

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Council Offices, Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury on Tuesday, 20 March 2018 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, J E Day, D T Foyle, P A Godwin, R M Hatton, H C McLain, P E Stokes, P D Surman, M G Sztymiak, H A E Turbyfield and M J Williams

also present:

Councillor G F Blackwell

OS.76 ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 76.1 The evacuation procedure, as noted on the Agenda, was advised to those present.
- 76.2 The Chair welcomed the Managing Director of Ubico to the meeting and indicated that he was in attendance for Agenda Item 9 – Ubico Update. It was noted that the Lead Member for Organisational Development - which included scrutiny - was also present as an observer.

OS.77 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

- 77.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor T A Spencer. There were no substitutions for the meeting.

OS.78 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 78.1 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.
- 78.2 There were no declarations made on this occasion.

OS.79 MINUTES

- 79.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2018, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

OS.80 CONSIDERATION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN

80.1 Attention was drawn to the Executive Committee Forward Plan, circulated at Pages No. 8-9. 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.

80.2 It was

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

OS.81 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18

81.1 Attention was drawn to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2017/18, circulated at Pages No. 10-13, which Members were asked to consider.

81.2 It was

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

OS.82 GLOUCESTERSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL UPDATE

82.1 The Chair advised that, unfortunately, the Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel had been unable to attend the last meeting of the Panel on 16 March 2018. He had advised that the main report had been based around restorative justice and this would be circulated to Members following the meeting.

82.2 It was

RESOLVED That the report on restorative justice, considered by the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel at its meeting on 16 March 2018, be circulated to the Committee following the meeting.

OS.83 GLOUCESTERSHIRE HEALTH AND CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE

83.1 Members received an update from the Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, on matters discussed at its last meeting held on 6 March 2018.

83.2 Members were informed that the Chief Executive of the Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust had submitted a detailed briefing to the Committee including the reasons for the proposal to establish a subsidiary company; the number of staff affected; and the staff consultation process. Most of the concerns that were raised by the Committee had reflected those raised by staff throughout the consultation process and the briefing paper clarified the Trust's response. It was also confirmed that the subsidiary company would be fully accountable to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. Whilst acknowledging that there had been formal consultation with affected staff, some Members felt that the Committee should also have been consulted; however, as this matter related to how the Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust organised its workforce, not to a service change, it fell outside the remit of the Committee.

- 83.3 It was noted that the Committee had received and discussed the Gloucestershire Winter Resilience Plan at its November 2017 meeting and it was important to understand whether the objectives identified in the plan had been achieved. It was clear that, despite the challenges, a lot had been accomplished and this was attributed to significantly closer partnership working and every member of staff working together to achieve the best for patients. Headlines from the period included: significantly improved winter emergency department performance – the national four hour standard had been met in November 2017 for the first time in over four years, December had seen a 16.84% increase in performance and there had been a 15.01% improvement in January compared with the same period in the previous year; 78% reduction in ambulance handover delays with zero over one hour; 59% increase in weekend discharges; reduced delayed transfers of care with Gloucestershire being the third best in the country for January 2018; and, the Gloucestershire Care Services NHS Trust rapid response service had supported 80% (1,295) more patients to remain in their own home over the winter compared to the previous year. The data on the trauma and orthopaedics pilot at Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust had indicated this was having a positive effect on the patient experience and was improving job satisfaction for staff and training for junior doctors. The Committee had agreed to extend the pilot in order to gather more data and continue validation of this process with a formal consultation on a service change in due course.
- 83.4 In addition to the Winter Plan performance, the Committee had noted that the Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (GCCG) was working to reduce cancer wait times and would continue to closely monitor performance. It was also clarified that the GCCG was working with the 2gether NHS Foundation Trust to improve waiting times around Early Intervention in Psychosis and would be looking to increase the age range next year. It was noted that adult social care reassessments had been an issue for some time and the performance team had been commissioned to undertake a detailed analysis with every team. It had been identified that restrictions within the Estates Return Information Collection (ERIC) system had resulted in each locality developing their own way of recording data which had impacted on overall performance; work was underway for a replacement for ERIC.
- 83.5 The Chair thanked the Council's representative for her report and it was
RESOLVED That the Gloucestershire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee Update be **NOTED**.

OS.84 UBICO UPDATE

- 84.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Head of Community Services, circulated at Pages No. 14-20, which provided Members with an update on the waste collection and grounds maintenance services provided by Ubico and the work underway to review street cleansing services. Members were asked to consider the update.
- 84.2 The Head of Community Services explained that the Committee had received a number of reports from the Council and the Joint Waste Team throughout the year and, at its meeting in May 2017, Members had specifically requested this interim update given that the next annual report was not due until July 2018. He reminded Members that the Council had completed its fleet procurement in April 2017 and significant round changes had also been introduced at that time impacting on 60% of the borough. Any changes to waste collections were expected to cause a degree of disruption in the following month or two but, in this case, it had continued well past that period - there had been an increase in missed bins including a number of assisted collections to the elderly and vulnerable, public complaints had

risen and there had been issues with stock control with Ubico running out of bins on several occasions. The table at Page No. 16, Paragraph 3.4, showed the number of missed bins for the year to date broken down by month; it was noted that over 1,000 bins had been missed in April 2017 and that was simply unacceptable. As the amount of missed bins remained at a high level, a number of meetings had been held with the new Managing Director of Ubico when he took up the post in May 2017 and this was something he had prioritised very quickly. As a result, an improvement plan was agreed with Ubico with the aim of reducing the number of missed collections to below 100 per week by the end of August 2017 with a 50% reduction on the quarter 1 figures by the end of October 2017; this equated to a 0.09% missed collection rate, well below the 1% target. The plan also intended to improve communications between the Council and Ubico, which he was pleased to report had happened, as well as developing better reporting systems and ensuring that the stock of bins was monitored and maintained. It was noted that the number of missed bins had increased in December 2017 and January 2018 due to the inclement weather; this was to be expected and Ubico had kept the Council fully informed of what was being done to address any issues so that this could be clearly communicated to residents and there had been a significant improvement in that area. In addition to the close monitoring of missed bins, a "red list" had been introduced by Ubico for properties where bins were missed on more than one occasion and therefore required additional attention; there were currently less than 10 properties on the red list. Regular reports were provided to the Environmental Services Project Board, which included the Head of Community Services and the Lead Member for Clean and Green Environment. The standard of waste collections continued to be monitored on a weekly basis to ensure that the Council and Ubico were working together to provide the best possible service for residents.

- 84.3 In terms of the garden waste service, Members were advised that a new garden waste club had recently been launched. Members of the club paid an annual subscription fee and there was now a single annual renewal date for all customers. Once they had paid the fee, customers were sent an adhesive sticker to place on their brown bins making it easier for crews to identify bins for collection. There was potential to expand this service and the idea of introducing rewards for recommending a friend was currently being considered as an incentive.
- 84.4 The Head of Community Services went on to advise that, unfortunately, grounds maintenance had not been as successful and the summer period had been particularly difficult for a number of reasons including the loss of the Council's client monitoring officer and a key member of staff leaving Ubico. The Council's Property team had played a significant part in getting the service back on track and had put in place a new task management software system which allowed tasks to be logged and managed. Furthermore, new Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) had been introduced and Officers were now looking at entering into a service level agreement for tasks to be categorised as urgent, high, medium or low. One of the issues that had been identified was the lack of investment in equipment but that had now been addressed. A further piece of work was planned for spring/summer and would involve looking at grounds maintenance across the borough to better coordinate with partners for more effective use of resources; this had been piloted in Bishop's Cleeve. It was noted that this would not necessarily result in financial savings and was more about improvements in service and efficiency; its success hinged on the various partners working together. A review of street furniture was also planned as some things had been put in place historically which had been logical at the time but which now created difficulties in terms of maintenance e.g. railings in a park which meant that the area needed both a lawnmower and a strimmer.

- 84.5 In terms of street cleansing, Members were informed that a review of the service was being undertaken by the Joint Waste Team to analyse the type of requests received by the Council and to establish if there were better ways of working. The Head of Community Services indicated that new guidelines had been introduced in 2017 which restricted what could be done without a road or lane closure. This was very problematic and would be addressed by the review which would also include an assessment of street litter bins - these had tended to be installed on an ad-hoc basis and their number had increased over the years. Financial performance had improved significantly over the past year, particularly around budget setting; in the past a percentage would simply have been added to the previous year's figures but this year it had been assessed line by line so it should be much more meaningful.
- 84.6 During the debate which ensued, a Member questioned what had been done to improve communications between the Council and Ubico. In response, the Head of Community Services explained that, previously emails had been sent back and forth between the teams and ultimately he and the Managing Director of Ubico had needed to intervene to get issues resolved. A very clear message had been sent out that Customer Services needed to log all requests through the system to ensure that Ubico got the job done more quickly. An agreement had also been reached around notification of missed bins, for example, if a whole street had been missed the Council would know about it at the earliest opportunity, and would know the reason and the remedy, so the public could be kept informed – Ubico had made a commitment to ensure action was taken when they said it would be. Over the winter period the communication of key messages to Councillors and members of the public had been very good and was based on information from Ubico via the Council's communication channels. The Member queried what timescales were expected from the service level agreement and was advised that missed bins were usually collected within five days; the Council's Waste Policy clearly set out how the service would operate. A Member noted that KPIs were due to be reviewed across all services and she questioned if that had taken place. The Head of Community Services confirmed that this had been done through the Joint Waste Team and a new suite of KPIs would be in place as of April 2018 which would be the same across the partnership, with slight variations for the different services. These would be reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 84.7 A Member raised concern that different staff were often used on waste collection rounds and he suggested that lack of consistency could result in more missed bin collections. He recognised that two important members of staff had been lost in relation to grounds maintenance but he felt that action should have been taken to replace them at a much earlier stage to avoid the resultant knowledge gap. He pointed out that there were occasions when bins could not be accessed if an area was overgrown and he questioned why this was not reported to the grounds maintenance team given that all the works were carried out by Ubico. He considered this to be a simple communication issue. The Managing Director of Ubico provided assurance that every effort was made to keep the three man crews consistent in order to build knowledge; however, this could be difficult to maintain and agency drivers often left at short notice. Notwithstanding this, attempts were always made to pair new staff with those who already knew the route. Some missed bins were inevitable but it was the responsibility of Ubico to keep that number as low as possible. In terms of the overall figures, the number of missed bins was reducing back down to the level that had been seen prior to the bad weather i.e. 50-60 missed bins per week which was a better than 50% reduction. Ubico had proven that could be achieved so it should be the benchmark as far as he was concerned. He provided assurance that Tewkesbury Borough Council was not alone in its experience with grounds maintenance. By its very nature, it tended to be based on the expertise of individual members of staff who built up knowledge about areas which required more frequent cutting etc. and this caused difficulties when they left. Unfortunately, there was not much built-in resilience if

someone left and consideration needed to be given as to how this could be overcome. He provided assurance that he would be discussing this with the Head of Community Services at strategic level. The Member had made a good point about general communication and he indicated that he would take this away to find out what happened. He pointed out that the partnership agreement was flexible in terms of where the Council could allocate resources and Ubico could recommend changes if things could be done more efficiently. The Member went on to point out that he was aware of an issue with a broken mower at the start of the 2017 growing season which had meant that several cuts had been missed. In his view, it was unacceptable to have let the grass grow so high and it was essential that equipment was available when it was required. The Managing Director of Ubico advised that there were maintenance schedules in place to ensure that plant and equipment was suitably looked after but he undertook to look into this particular issue following the meeting. One general problem was that equipment could be difficult to maintain as it got older and this could result in breaks in service. As a company, Ubico was working with all partners to ensure that clear fleet replacement programmes were in place which covered all plant and equipment. He recognised that grass not being cut was a potential reputational issue in the same way as bins not being emptied. The Member questioned whether all equipment was covered in the KPI around maintenance and was informed that it currently focused only on the vehicle fleet but the Head of Community Services undertook to discuss with the Joint Waste Team whether the KPI could be expanded.

- 84.8 A Member noted that a review of street cleansing was being undertaken. He expressed the view that Tewkesbury Borough Council residents were not currently receiving the same level of service they had in the past and he could not understand why this was the case given that there had been no changes to staffing. The Managing Director assured Members that, whilst there had been no change to the level of resources, Ubico was doing more than it had done previously for the same resources, for example, it was emptying more bins as and when new developments were built in the borough. The current view taken by Ubico was that changes could be made to absorb these additional collections, e.g. by changing the frequency they were emptied, looking at overall resourcing levels etc. but, with a clear performance agreement in place, this could be monitored in order to clamp down if standards started to slip. The Head of Community Services advised that the introduction of a Public Space Protection Order for dog fouling was due to be considered by the Council in April; if adopted, one of the key messages for the public would be that this type of waste could be disposed of in normal waste bins which would eliminate the need for dog waste bins which tended to be side by side with normal bins. He went on to explain that the Council had two street sweepers in its vehicle fleet but, unfortunately, due to the driver crisis, there was currently no driver for the larger vehicle which was used for the main roads. Ubico had been fiercely trying to recruit but it was a very technical machine and it was proving difficult to find someone with the right qualifications. To offer some perspective, he indicated that the vehicle could do the work of 10 men if used efficiently. The Managing Director of Ubico indicated that there had been a strategic overview of driver recruitment which continued to be a national challenge. One issue which had been identified was the tone of job advertisements and the need to use language which promoted some of the key benefits of the role e.g. good work-life balance rather than factors which may discourage people from applying e.g. working in all weather conditions. Another improvement was the introduction of finders' fees. It was important for Ubico to be more creative with recruitment as a company and this was now starting to pay dividends. A Member queried what the turnover rate was for drivers and why retention was difficult. The Managing Director of Ubico undertook to provide the turnover rate to Members following the meeting. He advised that market dynamics was part of the problem – the need to use agency drivers was a particular issue as

they tended to leave at short notice if they were offered another job with a higher wage and newer drivers did not have the same loyalty to the company. This was all being taken into consideration in the review of recruitment.

- 84.9 A Member questioned why bins were missed and whether there was any correlation in terms of location i.e. rural or urban. The Managing Director of Ubico indicated that there was no simple answer - bins could be missed for a whole host of reasons. He pointed out that another authority had recently introduced a new back office system and had seen the number of missed bin collections reduce from approximately 5,500 per year to 2,500 per year – the new system involved a button being installed into every cab which was pressed upon the non-presentation of a bin and this generated an immediate response for the Customer Services agent; this meant that if someone challenged a non-presentation, Customer Services could ask the customer for permission to access the CCTV in the cab which would send an image of the front of the property to confirm that the bin had not been presented. He stressed that, whilst Ubico did challenge people who reported missed bins when it was believed they had not been presented for collection, this could not be evidenced in the same way. Conversations had taken place with shareholders about the possibility of introducing similar technology and the associated savings in terms of time and fuel; however, it would require considerable investment and Tewkesbury Borough Council already had an advanced back office system in terms of reporting so it would be a significant change. He had no doubt this was an effective model for that particular Council but was not suggesting it should be replicated within Gloucestershire. In terms of the reasons for errors, it was common to miss bins in rural areas like Tewkesbury Borough as properties could be spread out – drivers may stop at the point they believed the road to end when it actually continued around the corner. In addition, he pointed out that bin stores were increasingly common in new developments and it was important to work with the Planning department to ensure these were as visible as possible and that they could be accessed by collection crews. Another common reason for missed collections was that a separate smaller vehicle was used to collect food waste - the food waste caddies could easily be missed if they were hidden behind a gatepost or another bin, particularly given that the presentation rate for food waste was around 50%. Encouraging the community to take ownership in order to keep the error rate as low as possible was part of the work Ubico had been doing around launching its new values and behaviours. A continuing issue had been identified within the Tewkesbury Borough crews where five or six bins had been missed because each crew had thought another was collecting them; this was unacceptable and was something which needed to be clamped down on. This was a cultural change which required continued enforcement over a period of time, not an overnight fix.
- 84.10 A Member indicated that he had been very impressed with the improvement plan when the Committee had received the last report, particularly the fact that it had been achieved by October; however, since that time the figures for missed bin collections had been creeping up – even when discounting the December and January figures which had been impacted by bad weather – and yet the report stated that the standard of waste collections continued to be monitored and improved. He asked for more detail about the monitoring that was undertaken. In terms of the KPIs, he raised concern that the target for missed bin collections was 1% and yet the improvement plan included a figure equivalent to 0.1% so he questioned why this was not the target for the KPI. In response, the Head of Community Services advised that missed bins were monitored on a weekly basis; he received an email every Friday, as did the Managing Director of Ubico and the Joint Waste Team. It was noted that conversations would have taken place prior to the email being sent out as to whether they were genuine missed bins so the figures were accurate. The introduction of the red list had been very useful in terms of monitoring – as these were bins that had been repeatedly missed, it was

accepted that there had been a service failure in these instances and that action needed to be taken. With regards to the KPI, 1% was the figure set out in the contract and represented between 300 and 400 missed collections per week; however, Ubico had demonstrated that it could reduce the number of missed bin collections to less than 100 per week and this was the benchmark. The Member pointed out that a missed bin collection rate of 0.1% was being regularly achieved and he was of the view that the KPI needed to be challenging and should be amended to reflect that. The Chief Executive indicated that changing the KPI to 0.1% or less would be reported to the partnership board as feedback from the Committee.

- 84.11 A Member raised concern that there was nothing in the report about maintenance of the new vehicle fleet and he sought assurance that equipment was checked regularly. The Head of Community Services felt that was a good question given the value of the equipment and he confirmed that the fleet, and fleet management, were included within the new KPIs. He advised that Ubico was required to hold an operator's licence and a regular audit was undertaken by the Traffic Commissioners to ensure that vehicles were properly maintained. The Internal Audit team would also shortly be carrying out its own audit, the results of which would be reported to the Audit Committee. A Member queried whether the vehicles used for street cleansing were different from the others in the fleet and if these were the same vehicles for which it was difficult to get drivers. The Head of Community Services clarified that the whole vehicle fleet had been replaced – both waste collection vehicles and street cleansing vehicles – and it was the large mechanical sweeper which did not currently have a driver. The Managing Director of Ubico confirmed that the fleet was performing well and operators were happy with the kit they were using. He indicated that Traffic Commissioner checks were becoming increasingly stringent; it was also necessary to comply with Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment (LOLER) Regulations which were very labour intensive and rigorous. He welcomed the internal audit which would help to ensure that Members were happy with the arrangements in place.
- 84.12 A Member indicated that he had previously been unable to report an incident of green waste being left in a passing place online as a postcode had been required; as it was located in a lane, he did not have that information. He also pointed out that many of the waste collection calendars that been hooked onto bins in Winchcombe had been blown away in the very windy weather conditions and he suggested that they could have been delivered at a more appropriate time. The Head of Corporate Services advised that a lot of work had been done around online forms and he clarified that, whilst there was a requirement to include a location, this did not have to be a postcode. The Managing Director of Ubico apologised for the issue with the distribution of the collection calendars. He recognised that a common sense approach should have been taken and undertook to speak to the supervisor for that round. The Member also noted that Ubico was a teckal company and shareholders could make profit up to a certain level of turnover; however, this was not referenced in the financial performance section of the report. In terms of Ubico's growth as a company, the Managing Director of Ubico explained that the first phase had been about consolidation rather than aggressive trading. Turnover had now reached £30M which gave £6M to trade with third parties and distribute to shareholders. Consideration was currently being given to the business plan for the forthcoming year and proposals to deliver more savings, for example, the company now owned 450 vehicles in total so there was some potential work around reducing the cost of hire vehicles which were used sporadically, either by keeping a few spare vehicles which Ubico could deploy itself or hiring them out to others.

- 84.13 The Chair sought assurance that the Committee would have sight of the KPIs and the Head of Community Services advised that they had not been formally signed off when the report had been written but he confirmed that it was absolutely the intention to bring the KPIs to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and provide regular updates as part of the performance management report. It was subsequently

RESOLVED That the Ubico Update be **NOTED**.

OS.85 PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 3 2017/18

- 85.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 21-66, attached performance management information for quarter 3 of 2017/18. 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 further action to be taken.
- 85.2 Members were advised that this was the third quarterly monitoring report for 2017/18 and progress against delivering the objectives and actions for each of the Council Plan priorities were reported through the Performance Tracker, attached at Appendix 1 to the report. Key actions for the quarter were highlighted at Paragraph 2.3 of the report and included the preparation and approval of the annual budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy; Council approval of a further £12M for commercial property investment; a new tenant occupying one third of the top floor with the refurbishment of the rest of the building well underway; adoption of the Joint Core Strategy; conclusion of the garden waste project with the annual renewal of over 15,000 customers; and over 500 responses to the consultation on Public Space Protection Orders with the Executive Committee making a recommendation to Council to introduce an Order. As always, due to the complex nature of the actions being delivered, it was inevitable that some would not progress as smoothly or quickly as envisaged and details were set out at Paragraph 2.4 of the report. A number of these had been flagged to Members previously and a combination of factors meant that more progress had not been made between quarters; some of the proposals may be delivered over the course of the Council Plan rather than over the year. In terms of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), Members were informed that the status of each indicator was set out at Paragraph 3.2 of the report. Of the 15 indicators with targets, 13 indicators were on target and two were unlikely to achieve their target. Areas of interest included KPIs 13, 14 and 15 in relation to determination of planning applications which were showing improvement compared to the previous year; KPI 19 which showed a significant reduction in the number of reported enviro-crimes; KPI 28 in relation to the increased number of sick days per full time employee – it was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been invited to a presentation on absence management in February; and KPI 29 in respect of percentage of waste recycled or composted which continued to perform strongly at 56%. A Member questioned whether the recommendations which had come out of the absence management presentation in February would be taken forward. In response, the Head of Corporate Services confirmed that they would and advised that a further breakdown would be given to explain the content of the KPIs in relation to sickness absence. The Member went on to raise concern that Councillors were not made aware of staff changes at an early enough stage. The Head of Corporate Services clarified that Members were notified of staff changes on a monthly basis via the Member Update Sheet. The Chief Executive recognised that changes to personnel could be difficult but, rather than being a Human Resources issue, this was more about service managers ensuring that there was a proper handover with Members and he undertook to raise this with the Management Team.

- 85.3 Turning to the financial information, the Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that the financial budget summary for quarter 3 showed a £590,640 surplus against the profiled budget; this had increased from £315,331 in quarter 2. The table at Page No. 26, Paragraph 4.1 of the report, showed the expenditure position for the Council split between the main expenditure types. The overall budget in the control of Heads of Service showed a surplus of £179,753 at the end of December and the summary position was set out at Appendix 2 to the report. Particular reference was made to the surplus against treasury management activity, which was due to access to cheap borrowing rates and the use of more lucrative funds for cash investment, and the income from investment properties following the acquisition of three new commercial properties. Business rates had continued to perform well with income of £240,000 for the year. In terms of overspends, planning income had been consistently below target; garden waste was also below budget but that was expected and was a one-off issue relating to the change to a single renewal date for all customers. Appendix 3 to the report gave an update on the capital budget which showed an underspend against the profiled budget due to not utilising all of the agreed funding on the purchase of commercial investment properties and slippage on certain projects e.g. refurbishment of the Council Offices, as well as consistent underspends against expectations on disabled facilities grants. Appendix 4 to the report provided a summary of the current usage of available reserves with £403,733 being spent during quarter 3. Whilst there remained a significant balance on the reserves, it was anticipated that this would be spent during quarter 4.
- 85.4 A Member noted that retained income from the business rates scheme was showing a surplus of £240,000 and he questioned when this would be available to spend. He also queried whether there was a programme in place for 100% retention. The Head of Finance and Asset Management confirmed that the surplus of £240,000 was the anticipated year end position. In terms of 100% retention, Officers were working through the scheme detail to see how the pilot would work. If it was in line with the projection, the scheme could generate an additional £400,000 for the Council. The Chief Executive reminded Members that business rates, and other income streams such as the New Homes Bonus, were volatile and any changes made by the government could have a significant impact on the authority's accounts. One of the risks with business rates was the potential number of appeals and this was something which had been a substantial cost to the Council in the past.
- 85.5 A Member drew attention to Page No. 27, Paragraph 4.12, which set out that the Council had successfully bid for £4.53M from the growth deal fund to improve the existing Longford roundabout and A40 access to the new development site at Innsworth. In order to access the funds, a business case needed to be put forward to the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for approval. With this in mind, he questioned how the Council would finance the transport consultants who were being contracted to do that work. The Head of Finance and Asset Management explained that the Executive Committee had approved £100,000 from the surplus to support the development of the business case; if approved by the LEP board, this would be replenished so there would be no detriment to the Council financially, although there was clearly an element of risk. The Head of Development Services confirmed that the first stage of the process was to produce the business case and this would unlock the wider allocation. Whilst there was no guarantee, the money had been allocated to this project and the risk had not increased since Members had been advised previously. A Member went on to question whether progress had been made in respect of the MAFF site and was informed that an Officer group was working up an options appraisal for a potential care home or residential facility on the site.

- 85.6 In response to a query regarding planning income, the Head of Development Services explained that a number of applications which had been expected throughout the year had not yet been received for various external reasons. This could not have been foreseen and they were still anticipated to come forward at some stage given that a lot were reserved matters applications linked to outline planning permissions. She pointed out that there had been a 20% increase in planning fees nationally which would have an impact but consideration was being given as to how to increase opportunities for commercialising the planning service. A Member raised concern that conflicting advice was being given at the pre-application stage and when the formal application was submitted. The Head of Development Services explained that pre-application advice assisted with the planning process and was a crucial way to increase planning income. Whilst schemes did occasionally change throughout the life of an application, there should be consistency in the advice being given. If Members heard of any times when this did not happen as it should then it was very important that she was given the details.
- 85.7 In response to a query regarding the Leisure Centre, the Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that the Council received £150,000 per year from Places for People plus a 45% share of the profit share in year 4 – 45% went to Places for People and the remaining 10% went to the Board to be used for improvements to the Leisure Centre and its facilities.
- 85.8 Having considered the information provided, it was
RESOLVED That the performance management information for quarter 3 of 2017/18 be **NOTED**.

OS.86 FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT GROUP REPORT

- 86.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Head of Development Services, circulated at Pages No. 67-86, which provided an annual update on progress against the Flood Risk Management Action Plan. Members were asked to consider the update.
- 86.2 The Head of Community Services explained that the action plan at Appendix 1 reflected the report that had been presented to the Flood Risk Management Group at its meeting on 26 February 2018. The action plan was split into four main sections: live capital projects; Tewkesbury Borough Council's programme of watercourse maintenance; future maintenance issues; and grant applications. In terms of live capital projects, the action plan included one project in respect of Grange Field and the proposal was attached at Appendix 2 to the report. With regard to watercourse maintenance, Members were advised that 98 projects had been undertaken across the borough during 2017/18 including desilting, unblocking, flail cutting and hedge cutting as well as reactionary work such as clearing fallen trees; this had amounted to £45,444. The action plan also contained the programmed future maintenance works proposed in 2018/19 and included 37 projects amounting to a total of £22,868. In terms of grant applications, the action plan detailed four existing schemes which were led by Gloucestershire County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority and these were summarised in Paragraph 6.1 of the report. In relation to funding bids in progress, there was a notional allocation of £3M for Gloucestershire under Priority Axis 6: Preserving and Protecting the Environment and Promoting Resource Efficiency under the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding. The project would involve the betterment of areas of public open space of low ecological value into a network of mini-meadows which would provide multiple benefits in terms of flood risk, biodiversity, water quality, amenity and anti-social behaviour. It was noted that the grant funding agreement was expected to be confirmed in the spring.

- 86.3 Another key project that had been overseen by the Flood Risk Management Group was the review of the Flood and Water Management Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This document had been adopted by the Council and was now a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The Head of Development Services advised that the Council worked with Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC), and other partners, to help communities in Tewkesbury Borough increase their resilience to floods, this included flood warden training which had last taken place in January 2018; regular updates on this work were received by the Flood Risk Management Group.
- 86.4 A Member drew attention to Page No. 73 of the report which indicated that there was a provisional agreement to engage the services of expert staff responsible for creating the wildflower planting at Pitville Park and she pointed out that this would be very costly. The Head of Development Services explained that consideration had been given to various ways of developing the Grange Field project and she provided assurance that there had been a number of cost savings as well. The project was being financed through grant funding so it was not Tewkesbury Borough Council's money per se but the intention was to achieve the best value possible. With regard to watercourse maintenance, a Member indicated that he had been led to believe from another meeting that there was some uncertainty as to which watercourses the Council-owned. The Head of Development Services provided assurance that Tewkesbury Borough Council knew which watercourses and assets it owned and was responsible for but it was unclear who owned other parcels of land; land ownership was very complex across the borough.
- 86.5 The Chair indicated that he was a Member of Flood Risk Management Group and he expressed the view that it was unnecessary to bring the same information that was reported at that Group to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He suggested that the Chair of the Group could instead be asked to provide an annual summary report and the Committee agreed that this would be an appropriate way forward. It was therefore

RESOLVED

1. That the annual report on progress against the Flood Risk Management Group Action Plan be **NOTED**.
2. That the Chair of the Flood Risk Management Group be asked to provide an annual summary report in future.

The meeting closed at 6:20 pm