

# TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Council Offices, Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury on Tuesday, 13 June 2017 commencing at 4:30 pm**

## **Present:**

Chair  
Vice Chair

Councillor P W Awford  
Councillor R E Allen

## **and Councillors:**

G J Bocking, K J Cromwell, Mrs J E Day, D T Foyle, Mrs P A Godwin, Mrs R M Hatton, Mrs P E Stokes, M G Sztymiak, H A E Turbyfield and M J Williams

## **also present:**

Councillors Mrs G F Blackwell

## **OS.5 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- 5.1 The evacuation procedure, as noted on the Agenda, was advised to those present.
- 5.2 The Chair welcomed Mr Norman Gardner, Chief Executive of the Citizens' Advice Bureau, who was in attendance for Item 8 – Citizens' Advice Bureau and Financial Inclusion Presentation. He also welcomed Councillor Mrs Gill Blackwell who was present as an observer since her Portfolio included responsibility for the Overview and Scrutiny function.

## **OS.6 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

- 6.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs H C McLain, T A Spencer and P D Surman. There were no substitutions made on this occasion.

## **OS.7 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

## **OS.8 MINUTES**

- 8.1 The Minutes of the meetings held on 2 May and 16 May 2016, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

**OS.9 CONSIDERATION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN**

9.1 Attention was drawn to the Executive Committee Forward Plan, circulated at Pages No. 15-19. 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.

9.2 A Member questioned what the report entitled 'Joint Core Strategy Strategic Allocation Sites: Allocation of Affordable Housing' would consider. In response, the Head of Community Services advised that this related to the new developments built as part of the Joint Core Strategy and how Tewkesbury Borough, Cheltenham Borough and Gloucester City Councils met the affordable housing need.

9.3 Accordingly, it was

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

**OS.10 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18**

10.1 Attention was drawn to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2017/18, circulated at Pages No. 20-27, which Members were asked to consider.

10.2 Accordingly, it was

**RESOLVED** That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2017/18 be **NOTED**.

**OS.11 GLOUCESTERSHIRE HEALTH AND CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE**

11.1 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 its last meeting held on 6 June 2017.

11.2 Councillor Day explained that as this had been the first meeting of the Committee since the election and it had been felt important that Members were given an understanding of the landscape of health and adult social care in Gloucestershire. The One Gloucestershire: Transforming Care, Transforming Communities Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP), set out the direction of travel for health and social care in the County and was therefore best placed to inform Members on the context and direction of travel for health and care services in the County. The Accountable Officer of Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group had described the challenges facing the services which included the projected and significant increase in the number of people over 65 years with a long term condition and the projected increase of 20% in the 75 to 84 age group by 2021. Gloucestershire had both an urban and rural landscape and the Clinical Commissioning Group recognised that one size would not fit all. The presentation had highlighted the significant amount of work in progress to deliver the STP and the positive health outcomes already being achieved. Many of those were detailed on the presentation slides which were available on the County Council's website. Some Members had expressed the view that the STP lacked the necessary detail to help members of the public understand what it meant for them; however, the Committee was assured that, as soon as any proposal for change was ready to go out for consultation, the Committee would be consulted as a statutory consultee.

11.3 In terms of the adult social care and public health performance report, the Director of Adult Social Services had explained that the number of people with a learning disability in employment was at its highest; however, the way the indicator was now measured did not reflect that position. The Director of Public Health had highlighted that the indicator showing the number of adults receiving 'alcohol brief interventions' was underperforming. The service had previously been achieving target and it was felt that this dip related to the change in provider at the beginning of the year. The Director expected that performance would improve during the first two quarters of 2017/18 and informed Members that the Council would be changing how it commissioned NHS health checks next year so that people at more risk would be targeted.

11.4 Councillor Day went on to advise that the Accountable Officer for the Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group had informed the Committee that there was a new Improvement and Assessment Framework in place; there were six clinical priority areas within the framework and the current assessment was that cancer, learning disabilities and mental health needed improvement and that dementia, diabetes and maternity were performing well. The Committee had received information reports covering adult social care, public health and health services and those reports included a wealth of information and were helpful in alerting Members to national consultations and local issues. Of particular interest was the annual report of the Director of Public Health; this outlined how the public grant was spent and provided information on the health and wellbeing of the residents of Gloucestershire. The report also used case studies to demonstrate how effective interventions had been and the difference made to individual lives; it was good to see how a referral to Slimming World had turned a diabetes sufferer's world around such that he was now diabetes free.

11.5 Councillor Day advised that a copy of the Minutes of the last meeting had been placed in the Members' Lounge and, accordingly, it was

**RESOLVED** That the feedback from the last meeting of the Gloucestershire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee be **NOTED**.

## **OS.12 CITIZENS' ADVICE BUREAU AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION PRESENTATION**

12.1 The Chair welcomed Norman Gardner, Bureau Manager for the Gloucester and District Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB), to the meeting. Members were reminded that Tewkesbury Borough Council had had a relationship with the CAB for a number of years and gave it a grant on an annual basis. The Committee received an annual presentation which provided Members with information about the work of the CAB and a flavour of what was happening within the Borough. The CAB had a four year Service Level Agreement with the Borough and currently performance against that was reported on a quarterly basis through the performance tracker.

12.2 The Bureau Manager for the Gloucester and District CAB was invited to make his presentation to the Committee. He explained that Members received a fairly comprehensive list of statistics every quarter and for the current presentation he had decided not to include those; instead he would provide a brief overview of the type of work which was ongoing. The presentation covered the following key points:

- Our Aims – to provide the advice people needed for the problems they faced and to improve policies and practices that affected people's lives.
- Our Principles – the Citizens' Advice service provided free, independent and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. It valued diversity, promoted equality and challenged discrimination.
- Our Locations – Tewkesbury Borough Council; Prior's Park; Bishop's Cleeve; Winchcombe; Brockworth; Cheltenham Town Centre; and Gloucester City

Centre.

- How Advice is Obtained – face to face - 79.5% (75.3% in the previous year); by telephone - 12.2% (12.6% in the previous year); and by email - 8.2% (12.0% in the previous year) or online at [www.gloucestercab.org.uk](http://www.gloucestercab.org.uk)
- Employment Status – employed and self-employed - 39.7%; carers - 9.8%; retired - 18.6%; and unemployed and permanently sick - 31.8%.
- Disposable Monthly Income – under £999 - 39.7%; £1,000-£1,499 – 9.8%; £1,500-£1,999 – 18.6%; and over £2,000 – 31.8%.
- Disabilities – physical disability – 12.6%; mental illness – 9.1%; long term health issues – 21.0%; and not disabled – 31.8%.
- Issues Dealt With - 2,885 in 2016/17 and 2,534 in 2015/16. Welfare benefits – 862 (715 in the previous year); debt – 720 (640 in the previous year); employment – 284 (262 in the previous year); relationships – 219 (222) in the previous year; and housing – 204 (195 in the previous year).
- Case Studies –
  - A. Miss D was single, had two young children and had claimed housing benefit, Council Tax reduction and income support. Her benefits had been stopped and a refund of over £65,000 was demanded when the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) had claimed she had been living with the father of her children. Two months later, Miss D became at risk of eviction as the loss of housing benefit resulted in the rent ceasing to be paid. At that point help was sought from the CAB. Actions taken included: a new claim for housing benefit was successfully made to avoid further rent arrears; the landlady was persuaded not to seek eviction; evidence was gathered to prove the DWP claim spurious; and an appeal was submitted. The appeal was upheld and the refund demand withdrawn.
  - B. Miss J was a single person suffering from agoraphobia, anxiety, depression and back pain and made a claim for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), scoring 0 points at her Work Capability Assessment. A mandatory reconsideration had resulted similarly. Miss J then sought assistance from the CAB which helped her with her ESA appeal; and applied, on her behalf, for a Personal Independence Payment (PIP). The tribunal awarded 18 points and ESA and the claim for PIP was successful.
  - C. Following the failure of her business, Miss H; a single parent caring for her 19 year old son who suffered from depression and anxiety, was left with over £10,000 of debts. In addition, the son's PIP application had failed adding the dilemma that the client could not claim carers' allowance. With the client unemployed, and in receipt of only Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), bankruptcy was the only option but the client did not have the funds to cover the fee of £680. The actions that were successfully taken by the CAB included: applying to a local charity for a grant to allow the client to pay back the £680 bankruptcy fee; the client was assisted in filing for bankruptcy online resulting in the Order being issued within the week; an application was made to the Big Difference Scheme (Severn Trent Trust Fund) to reduce the client's water and this saved her £380 pa.; the son had been assisted in his PIP appeal; and, as a result of the PIP award, the client had been assisted to claim carers' allowance.
- Definitions - financial capability – knowledge, skill, motivation, awareness and confidence in relation to money management. Financial exclusion –

individuals could not access the financial products and services they needed which meant that those that could least afford to do so would end up paying more for their basic needs. Financial inclusion – access to appropriate financial products and services allowing people to effectively manage their money, regardless of their level of income or social status.

12.3 The Head of Revenues and Benefits explained that he intended to provide an update on the financial inclusion partnership which the Borough Council hosted and which was chaired by Norman Gardner. The presentation covered the following key points:

- Background – established in 2014 by Tewkesbury Borough Council. A gap had been identified following a site visit to North Warwickshire District Council. The group had been set up in recognition that there was no coordinated work across the Borough to tackle financial inclusion issues.
- Demographic Composition – January 2017, 5,568 claims to Council Tax support and housing benefit representing 15.9% of the total population of the Borough. 54.9% of the households identified were of working age and subject to welfare reforms. 5,021 were on housing benefit and Council Tax support during May 2016 and January 2017. The highest proportion of claims were in Prior's Park – 13% followed by Brockworth – 8%. Prior's Park and Brockworth had the highest levels of claimants on in-work benefits e.g. low paid jobs. Brockworth had the highest level of claimants on not-in-work benefits due to disability and the number of claimants with children.
- The Financial Inclusion Group – included Tewkesbury Borough Council, Severn Vale, DWP/Job Centre Plus, Tewkesbury Food Bank, Green Square, Going the Extra Mile (GEM) Project, Gloucestershire Credit Union, Trussell Trust (Food Bank), Gloucestershire County Council, Bromford Housing Association, Citizens' Advice Bureau, Gloucestershire Fire Service, Severn Trent, other Registered Landlords, Prior's Park Chapel and Gloucestershire Recycling Project.
- Key Tasks During 2016/17 – developing working relationships with neighbourhood projects – food bank and furniture recycling. Skype available in Bishop's Cleeve Library to Revenues and Benefits. Encourage new stakeholders to attend the Financial Inclusion Partnership i.e. the GEM Project and making the financial inclusion web page available to the public – [www.tewkesbury.gov.uk/financial-advice-and-support](http://www.tewkesbury.gov.uk/financial-advice-and-support). Borough News article on the impacts of welfare reform, i.e. the benefit cap, and carry out a mapping exercise on housing benefit and Council Tax support in our Borough – Winchcombe, Prior's Park, Tewkesbury Town with Mitton and Brockworth have the highest number of Housing Benefit and Council Tax support claimants of pensionable age. Tewkesbury Borough Council staff will receive training on financial inclusion and welfare reform. Policy in practice reported on the impacts of welfare reform:
  - The benefit cap had been the main focus commencing November 2016.
  - Started exercise with over 90 claims.
  - Now down to 70.
  - Close working with the CAB, Severn Vale, Job Centre Plus and Tewkesbury Borough Council.
  - 'Policy in Practice' report distributed to all members of the group.
  - Looked at impact around Universal Credit.
  - Severn Vale key partner.
- Jobs Fair – held on 8 March and was a significant event including joint

working with Tewkesbury Borough Council and Job Centre Plus. The event had been aimed at job seekers and 23 employers had been involved with 100 potential applicants in attendance. The event had been very positive with one young applicant finding employment and many more attending job interviews.

- Developing Tasks 2017/18 – Universal Credit was commencing a full digital service from December 2017. Tenants would be encouraged to pay rent in advance to reduce impacts when migrating over to Universal Credit. There was a need to quantify the potential numbers at risk of homelessness and carry out training on personal budgeting. In addition, private sector landlords would be encouraged to increase the take-up of customers with higher risks. Homelessness reduction training would be undertaken and a policy in practice report on welfare reform would be commissioned and reviewed. There would also be early financial capability training in schools, physical barriers to work would be reduced, opportunities through volunteering would be promoted and digital accessibility within the Borough reviewed.

12.4 During the discussion which ensued, a Member indicated that, in terms of the roll out of Universal Credit, there was a need to get it right; he was concerned that in other areas of the country there seemed to be more and more Eviction Notices being served on people and this was not an acceptable way to treat the vulnerable people in society. In response, the Bureau Manager for the Gloucester and District CAB explained that the CAB covered 60% of the population of the County and everyone viewed Universal Credit with some trepidation. There was concern that the housing benefit element in particular would cause a lot of Eviction Notices to be raised. There was a six week waiting period before the first payment was made and this was likely to cause hardship for many people who were used to being paid on a weekly basis. Those people would have to learn how to cope with monthly payments and there was a fear that they would buy the essentials they needed such as food then, by the time they reached the date to pay rent for the month, they would have no money left as they were not used to budgeting on a monthly basis. The CAB wanted it to be made the norm that the rent would get paid straight to the landlord. This was a national issue which the CAB was taking forward to government and the local CAB offices were feeding into that national process. In addition, the Head of Revenues and Benefits confirmed that a 'Universal Credit Seminar' was being held on 29 June for all Members and that was being run in partnership with colleagues from the Department for Work and Pensions and Severn Vale. This would provide Members an opportunity to raise any particular concerns; he offered reassurance that Officers were trying to ensure they communicated as soon as possible with those residents that would be affected so that they were more prepared for the change.

12.5 Referring to the CAB provision which existed within Prior's Park, a Member expressed concern that the clients who used the service tended to vary depending on the person who was providing advice e.g. there had been a large section of the Polish community that had accessed the provision when a Polish lady had been providing advice but that clientele had changed when that advisor had gone on maternity leave. He questioned whether the CAB had any ideas how this could be addressed. In response the Bureau Manager for the Gloucester and District CAB advised that the lady referred to would be back from maternity leave on 30 June; however, he understood that there was a problem in that the customer base would probably change again and the CAB was trying to find a way to address this.

12.6 Members expressed their thanks to the Bureau Manager for the Gloucester and District CAB and the Head of Revenues and Benefits for their informative

presentations. The Chair of the Committee indicated that currently the CAB presentation was made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis and he questioned whether this should be extended to every other year as often things had not really changed very much from year to year. In response the Bureau Manager for the Gloucester and District CAB indicated that he was happy to continue to attend annually should Members so wish. Members generally felt the presentation provided was extremely interesting and that an annual presentation kept them up-to-date with what was happening with the CAB. Accordingly, it was

- RESOLVED**
1. That the Citizens' Advice Bureau and Financial Inclusion presentations be **NOTED**.
  2. That the report from the Citizens' Advice Bureau continue to be provided on an annual basis.

### **OS.13 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT - QUARTER 4 AND FULL YEAR 2016/17**

- 13.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 28-62, attached performance management information for the final quarter and the full year of 2016/17. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was asked to review and scrutinise the performance information and, where appropriate, identify any issues to refer to the Executive Committee for clarification or for further action to be taken.
- 13.2 Members were advised that this was the final quarterly monitoring report for 2016/17 and progress against delivering the objectives and actions for each of the Council plan priorities was reported through the Performance Tracker which was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. The majority of key activities were progressing well or had been implemented and those of particular note were set out at Paragraph 2.3 of the report with the full year achievements attached at Appendix 2 to the report. The achievements included the five year extension of the County Council's leases in the Public Services Centre; the approval of a new Economic Development and Tourism Strategy; and the building of 249 new affordable homes across the Borough which was significantly above the Council's target of 150. Due to the complex nature of the actions being delivered, it was inevitable that some may not progress as smoothly or quickly as envisaged and those were set out at Paragraph 2.4 of the report. In terms of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), the data reported was the position as at the end of March 2017. Of the 17 indicators with targets: 5 were unlikely to achieve their target; and 12 were on target. The Key Indicators of interest were set out at Paragraph 3.3 of the report and particular attention was drawn to KPI 14 – processing minor planning applications – performance was slightly improved from last year but significantly under target due to turnover of staff, in particular the departure of the North Team Leader and vacancies including a senior planning officer and 1.6 full-time equivalent planning officers.; KPI 20 – number of enviro-crimes reported - flytipping and dog fouling complaints were increasing which had resulted in the target not being achieved; and KPI 30 – recycling - waste to landfill was down by 600 tonnes, food and garden waste tonnage was up by 680 tonnes and recycling was up by 500 tonnes.
- 13.3 During the debate which ensued, the following queries and comments were made in relation to the Performance Tracker:

**Priority: Finance and Resources**

- P35 – Objective 3 – Action a) Develop a programme of commercial projects, including developing an entrepreneurial type culture for Councillors and staff. A Member noted that the comment should make it clear that the potential for a crematorium had been considered but not taken forward.
- The Chief Executive agreed that this should have been made clear and would be amended on the tracker.
- P37 – Objective 4 – Action b) Deliver the Council's asset plan. A Member noted that the pedestrian access for the Railsmeadow car park and the Doctors Super Surgery had been completed which made him question how up-to-date the report was.
- The Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that there were some areas where actions had moved on since the report had been written but this would inevitably be the case at times. It was anticipated that work would commence on site to refurbish the Vineyards Play Area in July so that update had also changed now. All of the information was accurate at the time of writing the report.

#### **Priority: Economic Development**

- P39 – Objective 2 – Action a) Produce an employment land review of sites within the Borough. A Member questioned whether the list of sites could be seen by Councillors.
- The Head of Development Services explained that the employment land needs had been considered through the Joint Core Strategy and Borough Plan and this had included detailed work on understanding the need. The study would provide evidence and the sites would then be identified through the Borough Plan. There was a list available should Members wish to see it.
- P40 – Objective 3 – Action a) Produce a vision for the J9 area. A Member questioned what was happening with the J9 area and what pieces of work were being commissioned.
- The Head of Development Services advised that Officers were trying to achieve an understanding of the future potential of the area, especially now that the Ministry of Defence plans for the Ashchurch Camp site had changed. There were currently three pieces of work ongoing which included transport issues i.e. what interventions could be used; a broadbrush visioning exercise which looked at the aspirations for the area; and masterplanning which looked at what could be achieved and included putting blocks on maps. Those three pieces of work together would help ensure the whole site was right as it was important for both the growth zone and the Borough as a whole. In terms of the J10 bid, Officers would continue to look at the options and discuss how the potential to change the junction to an 'all ways' junction could be achieved. In addition, potential development would be considered that may unlock the area. The Chief



Executive advised that this work was continuing but, if funding for J10 was not received from the government, changes would most likely not be made. It was felt that the explanation on the tracker could be made clearer and he undertook to ensure this was done.

P41 – Objective 4 – Action a)  
Put in place a plan to regenerate Spring Gardens following the opening of the new leisure centre. A Member questioned what the change of direction was for the project and what context the report to Executive Committee would take.

The Head of Finance and Asset Management explained that originally the Council had intended to develop the site itself; however, this was no longer a viable option. The report to the Executive Committee would ask Members to confirm the position they wished to take going forward.

P41 – Objective 4 – Action b)  
Work with Tewkesbury Regeneration Partnership to progress projects that regenerate Tewkesbury Town. A Member questioned what was meant by Multi-Modal Greenway.

The Head of Development Services explained that this referred to walking and cycling links. In addition, she referred to the Healings Mill site and indicated that this was about to be put on the market with a view to it being sold as soon as possible. In reference to the MAFF site, the Head of Finance and Asset Management explained that Officers were currently working with an agent representing a housing group which was looking at the potential viability of the site; he hoped to have something for Members to consider on this in August.

### **Priority: Housing**

P45 – Objective 3 – Action b)  
Work with partners, infrastructure providers and developers to progress the delivery of key sites. A Member questioned why the comment referred to housing at Longford when that site was nearly built out; he considered that it should instead refer to housing north of Gloucester.

The Chief Executive indicated that the growth deal bid related to Longford roundabout and he suspected this was why the reference to housing at Longford had been made; in fact the reference should be made to housing at Innsworth and this would be amended in future.

P47 – Objective 4 – Action c)  
Work in partnership to prevent residents becoming homeless. A Member questioned how much of the

The Head of Community Services was unsure but would investigate and provide the information following the meeting. In response to a query as to the meaning of someone being an “entrenched rough

District bid for Social Impact Bond monies came to Tewkesbury Borough.

sleeper”, the Head of Community Services advised that this was someone with a chaotic lifestyle and who was in and out of homelessness. The Council tried its best to help them but this was often very difficult.

P49 – KPI 15 – Percentage of ‘minor’ applications determined within 8 weeks or alternative period agreed with the applicant. A Member noted that performance had slightly improved but was still significantly over the target due to the turnover of staff and he questioned whether there was an underlying reason for the high staff turnover.

The Head of Development Services explained that she had been working hard to fully staff the Planning Team and currently it was 2.6 full-time equivalent posts down from a full establishment. Some of the posts had been vacant for a while so she was considering ways that recruitment could be improved. The Chief Executive advised that for some time local authorities had been in competition with private companies as there were many opportunities in the private sector which usually paid slightly more. Generally speaking there tended to be a lot of movement of staff in the planning world but more recently the Borough Council had been doing reasonably well at retaining and attracting new staff which was encouraging. The service review was continuing and the new Head of Service was bringing forward new thoughts and ideas, including taking a more commercial approach, and some of those would be discussed at Transform Working Group in due course. Consideration was being given as to whether the planning service could run a similar model to that used by One Legal where it was staffed to a point that services could be sold outside the authority. In addition there may be opportunities for joint working with partners which could help resilience but this all needed to be considered very carefully. Another Member expressed concern that the Council was consistently below the government’s 90% target and he questioned whether this could be reviewed. The Head of Development Services explained that the target was the Council’s own target; the government target was not as high. She felt it was right that the Council should be aspiring to the 90% target and, when the service was fully staffed, it should be achievable so she would not be keen to reduce it at this stage. The Chief Executive suggested that the 2017/18 performance information could also include the government target, and the Council’s performance against that, so that Members could compare the two.

### **Priority: Customer Focussed Services**

P51 – Objective 2 – Action b) The Communications and Policy Manager

Roll out a programme of customer services training for staff across the Council. A Member questioned how many members of staff were undertaking NVQ qualifications and whether they were internally or externally assessed.

explained that all staff undertaking NVQs were externally assessed. In terms of the Customer Services Team, it was not the whole team that had signed up but those that had done had achieved the qualification. In respect of customer services training, this would be provided for all frontline staff rather than just for those that were part of the Customer Services Team.

P52 – Objective 3 – Action b)  
To let out the top floor of the Public Services Centre. A Member noted that 'some interest' had been received in the top floor and he questioned what was meant by this.

The Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that he hoped to see a resolution to this soon. The agent had felt there were opportunities for letting; however, it had been on the market for two weeks and as yet no offers had been received. It was hoped that some interest would be received over the coming months and, in the meantime, Officers were still exploring all opportunities.

P52 – Objective 4 – Action c)  
Work with partners to improve digital links between public services to make life simpler for customers. A Member expressed the view that a revamp of the 'report it' forms was necessary, particularly regarding Ubico. He was aware of a particular problem which meant the system did not recognise some addresses and he questioned when the revamp would be happening.

The Communications and Policy Manager advised that the online forms project was ongoing and was progressing well. Members would be asked to feed into the project but she was aware that there were a few postcodes in the Borough which did not match up; it was helpful to know of any particular issues as she could then raise them with the project team. In response to a particular query regarding Members feeding into the process, she advised that a Member workshop was included in the project timetable and would be arranged in due course. However, she would appreciate it if Members had particular issues to raise, they did so as soon as possible rather than waiting for the workshop.

### **Key Performance Indicators for Priority: Customer Focussed Services**

P56 – KPI 23 – Average number of days to process new benefit claims. A Member asked whether the reduction in performance was a consequence of the restructure of the team and subsequent loss of staff.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits advised that the performance for last year had not been as good as the previous year but it had remained in the top quartile nationally. He felt it important to bear in mind that the previous year's performance had been exceptional. 2016/17 performance had still been very good and the Council remained the envy of many other local authorities in the country. To date, the current year remained good with 13 days being taken for new claims and 4 days for change in circumstances. The restructure of the team would have an impact going forward but the changes were being made with the implementation of Universal Credit in mind and that would take away quite a lot of the work which the Council's team currently

did; a reduction of 50% of claims overall. There were longer term concerns over growth in respect of new homes and the collection of Council Tax etc. so there would probably be a need to look at the 'shape' of the service again in the future. The Chief Executive advised that the Council's revenues and benefits service was a credit and it wanted to maintain its top quartile status. It was understood that the revenues side may need to grow due to the increase in new homes and businesses but this was being measured against the reductions in the benefits side of the service; it was hoped that most changes could be accommodated through voluntary changes in working hours rather than losing people to redundancy. It needed to be borne in mind that benefits customers tended to be some of the most vulnerable that the Council served and, as such, changes needed to be efficient and effective.

P58 - KPI 29 – Average number of sick days per full time equivalent. A Member questioned why the position regarding short term absence had worsened and whether this was the reason she found it hard to speak to members of staff within the building.

The Head of Corporate Services recognised the sickness level was above the target and advised that there were a number of things being considered to try and address this e.g. a review of the Absence Management Policy; the introduction of a new HR system for the recording of absence; and an audit of the policy to ensure it was being operated correctly across the authority. It was intended that these things would help to understand the position and therefore address it. In respect of the Member not being able to speak to staff members, the Chief Executive advised that this should not be an ongoing issue and if the Councillor had any specific examples he would be pleased to hear them following the meeting as this may be a wider issue.

- 13.4 The Chair advised that the Executive Committee had recently approved the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy and Members had been keen to thank those who had worked on producing it for their time and commitment. Accordingly, it was

**RESOLVED** That the performance management information for quarter 4 of 2016/17 be **NOTED**.

## **OS.14 CORPORATE POLICIES AND STRATEGIES**

- 14.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 63-73, set out an updated list of corporate policies and strategies. Members were asked to consider that list and identify any for inclusion within the Committee's 2017/18 work

programme.

- 14.2 The Head of Corporate Services advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had previously requested that a list of policies and strategies be produced to help inform its work programme as well as to provide support to the Executive Committee. That list was updated on an annual basis and the latest version was attached to the Committee report at Appendix 1. The policies and strategies that were due for review in 2017/18 were highlighted in bold.
- 14.3 There were four policies / strategies that were suggested for review by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee workshop which were the Workforce Development Strategy; the Customer Care Strategy; the Corporate Enforcement Policy – this referred to regulatory services; and the Waste Policy – this was not in the Council Plan but was a major front-facing service area. Members were asked to consider adding those to the work programme and whether they felt there were any further to add.
- 14.4 During the brief discussion which ensued, a Member referred to the Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy and questioned whether the Council actively monitored any trends and whether it looked for a cause or just waited for complaints to arise. In response, the Head of Corporate Services explained that the policy was well promoted throughout the organisation and, in addition, the staff survey had a question about bullying and harassment. Officers did look for trends and incidents were viewed very seriously when they occurred. The Chief Executive advised that exit interviews were undertaken when people left the organisation and any issues identified were monitored. He was of the view that tackling any problems was a priority and would be dealt with swiftly. Staff members could report any instances of bullying and harassment to HR, Union representatives, named individuals within the organisation and Line Managers so there were many routes open for people that wished to report such behaviours.
- 14.5 A Member expressed concern with the system to report issues on enviro-crimes and waste as, once reported to Ubico, the Council seemed to lose control of the issue and they were then not dealt with in as timely a manner as Members would like. In response, the Head of Community Services explained that concerns were reported to Ubico and they had timescales for a response. Generally, if it was an urgent issue, this would be highlighted when the report was made; this meant Ubico could divert resources if necessary to get the matter dealt with as soon as possible. In relation to the Safeguarding Children Policy, a Member questioned whether this could be reviewed earlier than the target date of January 2018 due to the seriousness of the issues raised by a recent Ofsted inspection of County Council Services. In response, the Chief Executive advised that it was still early to make a judgement on the outcome of the recent inspection but it should be remembered that safeguarding was a County Council function and that organisation would need to respond to the Ofsted report. The County Council would have a plan to do that and the Chief Executive suggested that Tewkesbury Borough leave its review as timetabled for now but with the understanding that this could be revised if necessary. One of the areas identified as 'good' by the Inspection was the way the County worked in partnership and Tewkesbury Borough Council formed part of that framework so it was important that it worked with the County Council as it moved forward. He undertook to provide a briefing note to all Members in due course to ensure everyone was aware of what was happening.
- 14.6 Accordingly, it was

**RESOLVED**

That the following policies and strategies be included for review in the Committee's 2017/18 Work Programme:

- Workforce Development Strategy.

- Customer Care Strategy.
- Corporate Enforcement Policy.
- Waste Policy.

The meeting closed at 6:30 pm