

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Council Offices, Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury on Tuesday, 23 February 2016 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, Mrs P E Stokes, P D Surman, M G Sztymiak, H A E Turbyfield and M J Williams

also present:

Councillors R E Allen and R E Garnham

OS.74 ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 74.1 The evacuation procedure, as noted on the Agenda, was advised to those present.
- 74.2 The Chair indicated that this was the last meeting for the Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager, Val Garside, who was retiring. He thanked her, on behalf of the Committee, for the tremendous work that she had done over an extended period and, during times of great change, and wished her a happy retirement.

OS.75 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 75.1 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.
- 75.2 There were no declarations made on this occasion.

OS.76 MINUTES

- 76.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2016, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

OS.77 CONSIDERATION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN

- 77.1 Attention was drawn to the Executive Committee Forward Plan, circulated at Pages No. 10-12. 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.
- 77.2 The Corporate Services Group Manager drew attention to the Council Plan Update

which was due to be considered by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 6 April 2016 and he indicated that all Members had been invited to a Council Plan workshop on 9 March 2016. A Member referred to the seminar which had recently been held in relation to waste and vehicle procurement and he questioned what the benefit of the seminar had been given that the Executive Committee had already approved the findings of the waste service review and made a recommendation to Council. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that this work in respect of the waste review had been conducted with a small group of Members who had been able to look carefully at the details and a report had then been taken to the Executive Committee and on to Council. Whilst it may have been beneficial to gain insight from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Members would appreciate that there had been a very tight timescale to ensure that the vehicles were procured by the end of the financial year.

77.3 A Member noted that several items due to be considered at the Executive Committee meeting on 6 April 2016 had previously been deferred and he sought clarification as to the reason for this. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that some items had been impacted by the long term absence of the Human Resources Manager who had been involved in a skiing accident and the property purchase had been subject to negotiations which had prevented it from being considered at an earlier meeting. She accepted that Officers were often optimistic about how quickly they could get an item on the Agenda which meant that the Forward Plan was subject to change.

77.4 It was

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

OS.78 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

78.1 Attention was drawn to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2015/16, circulated at Pages No. 13-15, which Members were asked to consider.

78.2 The Corporate Services Group Manager explained that, during the workshop on the review of the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Members had indicated that they would wish to invite representatives from Severn Vale Housing and Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service to give presentations at future meetings of the Committee. The presentations would be added to the Work Programme under 'Pending Items' which currently included a presentation from Healthwise Gloucestershire. A Member indicated that this was incorrect and should actually read 'Healthwatch Gloucestershire' and the Corporate Services Group Manager undertook to amend the Work Programme accordingly.

78.3 It was

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

OS.79 GLOUCESTERSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL UPDATE

79.1 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 February 2016.

79.2 Councillor Garnham advised that the majority of the meeting had been devoted to the Police budget and the setting of the Police precept for 2016/17. The Chief Executive's report had covered Freedom of Information requests; complaints;

forthcoming Police and Crime Commissioner elections; an update on estates; potential collaboration; and the government consultation on giving greater powers to Police and Crime Panels. It was noted that the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner would be hosting a familiarisation event on 11 April 2016 at the Police Headquarters in Waterwells. There had been some discussion about the estates strategy and one Member had questioned why the original plan to move Coleford Police Station into shared accommodation with the Forest of Dean District Council had not been followed through. In response, the Police and Crime Commissioner had explained that he had made a manifesto commitment to keep the Coleford Police Station on the existing site. It was noted that the Chief Constable of Wiltshire had spoken of his desire for a regional service for the whole of the south west but this was not a view shared by Gloucestershire's Police and Crime Commissioner. A joint response would be prepared to the ongoing government consultation regarding the powers of Police and Crime Panels; those proposed powers involved giving greater responsibility to the Police and Crime Panel to investigate complaints about the Police and Crime Commissioner.

79.3 It was noted that Safer Cyber was one of the Police and Crime Commissioner's priorities and the Constabulary had set up the UK's first Safer Cyber Forum which included membership from local businesses and academia. A comprehensive report had been provided on the Police and Crime Plan priorities; of particular note were the examples of diverting youth away from crime and reference was made to two young people whose attendance at school had been less than 60% but was now up to 98% as a result of their involvement in the Aston Project. A lengthy debate had taken place regarding the Commissioner's proposed 1.2% precept. The Chief Constable had asked for an increase of 1.99% and reference had been made by various members of the Panel to the government guidelines that the Police precept could be increased by 2% as, in future years, the grant settlement would be reduced by that amount. It was noted that, due to tax bases and increases elsewhere, the Police and Crime Commissioner felt that an increase of 1.2% would reflect the government's wishes. All political parties had suggested a veto of the Commissioner's budget proposals but, when being put to the vote, this had not been carried due to there not being a two-thirds majority of all Members of the Panel, not just two-thirds of those present. The Panel therefore decided to support the precept and to make a recommendation that the Commissioner provide greater clarity on the use of ongoing reserves. Members noted that the date of the next meeting of the Police and Crime Panel had been changed to 11 March 2016.

79.4 A Member noted that, when presenting at a recent Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting, Inspector Goga had informed the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that organised crime was reducing so it was worrying to see that it was now on the increase. A Member indicated that there had been a lot of concern amongst the public regarding rural crime and he queried whether there was any movement in that area. Councillor Garnham confirmed that this had been mentioned at the last meeting and reassurance was consistently provided that the challenges of policing a county which was both rural and urban were recognised and the Police still had their 'eyes on the ball'. A Member questioned whether any decision had been made in relation to the land which had been purchased in Bishop's Cleeve to build a new Police Station and Councillor Garnham explained that there was likely to be some movement on that before the next meeting as the land was now surplus to requirements.

79.5 A Member raised concern at the lack of Members in attendance at the Police and Crime Panel meeting. Given the importance of the meeting, he would have expected full attendance and he was disappointed to hear that veto of the budget proposals had not been able to go ahead. In response, Councillor Garnham

provided assurance that the meetings were normally well attended.

- 79.6 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.80 GLOUCESTERSHIRE HEALTH AND CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 80.1 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 12 January 2016.

- 80.2 Councillor Day explained that the meeting had been attended by CareUK, the provider of NHS111 in Gloucestershire. There had been concern regarding NHS111 performance against targets since its implementation in February 2013 and CareUK had given a detailed presentation which demonstrated the actions that had been taken to address those issues. Workforce factors were a significant issue and CareUK was undertaking a large amount of activity to improve recruitment and retention of Clinical Advisers. This was a national issue cutting across all aspects of the NHS and it had been suggested that the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee may wish to write to the Secretary of State for Health to ascertain what plans were in place to address workforce planning in order to 'fill the gap'.

- 80.3 The Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group report demonstrated that there was a lot of good performance against targets, however, there were still concerns with performance against some targets including cancer wait times and the four hour accident and emergency target at both Acute Hospitals. The Adult Social Care and Public Health Performance Report had showed that the number of people being admitted to residential care was reducing in line with the intention to support more people to live independently and the good work being done to support people with learning disabilities into employment continued. Members had raised concern with performance against drug and alcohol targets, however, it was noted that the service was in the process of being recommissioned.

- 80.4 The Healthwatch Gloucestershire Process Task Group Report looked at the impact on the patient and their family/carer. The Committee had been pleased to note the positive responses to the recommendations in the report and it was clear from the responses that a lot of activity to improve the discharge experience had already been identified and actioned. Healthwatch Gloucestershire would review action against their recommendations in three months. It was also noted that, in terms of delayed transfers of care, Gloucestershire's performance was better than the England average and the best in the south west.

- 80.5 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.81 ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COUNCIL'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE HEALTH AND CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 81.1 The report of the Corporate Services Group Manager, circulated at Pages No. 16-

20, asked Members to consider the effectiveness of the Council's continued involvement in the Gloucestershire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, subject to the Committee being satisfied that value for money was being achieved, Officers be authorised to make the payment for £2,500 from the Council's base budget as its 2016/17 contribution to the Gloucestershire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

81.2 It was

RESOLVED That Officers be authorised to make the payment of £2,500 from the Council's base budget as its 2016/17 contribution to the Gloucestershire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

OS.82 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT - QUARTER 3 2015/16

82.1 The report of the Corporate Services Group Manager, circulated at Pages No. 21-77, attached performance management information for quarter 3 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.

82.2 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 to the report, 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: the approval of an Asset Management Strategy by the Executive Committee in November 2015; completion of the Planning and Environmental Health service review; launch of the new Tewkesbury tourism website using the Government's flood support grant money; and the Executive Committee's approval of the borough-wide roll out of the place approach following its success in the east area. A Member sought clarification as to what was meant by LEADER and the Economic and Community Development Manager advised that this was a Defra funded project to encourage growth in rural areas and the scheme that had been launched in Tewkesbury Borough and the Forest of Dean had been awarded £1.4M of funding to put towards the generation of jobs in the area. Organisations and businesses could submit applications setting out how they intended to generate growth which would then be assessed and money potentially awarded. It was noted that LEADER itself was an acronym for a French term which was the reason it had not been written in full in the Committee report. A Member went on to question whether the Tewkesbury tourism website was borough-wide and was informed that it had been established in response to flood affected businesses within Tewkesbury town centre and along the river and therefore did not cover the whole borough. It was a specific piece of work and the grant allocated had been based on the number of businesses in the affected areas. The Communications and Policy Manager went on to advise that some of the actions were not progressing as smoothly or as quickly as envisaged. Those actions were highlighted at Page No. 24, Paragraph 2.4 of the report and included Council Tax setting; development of a new workforce strategy; and street cleansing.

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

Priority: Use Resources Effectively and Efficiently

P31 – Objective 2 – Action a) Rationalise office The Deputy Chief Executive explained that negotiations were ongoing with a group of

accommodation through new ways of working and to increase rental income – A Member questioned why it was taking such a long time to rent out the office space which was available within the Public Services Centre.

partners but they were confidential at this stage. Ideally the space would be occupied by public service partners in order to grow the public service hub for Tewkesbury Borough. In terms of timescales, there were some set milestones but these were dependent on the other organisations and their consultation processes. Other factors also needed to be taken into consideration, for instance, if the expansion of One Legal went ahead the additional staff would need to be accommodated within the building. It was anticipated that a clearer steer would be gained over the next couple of months and Members would be kept informed as things progressed.

Priority: Promote Economic Development

P37 – Objective 3 – Action a) Work with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to initiate projects identified in the Strategic Economic Plan and the Structural and Investment Fund Strategy – A Member sought clarification regarding the update on environment and resources efficiency.

The Economic and Community Development Manager explained that the LEP had been awarded European funding and there were now opportunities for organisations to bid for projects of an environmental nature.

Priority: Improve Recycling and Care for the Environment

P43-44 – Objectives In respect of enviro-crimes – A Member raised concern that reports of enviro-crimes, particularly fly-tipping, seemed to be increasing and she questioned whether there was a need for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Review Working Group to be resurrected.

The Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager advised that fly-tipping had been raised as an issue at the Joint Waste Committee and she explained that it was a national problem. Work had been carried out over the previous summer with one particular Officer and they had now been brought back to do a pilot scheme on work around fly-tipping. It was hoped that this would generate information to help to make a decision as to whether additional resources were required to tackle the problem.

82.4

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 Paragraph 3.2 of the report. Key areas of interest included KPI 4 and 5 which demonstrated that overall crime was increasing; 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 that processing times were down compared to the previous year; and KPI 30 which estimated that 205 new affordable homes would be delivered by the end of the year, the largest number delivered since 2007/08.

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

P65-66 – KPI No's. 12-14 – Planning processing times – A Member noted that the planning systems review was now complete but he had not seen any changes to the service provided, particularly in respect of communications and customer care, and he questioned when Members would be presented with the review report.

The Deputy Chief Executive clarified that the systems review had been led by the Planning team itself with external support from ICE Creates which had helped to capture the data and identify where improvements could be made. Whilst that part of the project was complete, changes to the way work was carried out within the department would be ongoing, as they had been within Revenues and Benefits which had just recorded its best ever performance in terms of housing benefit applications a year after the systems review had finished. It was important to recognise that the number of planning applications being received was at a record high which inevitably had an impact upon the performance figures, however, Officers had been making improvements and would continue to do so. One of the interesting things which had been identified in both Planning and Environmental Health was the amount of time Officers spent 'feeding' a computer system. This was not unusual in old, inefficient systems and part of the second phase would be to reduce reliance upon the computer system to allow Officers to spend more time dealing directly with customers. The review report itself would be presented to the Transform Working Group at its meeting the following day but it could also be brought to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee if Members so wished.

The Communications and Policy Manager indicated that the introduction of the Customer Care Strategy, which included Customer Care Standards for communicating with customers, would help to address the concerns around answering telephone calls etc. This would be discussed in more detail under the next Agenda Item.

82.6 The Financial Budget Summary for quarter 3 showed a saving of £276,131 against the budgeted profile. Page No. 26, Paragraph 4.2, set out the summary of the Council's position split into the main types of expenditure. It was noted that £123,000 savings had been made in relation to employees which had been achieved through vacant posts and staff absences such as maternity leave.

Furthermore, £786,000 additional income had been generated above budget projection; this was predominately from planning applications but also from garden and trade waste and the revised car parking tariff. Whilst treasury management was performing well against target, it 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. Also detailed under corporate budgets was the retained income from the business rates scheme. This was showing a deficit of £350,000 against the quarter 3 budgeted position due to a series of revaluations on various properties within the borough and the write-off of several debts which had proven to be unrecoverable. A summary position for each Group Manager was set out at Appendix 3 to the report.

82.7 The capital budget position for quarter 3 was set out at Appendix 4 to the report and was currently showing an underspend against the profiled budget which was principally due to the capital asset fund of £1.9M that had not been spent in quarter 3 as predicted. The leisure centre was progressing more quickly than had been anticipated but remained within budget. Appendix 5 contained a summary of the current usage of available reserves.

82.8 It was

RESOLVED

1. That the performance management information for quarter 3 2015/16 be **NOTED**.
2. That a presentation on the Planning systems review be brought to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

OS.83 REVIEW OF CUSTOMER CARE STRATEGY

83.1 The report of the Communications and Policy Manager, circulated at Pages No. 78-92, attached the Customer Care Strategy which Members were asked to recommend to the Executive Committee for approval.

83.2 The Communications and Policy Manager explained that the Council Plan included a promise that the Council would put the needs of customers at the heart of what it did and would listen to what they said, treating people fairly and without bias. The Customer Care Strategy detailed how the Council planned to deliver customer care and outlined the organisational commitments it would make to customers. The strategy also included a set of customer care standards which detailed what customers could expect from the Council and they would be adopted by all services across the authority. The draft strategy had been considered at an Overview and Scrutiny Committee workshop on 11 January 2016 where Members had endorsed the proposals. If the strategy was approved by the Executive Committee, Officers would work with staff to ensure that the standards were effectively embedded and they would also be presented at a staff briefing. The Communications and Policy Manager felt that it should be borne in mind that this would be a cultural change for some services, however, she was confident that the standards could be rolled out successfully.

83.3 A Member noted that there were several references to letters and online queries receiving a response within 10 working days and she questioned how this would be monitored. The Communications and Policy Manager explained that the onus would be on Managers to ensure that the standards were being implemented within their own teams. It was noted that Officers were already working to a 10 working day response rate so this should not represent a major change. If Members did

experience any problems with particular areas, she encouraged them to report this to her so she could work with that particular Manager to address any problems. A Member indicated that he often experienced problems with the Planning department failing to pick up telephone calls and he queried whether this was due to workload. He went on to advise that the main problem was not necessarily that a particular Officer was not available but rather that there was no response whatsoever and, therefore, no indication as to when a response might be received. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that, although the volume of planning applications being received was significant, there was a wider issue around re-educating staff. It had also been identified that a more effective case management system could help to free up Officers and work was being done with the Customer Services team to identify possible solutions. The Member felt that it would be useful for the Lead Member for Customer Focus to attend a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in order to answer questions once the strategy had embedded and he explained that, as a relatively new Member of the Council, he did not feel that he was aware of what was included in the various Lead Member Portfolios. The Democratic Services Group Manager advised that this point had been raised during the workshop on the review of the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. She explained that it was intended to reintroduce Lead Member presentations to Council in order to familiarise Members with the work which was carried out in each Portfolio and she would be putting together a programme for consideration by the Executive Committee and Corporate Leadership Team. If the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had a number of questions on a particular issue then, under those circumstances, it may be appropriate to invite the responsible Lead Member to attend a meeting.

- 83.4 A Member suggested that it might be beneficial to add an automated message at the end of telephone calls inviting customers to rate the service they had received. The Communications and Policy Manager advised that there was an action around monitoring satisfaction and an automated message would be considered amongst a range of options. A Member congratulated Officers on the strategy which she felt was a really good piece of work and it was subsequently

RESOLVED That it be **RECOMMENDED TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE** that the Customer Care Strategy be **APPROVED** as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

OS.84 ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

- 84.1 At the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 21 October 2015, Members had raised a query in relation to why the Climate Change Strategy had been removed from the Executive Committee Forward Plan. Members had been advised that the most recent Climate Change Strategy was a five year strategy ending in 2015. When the Council Plan was developed in 2012, climate change issues were not seen as a priority, therefore it had not been planned for renewal. Although the Council did not currently have a dedicated resource around monitoring climate change response, this work has been distributed to the appropriate services and much of the work associated with the Climate Change Strategy was continuing. The Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager had undertaken to report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide an overview of the Council's work in this area.
- 84.2 Members received a presentation which covered the following key points:
- Causes of climate change – Carbon dioxide levels had increased by more than 40% since before the industrial revolution; other greenhouse gases had increased by similarly large amounts; all of the evidence showed that these increases were almost entirely due to human activity; the increase was mainly caused by: burning fossil fuels for energy, agriculture/deforestation and the

manufacture of cement, chemical and metals.

- Definition of carbon footprint – “The total amount of greenhouse gases produced to directly and indirectly support human activities, usually expressed in equivalent tonnes of carbon dioxide”.
- How does your carbon footprint impact climate change? – There were several ways to combat climate change by reducing carbon footprint: recycle (at work and home); use less fuel (car and heating); print less/double sided print; only use the lights needed.
- Direct contribution – Recycling waste collection from every household – a recent food campaign had resulted in a 20% increase in food waste being taken to the anaerobic digestion plant; new windows – keeping the heat in and reducing the amount of energy used; roof insulation – keeping the heat in; installation of a 90kwh solar panel system on the Council Offices roof; Thin Client boxes which used 8watts of electricity compared to 90watts for the older style computer towers; Council car park and public car park lighting being replaced with LED lights; installation of a combined heat and power generator in the new leisure centre; and new insulation on the roof of the Roses Theatre.
- Indirect contributions – Ask for contractors to have environmental policies in place which included the reduction of carbon dioxide; bulk stationery orders; contractors having recycling policies; Code 4 homes.
- Future opportunities – Green travel plan for staff and tenants of the building; becoming paperless with the use of technology e.g. using tablets on site; education.

84.3 A Member indicated that he was aware that there had been plans in the past to introduce textile bins in various locations and he suggested that this may help to increase recycling rates. The Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager explained that there had previously been a number of bins at bring sites around the Borough but the company which had provided the service had unfortunately gone into liquidation. The Council was currently in the process of agreeing a contract with a new company to install textile bins across the Borough. She explained that the main difficulty was that the price of textiles had decreased and, at the last Joint Waste Committee meeting, it had been suggested that it might be better to take these items to a charity shop than recycle them at bring banks. It was hoped that the introduction of the new bins, combined with encouraging people to take unwanted textiles to charity shops, would help to improve the situation but the Council was governed by commodity prices at this point in time. A Member felt that education was essential in the fight against climate change and the Deputy Chief Executive agreed that the Borough Council had a part to play in terms of providing information.

84.4 The Chair thanked the Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager for her presentation and it was

RESOLVED That the presentation on the Environment Management Action Plan be **NOTED**.

OS.85 DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS REVIEW REPORT

85.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager, circulated at Pages No. 93- 114 which set out the report of the Disabled Facilities Grants Review Working Group. Members were asked to adopt the report and to refer it for consideration by the Executive Committee.

85.2 At its meeting on 21 July 2015, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to

establish a Working Group to review the Council's approach to Disabled Facilities Grants and the Terms of Reference for the Group were attached at Appendix 1 to the report. At the first meeting, Councillor Spencer was appointed as Chair of the Working Group. The Working Group met on three occasions and had focused on three main areas of potential improvement: better and earlier information being provided to those with a disability regarding their options, including assistance to move to a more suitable property when that was their wish, or to one that could be more easily adapted; streamlining the application process and the correspondence sent once the grant had been approved; and possible amendments to the procurement of contractors and equipment, including the benefits of using a schedule of rates and alternatives to fixed equipment currently being provided. The Disabled Facilities Grant Review Working Group report and action plan was attached at Appendix 2 to the report and included an outline of the review findings; an update on current performance of the service; and progress of the service improvements being undertaken. The Chair of the Working Group indicated that, since the publication of the report, the government had significantly increased the amount of money available for disabled facilities grants and the Council could now expect £944,000 as opposed to £497,000 for the forthcoming year.

- 85.3 A Member queried whether the action plan would be monitored and was informed that progress would be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a biannual basis. It was subsequently

RESOLVED That the Disabled Facilities Grants Review Report be **ADOPTED** and referred to the Executive Committee for consideration.

OS.86 REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 86.1 The report of the Corporate Services Group Manager, circulated at Pages No. 116-122, asked Members to consider the findings of the review of the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to approve the action plan set out at Appendix 1 to the report.
- 86.2 The Corporate Services Group Manager explained that the corporate peer challenge completed in November 2014 had recognised how the Overview and Scrutiny Committee made an impact and contributed to policy development and had suggested that the Committee's contribution could be maximised to add even greater value. In February 2015, the views and experiences of the previous Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been obtained to assist with this and an action plan had been developed to aid this effectiveness. Following the Borough Council elections in May 2015, several new Members had been appointed to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and a similar workshop had been held on 9 February 2016 to obtain the views of the new Committee. At the workshop, Members were asked for their opinions on a number of areas including: the Committee's Work Programme; the Committee's review of performance management information; choosing areas for review; the challenge role currently provided by the Committee; its role as a 'community' Committee; and training and development. An action plan had been produced based on the comments made, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, and this would be taken forward during 2016/17 once approved by the Committee.

- 86.3 It was

RESOLVED That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Review of Effectiveness Action Plan be **APPROVED** as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

OS.87 SCHEME OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT PLANNING COMMITTEE REVIEW

- 87.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Democratic Services Group Manager, circulated at Pages No. 123-127, which asked Members to establish an Overview and Scrutiny Committee Working Group to review the Scheme for Public Participation at Planning Committee; to approve the proposed Terms of Reference for the Working Group; and to name seven Members to serve on the Working Group.
- 87.2 The Democratic Services Group Manager advised that, at its meeting on 14 April 2015, the Council had resolved that a Scheme for Public Participation at Planning Committee be introduced for a one year trial period starting with the new term of the Council in May 2015 and it had therefore commenced with the Planning Committee in June. As the one year trial period would shortly be coming to an end, it was necessary to undertake an assessment of how the scheme had worked since its introduction in order to inform the Council as to whether the scheme should continue and, if so, whether any amendments should be made. It was proposed that an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group comprising seven Members be established to work with Officers to review the scheme and the proposed Terms of Reference for the review were attached at Appendix 1 to the report.
- 87.3 She explained that it would be a fairly challenging programme as a report would need to be taken to the Council meeting on 17 May 2016. The timetable for the review was included within the Terms of Reference and it was noted that the first two meetings would be used to obtain views from people who had used the scheme, including Parish/Town Councils and members of the public speaking in support or objection of an application, either via written representations or in person at the meetings. At the third meeting, Members would review other schemes, identify best practice and undertake a comparison with the Council's scheme. The final meeting would be to finalise the Working Group's report which would be brought to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for approval. The report would then be taken to the Planning Committee to obtain its views before the Council meeting on 17 May 2016.
- 87.4 A Member questioned why the meetings had been set at those particular times and he was advised that a letter had already been sent out to users and administrators of the scheme inviting them to participate in the review so it had been necessary to pick the most suitable times for them to attend and to advise them accordingly. The tight timetable had also played a part in dictating when the meetings could be held. It was noted that the review would only deal with the Scheme for Public Participation at Planning Committee and not any other aspect of the planning process.
- 87.5 It was subsequently
- RESOLVED**
1. That an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group be established to review the Scheme for Public Participation at Planning Committee.
 2. That the Terms of Reference for the Working Group be **APPROVED** as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

3. That the Membership of the Working Group be as follows:

Councillors: Mrs G F Blackwell, R D East, D T Foyle,
Mrs M A Gore, T A Spencer, Mrs P E Stokes and
P D Surman.

The meeting closed at 6:15 pm