

**Questions raised by Overview and Scrutiny Committee at meeting held on
3 December 2019**

Questions raised by Overview and Scrutiny	Response from officers
Performance Tracker – Priority: Promoting and Supporting Economic Growth	
Objective 2 – Action a) Deliver employment land through the Joint Core Strategy and Tewkesbury Borough Plan – A Member sought clarification as to the amended target date and whether this was realistic.	<p>The Head of Development Services confirmed that the target date was spring 2020 rather than 2019 as incorrectly stated in the report. She reminded Members that Tewkesbury Borough Council was working with two other Joint Core Strategy authorities so there were a lot of complex issues to address but she was as confident as she could be that the new date would be achieved. Although it was a very challenging timetable, the revised date ensured that the Borough Plan remained on course for examination in 2021 and adoption in 2022.</p> <p>She stressed that it was not a quick process – the Joint Core Strategy had taken longer than anticipated as further work had been required at the examination stage – and, whilst it was possible to make up time at different points during the process, clearly it was important not to fall too far behind at this early stage.</p>
Objective 3 – Action a) Produce a detailed strategy for the delivery of growth at Junction 9 – A Member noted that the comments against this action referenced the Garden Town project and she questioned whether it would be appropriate for Members to receive an update to understand what was happening and how the Garden Town impacted on other actions such as the delivery of growth at Junction 9.	<p>The Head of Development Services advised that the Tewkesbury Garden Town Member Reference Panel was currently meeting every two weeks, although she accepted that the wider membership was not engaged so she would be happy to arrange a Member seminar in the New Year and to work with the Communications Team on the most appropriate method for communicating key messages as the Garden Town project progressed.</p>

Objective 5 – Action b) Review the tourism resources to maximise the tourist provisions in the borough – A Member raised concern that the target date for this action had now changed four times and he sought an update on how this was progressing.	The Head of Development Services reminded Members that this action was not just about the Tewkesbury Tourist Information Centre, which had its own particular issues associated with its location in the Hat Shop, and she advised that a review of the broader service was underway; ultimately she felt there was a tourism post which could be utilised more effectively and she hoped to be able to report back to Members in March 2020. The Deputy Chief Executive undertook to ensure that the action was revised to reflect the fact that it was a strategic tourism review rather than simply being focused on the future of the Hat Shop.
Key Performance Indicators for Priority: Promoting and Supporting Economic Growth	
KPIs 3 and 4 – Number of business births and business deaths – A Member noted that there was no data for 2019 and asked when this would be provided.	The Head of Development Services advised that the information was backdated which was why the last available information was from 2017; due to collection times, the new data would be available in quarter three which would be included in the next performance report and would relate to 2018.
Performance Tracker – Priority: Growing and Supporting Communities	
Objective 2 – Ensure a supply of land to accommodate a five year requirement – A Member questioned why there was no Key Performance Indicator for the five year housing land supply.	The Head of Development Services explained that five year housing land supply was calculated on an annual basis therefore it remained the same each quarter. In response to a query as to whether a ruling had been made on whether housing built in advance could be included in the housing land supply figures, the Head of Development Services advised that the High Court Judge had decided not to rule on the position deeming it a matter for each decision-maker. As such, the Council would continue to defend its position and that would be tested through the appeal process when it was able to demonstrate a five year supply which she hoped would be in the new financial year. It was noted there were no new cases nationally to test the position.

Objective 4 – Action a) – Continue to improve the proactive homelessness prevention programme – A Member raised concern that the commentary box contained a lot of jargon which made it difficult to understand, for instance, ‘kata type questions’ ‘Liberating Structures’ and ‘Trello boards’.	The Head of Community Services apologised and indicated that he would take this on board for future reports.
Objective 4 – Action b) Achieve the Council’s affordable homes target by working with local housing providers – A Member noted that a total of 109 affordable homes had been delivered in the first two quarters of 2019/20 with only 36 of those in quarter two and she questioned why so many more had been achieved in quarter one.	The Head of Community Services advised that this was linked to when developments came on line; as the Council had little control over this, delivery of affordable homes was not evenly spread across the year.
Objective 4 – Action d) Develop a programme to work with landlords to ensure residents have a supply of rented properties to meet their needs – A Member noted that a new additional post had been recruited to within Housing Services to assist with the additional workload associated with the new legal duties and she asked how this was progressing, particularly as the target date for this action had been amended twice previously.	The Head of Community Services reminded Members that Tewkesbury Borough Council had led the successful bid for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) funding to incentivise landlords to take tenants on lower incomes. Slow progress had been made due to a key member of staff leaving the authority; however, there had been further developments during the third quarter and the scheme which was about to be adopted would include rent in advance, an enhanced deposit scheme and tenancy support. It was noted that Tewkesbury Borough Council was no further behind any of the other Gloucestershire authorities despite the delay. A launch event for landlords and agents was being organised by the person who had been appointed to the new post within Housing Services which would take place in January. Members were advised that the MHCLG project had been due to end in March but he was pleased to report that the pilot could continue until all of the money had been spent which was great news. He undertook to bring a full report on the project to the Committee in September 2020.
Key Performance Indicators for Priority: Growing and Supporting Communities	

<p>KPIs 8, 9 10 and 11 in relation to housing applications and homelessness – A Member questioned why there was no direction of travel for these KPIs as it was unclear if they were performing well or not, for instance, 334 homeless applications had been accepted in 2018/19 with 22 in the first two quarters of 2019/20.</p>	<p>The Head of Community Services explained that legislative changes meant that the information being compared was not like for like. It was intended to review the KPIs ready for 2020/21 to coincide with the new Housing Strategy and consideration would be given to more meaningful measures which could be compared year on year. In the meantime, he undertook to ensure that more comments were included in the narrative so it was clearer if performance was positive or negative. A Member felt that it was right to reconsider the KPIs in light of the significant changes brought about by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 so he would be supportive of a complete review.</p>
<p>Performance Tracker – Priority: Customer-focused services</p>	
<p>Objective 3 – Action b) Introduce the option for paperless billing for council tax and business rates – A Member sought further detail of the issues experienced and whether this action would still be delivered.</p>	<p>The Head of Corporate Services explained that it had not been an easy process and there had been issues around the performance of the supplier so One Legal was currently looking at the contract. The Council's Digital Developer was looking at an in-house solution and he would know within the next seven to 10 days whether that could be achieved for February 2020.</p>
<p>Key Performance Indicators for Priority: Customer Focused Services</p>	

<p>KPI 31 and KPI 32 – Percentage of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests answered on time and percentage of formal complaints answered on time – A Member questioned why only 108 of the 142 FOI requests and 52 of the 62 formal complaints had been answered within the 20 working days deadline.</p>	<p>The Head of Corporate Services confirmed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an annual report on formal complaints. In terms of the first two quarters of the year, 129 formal complaints had been received of which 115 had been answered on time. Of the remaining 14, six related to planning; two to waste and recycling; two to grounds maintenance; two to environmental health; one to customer services; and one to housing – whilst complaints were across the board, six of the 13 complaints received by planning had not been answered within the deadline. It was noted that there was an opportunity to discuss an extension of time with the complainant if it was not possible to respond within 20 working days.</p> <p>The Head of Development Services indicated that this matter had been discussed by management team and she was very keen to address the situation. She reiterated that planning complaints were often complex and required input from other departments such as One Legal so if a complaint could not be resolved within 20 working days, Officers should be negotiating a new deadline to ensure that they remained compliant with the KPI.</p> <p>With regard to FOIs, the Head of Community Services felt it was important to recognise the sheer amount of requests, some of which asked for information dating back a number of years, or were repeat requests with a slight variation in the data or format being asked for. This was incredibly time consuming and management team was considering what information could be published on the Council's website in order to reduce the resources currently being used for FOIs.</p> <p>A Member sought clarification as to the number of FOIs that came under one of the exemptions i.e. where the information requested did not have to be provided. The Head of Corporate Services confirmed that a very small number were subject to exemptions and he undertook to circulate the figures following the meeting.</p>
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