

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the
Council Offices, Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury on Tuesday, 20 October 2015
commencing at 4:30 pm**

Present:

Chairman
Vice Chairman

Councillor P W Awford
Councillor Mrs G F Blackwell

and Councillors:

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

OS.38 ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 38.1 The evacuation procedure, as noted on the Agenda, was taken as read.
- 38.2 The Chairman welcomed the Families First Plus Programme Manager, Eugene O’Kane, and the Gloucestershire Families First Plus Team Manager, Emma Trigwell, to the meeting and indicated that they would be giving a presentation in relation to Agenda Item 10 – Gloucestershire Families First Update.
- 38.3 The Chairman indicated that the Committee had established an Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Review Working Group at its meeting in June and the first meeting was due to be held the following day. Councillor M G Sztymiak had been nominated as one of the Members of the Working Group but now found himself unable to attend the meetings due to other commitments. As there was no provision for substitutions on Working Groups, Councillor Sztymiak had asked whether Councillor P N Workman could take his place and the Committee was asked to consider whether this would be acceptable. It was subsequently
- RESOLVED** That Councillor P N Workman replace Councillor M G Sztymiak on the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Review Working Group.

OS.39 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

- 39.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Mrs P E Stokes. There were no substitutions for the meeting.

OS.40 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 40.1 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.
- 40.2 There were no declarations made on this occasion.

OS.41 MINUTES

- 41.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 September, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

OS.42 CONSIDERATION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN

- 42.1 Attention was drawn to the Executive Committee Forward Plan, circulated at Pages No. 10-13. 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.
- 42.2 The Chairman reminded Members that part of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's role was to challenge the Executive Committee and this had been emphasised at the Scrutiny training held in September. It was very important from a public perspective to demonstrate that decisions or actions being taken by the Council were properly scrutinised and he urged Members to track the Executive Committee papers and not be afraid to ask challenging questions.
- 42.3 A Member queried why the Climate Change Strategy and Waste Management Strategy had been removed from the Executive Committee Agenda for the meeting on 25 November 2015. The Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager advised that the Waste Management Strategy had been moved to the Agenda for 12 January 2016 in order to align with the review being carried out by Gloucestershire County Council and the Joint Waste Committee and to ensure that realistic information was brought to Members for consideration. With regard to the Climate Change Strategy, unfortunately, the Officer who had previously been responsible for this area had transferred to Ubico and there were currently no other members of staff who could carry out this work. A Member indicated that he found this very concerning given that climate change was such an important national issue. The Chief Executive undertook to look into the situation following the meeting and ensure that a written response was circulated to the Committee.

- 42.4 It was

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

OS.43 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

- 43.1 Attention was drawn to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2015/16, circulated at Pages No. 14-15, which Members were asked to consider.

- 43.2 It was

RESOLVED That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2015/16 be **NOTED**.

OS.44 GLOUCESTERSHIRE HEALTH AND CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE

- 44.1 Members received an update from Councillor Mrs J E Day, the Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, on matters discussed at the last meeting of the Panel held on 15 September 2015.

- 44.2 Councillor Day advised that the community hospitals in the country were recognised as valuable and vital community assets and, going forward, the Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group and Gloucestershire Care Services

Trust wanted to ensure that they were being used effectively to best support local communities. The Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group had established a Transforming Community Hospitals Group in order to take this matter forward. The Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group had recently commissioned a review of community services in the Forest of Dean. This was about developing a plan for high quality and affordable community and social services in the Forest of Dean locality. The Gloucestershire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee would have a statutory role in any consultation on proposals relating to substantial or significant variations to services. The Committee was very aware that Gloucester and Cheltenham did not have any community hospitals and it would be important to understand how community services could be effectively provided in those areas.

- 44.3 The Committee had received the Adult Social Care and Public Health Performance Report for quarter 1 of 2015/16 and had been disappointed to see that performance of direct payments, reassessments, drug and alcohol performance and health checks were still of concern. The Director of Adult Services had explained the activity that was in place to address those matters and the Committee would be able to follow this up at the Adult Social Care and Public Health workshop on 16 November 2015.
- 44.4 The Committee continued to be concerned with ambulance response times, however, it would be receiving a 'spotlight' item on South Western Ambulance NHS Foundation Trust performance at its meeting on 3 November. It had been noted that there were challenges around performance against the stroke targets; this had been identified earlier in the year and four Members of the Committee had subsequently visited the Stroke Pathway at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital to better understand the issues. The Committee had also received patient and public feedback in respect of Healthwatch Gloucestershire and had felt that the work which it undertook was extremely valuable.
- 44.5 It had been pleasing to note the awards which had been won by NHS providers in the county, in particular the awards won by the Hospitals Trust at the Gloucestershire Apprenticeships Awards 2015 where their Lifelong Learning Team had won Employer of the Year and one of their apprentices had won two awards including Apprentice of the Year.
- 44.6 The Chairman understood that Healthwatch Gloucestershire was keen to get involved with communities and he suggested that it might be beneficial for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to receive a presentation in early 2016 which would provide Members with information to disseminate within their Wards. A Member explained that he had received a number of emails and comments from members of the public raising concern in relation to the apparent merging of GP surgeries. He questioned whether this was related to the proposals for the new 'super surgery' and whether the right messages were being adequately conveyed to the public. It was noted that this was the responsibility of the Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group, however, the Corporate Services Group Manager undertook to speak to the Member outside of the meeting to get an idea of the specific problem.
- 44.7 The Chairman thanked the Council's representative for her presentation and indicated that the update would be circulated to Members via email following the

meeting. It was

- RESOLVED**
1. That the feedback from the Gloucestershire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee be **NOTED**.
 2. That Healthwatch Gloucestershire be invited to give a presentation at an Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in early 2016 and that the Work Programme be updated accordingly.

OS.45 UPDATE ON UNIVERSAL CREDIT

- 45.1 The Chairman welcomed the Revenues and Benefits Group Manager to the meeting and indicated that he would be giving an update on Universal Credit.
- 45.2 The Revenues and Benefits Group Manager explained that Universal Credit was part of the Government's welfare reform programme which promoted the ethos that it 'paid to work' and encouraged people to get back into work whilst providing protection for the most vulnerable. The Government was committed to saving £12.5 billion from its welfare bill and Universal Credit was intended to put public spending on a more sustainable footing. It would merge six benefits into one: Housing Benefit, Jobseeker's Allowance; Working Tax Credit; Child Tax Credit; Employment and Support Allowance; and Income Support. These were all significant benefits in their own ways and there was a long timescale for implementation with the process only just starting in Tewkesbury Borough Council.
- 45.3 Universal Credit would apply to anyone of working age and was initially for sole claimants, i.e. not couples or families, which represented a very small number of claims. Since it had gone live in May 2015, Tewkesbury Borough Council had only received approximately 30 claims. Universal Credit would be administered by the Department for Work and Pensions which would have service centres across the country. The longer term plan was for a fully automated service whereby clients claimed online, although it was understood that there would be provision for those who could not access the internet. There was no firm timetable for implementation and it was noted that Tewkesbury was currently in the second tranche. Couples and families would be included in future; it was anticipated that they would be introduced sometime from June 2016 onwards. It was thought that full roll out would not take place until 2020, although this was largely dependent on how quickly the Government could get the digital arrangements in place to support its administration. It was intended that housing benefits forms would stop being sent out by 2017 and those residents claiming housing benefit would be moved across to Universal Credit. In terms of case load, there were approximately 4,200 claims with a 50/50 split between pensioners and people of working age.
- 45.4 With regard to the its role in the future, the Council would be very much engaged with personal budgeting and support and would need to work closely with the Citizens' Advice Bureau to provide assistance to people who would be receiving a monthly payment and would have responsibility for paying their own rent directly to their landlord. It would also be necessary to work with Job Centre Plus regarding the digital inclusion aspect in order to provide more help for those who wanted to submit claims and look for jobs online etc. Council Tax reduction would remain

within the Council's remit and it would continue to administer housing benefit for pensioners, and residual housing benefit for people of working age, until such time as the Government took away that requirement. Where people struggled to meet their rent responsibilities, the Council had an obligation to help them to meet the

shortfall and could issue discretionary housing payments.

- 45.5 A Member sought clarification as to when the Council might decide not to issue a discretionary housing payment given that it would be the claimant's responsibility to manage their own money. The Revenues and Benefits Group Manager confirmed that the Council was obliged to look at the individual circumstances and to help where possible, however, where an account had been severely mismanaged, e.g. if the claimant had used the money to maintain a particular lifestyle, it was unlikely that assistance would be provided. The budget for discretionary payments was limited so careful consideration would need to be given to how it was spent. The payments were only intended to be for a short time to help people through difficult periods, enable them to resolve those issues and become self-sufficient. A Member raised concern that there would always be some people who were not able to manage their own money and the Revenues and Benefits Group Manager advised that this had been recognised by the Department of Work and Pensions and there were provisions for people who did get into financial difficulty whereby the housing benefit element of Universal Credit could be taken away and paid directly to the landlord.
- 45.6 A Member questioned whether claimants would be allocated a particular person to offer help and advice and was informed that a 'Job Coach' would be provided via Job Centre Plus to offer assistance on how to get back into work, for example, writing CVs, training courses etc. Local authorities would initially be responsible for helping with the personal budgeting and digital inclusion aspects but, as the process advanced, it was intended to take a more joined-up approach and look towards having a single point of contact.
- 45.7 The Chairman thanked the Revenues and Benefits Group Manager for his informative presentation and it was

RESOLVED That the update on Universal Credit be **NOTED**.

OS.46 REVIEW OF UBICO

- 46.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager, circulated at Pages No. 16-22, which provided a six month update on the transfer of Waste Services to Ubico. Members were asked to consider the report.
- 46.2 Members were advised that the Council's Waste Services had been transferred to Ubico on 1 April 2015. A decision had been taken at the time not to hold a big launch event as there would be no change to the service provided to residents who would have their refuse collected on the same day and by the same crew etc. The Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager indicated that the initial few months had been very difficult as the amount of contact from residents and Parish Councils had been underestimated and issues had taken time to resolve. The Council's IT team had played a significant role in developing an online system, 'Achieve', whereby customers could self-serve which was now working well. The information provided in the report had been exchanged at the first Environmental Services Partnership Board meeting on 27 August 2015.
- 46.3 Attention was drawn to Page No. 18, Paragraph 2.1, which set out the various performance monitoring procedures included within the contract. The Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager explained that there was a weekly Customer Service Liaison Meeting which had been used to resolve any issues, for example, when the Achieve system had first been implemented,

Customer Services and Ubico could each only view different sections. As the initial teething problems had been ironed out the meetings were now held on a fortnightly basis. A monthly Performance Monitoring Review was carried out by the Joint Waste Team on behalf of the Council and a full report was provided to Officers. The Environmental Services Partnership Board was attended by the Deputy Chief Executive, as a Director of Ubico, and the Lead Member for Clean and Green Environment, as well as Officers from Ubico. The figures provided demonstrated that there had been no fundamental change in the services provided to residents as a result of moving to Ubico. There had been no significant health and safety incidents during quarter 1 and no incidents had been reportable under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR). The report also provided information regarding the residual household waste per household and the household waste reused, recycled and composted which had previously been National Indicators. There was little difference in the figures for residual waste compared to the previous year, however, recycling was down nationally and there had been a huge drop in the sale of recyclates. The Joint Waste Team was looking at initiatives to encourage residents to recycle more and there was currently a campaign around food waste caddies. Refuse and recycling calendars would be sent out shortly and contained information on the materials which could be recycled. In terms of future work, collection methods would need to be reviewed as a result of legislative changes and a report would be taken to the Executive Committee and Council in due course. In addition, the current vehicle lease was due to expire in 2017 and consideration would need to be given to how waste would be collected in the future and the type of vehicles which would be required.

- 46.4 Whilst he recognised that little had changed in terms of the delivery of waste services to residents, a Member indicated that the one thing which had changed was the ability to speak directly with staff to resolve problems. The Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager clarified that the staff previously employed by the Council had been transferred to Ubico and were now employed by that company. As the Council had a contract with Ubico, it was necessary to monitor the requests being made and everyone was being encouraged to use the Achieve system to report any issues. The system could be accessed from a Parish Council and public point of view and anyone reporting an incident would receive an acknowledgement notification and a further notification when the matter had been resolved. If an issue was not being resolved then she encouraged Members to contact either herself, or Customer Services. A Member indicated that he had reported an issue using the Achieve system but he had not had any feedback as to whether it was progressing and the Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager undertook to speak to the Member following the meeting.
- 46.5 In terms of the recycling figures, a Member recognised that it was a problem nationally and he noted the point about the reduction in recyclate sales, however, this did not explain why people in the Borough were recycling less. The Council had previously been aspiring to the 'Sights on 60' campaign to increase recycling rates to 60% and yet the recycling rate was now closer to 50% and he queried what was being done to address this. The Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager indicated that it was largely as a result of residents becoming lazy as it was easier to put all refuse into a single bin as opposed to separating it out. The refuse and recycling calendars would help to raise awareness that people should be recycling more and there would be more initiatives to encourage residents to recycle as much as they could. A Member pointed out that there had been a change in attitude amongst supermarkets, with a drive towards reducing packaging, which meant that there was less recyclable material in circulation. A Member questioned if anything could be done to make it easier for people to identify what materials could be recycled as she found the symbols very confusing. In response, the Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager explained

that this information could all be found on the Council's website but she accepted that people may not realise it was available and she indicated that she would see what could be done to address this.

46.6 A Member queried whether anything was being done to discourage people from parking their cars in places which made it difficult for refuse vehicles to pass. The Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager confirmed that windscreen stickers were used on vehicles to indicate that they were causing an obstruction.

46.7 Members were advised that a further report would be provided in six months time and it was

RESOLVED That the six monthly update following the transfer of waste services to Ubico be **NOTED**.

OS.47 GLOUCESTERSHIRE FAMILIES FIRST UPDATE

47.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager, circulated at Pages No. 23-27, which provided Members with an update on the Gloucestershire Families First Programme. Members were asked to consider the progress made in delivering the programme.

47.2 The Committee received a presentation from the Council's Community Development Officer, Adrian Goode, the Families First Plus Programme Manager, Eugene O'Kane, and the Gloucestershire Families First Plus Team Manager, Emma Trigwell, during which the following key points were raised:

- Recap – Families First was the local name for the national Troubled Families Programme; a three year programme (2012-2015) aimed at turning around the lives of an estimated 120,000 troubled families in the country; overseen by the Department of Communities and Local Government; agreed that Gloucestershire would work with 900 families over the three years (90 for Tewkesbury Borough).
- Original Criteria – An adult on out of work benefit, children not attending school, and/or family members involved in crime and anti-social behaviour; high costs to the public purse.
- Aim of the Programme – To get children back into school, reduce youth crime and anti-social behaviour, put adults on a path back to work and bring down the amount spent on them by public services; over time, to change the way services were delivered – re-designing them for the longer term i.e. a key single worker identified to work with a particular family and make links to other agencies rather than several different agencies being involved.
- Progress to Date – As of February 2015, over 900 families were engaged by intensive key workers, commissioned services or existing agencies; 100% of families had achieved outcomes: 825 had achieved the crime/education result, 75 had achieved the employment result and 59 had achieved the progress to work result; as a high performing area Gloucestershire had entered into the expanded programme early.
- Evaluation: Family Situation on Exit – Educating, employment and training: improvements in school exclusions, school behavioural problems, attendance at alternative provision (when not in mainstream education) and adults in employment; Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour: improvements in youth offending, Police call-outs, families involved in domestic abuse incidents;

Health: improvements in adult mental health and young people using alcohol/drugs; 85% of families said that they had made progress since being involved in Families First.

- Expanded Troubled Families Programme – Five year programme from 2015/16 – funding for first year; additional 3,000 families in Gloucestershire (approximately 10% in Tewkesbury Borough); getting to a much wider group of families with multiple problems; greater flexibility to decide which families to work with but must prioritise highest need; payment by results based on ‘sustained and significant progress’; local authorities to produce a ‘Troubled Families Outcomes Plan’ against which to measure progress.
- Criteria for the Expanded Programme – Parents and children involved in crime and anti-social behaviour; children not attending school; children who need help; adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion and young people at risk of worklessness; families affected by domestic violence and abuse; and parents and children with a range of health problems.
- What is Early Help? – “Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child’s life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years” – Working Together to Safeguard Children, DfE, March 2015.
- Working in Tewkesbury – Locality Managers Group: health, education, Police, probation, Council services, housing, mental health, domestic abuse, substance misuse, Department of Work and Pensions, voluntary and community sector representation; Early Help Hub Allocations – Advice Information Support and Targeted Support (family support, community support).
- Tewkesbury Families First Plus Team – Team Manager, Emma Trigwell; Assistant Team Manager, Rachel Shore-Nye; Community Social Worker, Isobel Neason; Early Help Coordinators, Theresa Brown and Karen James; Family Support Workers, Hannah Oakshott, Lucy Holford, Susan Hatch and Kevan Constantine; Social Work Student, Stephanie Hunt; Administrator Support, Susan Pope.
- The Role of Families First Plus Teams – Support the coordination and development of local partnerships; coordinate all requests for additional support on behalf of the partnership; provide advice, guidance and support through Community Social Workers and Early Help Coordinators; provide targeted support – a range of family support interventions including whole family intensive work, parenting groups, specific interventions linked to an assessment of need.

47.3

The Gloucestershire Families First Plus Team Manager explained that, in Tewkesbury Borough, the co-location of various services had enabled good relationships to be formed during the Families First Programme which had resulted in a new approach being taken to requests for assistance. Whereas requests had

previously been made directly to the various teams, they now came in via the Early Help Hub and the core management group met on a fortnightly basis to assess the requests and match families with the right type of service to meet their need. This had removed the bureaucracy and prevented delays for the families as there was only one set of paperwork and one assessment form to complete. The Gloucestershire Families First Plus Programme Manager advised that this approach was now being rolled out around Gloucestershire.

- 47.4 A Member queried whether the 90 families who had participated in the initial Families First Programme had been located in one particular area or whether they had been spread across the Borough. The Gloucestershire Families First Plus Team Manager indicated that the Team did spend a lot of time in certain areas but the families were widespread across the Borough and those in rural areas had very different needs to those in urban areas. There were spikes in particular problems, for instance, work was currently being done with a number of adults with very entrenched mental health issues and a lot of time was being spent supporting parents around domestic abuse as the next generation entered into violent relationships. It was noted that Gloucestershire Homeseeker enabled residents to choose where they wanted to live rather than properties being allocated to certain individuals based on certain criteria. The Team often worked with several properties in one street as people tended to speak to their neighbours about the support they were getting which encouraged them to make requests for assistance.
- 47.5 In response to a query regarding youth authorities, the Gloucestershire Families First Plus Programme Manager advised that the Team did work with organisations such as Young Gloucestershire, however, by that stage the child would already have been identified as being at risk and the role of Families First Plus was to work with them before they got to that stage. A Member questioned whether there were enough people in the Team to be able to work with the amount of families required for the second phase of the programme, which had increased substantially since the first phase. The Gloucestershire Families First Plus Programme Manager indicated that it would not be possible to do that within the Team which was why the Government was keen to point out that this should not be thought of as a separate project but rather as embedding different ways of working in order to intervene at an earlier stage.
- 47.6 A Member was very impressed with the programme and he was particularly pleased to see how the processes had been streamlined in order to produce results more quickly. The Chairman echoed these sentiments and felt that incorporating the changes into 'business as usual' was the most sensible way forward, particularly when it was not clear how funding would be provided in future. He thanked the team for their presentation and asked that congratulations be passed on to everyone involved in the programme on behalf of the Committee. It was subsequently

RESOLVED That the progress made in delivering the Gloucestershire Families First Plus Programme be **NOTED**.

OS.48 FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT GROUP MONITORING REPORT

- 48.1 The report of the Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager, circulated at Pages No. 28-40, provided an update on the progress of the Flood Risk Management Group Action Plan. Members were asked to consider the progress

which had been made.

- 48.2 Members were advised that the Flood Risk Management Group Action Plan, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, was monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis and this update was based on the Flood Risk Management Group meeting held on 28 September 2015. Table 7, set out at Pages No. 37-38, had been of particular interest to the Group as it provided information on the capital improvement to properties within Tewkesbury Borough, in particular the Repair and Renew Grant which had been offered by the Government following the 2014 flooding and had helped to deliver up to £5,000 of property flood resilience improvements to each flooded property which applied. The table also included information about the Gloucestershire Community Fund which had been administered at the same time to people locally. Overall, almost £600,000 of capital improvements had been made to households and businesses which represented a really good uptake. Tables 8, 9, 10 and 11, set out at Pages No. 39-40, provided an update on the flood alleviation work in Tirley which was part of the original Flood Response Action Plan (FRAP) arising from the 2007 floods. Work had now commenced, with a number of different measures being employed, and it was hoped that the scheme would finally be completed by the end of the year.
- 48.3 As a local Member for Tirley, the Chairman welcomed the progress which was being made and indicated that the FRAP could be signed off once the work was complete. The Environmental Health Manager confirmed that this would bring the FRAP to a close, however, he clarified that the Flood Risk Management Group would continue to meet in order to deliver the Flood Risk Management Action Plan which was a 'living' document to which funding and partnership opportunities were added as and when they arose. The Chief Executive indicated that one of the 'asks' within the Gloucestershire devolution bid was around funding for a flood alleviation programme for the county and he felt that it would be a significant benefit to secure a longer term funding arrangement with the Government.

48.4 It was

RESOLVED That the progress against the Flood Risk Management Plan be **NOTED**.

OS.49 REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS

- 49.1 The report of the Corporate Services Group Manager, circulated at Pages No. 41-49, provided a six monthly update on the Tewkesbury Borough Council complaints recorded and managed through corporate feedback management procedures and the Local Government Ombudsman complaints received about the Borough Council. Members were asked to consider the information provided and determine whether any further action was required.
- 49.2 The Corporate Services Group Manager drew attention to Table 1, set out at Page No. 43, which set out the formal complaints resolved within target times between January and June 2015. A further breakdown of the complaints by type, remedy, Parish and channel was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. The report also included a summary of complaints received by the Local Government Ombudsman, set out at Page No. 44, Paragraph 3.0. It was noted that only 11 complaints had been received by the Ombudsman relating to Tewkesbury Borough during 2014/15 and none of those had been of detriment to the Council. The Ombudsman's letter was attached in full at Appendix 2 to the report and referenced a workbook for Councillors, produced with the Local Government Association, which explained how Councillors could support local people with their complaints. The Corporate Services Group Manager distributed copies of the workbook around the table for information and undertook to circulate the document to Members via email following the meeting. He felt that it was a very positive report overall and he reminded Members that the complaints framework was shortly due to be reviewed in order to

ensure that arrangements were robust.

49.3 Whilst he realised that it was not realistic to expect there to be no complaints, a Member felt that the complaints did highlight things which were not being done as well as they could be and that they were worth investigating to see if any improvements could be made. He noted that 14 formal complaints had been received during the period January to June 2015 and, although they had all been resolved, he questioned why four of them had been resolved outside of target. He went on to query how complaints which were received online were dealt with and whether they translated into formal complaints. In response, the Corporate Services Group Manager advised that the formal complaints were dealt with within individual service areas and should be resolved within 10 working days, unless an extension had been agreed with the complainant. Whilst some complaints could be more complex than others, this was something which needed to be looked into as part of the review. Complaints which were received online tended to be about operational issues e.g. missed bin collections, although they did have the potential to escalate into formal complaints. The website would be looked at as part of the review to ensure that people were being clearly signposted as to how to report issues and make complaints.

49.4 It was

RESOLVED That the complaints report be **NOTED**.

OS.50 UPDATE ON DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS REVIEW

50.1 At its meeting on 21 July 2015, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had established a Working Group to undertake a review of Disabled Facilities Grants. The first meeting of the Working Group had been held on 24 September 2015 and its Chairman, Councillor T A Spencer, had been asked to provide an update to the Committee as to the progress which had been made.

50.2 The Chairman of the Working Group explained that he had a particular interest in the review as it was something which he was affected by in his personal life. The Council had a responsibility to look after the people within the Borough and Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) were an essential way to help vulnerable people to remain in their homes. The Working Group had been given a very good introduction to the programme, and the way DFGs were currently handled, at its meeting on 24 September and they had been advised that 132 DFGs had been completed in 2014/15, at a cost of £772,049, which was not an insignificant amount. The main aim of the review was to streamline procedures and remove some of the bureaucracy in order to speed up the process. For instance, the majority of clients were living in properties owned by Severn Vale Housing Society and one of the ways that aim could be achieved was by working more closely with housing associations to re-use properties for people with similar requirements, rather than removing the adaptations. The next meeting of the Working Group would be in November and it was noted that the review report was due to be presented to the Committee at its meeting in February 2016.

50.3 The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee thanked Councillor Spencer for his update and it was

RESOLVED That the update on the Disabled Facilities Grants Review be **NOTED**.

OS.51 TIMING OF FUTURE MEETINGS

51.1 The Chairman indicated that, following the Borough Council elections in May, there had been a number of changes to the membership of the Committee and he felt that it was an opportune time to review whether the timing of the meetings was still appropriate. It was noted that Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings were currently held on Tuesdays at 4:30pm.

51.2 Several Members indicated that they were happy to continue to have the meetings at 4:30pm. One Member suggested that it would be helpful if any training sessions could also be arranged for a similar time and the Corporate Services Group Manager undertook to take this into account when making arrangements for training in future. It was subsequently

RESOLVED That meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee continue to be held at 4:30pm.

The meeting closed at 6:10 pm