

Questions raised by Overview and Scrutiny Committee at meeting held on 13 June 2017	
Questions raised by Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Response from Officers
Performance Tracker:	
Priority: Finance and Resources	
Objective 3 – Action a) Develop a programme of commercial projects, including developing an entrepreneurial type culture for councillors and staff. A member noted that the comment should make it clear that the potential for a crematorium had been considered but not taken forward	The chief executive agreed that this should have been made clear and would be amended on the tracker.
Objective 4 – Action b) Deliver the council's asset plan. A member noted that the pedestrian access for the Railsmeadow car park and the Doctors Super Surgery had been completed which made him question how up-to-date the report was.	The head of finance and asset management advised that there were some areas where actions had moved on since the report had been written but this would inevitably be the case at times. It was anticipated that work will start on site to refurbish the Vineyards Play Area in July so that update had also changed now. All of the information was accurate at the time of writing the report
Priority: Economic Development	
P39 – Objective 2 – Action a) Produce an employment land review of sites within the borough. A member questioned whether the list of sites could be seen by councillors.	The head of development services explained that the employment land needs have been considered through the Joint Core Strategy and Borough Plan and this has included detailed work on understanding the need. The study will provide evidence and the sites will then be identified through the borough plan. There is a list available should members wish to see it.
P40 – Objective 3 – Action a) Produce a vision for the J9 area. A member questioned what was happening with the J9 area and what pieces of work were being commissioned.	<p>The head of development services advised that officers were trying to achieve an understanding of the future potential of the area, especially now that the Ministry of Defence plans for the Ashchurch Camp site have changed.</p> <p>There are currently three pieces of work ongoing, including what interventions could be used; a broad-brush visioning exercise which looked at the aspirations for the area; and masterplanning which looked at what could be achieved. These three pieces of work will help ensure the whole site is right as it was important for both the growth zone and the borough as a whole.</p>

Appendix 1

	<p>In terms of the J10 bid, officers will continue to look at the options and will discuss how the potential to change the junction to an 'all ways' and how this could be achieved. In addition, potential development would be considered that may unlock the area.</p> <p>The Chief Executive advised that this work was continuing but, if funding for J10 was not received from the government, changes would most likely not be made. It was agreed that the explanation on the tracker could be made clearer and he undertook to ensure this was done.</p>
Objective 4 – Action a) Put in place a plan to regenerate Spring Gardens following the opening of the new leisure centre. A member questioned what the change of direction was for the project and what context the report to Executive Committee would take.	<p>The head of finance and asset management explained that originally the council had intended to develop the site itself; however, this was no longer a viable option. The report to the Executive Committee would ask members to confirm the position they wished to take going forward.</p>
Objective 4 – Action b) Work with Tewkesbury Regeneration Partnership to progress projects that regenerate Tewkesbury Town. A member questioned what was meant by Multi-Modal Greenway.	<p>The head of development services explained that this referred to walking and cycling links.</p>
Priority: Housing	
Objective 3 – Action b) Work with partners, infrastructure providers and developers to progress the delivery of key sites. A Member questioned why the comment referred to housing at Longford when that site was nearly built out; he considered that it should instead refer to housing north of Gloucester.	<p>The chief executive indicated that the growth deal bid related to Longford roundabout and he suspected this was why the reference to housing at Longford had been made; in fact the reference should be made to housing at Innsworth and this would be amended in future.</p>
Objective 4 – Action c) Work in partnership to prevent residents becoming homeless. A member questioned how much of the district bid for Social Impact Bond monies came to Tewkesbury Borough.	<p>The head of community services was unsure but would investigate and provide the information following the meeting.</p>
KPI 15 – Percentage of 'minor' applications determined within 8 weeks or alternative period agreed with the applicant. A Member noted that performance had slightly improved but was still significantly over the target due to the turnover of staff and he questioned whether there was an underlying reason for the high staff turnover.	<p>The head of development services explained that she had been working hard to fully staff the Planning team and currently it was 2.6 FTE posts down from a full team. Some of the posts had been vacant for a while so she was considering ways that recruitment could be improved.</p>

Appendix 1

	<p>The chief executive advised that for some time local authorities had been in competition with private companies as there were many opportunities in the private sector which usually paid slightly more. Generally speaking there tended to be a lot of movement of staff in the planning world but more recently the council had been doing reasonably well at retaining and attracting new staff which is encouraging.</p> <p>Consideration is being given as to whether the planning service could run a similar model to that used by One Legal where it was staffed to a point that services could be sold outside the authority. In addition there may be opportunities for joint working with partners which could help resilience but this all needed to be considered very carefully.</p>
<p>Priority: Customer focused services</p>	
<p>Objective 2 – Action b) Roll out a programme of customer services training for staff across the Council. A member questioned how many members of staff were undertaking NVQ qualifications and whether they were internally or externally assessed.</p>	<p>The communications and policy manager explained that all staff undertaking NVQs were externally assessed. In terms of the Customer Services Team, it was not the whole team that had signed up but those that had done had achieved the qualification. In respect of customer services training, this would be provided for all frontline staff rather than just for those that were part of the Customer Services team.</p>
<p>Objective 3 – Action b) To let out the top floor of the Public Services Centre. A member noted that 'some interest' had been received in the top floor and he questioned what was meant by this.</p>	<p>The head of finance and asset management advised that he hoped to see a resolution to this soon. The agent had felt there were opportunities for letting; however, it had been on the market for two weeks and as yet no offers had been received. It was hoped that some interest would be received over the coming months and, in the meantime, officers are still exploring all opportunities.</p>
<p>Objective 4 – Action c) Work with partners to improve digital links between public services to make life simpler for customers. A member expressed the view that a revamp of the 'report it' forms was necessary, particularly regarding Ubico. He was aware of a particular problem which meant the system did not recognise some addresses and he questioned when the revamp would be happening.</p>	<p>The communications and policy manager advised that the online forms project was ongoing and was progressing well. Members would be asked to feed into the project and a workshop is being arranged. The manager was aware that there were a few postcodes in the Borough which did not match up; it was helpful to know of any particular issues as she can raise them with the project team.</p>

Key Performance Indicators for Priority: Customer Focussed Services	
<p>KPI 23 – Average number of days to process new benefit claims. A member asked whether the reduction in performance was a consequence of the restructure of the team and subsequent loss of staff.</p>	<p>The head of revenues and benefits advised that the performance for last year had not been as good as the previous year but it had remained in the top quartile nationally. He felt it important to bear in mind that the previous year's performance had been exceptional. 2016/17 performance had still been very good and the council remained the envy of many other local authorities in the country.</p> <p>The restructure of the team will have an impact going forward but the changes are being made with the implementation of Universal Credit in mind and that would take away quite a lot of the work which the council's team currently did; a reduction of 50% of claims overall. There were longer term concerns over growth in respect of new homes and the collection of Council Tax etc. so there would probably be a need to look at the 'shape' of the service again in the future.</p>
<p>KPI 29 – Average number of sick days per full time equivalent. A member questioned why the position regarding short term absence had worsened and whether this was the reason she found it hard to speak to members of staff within the building.</p>	<p>The head of corporate services recognised the sickness level was above the target and advised that there were a number of things being considered to try and address this e.g. a review of the Absence Management Policy; the introduction of a new HR system for the recording of absence; and an audit of the policy to ensure it was being operated correctly across the authority.</p>