

# TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Council Offices, Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury on Tuesday, 1 December 2015 commencing at 4:30 pm**

**Present:**

Chairman

Councillor P W Awford

**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, Mrs P E Stokes, P D Surman, H A E Turbyfield and M J Williams

**also present:**

Councillor R E Garnham

**OS.52 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- 52.1 The evacuation procedure, as noted on the Agenda, was taken as read.
- 52.2 The Chairman welcomed Councillor R E Garnham, the Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel, to the meeting and indicated that he would be providing an update on the last meeting of the Panel at Agenda Item 8.

**OS.53 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

- 53.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mrs G F Blackwell (Vice-Chairman) and M G Sztymiak. There were no substitutions for the meeting.

**OS.54 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- 54.1 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.

- 54.2 The following declaration was made:

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Application No./Item</b>	<b>Nature of Interest (where disclosed)</b>	<b>Declared Action in respect of Disclosure</b>
P W Awford	Item 9 – Performance Management – Quarter 2 2015/16	Is a non-pecuniary member of the National Flood Forum.  Is a Borough Council representative on the Lower Severn (2005) Internal Drainage Board.  Is a representative on the Severn and Wye Regional Flood and Coastal Committee and on the Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.	Would speak and vote.
Mrs P E Stokes	Item 7 – Gloucestershire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee Update.	Is a member of Healthwatch.	Would speak and vote.

54.3 There were no further declarations made on this occasion.

## **OS.55 MINUTES**

55.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2015, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **OS.56 CONSIDERATION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN**

56.1 Attention was drawn to the Executive Committee Forward Plan, circulated at Pages No. 13-15. 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.

56.2 It was noted that the Customer Services Strategy was due to be considered at the Executive Committee meeting on 13 January 2016, however, it had been suggested that it would be more appropriate for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the strategy first in order for its feedback to be taken into account by the Executive Committee. The Communications and Policy Manager advised that an Overview and Scrutiny Committee workshop to review the strategy was being arranged for early January and it was intended to include an item on the Agenda for the next available Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting to discuss the findings; this was likely to be the meeting on 23 February 2016. On that basis the Executive Committee would consider the Customer Services Strategy at its meeting on 6 April 2016 and the Forward Plan would be updated accordingly.

56.3 A Member sought clarification as to whether the item in respect of Cemetery Provision, due to be considered at the meeting on 13 January 2016, related to

Tewkesbury Town or Tewkesbury Borough. In response, the Finance and Asset Management Group Manager confirmed that it related to provision within Tewkesbury Town.

56.4 It was

**RESOLVED** That the Executive Committee Forward Plan be **NOTED** subject to an amendment to show that the Customer Services Strategy would be considered at the meeting on 6 April 2016 as opposed to 13 January 2016.

#### **OS.57 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16**

57.1 Attention was drawn to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2015/16, circulated at Pages No. 16-17, which Members were asked to consider.

57.2 The Chief Executive indicated that the Annual Waste & Recycling Action Plan 2015/16 had been due to be considered by the Committee at the current meeting, however, it would now be incorporated into the Joint Waste Partnership Action Plan which would be included as an Agenda item for the meeting on 19 January 2016. A Member queried whether it would be possible to amend the Work Programme so that it was easy to see when items had been removed or delayed and the Democratic Services Group Manager undertook to ensure that the format of the Work Programme was revised on that basis.

57.3 The Chairman queried whether it was necessary to include an item to discuss the progress of the Joint Core Strategy. The Chief Executive explained that a full update had been provided to the Executive Committee at its meeting the previous week and a range of actions had been agreed in order to expedite the examination process. He felt that this was all that could be done at the present time. A Member queried if the other Joint Core Strategy authorities had a view on the current situation and was advised that this had been discussed at the Joint Core Strategy Member Steering Group which had been held the previous day. The meeting had demonstrated that the other authorities were equally concerned about the lack of progress being made and it was thought that they would support Tewkesbury Borough Council in the actions proposed by the Executive Committee.

57.4 It was

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2015/16 be **NOTED**.
2. That the format of the Work Programme be revised to show more clearly when items had been removed or delayed.

#### **OS.58 GLOUCESTERSHIRE HEALTH AND CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE**

58.1 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 Committee held on 3 November 2015.

58.2 Councillor Day advised that the Care Quality Commission Inspection Report had been presented to the Committee and had indicated that the overall rating for the Gloucestershire Care Services NHS Trust was 'requires improvement'. Whilst the

Committee had recognised the importance for the people of Gloucestershire to be aware of how their health and social services were rated by the Care Quality Commission, it was also important to be clear that it had been recognised that it was a very caring organisation with staff who treated people with kindness, dignity and respect, and who were consistently exceptional at the community hospitals. The Committee Members hoped that staff morale was not adversely affected by the overall rating.

58.3 The Committee had welcomed the Head of Operations from the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust to the meeting to inform Members of progress since the implementation of the Out of Hours Service on 1 April 2015. It was clear that it had been a challenging time for the service, particularly regarding the staffing of the Primary Care Centres which had been closed on occasions during the period. The target for the service was that people should not have to travel more than 30 minutes but analysis had shown that the closures had resulted in 15 people having an extended journey. The Committee had been informed that ensuring that the Primary Care Centres in the main urban areas of Gloucester and Cheltenham were fully staffed was a priority. As the service was not meeting the National Quality Requirements, and given the Committee's concerns regarding the delivery of this service, it had been agreed that the Committee would receive a further update in six months.

58.4 It had been positive to hear that the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust was in discussion with the Council's Chief Fire Officer to identify options for joint working in Gloucestershire. The Trust was also funding the training of 30 Emergency Care Assistants to become paramedics; the cohort was due to qualify in 2016 and would be followed by another 30. The Committee was informed that 50% of the new paramedics would be based in Gloucestershire. The Trust had also been selected by the Department of Health to pilot a new way for ambulance services to respond to 999 calls – Dispatch on Disposition. This pilot had proved successful and was now being extended to other ambulance services. It was also pleasing to note that the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust was the best performing English ambulance trust for 999 calls resolved over the telephone and for the percentage of patients cared for through alternative healthcare pathways, avoiding unnecessary admissions to hospital emergency departments. The Committee had raised concern about the poor response times in the rural areas, but it was important to acknowledge that the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust was performing well overall against its targets. Going forward it would be interesting to see whether the increase in the number of paramedics and the work with Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service made a real difference on the ground.

58.5 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** That the feedback from the Gloucestershire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee be **NOTED**.

## **OS.59 GLOUCESTERSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL UPDATE**

59.1 Members received an update from Councillor R E Garnham, the Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel, on matters

discussed at the last meeting of the Panel held on 5 November 2015.

- 59.2 Councillor Garnham advised that the meeting had opened with a tribute being paid to Graham Robinson, a former Independent Member of the Panel, who had recently passed away. The main Agenda items had been an extended Chief Executive's report and the Police and Crime Plan Highlight Report which the Panel had requested be provided by the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- 59.3 The Chief Executive's report had focused on two recent Constabulary Inspections that had been undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary (HMIC) and Her Majesty's Inspection of Prisons (HMIP). The first report had covered efficiency and had given the Constabulary an overall rating of 'good' and stated that the force was "very well prepared to face its future financial challenges". The Constabulary had also been commended for producing a balanced budget and for having a "good understanding of the likely financial position through to 2018/19". The second inspection was a joint inspection of the new Custody Centre at Waterwells by HMIC and HMIP. The main item reported was that the Police and Crime Commissioner, and the Police Chief Officer Group, should work with Gloucestershire County Council and youth services to ensure that young people were not unnecessarily detained in Police cells. One Member had noted that there were 74 instances of Police cells being used as a 'place of safety' for people detained under the Mental Health Act. Additional work had followed on this matter since the Police and Crime Panel meeting and both Councillor Garnham and Councillor Ian Dobie, Chairman of Health Scrutiny at Gloucestershire County Council, had visited the Custody Suite on 26 November which had prompted further work. The Chief Executive's report had continued to discuss consultation on greater co-operation between 'blue light' services and also the arrangements for the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May 2016. The Chief Executive had highlighted that the Police and Crime Commissioner's office must conduct its business in relation to the election with complete fairness and transparency, whilst still continuing to support the Commissioner in his normal role.
- 59.4 The Panel had welcomed the Police and Crime Plan Priorities Quarterly Highlight Report which was 31 pages long but gave scope for many questions to be asked regarding current performance. There were two questions of particular interest, the first of which related to how the Commissioner satisfied himself with regards to outcomes from the projects and details had subsequently been provided about the arrangements in place, for instance, a funding panel that looked at the bids and evaluated them against criteria that included relevance to the plan, value for money and sustainability etc. The second question had related to the increase in the abandoned call rate in relation to 101 calls. The Panel had been informed that there had been some technical issues with the ICT system which had led to some calls being lost but there would be ongoing work to improve the service.
- 59.5 The Panel had also received a more comprehensive financial report, compared to previous Panel meetings, which showed that revenue account was forecasting an underspend of £0.092M; reserves were forecast to be at £22.794M at 31 March 2016; and the capital programme had a forecast spend of £7.237M in the current financial year. At present there remained £8M of uncommitted reserves in the revenue support reserve fund and £6.187M in the general reserve. The Panel had noted that the Police and Crime Commissioner had been consulting on a possible 2% precept increase for the 2016/17 budget on the basis of cuts of between 25% and 45%.
- 59.6 A presentation had been received from Phil Sullivan, the Police and Crime Commissioner's Lead on the 'Older but not Overlooked' priority. The report had covered rural isolation, fear of crime, Police Community Support Officers, and the use of Village Agents, amongst other matters. He had also highlighted how

funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner's office could often be match funded under this particular priority. It was noted that the next meeting of the Police and Crime Panel would be held on 18 January 2016 and would be an additional meeting to consider any early papers regarding budget setting in February.

- 59.7 A Member understood that the Police and Crime Commissioner had committed to protect funding for the Police. In response, Councillor Garnham explained that, whilst funding was being protected, the Police and Crime Commissioner had indicated that it would be necessary to increase the precept by 2% in order to guarantee a standstill position. Another Member had heard a radio report regarding the precept during which the interviewer had stated that a 2% increase would be enough to employ an additional 20 Police Officers; he queried whether that was where the money was intended to be spent. Although he did not know for sure, Councillor Garnham advised that it was unlikely to be that straightforward as there were a number of other demands.
- 59.8 A Member questioned what advice should be given to people who called the 101 number but were subsequently 'lost in the system' and Councillor Garnham advised that, if it was an emergency, they should ring 999. He tended to test out the 101 system if he needed to contact a Police Officer and encouraged other Members to do the same. A Member indicated that she had used the 101 service recently and had found it to be very efficient. The Chief Executive took the opportunity to remind Members that an email had recently been circulated to Members via Democratic Services providing an operational telephone number for the Police; he stressed that this was not for use by members of the public but Members could use it during office hours if they needed to contact the Police.
- 59.9 A Member stated that there were community safety related schemes in Tewkesbury Borough that had received funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner's fund which had been granted over a three year period running until 2017. As such, he questioned what would happen to the funding that had already been pledged should the Police and Crime Commissioner change as a result of the May elections. The Council's representative understood that the intention was that those items would continue to be funded but he undertook to seek a response from the Police and Crime Commissioner's office.
- 59.10 The Chairman thanked the Council's representative for his presentation and indicated that the update would be circulated to Members via email following the meeting. It was

**RESOLVED** That the feedback from the last meeting of the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel be **NOTED**.

## **OS.60 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT - QUARTER 2 2015/16**

- 60.1 The report of the Corporate Services Group Manager, circulated at Pages No. 18-71, attached performance management information for quarter 2 of 2015/16. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was asked to review and scrutinise performance information and, where appropriate, identify any issues to refer to the Executive Committee for clarification or further action to be taken.
- 60.2 The performance management report comprised the Council Plan Performance Tracker, the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) set, the Revenue Budget Summary Statement, the Capital Monitoring Statement and the Reserves Position Summary. With regard to the Performance Tracker, attached at Appendix 1, Members were

informed that the majority of actions were progressing well and Paragraph 2.3 of the report highlighted a number of achievements since the last update including: establishing an internal project team to review how the Council dealt with complaints; the start of work on the Riverside Walk; review of waste and recycling collection linked to the fleet procurement project; and the new leisure centre build remaining ahead of schedule with a successful open day held for over 100 members of the public. In terms of those actions which were not going as well as planned, Members were informed that they were all areas which had been flagged in quarter 1.

60.3 Members raised the following queries in respect of the Performance Tracker:

**Priority: Use Resources Effectively and Efficiently**

P27 – Objective 1 – Action b  
i) £ saved in accordance with corporate savings programme target – A Member noted that there had been an increase in the overpayment of housing benefit and he questioned how frequently that happened.

The Finance and Asset Management Group Manager advised that overpayments were made to claimants every year, mainly due to claimant error e.g. failure to notify of change of circumstances. As a result of the systems review of the service, and the introduction of real-time information from the Department of Work and Pensions, these instances were being picked up more quickly than they had been in previous years which would lead to an improvement in the longer term.

The Member questioned whether it was difficult to get the money paid back and he was informed that, whilst the majority of money was recovered, the main problem was the length of time it took. The people who tended to be affected did not necessarily have a great deal of money in the first place and there were rules about the amount which could be taken each week in terms of benefit recovery. Whilst the Council was doing more to recover greater amounts, and very little was written off, it did tend to come in over a longer period. It was easier to recover smaller amounts than one which had been allowed to grow so it was hoped that this would continue to improve over time.

P28 – Objective 2 – Action a)  
Rationalise office accommodation through new ways of working and to

The Chief Executive highlighted the importance of finding the right client which would add to the public sector service centre being created within the Council Offices

increase rental income – A Member raised concern that the top floor of the Council Offices building remained vacant and he felt that it would be preferable to rent it in order to generate income.

building. Discussions were ongoing with a number of agencies and the outcomes would be reported back to Members in due course. Officers were currently working with Gloucestershire County Council with a view to sharing a legal service, subject to the business case which was currently being worked up. If it was successful, the One Legal department would triple in size and it would be necessary to find appropriate accommodation for the additional staff which would be based at the Council Offices in accordance with the business case; the top floor and the ground floor of the Council Offices building were both potential options. He understood Members' concerns regarding loss of income and provided assurance that provisions were being made in the budget for next year.

P29 – Objective 3 – Action b) Improve complaints handling, including learning from complaints received to improve service delivery – It was noted that Members had received an email the previous week which the Deputy Chief Executive had advised Members she would be responding to on their behalf and he sought clarification on the situation.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that a Freedom of Information request had been emailed to all Councillors and Members had been advised that they did not need to respond as Officers would be responding on behalf of the Council. The Chief Executive highlighted the importance of providing a co-ordinated response but assured Members that they would be advised if there were any particular issues that needed to be brought to their attention in such circumstances. The Chief Executive confirmed that Members would be informed if Officers were intending to issue a response on behalf of the Council and they would be copied into responses when appropriate.

### **Priority: Improve Recycling and Care for the Environment**

P36 – Objective 2 – Action a) Promote waste minimisation

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that recycle was becoming increasingly



and aspire to increase our recycling rate through working with our residents and communities on promotional campaigns – A Member noted that waste to landfill had increased and he questioned how this was being tackled.

contaminated which could cause problems when it reached the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF); there had been instances where material could not be recycled due to the level of contamination. Needles were a particular problem and Officers were working with a number of partners, including registered social landlords and Turning Point, an alcohol and drug misuse service, to identify problem areas and to make improvements. She confirmed that all recyclate was currently going into the MRF as normal.

In terms of trying to encourage people to recycle, stickers had been used on residual waste bins where people were not putting out a food waste caddy for collection and there had been a 20% increase in food waste recycling as a result. The Joint Waste Team would be discussing further initiatives at its next meeting, including some of the methods featured on the recent BBC programme presented by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall. A Member indicated that he had done some research into the recycling rates of neighbouring local authorities and he felt that Tewkesbury Borough Council was performing well in comparison.

P40 – Objective 5 – Action a) Work with areas prone to flooding to build community resilience – The Chairman indicated that he had received a request from a resident of Tirley asking for several questions to be raised at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the work being carried out to attenuate flooding in the area and he questioned how this should be addressed.

The Chief Executive indicated that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was not a decision-making body, it was a scrutiny and review body, and therefore responding to public questions on decisions of the authority was outside of its remit and rested with the Executive Committee and Council where decisions on policy, practice and procedure were made. The questions were in relation to an operational matter which would normally warrant an Officer response; however, Officers had not yet had sight of the questions and therefore would not be in a position to respond at the present meeting. On that basis, he felt that the most appropriate way forward would be to refer the questions to the relevant Officers and to take a response to the Flood Risk Management Group meeting on Monday 14 December for Members to consider.

### **Priority: Provide Customer Focused Community Support**

P43 – Objective 3 – Action a) Agree approach and programme of work for

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the Council had been working on a CIL with its Joint Core Strategy partners as there

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – A Member sought an update on the progress of the CIL.

would be implications for cross-boundary sites. A Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule had been out to consultation in the summer to ask for comments on the suggested charges. It was very important to get the balance right otherwise CIL would become unviable; if the charges were set too high, developers would not be able to afford to build, and if charges were too low, development would become unsustainable. Members were informed that 30 responses had been received from developers and the next big step would be to decide whether to charge for strategic allocations; there was now a question mark over whether CIL was the best mechanism for obtaining contributions for strategic sites and the infrastructure which would be required within them. In terms of delivery, until the outcome of the JCS Examination was known, it was very difficult to make any decisions in relation to CIL charges. The Deputy Chief Executive was hopeful that the report in December would give a clear direction for Officers to move on to the next stage of consultation in respect of the CIL.

P48 – Objective 5 – Action b) Progress the work streams for a new leisure facility – A Member noted that an open day had been held for members of the public and he asked if Members would have the opportunity to visit the new leisure centre.

The Finance and Asset Management Group Manager indicated that the leisure centre was progressing all the time and he undertook to arrange a Member tour in the New Year to which Parish Councils could also be invited.

### **Priority: Develop Housing Relevant To Local Housing Needs**

P50 – Objective 2 – Action b) To deliver a programme of affordable homes in partnership with Parish Councils, developers and registered providers to meet the needs of clients in rural communities – A Member indicated that his local Parish Council was very upset as the work which had been done on the Shurdington site had been brought to a standstill.

The Deputy Chief Executive recognised that a lot of good work had been done on the Shurdington garage sites which had been temporarily suspended in order to carry out a review of assets to see if there was any potential to combine certain sites in order to direct development more efficiently. It was anticipated that the work on the garage sites would restart quite quickly.

60.4 Attention was drawn to the KPIs, attached in full at Appendix 2 to the report, and Members were informed that the status of each indicator was set out at Paragraphs 3.1-3.2 of the report. Key areas of interest included KPI 7 which showed a significant decrease in the number of homeless applications compared to quarter 2 in 2014/15; KPI 11 which showed that the average number of sick

days taken had dropped significantly compared to the previous year; KPIs 12-14 which related to planning processing times and confirmed that all three targets were unlikely to be achieved by the end of the year and processing times were down compared to the previous year; KPIs 15 and 16 which demonstrated that processing times for benefit applications were the best ever and continued to improve; and KPI 30 which set out that 40 new build affordable homes had been delivered during the quarter which was a continued improvement in the total number delivered.

60.5 During the debate which ensued, Members raised the following queries in relation to the KPIs:

P55 – KPI No. 7 – Total number of homeless applications accepted – A Member felt that the hard work which had been done in this area should be noted.

The Housing Services Manager reiterated that a lot of hard work had been done to increase homeless prevention activities and she undertook to pass this comment on to the team.

P56 – KPI No. 11 – Average number of sick days per full time equivalent – A Member was delighted to note the improvement in relation to sickness absence.

The Chief Executive indicated that he was also very pleased to see that the sickness absence levels had reduced. This was an area which was carefully monitored and the Corporate Leadership Team did try to address any issues which could give rise to stress e.g. increased workloads. It was noted that the Agenda for the Council meeting on 8 December included an item on the review of the Development Management Team staffing structure which it was hoped would address the problems with resources in that area. The Chairman indicated that Planning was an area which the Committee may wish to look at, in light of the concerns which had been raised by Members in recent months, however, he felt that it would be inappropriate to do so before the actions arising from the review had been implemented.

60.6 The Financial Budget Summary for quarter 2 showed a small surplus of £20,236 against the budgeted profile. Page No. 23, Paragraph 4.2, set out the summary of the Council's position split into the main types of expenditure. Savings had been made in relation to staffing costs, transport and premises and £302,000 additional income had been generated above budget projection via housing benefit payments and income from Planning, One Legal and garden waste. Treasury management continued to show an under-recovery against budget and was still impacted by the limited available cash balances as a result of the Virgin Media refund and the cost of the leisure centre. In terms of the overall budget position for Group Managers, there was an underspend of £292,000 and a summary position for each Group Manager was set out at Appendix 3 to the report. In response to a query regarding the £50,163 overspend on supplies and services, the Finance and Asset Management Group Manager advised that this related to disbursements i.e. additional work undertaken by One Legal in the first six months of the year. These additional costs were being recovered through income as costs were recharged to the various clients.

60.7 The capital budget position for quarter 2 was set out at Appendix 4 to the report and Members were asked to note the figures in relation to the leisure centre build

which was ahead of schedule but within budget. Members were informed that work on the Riverside Walk had commenced in November and that would be reflected in the figures for quarter 3, as would recovery of the Repair and Renew grant funding from the Government. Appendix 5 contained a summary of the current usage of available reserves.

60.8 In response, the Finance and Asset Management Group Manager indicated that there would be consultation in the New Year as to the future of the New Homes Bonus as there was a proposal from the Government to use some of the current allocation to support health expenditure at an upper tier level. Any reduction in New Homes Bonus would affect the Council's position and this would be reflected in its consultation response. In relation to a query regarding the Virgin Media revaluation, Members were informed that valuations were carried out by the Valuation Office Agency; the Council had no input into valuation and no right of appeal, although it did have a financial interest under the new scheme introduced in 2013. A Member questioned whether an assessment had been made as to how many other companies were likely to appeal and the Finance and Asset Management Group Manager indicated that an assessment was carried out on a monthly basis and an estimate was made on the basis of business type, success rate etc. It was worth noting that a 21% provision had been estimated in relation to Virgin Media, however, it had actually been over 40%. The Chief Executive reminded Members that a decision had been taken not to enter into the Gloucestershire business rates pool next year due to the outstanding risk of the Virgin Media account. By not being included, the Government would pick up the safety net payment as opposed to the members of the pool.

60.9 Having considered the information provided, it was

**RESOLVED** That the performance management information for Quarter 2 2015/16 be **NOTED**.

## **OS.61 PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN MONITORING REPORT**

61.1 Attention was drawn to the Peer Challenge Action Plan Monitoring Report, set out at Pages No. 72-101, which outlined the progress made in delivering the recommendations within the Peer Challenge Action Plan. Members were asked to consider the report.

61.2 Members were advised that the Council's peer challenge had taken place during November 2014 and the process had been an excellent learning opportunity for the Council, providing an external health check of the Council's position and how it was set up to meet its future challenges. Following the challenge, a formal report had been received, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, which summarised the findings of the challenge team. The report included a number of recommendations for further improvement and the Council had approved an action plan to progress these recommendations on 19 February 2015. The action plan and a summary of progress in delivering the recommendations was set out at Appendix 2 to the report. This confirmed that all of the actions were being progressed, the majority via the ongoing work around the development of the new Council Plan. The intention was to make the Council as effective as possible, and to ensure that there was adequate training in place, and work would be ongoing.

61.3 In terms of training, the Chairman indicated that he had recently attended some speed reading training in his role as a Gloucestershire County Councillor which he had found very useful and he suggested that it might be something which other Councillors would also benefit from. The Democratic Services Group Manager indicated that she was aware of the training and was looking to organise something for Borough Councillors in the New Year.

61.4 It was

**RESOLVED** That the progress made in delivering the recommendations within the Peer Challenge Action Plan be **NOTED**.

**OS.62 HOUSING, RENEWAL AND HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY REVIEW MONITORING REPORT**

62.1 The report of the Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager, circulated at Pages No. 102-128, set out the achievements to date in respect of the outcomes identified in the Housing, Renewal and Homelessness Strategy 2012-16 Action Plan. Members were asked to consider the report.

62.2 The Housing Services Manager explained that the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Local Government Act 2003 required all Councils to develop a strategy that set out their policies, commitments and programme for a wide range of housing matters. The Housing, Renewal and Homelessness Strategy 2012-16 was developed by an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group and adopted by the Council in September 2012. In terms of the key activities that had been achieved over the last 12 months, 145 new build homes had been completed with a mix of property types and tenures, of which 24% had been developed to the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 of higher efficiency standards, or equivalent standard; all other homes had met the minimum requirement of Level 3 which was now Building Regulations standard for all homes. A total of 13 affordable properties had been delivered using the cross-subsidy model in Winchcombe and Badgeworth and two rural exception developments were in the planning system for the Parishes of Minsterworth and Sandhurst, both of which would achieve new affordable housing as well as market housing for families and smaller accommodation for downsizers.

62.3 Members were informed that 132 disabled facilities grants had been completed between April 2014 and March 2015 at a value of £772,410. Partnership working across all six Gloucestershire Districts continued to facilitate solutions to health improvements, crime reduction and housing matters. Applications for social housing were banded according to housing need and a total of 424 properties had been let in the Borough in the financial year; the majority of households, 39%, were in silver band, with 36% in gold band, 23% in bronze and 2% in emergency band. A greater emphasis had been placed on homelessness prevention in line with the Government's 'Gold Standard' to enable those threatened with homelessness to avoid homeless crisis by staying in their existing home, where reasonable and affordable, and to move to a property of their choice in the private rented sector without the need for costly emergency accommodation. Following the presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the redeployment of financial housing options, Officers had successfully assisted the first applicants with deposits to move to alternative accommodation in areas where they wanted to live near to existing support i.e. families and schools. Three family households had been assisted with small deposits of £450-700 to move into private rented accommodation within the Borough, alleviating pressure on social housing in the area.

62.4 Members were informed that the six District Councils in Gloucestershire, together with the Police and Crime Commissioner, had piloted a 12 month sanctuary scheme in 2014 to offer target hardening and sanctuary room measures to residents wanting to remain in their homes but who were at risk of domestic violence. The pilot had been very successful and the scheme had subsequently been extended until March 2017. Seven households within Tewkesbury Borough

had accessed assistance through the scheme during the pilot year and all continued to remain in their homes. All seven properties had received target hardening measures e.g. lock changes and minor adaptations, funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner. No households had required sanctuary measures which would have been part funded by Tewkesbury Borough Council. It was noted that all of those who benefited were female households; one household had declined assistance. A joint bid from the six District Councils in Gloucestershire to the Department for Communities and Local Government had recently been successful in securing £500,000 for 'places of safety' to provide self-contained emergency accommodation for those fleeing domestic abuse. 12 properties would be made available for that purpose across the County; Severn Vale Housing Society had agreed to provide two properties within Tewkesbury Borough and it was hoped that the first would be available later that month. A Member queried whether 12 properties was enough to accommodate all those fleeing from domestic violence and the Housing Services Manager indicated that, whilst two properties would be enough for Tewkesbury Borough, urban areas such as Gloucester were likely to require more and, as the properties were being shared across Districts, 12 properties would probably not be sufficient overall.

62.5 A Member raised concern regarding figures for rough sleepers and whether they took account of "sofa surfers" which, in her experience, were often younger people aged 16-24. The Housing Services Manager clarified that the rough sleeper statistics reflected only those people who were sleeping outside. She provided assurance that Officers worked closely with vulnerable young people from an early stage and she was not aware of anyone currently sofa surfing in Tewkesbury.

62.6 Having considered the information provided, it was

**RESOLVED** That the achievements to date in respect of the outcomes identified in the Housing, Renewal and Homelessness Strategy 2012-16 Action Plan be **NOTED**.

### **OS.63 UPDATE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGY REVIEW**

63.1 Attention was drawn to the update on the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Review, circulated at Pages No. 129-135, which Members were asked to consider.

63.2 The Economic and Community Development Manager advised that the current Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 'Regenerating and Growing the Economy' was now at the end of its life and an Overview and Scrutiny Committee Working Group had been established to develop a new strategy. Councillor R A Bird had been elected as the Chairman for the Working Group and there had been one meeting to date. The purpose of the Working Group was to review current work; set priorities for the future; agree a time period for the strategy; and allocate required resources. It was noted that the work would include a review of the current Small Business Grant Scheme. Members had been made aware of the current landscape for economic development and tourism and, following discussions, the Working Group had agreed that growth was a key component to a new strategy and suggested an emerging vision "For Tewkesbury Borough to be the engine that delivers growth in Gloucestershire". Other key points, particularly in respect of tourism, included the need to support and make the most of larger attractions; utilise external funding opportunities for tourism attractions; and effective promotion of the area including associating with the Cotswold Tourism brand. There had been a discussion around how best to support the town centre and the need to look at infrastructure requirements around growth e.g. J9 and J10 of the M5 and the need to link with the work of the J9 Area Member Reference Panel. It was recognised that the emerging strategy should align with the Council

Plan progress to ensure that they complemented one another; it was understood that economic development and growth would be a major focus within the new Council Plan. In terms of timeframe, it was agreed that the strategy itself should have a lifespan of five years but that the work would actually go way beyond that.

- 63.3 The next meeting of the Working Group would focus on four main topics: ensuring the vision aligned with the J9 Area Member Reference Panel; providing information on economic data/employment sectors; discussing funding opportunities; and a presentation from the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), with particular focus on how the Council could best work with the LEP. In response to a query regarding timescale, the Economic and Community Development Manager indicated that it had originally been intended to have the second meeting before Christmas, however, it had not been possible to find a suitable date. On that basis, it was likely that the next meeting would now be held in January, subject to the availability of a representative from the LEP.
- 63.4 In response to a Member question regarding the employment growth in Gloucestershire, the Chief Executive explained that broadband provision for homes, and particularly businesses, would be a crucial consideration for many people thinking about relocating to the area. Work was ongoing with Government and internet providers regarding provision within the area and he suggested that this should be referenced in the strategy as it would become increasingly important. He advised that the IT department of one of London's teaching hospitals had recently relocated to Cornwall to make more effective use of space in the capital and this was something which should be taken into consideration in terms of the development of the Borough. The Economic and Community Development Manager indicated that there was currently a scheme in place for businesses that were struggling with their broadband provision and he encouraged Members to put them in touch with Officers if they were aware of any as there was a possibility of funding.
- 63.5 The Chairman noted that four of the six motorway junctions in Gloucestershire were within Tewkesbury Borough and the potential for employment growth was tremendous. He felt that the review of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy was a crucial piece of work and it would be up to the Council to drive economic development for the success of the Borough. It was subsequently

**RESOLVED** That the update on the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Review be **NOTED**.

The meeting closed at 6:30 pm