

Appendix 1

Questions raised by Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 28 November 2017	
Questions Raised by Overview and Scrutiny	Response from Officers
Performance Tracker - Priority: Finance and Resources	
Objective 3 – Action a) Deliver the aims and objectives of the commercial property investment strategy – A Member sought clarification as to when the acquisition of the three new commercial properties would be complete.	The Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that two of the properties had been acquired and were on the Council's books; the third was currently going through the legal process and it was hoped that outstanding issues would be resolved within the next two or three weeks so that would also be on the books by Christmas.
Objective 3 – Action b) – Undertake a review of the discretionary trade waste service to ensure that it is operating on a viable commercial level – A Member raised concern that this project had slipped and questioned when it would be properly addressed given that it had potential to generate income for the Council.	The Head of Community Services explained that the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) report commissioned by the Council was expected to have been completed at a much earlier stage; however, Officers had not been happy with the contents and it had now been revised on a number of occasions. It was hoped that the current draft would be the final draft and Officers would then be in a position to look at the recommendations and see if they would work for Tewkesbury Borough Council, and the particular issues within its commercial service. He provided assurance that the final recommendations would be reported to Council by April 2018.
Key Performance Indicators – Priority: Finance and Resources	
KPI 2 – Outstanding sundry debt in excess of 12 months old – A Member indicated that Officers had reported that the outstanding debt of £10,973 was close to resolution on a number of occasions and he questioned when this would actually be dealt with.	Members were advised that the debt related to road repair costs and there was a dispute about who owed what; the terms were being agreed with the partners and it was hoped that the issue would be resolved when the report came back to the Committee in quarter 3.

Performance Tracker – Priority: Economic Development

Objective 4 – Action b) Deliver a programme with partners to progress Healings Mill and other key sites to support the regeneration of Tewkesbury – A Member sought clarification as to the Council’s role; who the partners were; and what would be achieved by the target date of January 2018.

The Head of Development Services explained that the Council acted as a facilitator. There were a number of different partners involved in the planning process including developers, site owners, agents and statutory bodies such as County Highways. Healings Mill was a historic asset and, whilst the building itself was not listed, it was within a Conservation Area so it was necessary to work with Natural England to find an appropriate solution. By January 2018 it was hoped to have a broad outline and brief for the site which could be used, either with the current developers or others.

The Member questioned why other sites in the area, e.g. Quay Street and Back of Avon, which already had planning permission were not coming forward. In response, the Head of Development Services indicated that, whilst the developers would like to sell it as a package if possible, Healings Mill - and its poor condition - was not helping. Once a plan was in place for Healings Mill other sites should move forward as well.

Objective 4 – Action c) Explore the potential for the formation of a retail group to support the vitality and regeneration of the town – A Member was pleased to note the formation of a Tewkesbury Town Traders retail group and questioned how it would be reported upon.

The Head of Community Services advised that there was no formal reporting structure; however, the meetings were attended by the Economic Development Officer and she would be able to provide Member Updates when appropriate.

Performance Tracker – Priority: Housing

Objective 1 – Action b) Develop the Tewkesbury Borough Plan – A Member raised concern that the target date had been changed to spring/summer 2019 and he sought assurance that it would be delivered within an acceptable timeframe.

The Head of Community Services reiterated that the Tewkesbury Borough Plan Working Group had met earlier that day and both Officers and Members recognised the importance of putting a plan in place in a sound and compliant document. Even if the dates in respect of consultation changed slightly, there was no reason why the target date for the adoption of the plan would not be achieved.

Key Performance Indicators for Priority: Housing

KPI 14 – Percentage of ‘minor’ applications determined within 8 weeks or alternative period agreed with the applicant – A Member raised concern there had only been a 2% improvement between quarter 1 and quarter 2 - from 66.04% to 68.29% - which was still some way off the 90% target.

The Head of Community Services indicated that it was inevitable that some applications took longer to determine than others; however, by the New Year a number of improvement plans would be implemented and she was confident that significant improvement would be made on the figures.

Performance Tracker – Priority: Customer-focused services

Objective 1 – Action a) Deliver improvements through a review of the Revenues and Benefits service – A Member noted that the Revenues and Benefits team had been reduced by 1.5 full-time equivalents; however, he assumed that workload would increase dramatically once the Joint Core Strategy had been adopted and he questioned whether there were plans to expand the department.

The Chief Executive advised that a lot of the housing benefit work was expected to be lost over the coming months due to the roll-out of Universal Credit. In revenue terms, it would be necessary to collect from the new properties; however, a lot of processes were being automated e.g. online payments. He stressed that the structure was being kept under review going forward. The Lead Member for Organisational Development provided assurance that this was being closely monitored at her monthly portfolio briefings.

Objective 3 – Action a) Deliver the Public Services Centre refurbishment project – A Member noted that this project had slipped slightly and he questioned whether this was likely to happen again.

Another Member sought assurance that the pond area at the front of the Council Offices would be tidied up.

The Head of Finance and Asset Management explained that the March 2018 target date had been optimistic and the new target date of June 2018 was based on a much more pragmatic approach to deliver all elements of the project. The update from the contractors following a market tendering exercise was that the project could be delivered for the money available; as soon as it was brought within budget, a programme of delivery could be agreed and timescales firmed up. The second floor was on target and the first tenant would be moving in mid-December. The other two units would be completed in mid-January. Members had made clear that external areas should be part of the project and he confirmed that the entrance and pond areas were both included.

Objective 4 – Action a) Look at collaborative options for the planning and environmental health services – A Member sought further information as to why this had slipped to April 2018.

The Head of Community Services advised that, since he had taken up his role, he had been reviewing all of the services within the department to see how they could be improved. In terms of Environmental Health, whilst it may be easier to collaborate with another authority and absorb the service into theirs, he wanted to ensure that Tewkesbury Borough Council had a fit for purpose service so that it would be in a strong position to lead in any future collaboration. The Chief Executive went on to explain that Officers had been looking at potential options for collaboration with Cheltenham Borough Council, particularly in relation to Environmental Health; however, they had now moved away from that and were considering alternatives. It was a similar situation within Development Services where consideration had been given to a joint planning service, although this was not on the table at the moment. Notwithstanding this, there were a number of options available and these were being considered as part of the Planning Services review. Some collaboration had already taken place with Gloucester City Council on the joint advertising of posts and job descriptions allowing Officers to work across borders if there were particular resource issues at either authority. Whilst opportunities for collaboration could come forward at any time, the Chief Executive recognised that the action needed to be reviewed to make it more definitive and ensure that the target date did not continue to be pushed back.

Objective 5 – Action c) To improve business continuity, migrate to cloud-based Office 365 – A Member raised concern that this action was marked as complete despite Members continuing to have issues with Office 365 e.g. not being able to connect to the intranet when using apps and having to use ‘reply all’ for emails.

The Head of Corporate Services advised that phase one of the project was migrating to cloud-based Office 365 and that was complete. He was not aware that Members had been having any issues and he urged them to contact him directly so he could ensure they were resolved. The second phase of the project would include the roll-out of smartphone apps and training would be provided for Members. The Chief Executive pointed out that this specific action related to business continuity, and the Council being able to operate in the event of system failure. A new action would be included to reflect phase two when the

	Council Plan was refreshed.
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Key Performance Indicators for Priority: Customer Focused Services

<p>KPI 28 – Average number of sick days per full-time equivalent – A Member questioned whether there was a particular reason for the increase.</p>	<p>The Chief Executive explained that this was largely due to an increase in long term sickness; even one or two Officers being absent due to long term illness could affect the figures quite significantly. In response to Members’ concern as to how these absences impacted on other Officers, assurance was provided that the management team did try to backfill and ensure that support was available within the team most directly affected. The Head of Corporate Services indicated that a review of the Absence Management Policy was a pending item in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme and he suggested that this could include a workshop to give some information behind the statistics.</p>
<p>KPI 31 – Food establishment hygiene ratings – A Member queried whether it could be made mandatory for hygiene ratings to be displayed on doors.</p>	<p>The Head of Community Service advised that this was governed by the Food Standards Agency; he would welcome making the display of food hygiene ratings compulsory if and when that came forward.</p>