

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Council Offices, Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury on Tuesday, 18 June 2019 commencing at 4:30 pm

Present:

Chair
Vice Chair

Councillor K J Cromwell
Councillor J W Murphy

and Councillors:

G J Bocking, C L J Carter, P A Godwin, H C McLain, P D McLain, H S Munro, P W Ockelton, J K Smith, R J G Smith, S A T Stevens, P D Surman, M J Williams and P N Workman

also present:

Councillor C Softley

OS.6 ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

OS.7 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

7.1 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.

7.2 The following declaration was made:

Councillor	Application No./Item	Nature of Interest (where disclosed)	Declared Action in respect of Disclosure
P W Ockelton	Item 11 – Disabled Facilities Grants Review Monitoring Report	Had used the Disabled Facilities Grants facility in the past.	Would speak and vote.

7.3 There were no further declarations made on this occasion.

OS.8 MINUTES

8.1 A brief debate ensued around Minute No. OS.103.4 which stated that the Head of Development Services had confirmed that the template for the report on Planning Committee overturns would be included on the Agenda for the July meeting, with the populated version being submitted at a later date following consideration by the Planning Committee. A Member expressed the view that this was inaccurate and that the populated version should be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in July; he did not understand why the report needed to be taken to Planning Committee. In response, the Head of Development Services explained that it was a requirement of the Planning Protocol for information on Planning Committee overturns to be reported to the Planning Committee and it was intended to do this once the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had agreed the template for reporting at its meeting in July to ensure Members were happy with the information being provided. The Member continued to be of the view that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been advised that the populated version would be brought to the Committee in July and, upon being put to the vote, it was agreed that the Minutes be amended to reflect that.

8.2 A Member drew attention to Minute No. OS.108.3 which referred to Lead Members being advised when Section 106 money was available within their Wards and indicated that this should refer to 'Ward' Members as opposed to 'Lead' Members.

8.3 It was subsequently

RESOLVED

1. That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2019, copies of which had been circulated, be **APPROVED** as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the following amendments:

- OS. 103.4 – The Head of Development Services confirmed that **a populated version of the template** would be included on the Agenda for the July meeting. ~~in terms of the template with the populated version being submitted at a later date following consideration by the Planning Committee.~~
- OS.108.3 - The Member questioned whether ~~Lead~~ **Ward** Members could be informed when Section 106 money was available within their Wards and the Head of Development Services undertook to provide updates before the money was allocated.

2. That the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 May 2019, copies of which had been circulated, be **APPROVED** as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

OS.9 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN

9.1 Attention was drawn to the Executive Committee Forward Plan, circulated at Pages No. 14-20. 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.

9.2 It was

RESOLVED

That the Executive Committee Forward Plan be **NOTED**.

OS.10 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20

- 10.1 Attention was drawn to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2019/20, circulated at Pages No. 21-30, which Members were asked to consider.
- 10.2 A Member sought confirmation that the Annual Review of Committee Overturns item, due to be considered at the meeting on 23 July 2019, would be amended to make clear that this would be the populated version as opposed to just the template, in accordance with the amendment made to the Minutes of the meeting on 9 April 2019 discussed earlier in the meeting. The Head of Development Services confirmed that would be the case and indicated she would provide as much information as she could, although it may not all be available in time for the next meeting. Another Member noted that a Trade Waste report was due to be brought to the Committee in January 2020 and he sought an update on what was happening. The Head of Community Services explained that a review was currently being undertaken as to the future of the service with a view to bringing the report to Members in the New Year. In the short term, a piece of work had been carried out around how to increase the customer base to ensure that the authority was in a good position should the decision be to continue with the service.
- 10.3 A Member drew attention to the pending items section of the Work Programme and queried when the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure would be coming forward given that this had been put on hold pending new national guidance. The Head of Community Services advised that Gloucestershire County Council was in the process of consulting on a new policy document; once that had been agreed, Tewkesbury Borough Council would then look to review its own policy with a view to bringing this back to the Committee early in the new year.
- 10.4 The Chair indicated that he was aware that a meeting of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee had recently taken place and he asked that Democratic Services check the dates of these meetings and ensure that updates from the Member representative be included at the appropriate place in the Work Programme.
- 10.5 It was

RESOLVED

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2019/20 be **NOTED** subject to the following amendments:

- 23 July 2019 – Annual Review of Planning Committee Overturns – wording to be amended to make clear that this would be the populated version as opposed to just the template, in accordance with the amendment made to the Minutes of the previous meeting discussed earlier in the meeting; and,
- Safeguarding Policy and Procedure – To be moved from pending items to the Agenda for the meeting on 14 January 2020.

OS.11 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGY 2017-21

- 11.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Head of Development Services, circulated at Pages No. 31-56, which asked Members to consider the progress made against the delivery of the Economic Development Strategy during year two, and the actions identified for 2019/20, and to recommend to the Executive Committee that authority to make amendments to the strategy be delegated to the Lead Member for Economic Development/Promotion in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Development Services.

- 11.2 The Head of Democratic Services advised that it was not possible to delegate authority to the Lead Member to make changes to the strategy, therefore, part two of the recommendation set out in the report should read 'To recommend to the Executive Committee that authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Development Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Economic Development/Promotion, to make amendments to the strategy'.
- 11.3 The Economic and Community Development Manager advised that the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2017-21 had been adopted by the Executive Committee in June 2017. The strategy had been developed by an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group and was informed by an employment land review, economic assessment and business survey carried out by Bruton Knowles. The strategy was based on five key priorities: employment land planning; transport infrastructure improvement; business growth support; promoting Tewkesbury Borough; and employability, education and training. These priorities were reflected in an annual action plan. The report outlined the work from the previous year and, as set out at Page No. 33, Paragraph 3.2 of the report, provided key actions for the year ahead. Members were advised that a new strategy was due to be produced in 2021; however, due to a focus on growth and a number of changes around economic development, for example, new initiatives such as Garden Towns and the High Street Fund, it was requested that authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Development Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Economic Development/Promotion, to update the current strategy in the interim.
- 11.4 A Member indicated that she could see Officers had worked hard, and there were a number of actions, but there were no quantifiable outputs in the report so she would like to see the inclusion of performance metrics to demonstrate what had been achieved. The Economic and Community Development Manager indicated that the performance tracker, included as part of the performance management report which was the next item on the Agenda, gave information on the unemployment rate, number of business births etc. and he would be more than happy to reflect that within this report in future. The Growth and Enterprise Manager advised that the Growth Hub set targets around jobs created and interactions with businesses so those figures could also be included.
- 11.5 A Member went on to question whether there was a realistic timescale for the work around supporting the Gloucestershire Airport business expansion. He noted that a lot of work was already being done around apprenticeships but surely it was necessary to expand supporting services as well and he queried whether that was being considered as part of the Tewkesbury Borough Plan process. In response, the Head of Development Services advised that the Tewkesbury Borough Plan dealt with the policies in more detail and would specifically look at promotion and development of the airport, from both a development management and a business growth and economic activity point of view, in order to create the conditions for that growth to occur. A Member queried whether development would be on the airport site itself or in the surrounding areas and was advised that the proposals in the Tewkesbury Borough Plan set out the policy framework to create a degree of flexibility to bring sites forward on the airport which was partly in the Green Belt and therefore subject to certain policy restrictions.
- 11.6 With regard to the action around supporting business parks in their growth plans, a Member questioned how many were likely to come forward and where they would be situated and she was advised that the majority were extensions to existing rural business centres and business parks. The Head of Development Services indicated that the draft Tewkesbury Borough Plan was due to be taken to Council in July 2019 and included a generic policy about the growth of rural businesses, as well as identifying expansion opportunities at some rural centres, and she undertook to provide this to Members.

- 11.7 A Member noted from Page No. 37 of the report that one of the actions for 2018/19 was the commencement of a Joint Core Strategy review and, whilst the 'progress' section stated that this had commenced, the actions for 2019/20 included 'commence JCS review' so he was unsure whether or not this had started. The Head of Development Services confirmed the review was underway and a meeting of the Planning Policy Reference Panel would be held over the next couple of weeks. Another Member drew attention to Page No. 39 and the action around promoting traffic flow improvements, which included an initiative with Highways England regarding strategic routes and road implementation schemes, which had been given a smiley face and he raised concern that this could not be the case given that there was no mention of the Innsworth/Twigworth link road which was a major piece of infrastructure. In response the Head of Development Services provided assurance that this was recognised as a key piece of infrastructure and clarified that the smiley face reflected the broad work as opposed to specific projects. The Member accepted the work that had been done but felt it was important to reference that which was outstanding.
- 11.8 A Member noted that a key priority for 2019/20 was establishing a J9 Business Group to support the masterplan and Garden Town delivery and she questioned what type of businesses that would include. In response, the Growth and Enterprise Manager explained that it was hoped to form a group from the businesses which attended the business breakfast meetings held at the end of each month. The Member queried how many businesses would be on the group and was informed that 20 would be a manageable number. Another Member drew attention to Page No. 47 of the report which stated that a range of courses had been delivered throughout the year through the Growth Hub and she sought clarification as to how many. The Growth and Enterprise Manager advised that 20 courses had been delivered to date, focusing on social media and marketing to assist business with their business plans, and it was hoped to run two per month going forward. The Member questioned how the success of the courses was evaluated and was advised that this was largely gauged through demand and feedback - there was a waiting list for the courses and a survey was conducted at the end of each one.
- 11.9 A Member indicated that he had made a number of observations which Officers may wish to consider in their refresh of the strategy. He noted that no specific reference had been made to the potential for Junction 10; it had been referenced in the broader document with regard to the proposal for a cyber park and the investment the government had put into local colleges and it seemed to him there was a significant opportunity in terms of generating both cyber and engineering opportunities given Tewkesbury Borough's historic base in those areas. He was also conscious that the announcement of the commitment to net zero carbon emissions would be a significant economic strain but pointed out the economic opportunities in technology and development and suggested that should potentially be looked at in relation to the Junction 10 facility. He felt that the detailed action plan contained a lot of good work but noted there was no reference to leisure opportunities other than tourism and he referred to Cheltenham Brewery and the significant business rate and rent reductions being offered there. In terms of airport growth, he raised concern that this had been discussed for many years with no real outcomes aside from site growth. He was excited about the LEADER grant programme but felt it was important to look at the next tranche of rural economic growth; he welcomed the introduction of the Growth Hub and questioned whether there was potential for growth 'spokes' coming out of the Hub as, although it was right to focus on Tewkesbury, there was also a lot of rural potential. The Member indicated that he would be happy to discuss his thoughts with Officers in more detail following the meeting.

- 11.10 A Member noted that one of the actions for 2019/20 was to develop plans for an increased heritage offer and he felt this should include Gwinnett's Tomb in Down Hatherley - Button Gwinnett was the second American signatory of the declaration of independence and therefore this was a significant historical site. The Economic and Community Development Manager confirmed that this attraction was being promoted and a guide had been produced and was on display, furthermore, conversations had taken place with the Council's Community Funding Officer around the need for funding to make more of the tomb.
- 11.11 With regard to the regeneration of Tewkesbury Town Centre, a Member questioned how realistic a retail development would be on the Spring Gardens site. In response the Economic and Community Development Manager advised that a national report comparing this year with the previous year indicated that trade was 5% down across the country. The Head of Development Services explained that this was why diversification was so important and the High Street Fund bid would help to ensure the Council had the opportunity to maximise the potential of the High Street and improve the public realm to create an environment that would flourish and increase footfall. Spring Gardens was a development project that was yet to finally emerge but she stressed it was all about improving the quality of the town and supporting traders where appropriate. Members were also advised that the High Street Fund bid asked for other uses, for instance, leisure uses and events, which would make it a vibrant place for the community. In response to a query, the Growth and Enterprise Manager confirmed that the Growth Hub supported businesses across the borough, not just in Tewkesbury Town, for instance, she had recently assisted a business in Bishop's Cleeve to occupy one of the empty units in the village and events were often carried out 'on the road'. A Member suggested that 'Welcome to Tewkesbury Borough' signs would be beneficial in terms of the action to promote Tewkesbury Borough and the Economic and Community Development Manager confirmed that this was something which had been investigated previously and had been found to be cost prohibitive, furthermore, people tended to visit places within the borough as opposed to visiting Tewkesbury Borough itself. Notwithstanding this, he would be happy to revisit this if Members wished.
- 11.12 A Member noted that the report contained a lot of smiley faces and questioned whether this was an accurate reflection of strategy delivery. In response the Economic and Community Development Manager advised that it was a very different climate than when the strategy had first been produced, particularly in terms of retail, and there were certain aspects which the team would like to develop, for instance, events across the borough and supporting tourism businesses, particularly with regard to accommodation. The Member noted that the performance management report, which was the next item on the Agenda, showed one of the tourism actions with a sad face and he questioned why this was not reflected in this report. In response, Members were advised that the strategy was not exactly the same as the measures in the performance report but this was something which Officers would be looking to align as the strategy changed in order to give a better picture.
- 11.13 The Chair noted that Officers had requested the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to recommend to the Executive Committee that authority be delegated to Officers, in consultation with the Lead Member, to make changes to the strategy and he questioned what type of amendments they would be, whether they would be brought back to Members and what the procedure would be going forward. In response, the Economic and Community Development Manager explained that the strategy was due to be reviewed in 2021 to reflect the new Council Plan; however, there were certain things which had not even existed in 2017 when the strategy had been written which may need to be addressed, therefore, the delegated authority would enable minor changes to be made in the interim.

- 11.14 A Member questioned what 'Fastershire' was and why Members had not been informed of it. The Economic and Community Development Manager advised that 'Fastershire' was essentially the roll-out of broadband to improve speeds, and therefore capacity, for residents and businesses and he undertook to circulate a Member Update in relation to this following the meeting. It was subsequently

RESOLVED

1. That the progress made against the delivery of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy during year two and the actions identified for 2019/20 be **NOTED**.
2. That it be **RECOMMENDED TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE** that authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Development Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Economic Development/Promotion, to make amendments to the strategy.

OS.12 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT - QUARTER 4 AND FULL YEAR 2018/19

- 12.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 57-109, attached performance management information for quarter four of 2018/19. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was asked to review and scrutinise the performance information and, where appropriate, identify any issues to refer to the Executive Committee for clarification or further action to be taken.
- 12.2 Members were advised that this was the fourth quarterly monitoring report for 2018/19 and progress against delivering the objectives and actions for each of the Council Plan priorities was reported through the Performance Tracker, attached at Appendix 1 to the report. Key actions for the quarter were highlighted at Paragraph 2.3 of the report and included the strong performance of garden waste renewals with over 17,000 stickers sold, generating income of £820,000; progression of the Spring Gardens project in accordance with key milestones with a report due to be taken to the Executive Committee in July; input from Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the development and approval of a new Workforce Development Strategy; a Place Approach Member seminar held in the final quarter of the year which had resulted in it being tailored to what worked most effectively in each of the three areas; 'making' of the Down Hatherley, Norton and Twigworth Neighbourhood Development Plan at Council on 28 May resulting in a total of six 'made' Neighbourhood Development Plans across the borough; and the successful bid for Garden Town status for the Ashchurch area. Due to the complex nature of the actions being delivered, it was inevitable that some would not progress as smoothly or quickly as envisaged and the details of these were set out at Paragraph 2.4 of the report. In terms of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), Members were informed that the status of each indicator was set out at Paragraph 3.2 of the report. Of the 17 indicators with targets, nine had been achieved, two were on par with the target and six had not been achieved as at the end of quarter four. Key areas of interest were included at Paragraph 3.3 of the report.

- 12.3 During the debate which ensued, the following queries and comments were made in relation to the Performance Tracker:

Priority: Finance and Resources

P70 – Objective 3 – Action b)
Undertake a review of the discretionary trade waste service to ensure it is operating on a viable commercial level – A Member noted that the commentary for this action stated that this included an action plan for increased marketing of the service and he questioned if this was necessary at this stage given that the service was under review.

The Head of Community Services explained that the Council had a legal duty to deal with trade waste. The service was currently not far from a break-even point and the review had demonstrated that the customer base could be increased quite easily; as such, it was important that the service was in as strong a position as possible should Members resolve to retain it in-house.

Priority: Promoting and Supporting Economic Growth

P72 – Objective 1 – Action c)
Conduct a retail study in partnership with Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucester City Council – A Member noted that a dedicated consultant had been employed to undertake the study but raised concern that Tewkesbury Borough was very different to Cheltenham Borough and Gloucester City. She also questioned whether the consultant would be able to deliver the study on time.

The Head of Development Services explained that it was important to keep a relatively similar methodology as it would be used to inform the Joint Core Strategy policy. She agreed that Tewkesbury Borough was a very different area, with a different customer base, and she provided assurance that the methodology was sophisticated enough to recognise this. She did not believe there would be an issue with the timeframe, certainly in relation to formation of the policy which was the purpose of the work.

P75 – Objective 4 – Action b)
Develop a programme with partners to progress Healings Mill and other key development opportunity sites to support the regeneration of Tewkesbury – A Member questioned who owned Healings Mill.

The Head of Development Services confirmed that Healings Mill was owned privately by a subsidiary company of the St Francis Group.

P77 – Objective 5 – Action c)
Review the tourism resources to maximise the tourist provisions in the borough – A Member noted that this had been given a revised target date of October 2019 and he questioned whether resources had been reviewed in order to achieve the new date.

The Head of Development Services advised that there were many issues which were changing the face of tourism locally and nationally and consideration was being given to what other authorities were doing in terms of digitalisation, for example, installing interactive screens - similar to those used in shopping centres - at tourist locations and other hotspots across the borough. She hoped to be in a position to update Members on the Old Hat Shop shortly and indicated that discussions were taking place with Winchcombe Town Trust regarding the Tourist Information Centre following its successful bid for LEADER funding to develop a new heritage centre. Whilst the October target date was achievable in terms of being able to present the Council's position, it was reliant on external factors in terms of how far things had progressed.

Key Performance Indicators for Priority: Economic Development

P77 – KPI 1 – Employment rates 16-64 year olds.

A Member congratulated Officers on the outturn of 84.7% which was significantly higher than both the 2017/18 outturn of 74.3% and the national rate of 75% and a fantastic achievement.

P78 - KPI 5 - Number of visits to Tewkesbury Tourist Information Centre (TIC) and KPI 6 - Number of visits to Winchcombe Tourist Information Centre (TIC) – A Member noted that the figures were slightly down and he sought a view on the future of the TICs, particularly given the increasing reliance on electronic methods of communication.

The Head of Development Services advised that one of the key pieces of work for the forthcoming year was around a strategic approach to tourism and keeping up with the latest technology and customer demand. She pointed out that the TICs were not just about information but also acted as a welcome point in each town.

Priority: Growing and Supporting Communities

P80 – Objective 1 – Action d)
Develop housing growth plans associated with the Junction 9 masterplan – A Member questioned whether improvements to Junction 9 and the surrounding area would open it up to speculative development and whether that was a legitimate concern.

The Head of Development Services explained that speculative development was always a concern which was why the preparation of the Tewkesbury Borough Plan and the review of the Joint Core Strategy were so important. Although planning applications may come forward, they would need to be considered on their own planning merits and meet the relevant transport assessments etc. In response to a query as to whether Members could be updated on any speculative planning applications coming forward on a weekly or monthly basis, the Head of Development Services explained that all Members could sign-up to receive notifications about planning applications in their Ward - or across the borough as a whole should they wish - and she would be happy to go through this with the Member outside of the meeting.

P82 – Objective 3 – Action a)
Monitor annually the delivery of homes within the borough – A Member questioned whether this figure had been rolled-over from 2017/18 given that there was often a time lag between planning permission being granted and homes being built.

Confirmation was provided that the total of 945 new homes represented homes that had been delivered in the borough between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019.

P82 – Objective 3 – Action c)
Produce a business case for improvements to the A40 at Longford, including improvements to Longford roundabout – A Member questioned how the local authority was able to deliver the link.

The Head of Development Services indicated that some Members would be aware that the Council had submitted a funding bid for this infrastructure at the same time as the bid for the bridge at Ashchurch but it had been unsuccessful. The Council was not able to deliver the A40 link itself due to the cost, therefore it was looking for other funding opportunities and had been discussed in the conversations around the improvements to Junction 10 but nothing concrete had been agreed. At this stage, she could only reassure Members that Officers were looking into it and would take any opportunities that came forward.

P83 – Objective 4 – Action b)
Achieve the Council's affordable homes target by working with local housing providers – A Member congratulated Officers on delivering 277 new affordable homes and questioned whether the target – currently set at 200 – should be increased.

The Head of Community Services confirmed that the target would be reviewed. In response to a query as to where the target had come from, he indicated that he believed it was a stretch target, although it had been set before he had joined the authority. The new target would be informed by the housing needs assessments and it was noted that the rural assessments were being carried out currently; the Council's Housing Strategy was due to end in 2020 so now was the right time to do this work and set a new target. In response to a query as to whether the strategy review could be brought forward to align with the Joint Core Strategy and Tewkesbury Borough Plan, the Head of Community Services indicated that it had been set as a five-year strategy but it was something he would look at.

P84 – Objective 4 – Action c)
Work in partnership to deliver the Council's Housing and Homeless Strategy – A Member asked for up-to-date figures on rough sleepers and questioned how many had migrated from Cheltenham or Gloucester; he also queried whether any mental health checks were carried out.

The Head of Community Services advised that a rough sleeper count was carried out annually on a national basis. Tewkesbury Borough had extremely low numbers of rough sleepers with only one recorded in the previous year. He gave assurance that Officers provided all of the support they could and worked very closely with partners to give financial and medical advice; however, the Council tended to focus more on prevention of homelessness and people at risk. Unfortunately, there was no information available as to whether rough sleepers were transient, and he pointed out that it was not unusual to find that some rough sleepers actually did have a place to stay.

In response to a query as to whether the Council was represented on the board at Bromford Housing Association, as it had been previously on the Severn Vale Housing Society board, the Chief Executive advised that the whole system had effectively changed and was now regulated by Homes England; as such, there was no automatic place on boards following stock transfer so the Council was not represented and was not permitted to have any such representation.

Key Performance Indicators for Priority: Growing and Supporting Communities

P87 – KPI 12– Percentage of ‘major’ applications determined within 13 weeks or alternative period agreed with the applicant – and KPI 14 – Percentage of ‘other’ applications determined within eight weeks or alternative period agreed with the applicant – A Member noted that, whilst performance in relation to KPI 12 had improved, performance in respect of KPI 14 had deteriorated and he questioned whether improving one had a negative impact on the other.

The Head of Development Services provided assurance that this was not the case. She clarified that ‘major’ applications were for 10 dwellings or more, ‘minor’ applications were for nine dwellings or fewer and ‘other’ applications covered householder applications, certificate of lawfulness applications, conditional discharge applications etc. Major applications were clearly a focus for the Planning department and required significant Officer resources; notwithstanding this, other applications were wide-ranging and could also generate a lot of work. She explained that the team was currently trialling a new process for certificate of lawfulness applications - some authorities were able to turn around those applications within 14 days as they did not require as much consultation as other application types. With this in mind, she hoped to see an improvement in respect of ‘other’ applications by the end of the first quarter of 2019/20.

Priority: Customer Focused Services

P92 – Objective 3 – Action b) Introduce the option for paperless billing for council tax and business rates – A Member questioned whether there was a resource issue within IT services which needed to be addressed in order for the project to be delivered.

The Head of Corporate Services advised that an IT Strategy was currently being developed and there was money available to improve the infrastructure. Notwithstanding this, he clarified that the issues with the paperless billing project were not IT-related.

Key Performance Indicators for Priority: Customer Focused Services

P95 – KPI 19 – Community groups assisted with funding advice – A Member felt that this was fantastic work and asked whether it was possible to have a list of the groups which had been supported and their objectives and outcomes.

The Head of Development Services undertook to provide a list to Members and confirmed that £2M of community grants had been received over the last two years.

P98 – KPI 28 – Percentage of waste recycled or composted – A Member questioned why the outturn had reduced.

The Head of Community Services indicated that Page No. 61 of the report incorrectly stated that 52.6% of waste had been recycled and composted during 2018/19 when in fact that was the quarter four outturn; the full year outturn was 54.72% which was on a par with 2017/18 (54.55%) and above the 52% target.

A Member questioned how Tewkesbury Borough Council compared to other local authorities and what the target was for the current year. In response, the Head of Community Services advised that it was in the top quartile and he undertook to provide the 2019/20 target following the meeting. The Member also asked if the target was increased year on year and was advised that it was a countywide target set with the Gloucestershire Joint Waste Committee and it was generally increased.

A Member understood that Stroud District Council had an exceptionally high success rate in terms of percentage of waste recycled or composted and he questioned what that authority did differently. The Head of Community Services expressed the view that this was likely to be down to social demographics and the willingness of residents to recycle, particularly with regard to food waste. A Member queried whether the Council had any educational policies in respect of waste, and encouraging people to recycle more, and whether there were any plans to increase the number of items that could be recycled. Members were informed that various national and countywide campaigns ran throughout the year and the Committee would receive details of those in the report from the Gloucestershire Joint Waste Team. In terms of recycling more, the Head of Community Services explained that the waste hierarchy set out that re-using products and reducing waste should be encouraged alongside recycling which could be difficult to expand as there was a limited market for certain products, for example, there was no local market for hard plastics so those products ended up in landfill. Notwithstanding this, consideration was

always being given to what else could be done, for instance, Officers were currently looking at the potential for recycling small electrical items.

A Member noted that performance had been hindered by the increased level of contamination and he sought clarification as to what this meant and what was being done to address it. The Head of Community Services explained that contamination was often non-recyclables being put into recycling bins which could result in waste being rejected when it was tested at the Materials Recovery Facility in Avonmouth. There had been a particular issue in the last quarter of 2018/19 and Officers were trying to identify exactly what that was in order to work with residents to ensure it did not continue. Notwithstanding this, the outturn for the year was positive following a strong performance on the first three quarters and he pointed out that the direction of travel for this indicator should be up rather than down as set out in the report. A Member indicated that recycling had reduced from 56.53% in quarter one to 52.6% in quarter four and, should it continue at that rate, it would be below the 52% target within the next two quarters; on that basis, he questioned whether any actions for improvement were needed. In response, the Head of Community Services advised that discussions were taking place with other authorities in the county about the best measurements for recycle.

- 12.4 Turning to the financial information, the Head of Finance and Asset Management informed Members that the figures at the bottom of Page No. 102 in relation to the One Legal service were incorrect and showed the previous years' data. He confirmed that, for 2018/19, there was an overall saving of £95,000, which was £9,000 less than the figure set out in the papers. Officers were working this through to ensure there was no impact on the Statement of Accounts but Members should bear this in mind during the presentation of the report.
- 12.5 Members were advised that the general fund revenue outturn position for the full year 2018/19 showed a surplus of £2.68M. This was a significant increase against the quarter three surplus of £664,478 and could primarily be attributed to strong performance in treasury and commercial activities; additional business rates retention, including the impact of the successful 100% retention pilot; and substantial external grant funding being received. The table at Page No. 62, Paragraph 4.3 of the report summarised the main elements which had generated the surplus - particular reference was made to the £159,899 underspend on employees which was largely due to staff turnover and the time lag between replacements with new staff often starting on a lower spinal column salary point. In addition, 'premises' was underspent as a result of savings on utilities and the

release of New Homes Bonus monies to support the asset maintenance programme in future years. Payments to third parties was showing a significant overspend of £543,862 as a result of work undertaken in areas such as the Community Infrastructure Levy and Joint Core Strategy, where partner finance or reserves existed to cover the cost, and also due to the overspend on the Ubico contract, detailed at Paragraphs 4.7-4.10 of the report; this had been of concern to the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Committees during the last quarter and both had requested more information and justification. A full breakdown of expenditure by service on the contract sum, including a variance analysis by subjective heading, was attached at Appendix 5 to the report. The total Ubico overspend for the year was £268,866, of which £108,980 was in relation to employment costs which was an ongoing cost largely attributable to increased agency staff costs to cover sickness, much of which was long-term and due to the nature of the job. Another area of concern was the £93,765 overspend on transport costs, the majority of which related to tyres and Ubico had produced a briefing note on this, attached at Appendix 6 to the report, which set out that it was attributable to the fact that the fleet had been purchased at the same time and the tyres wore at the same rate; this had not been foreseen in the budget that had been produced for the financial year. Other factors contributing to the overspend included hire of vehicles, vehicle cleaning and spare parts specific to the fleet. Whilst it was the type of service that could attract large overspends, it was disappointing that the quarter three position had come as a surprise to the Council and Ubico had been working on an improvement programme within its operational and financial management to ensure timely communication of detailed information going forward. This included an overhaul of the reporting pack being issued, improved controls with regard to purchase ordering and financial training for supervisors and management. It was hoped this would help both Ubico and the Council to understand the position sooner and in greater detail.

- 12.6 The Head of Finance and Asset Management went on to advise that treasury performance had been strong in 2018/19 contributing to an overall surplus of £70,758, the majority of which was from investments with around £137,000 generated from the portfolio. This was offset by the increased amount of borrowing which was £67,000 over budget as a result of the acquisition of two new commercial properties at a cost of £8.5M; however, those properties had generated an additional rental income of £281,000. For the second year running, the Council was able to report a positive position on the retained business rates scheme which was partly due to a reduction in the number of appeals and also as a result of substantial grants from central government to cover the cost of the changes to the scheme in recent years. In addition to the base position with respect to retained business rates, Tewkesbury Borough Council was one of 10 members of the 100% business rate retention pilot during 2018/19 which had resulted in a net gain of £14.272M for Gloucestershire with an additional windfall of £882,000 for Tewkesbury Borough Council which was fantastic news. Overall, the Council was able to transfer a gross total of £3.46M to reserves. In terms of reserves, the net position from existing reserves and developer contributions was £615,042 which had allowed the Council to raise its total revenue reserves to £14.69M as at 31 March 2019. The significant surplus had allowed the creation of new reserves and the topping up of existing reserves to meet future needs or specific projects including a new £500,000 borough growth reserve; an additional £250,000 allocated to the working balance of the Council; an additional £133,000 allocated to the Medium Term Financial Strategy reserve which was now at £1M; an additional £200,000 to help with the vehicle replacement programme in addition to the planned contribution of £400,000; an additional sum for the business transformation programme of the Council; and a planned contribution of £175,000 to the commercial property portfolio reserve. A breakdown of the reserves was attached at Appendix 4 to the report and it was noted that they would also include substantial set asides for specific purposes including delivery of the Joint Core Strategy, transparency funding, clean high

streets and exit from the European Union.

- 12.7 The final part of the report related to the capital programme and Members were advised that the level of capital expenditure incurred in 2018/19 totalled £10.67M, of which £8.5M was on the purchase of further investment properties – although this was less than the budgeted amount of £15.1M with the balance of £6.6M being carried forward – £1.1M on refurbishment of the Public Services Centre and £0.5M on disabled facilities grants. In summary, during 2018/19 the Council had utilised £1.05M of capital reserves, £0.9M of capital grants, £0.2M of revenue contributions and £8.5M from borrowing. The balance on capital reserves, both receipts and grants, had reduced to £1.2M as at 31 March 2019 and the commitments going forward were substantially in excess of that amount and would require borrowing. The summarised capital programme was attached at Appendix 3 to the report.
- 12.8 A Member noted that the Council had utilised £8.5M from borrowing in 2018/19 and she questioned how much money had been borrowed in total and the risk associated with that. In response, the Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that total borrowing amounted to £28M due to the commercial property investments that had been acquired over the last three years. The loans were secured 50/50 between short-term and long-term – the Council had taken advantage of the very low rate for short-term loans and had taken out long-term loans with the Public Works Loan Board. There was a risk around the commercial properties themselves and ensuring income was being generated to cover the borrowing cost; however, he confirmed that the Council did employ an advisor and looked for properties with long-term tenants and secure revenue streams to mitigate risk. The average term was nine or 10 years and the contracts stipulated that only upward rent reviews were permitted. It was noted that a reserve was available to improve properties if required – refurbishment could be an incentive to attract new tenants. The Head of Finance and Asset Management stressed there would always be risk attached to investing in property but he felt the Council was investing sensibly, and in the right way, and the external auditors were very happy with the method being used compared to a number of other authorities which were taking far more risks. Ultimately, any risk was far outweighed by the financial benefits.
- 12.9 In response to a query as to whether there was a recommended level of reserves for local authorities, Members were advised that it was for each authority to decide what was prudent. When the CIPFA resilience index had come into being, it allowed comparison of earmarked and unallocated reserves in order to give a feel of where the authority stood – whilst Tewkesbury Borough Council was in the middle in terms of earmarked reserves, it was at the lower end when it came to uncommitted reserves and did need to improve in this regard. He reiterated that the total revenue reserves were £14.69M and this was the highest he had known it to be. The Chief Executive felt it should be borne in mind that much of the money was already earmarked for a function and was not available to spend freely. It was important to ensure reserves were healthy to allow the Council to do what it needed to do going forward, particularly in terms of facilitating the growth which the borough was expecting over the coming years, and to provide some protection against government uncertainty. A Member presumed that the Executive Committee received more detailed feedback in respect of reserves and felt that it would be helpful to see a breakdown of the delivery of reserves against commitments along with timescales and targets. In response, the Head of Finance and Asset Management indicated he would be happy to prepare a report to bring back to a future meeting.

- 12.10 A Member drew attention to the general fund outturn at Appendix 2 and sought an explanation in relation to the £3.9M surplus on transfer payments in the benefits service. The Head of Finance and Asset Management confirmed that the figures were correct and related to housing benefits payments; in previous years this had been around £19/20M but a further drop was anticipated the following year to around £13.6M. The £3.9M surplus meant there was a reduction in the amount that could be recovered from the government but housing benefit did effectively balance itself out. Another Member went on to question what budget was allocated for planning appeals as he could not see these figures in the papers and questioned why the Council appointed barristers when the service could be provided in-house by One Legal. The Head of Development Services explained that the cost of appeals was effectively contained within the Development Services budget, albeit not specified, and she confirmed that approximately £50,000 per annum was spent on planning appeals. She went on to advise that, if the appellant was using a barrister, it was often prudent for the Council to provide a barrister as well.
- 12.11 A Member sought a brief explanation on the Council's relationship with Ubico. The Head of Finance and Asset Management clarified that Ubico was a local authority-owned teckal company which was owned 100% by shareholders, of which there were currently seven including Tewkesbury Borough Council. The vehicle fleet was owned by the Council and this was one of the provisions within the contract. With regard to the Ubico overspend, a Member drew attention to Page No. 107, Paragraph 2.7 of the briefing note at Appendix 6 to the report which stated that, from August 2018, Ubico undertook a series of measures to make sure that drivers were appropriately inspecting their vehicles and he questioned what had been done before that as it was his understanding that drivers must undertake safety checks before leaving the depot. He also questioned whether there would be a cost implication from vehicles travelling to the Energy from Waste plant at Javelin Park as opposed to the landfill site at Wingmoor Farm. The Head of Community Services stressed that the briefing note focused on tyre checks and he confirmed absolutely that drivers had been carrying out daily checks on the vehicles each morning prior to that date and that this data was all recorded and audited. In terms of Javelin Park, he believed there would be a beneficial impact in terms of vehicle damage, and some routes would be shorter than they were currently; however, it would be a different type of driving, i.e. on the motorway rather than minor roads, so it would be necessary to assess this after a period of time to establish whether any action needed to be taken. The Member questioned when the Council would start to take waste to Javelin Park and was advised that Javelin Park was contracted to take waste from the end of June but the Council was likely to start delivering between 1 and 3 July. In response to another query as to why so many tyres had needed to be replaced at the same time, the Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that Ubico estimated that the average life of tyres was approximately 20,000 miles and they would generally require replacement after 15/16 months – the Council's fleet had been purchased in 2017 so this should have been anticipated and the budget had been amended to ensure there was a proper designation going forward. A Member drew attention to Page No. 109, Paragraph 3.11 of the report, which stated that Ubico's introduction of driving assessors may also help to reduce tyre damage and wear further by improving the skill level of drivers to reduce incidents of mounting kerbs when manoeuvring and improving driving style overall and he questioned whether this was really necessary. The Head of Community Services confirmed that there were potential savings to be made as any erratic driving styles could be identified via a driver assessment. A Member indicated that he often observed refuse collectors in his area and witnessed them driving over pavements etc. in order to get the job done as quickly as possible – this not only led to premature vehicle deterioration but also had a negative impact on highways and pavements and he questioned whether spot checks were undertaken. The Head of Community Services explained the Audit Team regularly carried out fleet checks, Ubico also had its own auditors and third-party checks were undertaken by the

Driver and Vehicle Safety Authority (DVSA) to ensure compliance with the operator licence; this was based on a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating and Ubico was currently green. It was intended to establish a small Member Working Group to look at all aspects of the Ubico contract in order to ensure Members had confidence that value for money was being achieved, and to provide assurance that everything was being done as it should be, and he confirmed that Terms of Reference would be brought back to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

- 12.12 A Member went on to question whether Officers were happy with the briefing note at Appendix 6 and she was curious as to why the Council was responsible for the overspend on tyres as she thought it should have been factored in to the budget. She also queried whether it would be cheaper to hire vehicles as opposed to purchasing them in future. In terms of hire vs. purchase, the Head of Finance and Asset Management explained that an exercise had been undertaken in 2017 when the fleet had been replaced and the Council's financial circumstances had meant that purchase had been considered the better option as this came from capital as opposed to revenue. At the time, one third of the £200,000 budget had been set aside for maintenance, including tyres, as an agreed indicator in the contract; the overall budget had now been increased to £150,000 and money was included in the reserves for vehicle replacement. In response to a query as to whether Officers had confidence in Ubico to rectify the problems going forward, the Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that the processes and procedures for monitoring and managing all pointed in the right direction and the structure for reporting was as he would expect - Officers would get to see the information at the end of quarter one. He had been involved in the selection process for the new Financial Controller who had been in post for six months and was starting to make positive changes. Notwithstanding this, he reiterated that this was the type of service where overspends may occur and that should be borne in mind going forward.

- 12.13 Having considered the information provided, it was

RESOLVED That the performance management information for quarter 4 of 2018/19 be **NOTED**.

OS.13 ENVIRO-CRIME ANNUAL REPORT

- 13.1 The report of the Head of Community Services, circulated at Pages No. 110-136, provided an annual summary of progress made tackling enviro-crime in 2018/19. Members were asked to consider the report and action plan.
- 13.2 The Head of Community Services explained that responsibility for enviro-crime rested with the Environmental Health Team. This was a small but very busy team which also carried out food hygiene inspections in over 750 food establishments across the borough; undertook environmental protection work such as monitoring air quality and contaminated land as well as commenting on planning applications; supported the licensing service; delivered Disabled Facilities Grants; and reacted to service requests. The Environmental Health Manager advised that the original action plan for tackling enviro-crime was attached at Appendix 1 to the report; this had focused on putting in place the procedures and general infrastructure to allow a more robust, targeted approach to enviro-crime. This was built upon in the revised plan, attached at Appendix 2 to the report, which also focused more on making connections within local communities and developing joint working arrangements with partner agencies. Enviro-crimes had originally been considered collectively but, during 2018/19, they had been separated out into individual enviro-crimes in order to allow comparison and identification of trends going forward.
- 13.3 With regard to fly-tipping, Members were advised that majority of fly-tips reported were not witnessed and did not appear to contain any relevant information that would allow a further investigation to take place, for example, residential or

business addresses, therefore it was more difficult to secure a prosecution; however, it was hoped that increased Officer presence across the borough would give more chance of catching offenders. When the last report had been presented to the Committee in January, Members had been informed that a case involving a number of waste offences had been taken to court in November 2018 but one of the individuals had not attended, therefore this had not been resolved and a warrant had been issued for their arrest. Over the Christmas period, both parties had been arrested with one pleading guilty and the other claiming their innocence. Another court date had been set but the individual had absconded again and the Environmental Health Team was working with the Police to find them. In terms of littering, the Environmental Health Manager explained that it was a criminal offence for a person to drop, throw down, leave or deposit litter in a public place and offenders could receive a fixed penalty fine of up to £75 so this was something he would encourage people to report. In terms of littering from a vehicle, a change in legislation meant that this was the responsibility of the registered keeper so offenders could be actively pursued. With respect to dog fouling, a Public Space Protection Order had been introduced in July 2018 which made it an offence for any person in control of a dog to fail to pick up after the dog or fail to produce, on request, a means of picking up after the dog. Offenders could be issued with a fixed penalty of £100. Parish Councils were working with the Environmental Health Team to replace existing 'no dog fouling' signs across the borough to reflect the new legislation and were also accompanying Officers during patrols of 'hotspots'. It was noted that the number of abandoned vehicles had remained relatively consistent throughout the year, although there had been a significant reduction in quarter three when the Police had carried out several operations targeting vehicles. In terms of noise, Officers now had access to a new piece of noise monitoring equipment which could easily be put into properties to gather evidence, as well as a remote control to enable people with mobility issues to carry out recording, and these were both being well-used.

- 13.4 In general terms, the Council had been quite successful with enforcement but it was important to bear in mind the resources required to gather evidence, conduct interviews under caution and ultimately put a case together. There were currently nine cases which were likely to result in fixed penalty or prosecution. Community engagement was vitally important and Officers were working closely with Town and Parish Councils and community groups. It was noted that a specific project was being carried out in Coriander Drive where there were a variety of different issues and its success would be dependent on various agencies working together to take a holistic approach.
- 13.5 A Member questioned why court cases and prosecutions were not publicised in the local media and the Corporate Services Manager advised that the Communications Team did put this information on social media. She felt there was a need to work more closely with the Environmental Health Team to push these messages out every time, although she pointed out that the Gloucestershire Echo and the Citizen were not always interested in these stories for print so this was likely to be online. Another Member expressed the view that a lot of people within his area did not know how to do anything about enviro-crimes and he queried if anything could be done to make it easier to report incidents. The Head of Community Services advised that the Report It facility was on the front page of the Council website and the vast majority of enviro-crimes were reported in that way. There was no reason why social media could not be used more to engage with the public and he confirmed that the team would be putting together targeted social media messages over the next two months in relation to the Public Space Protection Order which would include how these enviro-crimes could be reported. The Chief Executive stressed that Officers tried to make it easy to report issues and made use of social media and Borough News etc. to promote actions to reduce enviro-crimes but he indicated that Members could also report incidents on

behalf of their residents and Officers would be happy to work with Members on that.

13.6 A Member questioned whether consideration had been given to car idling as an enviro-crime as current legislation allowed the local authority to issue a fixed penalty fine of £20 and he suggested that would be worth exploring at certain times, for instance, during the school run. The Head of Community Services indicated that this had been mentioned to him earlier in the week and it was not something which he had considered before but he was happy to look at the legislation to see if this could be done within existing resources. Another Member noted that the CCTV cameras were not fit for purpose and she questioned whether it was necessary to buy new ones. In response, the Environmental Health Manager explained that the previous cameras were not encrypted and therefore were invalid under the General Data Protection Regulation. In his experience, CCTV cameras varied in their usefulness and they could be difficult to put in place, particularly in rural areas as they needed a power source and could be stolen. He had found them to be most effective in urban areas where they could be mounted on lampposts, communal bin stores etc. One possibility was to work with the Police to share their resources; however, whilst Officers had a very good working relationship with the Police and they undertook a number of joint incidents, ultimately the Police would take priority if they needed the cameras. One difficulty was that technology changed so quickly that, if the Council committed to buying new cameras, there was a risk that they would soon be out of date. A Member requested that a report be brought back to the Committee setting out the various options and the cost implications.

13.7 A Member questioned whether a vehicle declared as 'off the road', i.e. with a Statutory Off-Road Notification (SORN), which was on Council land could be treated as an abandoned vehicle and was advised that untaxed or SORN vehicles – whether on public or private land – were not something the Council looked at. Another Member went on to express the view that the anti-dog fouling posters which had been handed out to Parish Councils were very effective and he felt that Members should all be given some. The Head of Community Services indicated that he had provided posters to all Members previously but he undertook to ensure that a new supply was made available in Members' pigeon holes within the next few weeks. In response to a query as to when visits to Parish Councils would commence, the Environmental Health Manager explained that this had started earlier in the year but had been put on hold due to local elections. Officers had produced a schedule and were in the process of contacting Parish Councils to arrange the visits which were likely to take place every month for the next 12 months, following which there would be patrols each month at various hotspots to maximise the visual presence across the borough. A Member asked that Councillors be kept informed as to when the patrols were taking place and the Environmental Health Manager undertook to circulate the schedule once it had been finalised. A Member questioned whether Officers visited schools to discuss the importance of not littering, dog fouling etc. and was advised that, unfortunately, this was not currently possible due to lack of resources.

13.8 Having considered the information provided it was

RESOLVED That the enviro-crime annual report and action plan be **NOTED**.

OS.14 SINGLE USE PLASTICS UPDATE

14.1 The report of the Head of Finance and Asset Management, circulated at Pages No. 137-144, provided Members with an update on the elimination of single-use plastics following the motion to Council in July 2018. Members were asked to endorse the actions taken, and proposed, in order to eliminate single-use plastics from the Council's operations and to consider the extracts from the Government Waste

Strategy in relation to single-use plastics.

- 14.2 Members were advised that, in July 2018, the Council had approved that all single-use plastics within buildings and facilities managed by the Council be eliminated by 2020 and efforts be made to encourage the elimination of single-use plastics within the Council's supply chain by 2025; and that the work of the Gloucestershire Joint Waste Partnership in promoting the reduction of single-use plastics across the County be supported and any opportunities to lobby central government be taken through the partnership. There was no accepted definition of single-use plastics, and no common set of products, but Officers had looked far and wide to those used by environmental groups, the European Union and the government to come up with a list of commonly accepted examples, set out at Page No. 139, Paragraph 2.3 of the report. The Council's progress in eliminating single-use plastics from the Council building was detailed at Page No. 140, Paragraph 3.4 of the report, and it was noted that most had been replaced or removed. Particular reference was made to plastic water bottles, which were currently sold in vending machines, and it was noted that the vending machines would be removed by the end of the month. All disposable drinking cups and lids had been replaced with cardboard or compostable alternatives and plastic drinks stirrers had been phased out and replaced by wooden stirrers. Whilst the Council did not supply plastic cutlery, refreshments were provided at some meetings and Officers were working with suppliers to provide alternatives. Plastic milk cartons were currently still being provided but consideration was being given to alternative provision for supply of tea and coffee. Whilst the Council used little in the way of plastic bags, the ones it did use, for food waste etc. were biodegradable, with very few black bin bags being used – with regard to the latter, it was noted that the industry was moving very quickly and an alternative bio-based plastic was being produced which the Council would look to bring in over time. Whilst the Council had no direct power over its tenants in this respect, it was able to encourage and support them to adopt its policies and a number of tenants already had their own policies, for instance, Gloucestershire County Council was much further advanced and Places for People also had a policy in place. It was noted that the Council's Procurement Strategy was being updated to ensure it was appropriately worded so as to eradicate single-use plastic from the supply chain.
- 14.3 Members were reminded that reduction of single-use plastic was an international issue and Pages No. 141-143 of the report set out the salient points from the government's strategy for tackling waste and environmental issues 'Our Waste, Our Resources', published in December 2018, which included banning the most problematic plastics, introducing a deposit return scheme for single-use drinks containers and removing consumer single-use plastics from its estate by 2020. At the end of May 2019, the government had announced a series of controls on single-use plastics to meet its pledges covering plastic straws, cotton buds etc. which demonstrated that national policy was overtaking the Council's own efforts and would ensure that single-use plastics were effectively eradicated from use in the near future.
- 14.4 A Member questioned what action the Council would be taking going forward and the Head of Finance and Asset Management provided assurance that Officers recognised this to be an ongoing issue and would continue to review and eliminate single-use plastics from the Council Offices building. He was mindful of national and international environmental policy and advised that electric charging points was the next item that would be considered by the Council. The Member agreed it was important to look more broadly at environmental issues and he questioned what Tewkesbury Borough Council's position was in relation to the requirement to be carbon-neutral by 2050. The Head of Finance and Asset Management indicated that this was an emerging issue and would be significant for the Council going forward; there was currently no expertise or capacity for this within the Council but it

would need to be considered at some stage.

14.5 It was

RESOLVED

1. That the actions taken and proposed in order to eliminate single-use plastics from the Council's operations be **ENDORSED**.

2. That the extracts from the Government Waste Strategy in relation to single-use plastics be **NOTED**.

OS.15 DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS REVIEW MONITORING REPORT

15.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Head of Community Services, circulated at Pages No. 145-153, which set out the progress made against the recommendation arising from the Disabled Facilities Grants review. Members were asked to consider the report and to approve closure of the review.

15.2 The Head of Community Services advised that the Council's Environmental Health Team administered Disabled Facilities Grants but applicants must first be assessed by an Occupational Therapist from Gloucestershire County Council to find out if an adaptation best met the customer's needs; it was only following a referral that the Council was involved. The Environmental Health Manager explained that a review of the way the Council delivered Disabled Facilities Grants had been conducted by an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group in 2015/16 and reports setting out progress against the action plan had been brought to the Committee on a six monthly basis since that time. The action plan was now complete, therefore, Members were asked to consider the progress made and to close the review. It was noted that the downward trend of Occupational Therapist referrals and applications for Disabled Facilities Grants had continued during 2018/19 which could be attributable to the Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group restructure and the Occupational Therapists having less customers or less ability to process customers; notwithstanding this, it was a similar level to the previous year with a total of 85 referrals compared to 89 in 2017/18. He pointed out that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government had allocated additional funds to local authorities which committed to spend it prior to 1 April 2019 and Tewkesbury Borough Council had been allocated £141,363 which had been used for Disabled Facilities Grants adaptations and more broadly on "other social care capital projects", in particular for the insulation of park homes across the borough.

15.3 A Member noted that neither the Tewkesbury Borough Plan or Joint Core Strategy referred to 'homes for life' i.e. wheelchair accessible, wet rooms etc. In response, the Chief Executive advised that the 'homes for life' standard did come with affordability issues which some housing providers had problems with, particularly in terms of affordable housing, and he undertook to ensure that a briefing note on this matter was provided to Members following the meeting. Another Member questioned whether Gloucestershire County Council had been informed that the Council was not spending all of the funding it was allocated. The Head of Community Services confirmed that discussions did take place with colleagues at the County Council and any unused money went back into the pot at the end of the year but a countywide working group was currently looking at how this could be improved. In terms of possible reasons as to why the money was not being spent, Members were advised that, although the Council's procedure was sound and applications were processed quickly, Officers were required to follow specific criteria set down by legislation which meant that some people looked elsewhere for grants; in addition, there had been a general decline in the number of applications across the county and further afield which indicated that demand was not as high as it had been in the past. The Chief Executive reiterated that the Council's system was very good but that the Disabled Facilities Grants administered by the Council were often

capital grants for larger schemes as quite a lot of smaller adaptations were carried out within social care, furthermore, grants were means-tested which meant that some people would not qualify and may find it easier to obtain a grant from elsewhere.

15.4 It was

RESOLVED That the progress against the recommendations arising from the Disabled Facilities Grants Review be **NOTED** and closure of the review be **APPROVED**.

OS.16 REVIEW OF COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

16.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 154-164, set out the progress made in delivering the actions within the Communications Strategy during 2018/19. Members were asked to consider the report.

16.2 The Corporate Services Manager advised that the Communications Strategy had been approved by the Executive Committee on 7 June 2019 where it was agreed that an annual review would be undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure actions were being delivered effectively. The 2018/19 action plan was attached at Appendix 1 to the report and the Communications Team had worked hard to try to deliver all of the actions. There had been a particular focus on providing continued support for the Public Services Centre with the launch of the Growth Hub; developing social media engagement; ongoing promotion for the Joint Core Strategy; supporting the elections team in communicating the local elections; and reviewing the format of the Tewkesbury Borough News. Of the 17 actions, three had not been achieved and these were detailed at Page No. 155, Paragraph 2.2 of the report. It was to be borne in mind that these actions had been carried out alongside the day-to-day reactive duties of the Communications Team which included responding to a significant amount of media enquiries as well as managing the Council's social media channels. In terms of moving forward, this was the final year of the strategy and the team was currently working on developing a new one which would be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for comment prior to presentation to the Executive Committee for approval.

16.3 A Member raised concern that Councillors often knew less about issues than the public they served and questioned what could be done to ensure Members were better informed. The Corporate Services Manager recognised this was an issue but pointed out that it took a significant amount of resource to ensure that all Members were kept updated on everything; notwithstanding this, she undertook to work with other service areas to come to a solution. The Member also indicated that he was having problems with loading photographs onto the Report It system as Office 365 did not seem to have the tools to reduce the picture size and the Corporate Services Manager indicated that she would discuss this with the IT Team following the meeting. Another Member noted that one of the outstanding actions was the consolidation of the Council's photo library and questioned whether a temporary member of staff was needed to help deliver this action. In response, the Corporate Services Manager advised that she did not think this was necessary as it was thought there may be a solution within the review of the Council's intranet which was currently being carried out.

16.4 It was

RESOLVED That the progress against the actions within the Communications Strategy 2018/19 be **NOTED**.

OS.17 PARKING STRATEGY REVIEW

- 17.1 The report of the Head of Finance and Asset Management, circulated at Pages No. 165-169, asked the Committee to establish a Working Group to undertake a review of the Parking Strategy in accordance with the Terms of Reference attached at Appendix A to the report.
- 17.2 Members were advised that the current Car Parking Strategy was adopted in 2015 and it was now due for review. Members would be aware that the Council was considering possible regeneration options for Spring Gardens and it was important to have an effective parking strategy to support this. It was proposed that an Overview and Scrutiny Committee Working Group be established to undertake the review with the Lead Members for Economic Development/Promotion and Finance and Asset Management, meeting on a monthly basis between July and October, in order to bring a draft report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October with a final report presented in December before going to Executive Committee for approval in the new year. The new Parking Strategy and associated Parking Order would come into effect in April 2020. The proposed Terms of Reference for the Working Group were attached at Appendix A to the report.
- 17.3 A Member commented that Gloucestershire County Council was conducting its own review of parking in Tewkesbury and assumed this would be taken into account in this review. In response, the Head of Finance and Asset Management clarified that, whilst it would be informed by the County Council review which was looking at on-street parking and wider issues, Tewkesbury Borough Council's Parking Strategy would be focusing on the elements within its own control i.e. off-street parking in the eight car parks in Tewkesbury and two in Winchcombe. It was subsequently

RESOLVED

1. That a Parking Strategy Working Group be established in accordance with the Terms of Reference set out at Appendix A, subject to an amendment to 2 (i) to state that the Working Group shall comprise four Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
2. That the membership of the Working Group be **AGREED** as follows:
Councillors K J Cromwell, J W Murphy, M J Williams and P N Workman plus the Lead Members for Economic Development/Promotion and Finance and Asset Management.

The meeting closed at 8:05 pm