend analysis. With regard to missed bin collections, a Member questioned how many had been due to parked cars and inaccessible houses. In response, Members were advised that the reported missed collections were genuine missed collections; sometimes collections were missed due to people not having put their bins out and those incidents were not included in the figures. If the crew could not access a property to collect the bin this was reported to Customer Services who would log this but it was not classed as a missed collection. A Member questioned if the targets which had been set for Ubico could be reviewed; he drew particular attention to the 99% target for household collections completed which allowed for 450 missed collections per week which was ten times the amount of collections currently being missed per week. Members were informed that all targets were reviewable and this point was very relevant. With regard to the reports of dog/litter bins overflowing, which had increased from 0 to 16 between quarter 1 and quarter 3, a Member questioned whether there had been a change in policy which meant that they were being emptied less frequently. In response, the Environmental Contracts Team Leader from the Joint Waste Team advised that, when the system had first been set up dog/litter bins could not be requested as a specific area for reporting so it had not been possible to provide statistics for quarter 1. Despite the increase in reports, she did not believe that this was becoming a bigger issue.

95.9 A Member queried whether there was a target in place for residual household waste per household and the Environmental Contracts Team Leader confirmed that there was no specific target for this element. The Joint Waste Strategy which the Gloucestershire local authorities were signed up to included a target of 60% by 2020, however, there would need to be a drastic change across the county for that

to be achieved.

- 95.10 A Member questioned how the contamination of recyclate with needles could be attributed to Tewkesbury Borough Council waste. She was advised that the recyclate was taken to the Grundon Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) at Bishop's Cleeve which only accepted waste from Tewkesbury Borough Council; whilst it did accept commercial waste, this was separate and did not include glass. Work was currently ongoing to attempt to identify the rounds where this was a particular problem. Members were informed that diabetic needles were packed in plastic containers so there seemed to be a perception among the public that they could be recycled; work was being done with Turning Point on how best to educate people around this issue.
- 95.11 A Member suggested that it might be beneficial to re-establish the Enviro-Crimes Working Group as they appeared to be on the increase. The Deputy Chief Executive provided assurance that this was not the case and work was ongoing to deliver the approved action plan. The Environmental Services Manager undertook to bring a report back to the Committee to update Members on the current situation regarding enviro-crimes, particularly in respect of fly-tipping, and it was agreed that a separate report should be provided in respect of grounds maintenance. In terms of the frequency of the reporting from Ubico, Members felt that the report should not be combined with the Joint Waste report and that it should be considered on an annual basis in line with the annual report which Ubico was required to produce in accordance with its contract with the Council.
- 95.12 Having considered the information provided and views expressed, it was
- RESOLVED**
1. That the 12 month update following the transfer of the Council's waste services to Ubico be **NOTED** and that reports continue to be taken to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis in line with the Ubico annual report required as part of its contract with the Council.
 2. That separate reports be brought to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of:
 - i) enviro-crimes, with particular focus on fly-tipping; and
 - ii) grounds maintenance.

OS.96 REVENUES AND BENEFITS IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

- 96.1 The report of the Revenues and Benefits Group Manager, circulated at Pages No. 38-42, provided a 12 month update on improvements made as a result of the systems thinking review of the Revenues and Benefits service. Members were asked to consider the report.
- 96.2 Members were advised that the transformation project had commenced in the summer of 2014 when Ice Creates consultants had been appointed to facilitate a review of the Revenues and Benefits service. The main aim was to increase efficiency and cost savings within the service to free up time to focus on outcomes by promoting financial inclusion and poverty reduction. At its meeting on 7 April 2015, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had received a presentation on the project and had resolved that a further update be provided to the Committee in 12 months time. The Revenues and Benefits Group Manager was pleased to report that performance was being successfully sustained. New claims were now processed in an average of 12.73 days compared to 19.39 days the previous year and processing changes in circumstances took an average of 6.4 days compared to 13.42 days the previous year. Appendix 1 to the report set out Tewkesbury Borough Council's performance compared to other district councils in the county and showed that only Cheltenham Borough Council had better processing times.

The improved accuracy and processing times in Benefits had resulted in a better return within the Council's subsidy claim; Tewkesbury Borough Council was currently eligible for £58,000 in additional subsidy which had never been achieved before. The additional capacity and improvement in data matching arrangements had meant that a high number of unreported change in circumstances and claimant overpayments had been identified. The Council received a 40% subsidy for finding the overpayments and was able to recover and keep 100% of the overpayment on top of the subsidy. Whilst the claims caseload was falling, the numbers were not significant with 4,085 housing benefits claims and 4,650 council tax support claims in December 2015 compared with 4,089 and 4,749 in December 2014. The Council was still receiving the same number of claims on a weekly basis although 'failure' phone calls had dramatically fallen enabling staff to concentrate fully on processing. Having two members of the Benefits team permanently located in the booth in reception ensured that expert information was being given to customers from the first point of contact.

- 96.3 With regard to Revenues, council tax collection was at 96.83% compared to 96.11% in 2015 and £1M more had been collected than at the same point last year. Over the last 12 months there had been significant growth of new properties; the Borough had 38,955 domestic properties as at December 2015 which was an increase of 634 on the previous year, and the Revenues team had been able to absorb the increase and shed half a post. Business rates collection was now at 96.21% compared to 95.05% the previous year and the Council was gradually recovering from the major impact of the large reduction in rateable value and refund made to a major business rates account. An objective of the review had been to create additional capacity within the service to carry out important work on financial inclusion and a detailed analysis of housing benefit data and council tax support was being carried out to identify key areas of need within the borough. The data would help to identify the future impacts of welfare reform and to better assist those households under financial pressure. It was intended to create a framework for the delivery of a joined-up range of services which would build upon the work already achieved through the financial inclusion partnership.
- 96.4 A Member queried whether the introduction of the living wage would have an impact on the service and was advised that it would affect housing benefit and change in circumstances. This had been recognised by Officers who had been looking at a range of claims relating to people on low incomes to see how they would be impacted and it was intended to get on top of the situation as soon as possible. In response to a query regarding overpayments, the Revenues and Benefits Group Manager explained that the Council had to make every effort to recover overpayments, unfortunately, many of the claimants were under financial pressure and arrangements had to be made for them to clear the debt over time.
- 96.5 A Member indicated that he was very impressed with the improvements which had been made to the service, however, he raised concern as to how performance would be sustained over time. The Revenues and Benefits Group Manager indicated that he was mindful not to make too many more changes to the structure of the service and reiterated that the current collection rates being achieved were well above the national average. Staff now met three times per week to discuss performance and how this could be improved and they would endeavour to keep new claims processing times to 13/14 days and change in circumstances to seven days. The Member went on to query how digital inclusion had impacted on the service and he was informed that the Council had received money from the Department of Work and Pensions to help with this and work was being done with various partners on a project to enable access to services via the computers at the Advice and Information Centres in Churchdown and Brockworth. In response to a Member query as to whether there was anything else which could potentially impact on the service going forward, the Revenues and Benefits Group Manager advised that Universal Credit had the potential to have a major impact on the

Council. Although the roll-out which had been planned for the current financial year was on hold, it would effectively incorporate housing benefit into Universal Credit and mean that less resources would be required to administer this element of the service.

- 96.6 The Chair thanked the Revenues and Benefits Group Manager for his report and asked that congratulations be passed on to the team on behalf of the Committee. It was

RESOLVED That the 12 month update on improvements made as a result of the systems thinking review of Revenues and Benefits be **NOTED**.

OS.97 SCHEME FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT PLANNING COMMITTEE REVIEW REPORT

- 97.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Public Participation at Planning Committee Review Working Group, circulated at Pages No. 43-73. Members were asked to adopt the report shown at Annex A to the report as the Committee's report to Council proposing the continuation of the Scheme for Public Participation at Planning Committee.

- 97.2 The Chair of the Public Participation at Planning Committee Review Working Group advised that the review had been a very good exercise and had involved consultation with a wide range of people who used and administered the scheme. Everyone who had participated in the review had felt that the scheme should remain in place although suggestions had been made as to how it could be improved. The Democratic Services Group Manager went on to explain that Annex A set out the Working Group's draft report for consideration and adoption by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; once adopted it would be presented to the Council at its meeting on 17 May 2016. The report would be taken to the Planning Committee for consideration prior to that meeting and any comments would be submitted to the Council alongside the report in order to assist Members in making a final decision on this matter. She reiterated that there had been a lot of positive feedback from the people who had engaged with the review process and it had been a valuable experience. As well as speaking to people about their experience of using the scheme, the Working Group had also considered other schemes operating in the country. One of the main issues which had been identified was the length of time speakers were given with some people suggesting that five minutes per speaker would be more appropriate than the three minutes which was allowed under the current scheme; however, the Working Group had been of the view that three minutes was enough. It had also been suggested by some participants that there should be an opportunity for Members to ask questions of the speakers, however, the Working Group had felt that the scheme intended to give speakers an opportunity to emphasise what they considered to be the key points, and ensure that they were at the forefront of Members' minds when making a decision, and allowing questioning would open up a conversation which could detract from this purpose. On that basis, the Working Group had concluded that the opportunity to speak at Planning Committee was valued and supported open, transparent and accountable local government and the scheme should be introduced on a permanent basis, largely unchanged aside from some minor tweaks to the administration arrangements which were set out at Pages No. 50-51, Paragraph 5 of the report.

- 97.3 It was subsequently

RESOLVED That the report shown as Annex A be **ADOPTED** as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's report to Council proposing the continuation of the Scheme for Public Participation at

Planning Committee.

OS.98 FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT GROUP MONITORING REPORT AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

98.1 The report of the Interim Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager, circulated at Pages No. 74-95, provided an update on progress against the Flood Risk Management Group Action Plan. Members were asked to consider the progress made and to recommend to the Executive Committee that the Terms of Reference and Flood Risk Management Group Action Plan be adopted for the next 12 months and that progress be monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.

98.2 In terms of progress against the Flood Risk Management Group Action Plan, the Environmental Health Manager wished to highlight that work at Tirley was almost complete; work was being carried out on watercourses around Tewkesbury town centre to improve the passage of water; and work was being carried out on the Council's own asset at The Grange, Bishop's Cleeve with the Executive Committee recently resolving to help to fund an option to improve the area whilst also addressing the issue of bank collapse. At its meeting on 15 March 2016, the Flood Risk Management Working Group had considered its Terms of Reference and thought them still to be relevant and necessary but had asked that a recommendation be put to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the Committee consider progress against the Flood Risk Management Group Action Plan on an annual basis instead of quarterly as present. The Environmental Health Manager explained that, as the Working Group met on a quarterly basis, each meeting formed the basis of the quarterly report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee so moving to annual reporting would avoid repetition.

98.3 Several Members agreed that it would be more effective to move to annual reporting and it was

RESOLVED

1. That progress against the Flood Risk Management Group Action Plan be **NOTED**.
2. That it be **RECOMMENDED TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**:
 - a) that the Terms of Reference and Flood Risk Management Group Action Plan be **ADOPTED** for the next 12 months; and
 - b) that progress against the Flood Risk Management Group Action Plan be monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.

OS.99 REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS

99.1 The report of the Corporate Services Group Manager, circulated at Pages No. 96-101, provided a six month update on complaints from July to December 2015. Members were asked to consider the information provided and determine whether any further action was required.

99.2 Members were advised that the complaints within the report included formal complaints logged and managed through the corporate complaints procedure; complaints received through the Council's website; and complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman. Nine formal complaints had been recorded during the period July to December 2015 and the table at Paragraph 2.2.1 of the report gave a breakdown of the complaints received. A further breakdown of the complaints and details on the complaints trend was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. Whilst only nine formal complaints had been received, six of those had been responded to

outside of the target time; this could be for a range of reasons but it was noted that some could be quite complicated. One of the main problems was that there was no effective monitoring in place and Members were informed that a new corporate complaints procedure was due to be implemented which would operate in a similar way to the system for logging Freedom of Information requests and would ensure that they were responded to on time. As well as formal complaints, 241 complaints, comments or compliments had been logged through the Council's website; this was slightly higher than the previous six month period but not significantly so. The Local Government Ombudsman had received three complaints relating to Tewkesbury Borough Council but had agreed with the Council in terms of the responses.

99.3 A Member queried whether there were any recurring complaints and was advised that this would be something which would be picked up via the new complaint procedure and would be included in reports going forward. It was

RESOLVED That the six month update on complaints received for the period July to December 2015 be **NOTED**.

OS.100 ANNUAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORT 2015/16

100.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Corporate Services Group Manager, circulated at Pages No, 102-131. Members were asked to approve the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2015/16 attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

100.2 The Corporate Services Officer advised that it was a requirement of the Council's Constitution to report the activities of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis and the 2015/16 annual report was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2016/17 was included at Appendix B of the annual report with the outcomes of the review of the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee attached at Appendix C. Following the approval of the annual report, it would be presented by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at Council on 19 April 2016 and published on the Council's website.

100.3 It was

RESOLVED That the Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report 2015/16 be **APPROVED** as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

The meeting closed at 6:45 pm