

# TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Council Offices, Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury on Tuesday, 10 September 2019 commencing at 4:30 pm**

## **Present:**

Chair  
Vice Chair

Councillor K J Cromwell  
Councillor J W Murphy

## **and Councillors:**

G J Bocking, C L J Carter, P A Godwin, H C McLain, P D McLain, J K Smith, R J G Smith, P D Surman, M J Williams, P N Workman and S Thomson (Substitute for H S Munro)

## **OS.33 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- 33.1 The evacuation procedure, as noted on the Agenda, was advised to those present.
- 33.2 The Chair welcomed the representative from North and West Gloucestershire Citizens' Advice to the meeting and indicated that he would be giving a presentation at Agenda Item 7 – Citizens' Advice Bureau Presentation.

## **OS.34 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

- 34.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H S Munro, P W Ockelton and S A T Stevens. Councillor S Thomson would be acting as a substitute for the meeting.

## **OS.35 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- 35.1 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.
- 35.2 There were no declarations made on this occasion.

## **OS.36 MINUTES**

- 36.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2019 and the Special meeting held on 13 August 2019, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

## **OS.37 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN**

- 37.1 Attention was drawn to the Executive Committee Forward Plan, circulated at Pages No. 19-24. 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.

37.2 It was

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

**OS.38 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20**

38.1 Attention was drawn to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2019/20, circulated at Pages No. 25-33, which Members were asked to consider.

38.2 In response to a query as to whether the Parking Strategy Review Report was on target to be brought to the next meeting of the Committee on 22 October 2019, with a further report being taken to the meeting on 3 December 2019, the Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that these dates were based on the original timings put forward when the Committee agreed to establish a Working Group to undertake the review, with a view to the new strategy taking effect from 1 April 2020. Unfortunately, the dates were no longer realistic if the Working Group was to fully understand the parking issues and gather the information required to carry out a comprehensive review. A new timetable had been presented to the Working Group and it was now planned to bring the draft strategy to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 January 2020, with a further report to consider the consultation responses being taken to the meeting on 10 March 2020, and the Work Programme would be updated to reflect the new dates.

38.3 It was

**RESOLVED** That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2019/20 be **NOTED**, subject to amendments to reflect the new timetable for the Parking Strategy Review which would mean that the draft strategy would be brought to the meeting on 14 January 2020 with a further report to consider the consultation responses being taken to the meeting on 10 March 2020.

**OS.39 CITIZENS' ADVICE BUREAU PRESENTATION**

39.1 The Chair welcomed the representative from North and West Gloucestershire Citizens' Advice to the meeting. Members were reminded that Tewkesbury Borough Council had a service level agreement with Citizens' Advice which had been in place for a number of years and it awarded a grant on an annual basis for the services provided to residents. The Committee received an annual presentation which provided Members with information about the work of Citizens' Advice and quarterly reports giving more detail were provided via the Member Update Sheet with the most recent having been issued the previous week.

39.2 The representative from North and West Gloucestershire Citizens' Advice explained that things had changed considerably since his last presentation to the Committee and the service had been renamed as 'North and West Gloucestershire Citizens' Advice' to reflect a merge with Forest of Dean District. The service now covered Cheltenham, Forest of Dean, Gloucester and Tewkesbury which gave more scope for residents to obtain information from different locations, for example, someone who lived in Tewkesbury may work in Cheltenham or Gloucester so they could seek advice in that location during the working day. It was noted that the reporting structure had also changed for 2019/20 and he advised that 236 Tewkesbury residents had been seen in other districts during the first quarter compared with only 27 in 2018/19. He went on to give a presentation reflecting the work undertaken in 2018/19 which covered the following key points:

- Aims – To provide the advice people need for the problems they face; to improve policies and practices that affect people's lives.

- Principles - The Citizens' Advice service provided free, confidential, independent and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. It valued diversity, promoted equality and challenged discrimination.
- Locations – Citizens' Advice now operated from 15 locations: Tewkesbury Public Services Centre; Prior's Park; Bishop's Cleeve; Winchcombe – by appointment; Brockworth – by appointment; Northway – this was a new outreach centre; Churchdown – this was a new outreach centre; Cheltenham (town centre); Up Hatherley; Gloucester (city centre); Cinderford; Coleford; Lydney; Newent; St Briavels.
- How advice is requested – Majority still wanted face to face, approximately 80% of all contact, 10/12% via phone, online not popular; face to face was a more expensive method of giving advice but was the preferred option for the people using the service.
- Employment Status - Employed - 31.6% (33.4% previous year); self-employed – 4.5% (5.1% previous year); carers – 7% (7.7% previous year); retired – 20.5% (21.7% previous year); unemployed – 16.4% (14.7% previous year); and permanently sick – 19.9% (17.4% previous year). This was fairly consistent with the previous year, albeit with a slight reduction in the number of employed people seeking assistance and a corresponding increase in the number of unemployed people using the service; the types of issues people had tended to reflect the employment profile status.
- Disposable Monthly Income – Under £999 – 54% (52.7% previous year); £1,000-£1,499 – 24.3% (23.8% previous year); £1,500-£1,999 – 10.5% (12.8% previous year); and over £2,000 – 11.2% (10.7% previous year). The number of people in work and claiming benefits was rising and there was an increase in people seeking advice for issues with Universal Credit.
- Disabilities - Physical disability – 10.9% (8.7% previous year); mental illness – 8.3% (9.1% previous year); long term health issues – 30.8% (22.2% previous year).
- Issues dealt with – 3,167 in 2018/19 compared with 3,002 in 2017/18. Welfare benefits – 781 (837 previous year which included 30 in relation to Universal Credit); Universal Credit – 147; debt – 729 (668 previous year); employment – 308 (321 previous year); relationships – 288 (282 previous year); and housing – 246 (242 previous year). Issues around Universal Credit had increased dramatically compared to the previous year and debt was still a major problem across the county with the average debt of the people using Citizens' Advice being £12-13,000 per household.
- Significant issues during the year – Tribunal hearings; housing – repairs to private lettings; impact of rent caps and Universal Credit on Registered Social Landlords; employment practices; increase in complex cases. Tribunal hearings remained a major issue as 75-80% of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) applications were unsuccessful and fewer than 10% of decisions were overturned by the Department for Work and Pensions following mandatory reconsideration; Citizens' Advice assisted with tribunal hearings in terms of collating documentation and making representation on behalf of its clients; legislation set out that a hearing date would be within 13 weeks but this had been as long as 62 weeks in Gloucestershire at one point; this had been reduced to around 40-50 weeks following lobbying of MPs which had resulted in the appointment of an additional Judge but this was still an extremely long wait for people who were not receiving benefit during that time.

- Case Study A – 41 year old female with heroin addiction (in recovery) suffering from back pain and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) who had previously resorted to prostitution to fund her habit; failed work capability assessment, Employment Support Allowance ceased, forced to claim Universal Credit; claimant commitment resulted in methadone replacement and support group programme disrupted; started using again and likely to return to prostitution; strongly worded appeal submitted stating catastrophic effect on her health, decision changed within weeks avoiding a possible year long delay in appeal being heard.
- Case Study B – Couple with 11 year old son with dwarfism and little fine motor control in his hands, in need of care with all aspects of living; lost Disability Living Allowance at assessment therefore Carers Allowance (paid to mother) also ceased and tax credits reduced; successfully appealed the decision, Disability Living Allowance awarded, Carers Allowance (to mother) reinstated, tax credits increased, resulted in family income increase by £13,042 per annum.
- Case Study C – Husband in an elderly couple suffering from COPD and Crohn's disease, wife acts as carer, living in rented accommodation and in receipt of state and occupational pensions; following a stroke the wife was left partially sighted and with balance problems; Early Discharge Stroke Nurse referred the couple to Citizens' Advice; successfully applied for Attendance Allowance for husband and wife, switched energy supplier saving approximately £150 per annum, installed new radiators following discussion with landlord and successfully applied for a blue badge.
- Achievements 2018/19 – Merger with Forest of Dean Citizens' Advice; opened outreach at Northway and Churchdown.
- Future Plans 2019/20 – Outreach at Cheltenham Oncology Unit (now opened) funded by Clinical Commissioning Group; extend specialist services; establish Help to Claim service – government-funded service, working with Department for Work and Pensions.
- Definitions:
  - Financial capability – knowledge, skill, motivation, awareness and confidence in relation to money management.
  - Financial exclusion – individuals cannot access the financial products and services they need which means 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.

39.3

A Member queried whether Citizens' Advice did any outreach in rural Parishes. The representative from North and West Gloucestershire Citizens' Advice indicated that outreach was only in the 15 locations specified; however, consideration would be given to new locations provided there was sufficient demand for at least a half day service. He indicated that the outreach at Northway and Churchdown had opened as a result of engagement with Tewkesbury Borough Council Officers who were able to make suggestions as to where need might be. It was noted that Citizens' Advice offered a home visit service if clients were unable to get to one of the offices due to health problems etc. With regard to a query as to whether Trading Standards were responsive to queries, the representative from North and West Gloucestershire Citizens' Advice advised that this was not an organisation Citizens' Advice had a lot of dealings with on a local basis other than referring clients who dealt with them directly.

- 39.4 A Member pointed out that the Ward boundaries in Tewkesbury Borough had recently changed and he questioned whether this would skew the figures in terms of the number of clients seeking advice in different areas. In response, the representative from North and West Gloucestershire Citizens' Advice confirmed that the reporting structure for 2019/20 had been changed to reflect that and they had stopped making comparisons with previous years based on Wards as this now had little meaning due to the changes. He provided assurance that the Economic and Community Development Manager and his team were able to give feedback about where Citizens' Advice activity should be focused so they would react to any reduction or increase in users of the service in different locations as appropriate. The Member questioned whether the Council's Key Performance Indicator in respect of the total number of people assisted within the borough by Citizens' Advice would change going forward and the Economic and Community Development Manager confirmed that the report which had been circulated to Members on quarter one of 2019/20 had reflected the changes and the information included in the Performance Tracker would be updated accordingly going forward.
- 39.5 The Deputy Chief Executive advised that he was joint chair of the Financial Inclusion Partnership, together with the representative from North and West Gloucestershire Citizens' Advice, and they would both be at the Locality and Financial Inclusion Partnership Showcase Event at the Public Services Centre on 3 October 2019 to which all Members had been invited. He encouraged them to drop-in if they had any specific Ward issues or required any additional information. The Chair thanked the representative from North and West Gloucestershire Citizens' Advice for his presentation and it was

**RESOLVED** That the Citizens' Advice presentation be **NOTED**.

#### **OS.40 PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 1 2019/20**

- 40.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 34-78, attached performance management information for quarter one of 2019/20. 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.
- 40.2 Members were advised that this was the first quarterly monitoring report for 2019/20 and progress against delivering the objectives and actions for each of the Council Plan priorities was 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 garden waste renewals which were performing strongly and had generated income of £875,780; commencement of a full review of the bulky waste service; roll out of commercial awareness training to senior management and Members; presentation of an options report on Spring Gardens regeneration to Council in July 2019; and refurbishment of the ground floor west wing of the Public Services Centre and occupation by the County Council, which had signed long-term leases for all areas of occupation generating a rental income and securing a valuable partner. A Member noted the income being generated by garden waste and questioned how much the service cost to deliver. In response, the Deputy Chief Executive advised that garden waste generated approximately £450,000 net which was put back into the service. The Head of Corporate Services indicated that, 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 the details of these were set out at Paragraph 2.4 of the report. Particular reference was made to disposal of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (MAFF) site which was on hold pending the outcome of the Spring Gardens regeneration project, and the development of Healings Mill which was out of the Council's direct control and would be discussed in more detail at Agenda Item 10.

40.3 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 17 indicators with targets, 13 were on target, three were below target but the annual target would be achieved, and one was below target and the target was unlikely to be achieved. Notwithstanding this, it was to be borne in mind that it was only the first quarter of the year and the second quarter data would give a clearer indication of performance. Key areas of interest were included at Paragraph 3.3 of the report and particular reference was made to KPIs 12, 13 and 14 which related to determination of 'major', 'minor' and 'other' planning applications respectively and Members were advised that the figures were relatively small therefore it only took one or two applications to be determined outside of the target dates to impact the overall percentage. It was acknowledged there was a typographical error in relation to KPI 12 – Percentage of 'major' applications determined within 13 weeks or alternative period agreed with the applicant – which should state that the figure was down compared to the outturn of 2018/19 from **93.3%** to 90.91%, as opposed to 90.30% to 90.91%. In terms of KPI 27 – Average number of sick days per full-time equivalent – Members were advised that both long and short term sickness had increased during quarter one which had resulted in an average of 3.7 sick days per full-time equivalent and meant that the target of eight days was unlikely to be achieved by the end of the year. Areas where KPIs were performing particularly well were identified at the top of Page No. 40 and it was noted that the average number of days to process new benefits claims (KPI 21) had been reduced from 22 days in 2018/19 to 10 days as a result of the new ways of working implemented by the Benefits team.

40.4 During the debate which ensued, the following queries and comments were made in relation to the Performance Tracker:

**Priority: Finance and Resources**

<p>P44 – Objective 1 – Action a) Deliver the Council's transformation programme to deliver a balanced budget – A Member noted that the commentary stated that these projects had their individual milestones and target dates and were progressing well and he sought clarification as to whether this applied to all projects.</p>	<p>The Deputy Chief Executive explained that all projects were part of the Programme Board agenda and every Council project was subject to that process to ensure they were properly resourced and supported. The milestones and target dates would all be reported to the Programme Board so Members could be made aware of the timescales for specific projects at any point. He confirmed that the majority were progressing well and there were no areas of concern to bring to the Committee's attention.</p>
---	--

### Priority: Promoting and Supporting Economic Growth

- P48 – Objective 1 – Action c) Work with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and other partners to contribute to the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) – A Member noted that the target date was December 2019; however, from a presentation he had attended he believed the publication date was March 2020 and he sought some clarification around this.
- The Economic and Community Development Manager indicated that the dates were correct as at the time of writing the report but he would check to see if there had been any changes and would report back to Members following the meeting.
- P50 – Objective 3 – Action b) Work with partners to secure transport infrastructure improvements around the borough, including the all-ways Junction 10, Junction 9 and A46 improvements – A Member noted that it was intended to host an A46 session for MPs in the autumn and he questioned whether this was realistic given the current suspension of Parliament.
- The Deputy Chief Executive provided assurance that the project was on track and it was still intended to hold a meeting in London before the end of the calendar year to promote the work being undertaken to the relevant Ministers; there was no reason at this stage to suggest this would not happen.
- In response to a query regarding the Local Transport Plan, the Deputy Chief Executive undertook to ask the Gloucestershire County Council representative to provide an update to the Committee. Clarification was provided that a bid for funding for the all-ways Junction 10 had passed the first stage and was progressing. This was being led by Highways England and Gloucestershire County Council so the Deputy Chief Executive was not in a position to provide a more detailed update at this stage. The Chair indicated that he had received a presentation at a public meeting of the County Council which may be of interest to Members and he undertook to circulate this to the Committee following the meeting.

### **Key Performance Indicators for Priority: Promoting and Supporting Economic Growth**

P52 – Objective 5 – Action a) Explore with partners – including the Battlefield Society – the potential to increase the heritage offer at the Battlefield site – A Member noted that the revised target date was March 2021 and he raised concern that this would not be achieved in time for the commemoration of the 550<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Tewkesbury bearing in mind that Tewkesbury Abbey would be starting its celebrations in January 2021.

The Economic and Community Development Manager explained that the action to increase the heritage offer of the Battlefield area had arisen as a result of a petition to Council regarding the potential sale of the Gaston's field and it had subsequently been agreed that the Council work with the Battlefield Society to make more of the site as a whole. Investigations had been ongoing to understand what could be done and he had been involved in some positive meetings over the last few weeks around utilising the Gupshill Manor so the March 2021 target was a launch date for that. In response to a query regarding what the plans involved, the Economic and Community Development Manager stressed that nothing had been firmed up at this stage but recent discussions had focused on three areas: year round events e.g. medieval banquets; some gateway interpretation, potentially hosted at the Gupshill; and routes into Tewkesbury i.e. using the battle trail as a walking route into the town centre as was promoted during the Tewkesbury Medieval Festival – it was noted that discussions were ongoing with the relevant landowner as any proposals would need to be ratified and endorsed by them. The Chair recognised that the date for this project had slipped on five occasions but this was because the Council had no direct control and he suggested that Officers update the Committee when there was some progress to report. A Member indicated that he would prefer to see a report in 12 months' time and this was agreed as a way forward.

### **Priority: Growing and Supporting Communities**

P55 – Objective 1 – Action e) With partners, explore options for the provision of modular and innovative housing to meet housing needs – A Member queried how many sites had been identified and where they were located.

The Head of Community Services indicated that he did not have the information to hand and would report back outside of the meeting.

- P58 – Objective 3 – Action d) Deliver short-term access improvements to the infrastructure around the Ashchurch Housing Zone – A Member sought clarification as to the amount of funding awarded.
- The Deputy Chief Executive advised that £8.1M project funding had been awarded and the overall end date was March 2022. The legal conditions of the grant contract were currently being discussed with Homes England with a view to agreeing the contract by the end of September; whilst this was on track, Members should be mindful that it was a Homes England contract, therefore the Council's influence was limited.
- P60 – Objective 4 – Action d) Develop a programme to work with landlords to ensure residents have a supply of rented properties to meet their needs – A Member indicated that the wording in the commentary was confusing and he sought an explanation of what was being done.
- The Head of Community Services advised that a report had recently been taken to the Executive Committee regarding a successful bid to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to look at how to encourage landlords to accept individuals on lower incomes using a variety of incentives or mechanisms. Funding of £360,000 had been awarded between all of the Gloucestershire authorities and West Oxfordshire District Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council had originally been leading on the project; unfortunately, as a result of Officer sickness and a key Officer leaving the authority, the lead had now been passed to Forest of Dean District Council. This had resulted in some unexpected delays to the project but he was hopeful he would have an update within the next month or two so a report would be brought back to Members in due course.

### **Priority: Customer Focused Services**

- P64 – Objective 1 - Action b) To continue to proactively enforce against enviro-crimes including fly-tipping and dog fouling in accordance with the action plan – A Member expressed the view that Officers were doing an excellent job and he had received very positive feedback from Parish Councils.
- The Chair extended his thanks to the Environmental Health team, on behalf of the Committee, and congratulated them on an excellent strategy that was starting to pay dividends.

P67 – Objective 3 – Action b)  
Introduce the option for paperless billing for council tax and business rates – A Member questioned what was being done to progress the digital strategy and move towards paperless meetings following the roll-out of Members' new ICT equipment

The Head of Corporate Services confirmed that paperless billing for council tax and business rates would be ready to roll out by the end of the month. He clarified that the main driver behind the new Members' ICT equipment was to ensure that IT could offer the same level of support to all Members; however, there may be a natural reduction in paper if some Members chose to stop receiving hard copies now they were able to access papers electronically through their tablets. The Deputy Chief Executive agreed that it was for individual Members to decide whether they wished to continue to receive hard copies of papers and there was no reason that could not be championed informally through a pilot group of Members and Officers. Notwithstanding this, there would be a number of implications of moving towards paperless meetings - both positive and negative - so it would be necessary to put together a business case and bring it back to the relevant Committee for consideration.

P68 – Objective 3 – Action e)  
Review our corporate website – A Member raised concern that the Wi-Fi in certain parts of the Public Services Centre was still very slow and he questioned whether this was being addressed.

The Head of Corporate Services confirmed that IT was looking into this and hoped to have a solution in place by the end of the calendar year.

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

P70 – KPI 21 – Average number of days to process new benefits claims – A Member noted that performance had improved considerably due to new ways of working.

The Chair extended his thanks to the Benefits team for their hard work on behalf of the Committee which was very impressed with their achievements.

Page No. 72 - KPI 27 – Average number of sick days per full time equivalent – A Member noted that the financial figures at Page No. 40, Paragraph 4.1 of the report showed substantial

The Deputy Chief Executive stressed the Council's workforce was extremely valued and the organisation did everything it could to minimise long and short term absence - for instance, running 'Nibblets' sessions for staff on a regular basis which covered issues such as mental health and stress awareness - and

savings against employees and he felt there could be a link with the increase in staff sickness due to the amount of pressure on employees.

Officers were constantly looking for measures to support staff returning from sickness. Notwithstanding this, it was not a clear picture and there were currently some long term absences that had an impact on the overall figures. With regard to the deficit balance on employees, Members were advised that the reviews of the Community Services and Tourism sections had not yet been completed so some of this money would be for staff in those areas. He explained that there were also opportunities for Heads of Service to look at restructuring in order to do things in a different way to better serve the needs of their communities and the business so there could be delays in recruiting to vacant posts. He indicated that the Corporate Management Team was very supportive of requests to fill posts when they were put forward by the Heads of Service. In response to a query as to the present number of vacancies, the Deputy Chief Executive advised that, as a small authority, the Council could not afford to have numerous vacancies so there were very few currently.

Page No. 73 – KPI 29 – Residual household waste collected per property in kgs – A Member noted that residual waste was slightly higher than it had been in previous years and questioned what steps were being taken to address this.

The Head of Community Services explained that there had been an issue with the quality of recyclate at the end of 2018/19 and during quarter one of 2019/20 and, combined with a change in the processes at the Materials Recovery Facility in Avonmouth, this had resulted in more waste being rejected which had impacted on residual waste levels. He advised that Ubico had been instructed to be more stringent when checking bins and it was intended to launch an educational campaign later in the year. In response to a query regarding repeat offenders, Members were informed that these bins would be stickered to explain why they had not been emptied which tended to resolve the problem; however, if this did continue following written communication, their bins would not be collected.

- 40.5 Turning to the financial information, the Head of Finance and Asset Management indicated that the budget summary for quarter one showed a £71,190 deficit against the profiled budget which was unusual for the Council. The table at Page No. 40, Paragraph 4.1 of the report highlighted the position for the main expenditure types. Two areas had generated a surplus: employees, which was responsible for the majority of savings, and transport, where a smaller saving had been made due to the impact of the car pool pilot. The deficits reported in relation to supplies and services, and to a large extent on payments to third parties, were in relation to expenditure incurred in delivering the European Parliamentary Elections. Members were advised that the Council received a grant to cover the cost of the elections which was shown as an income surplus within Democratic Services; overall the

Democratic Services account was in balance. In terms of other areas contributing to the deficit for payments to third parties, there was a small overspend on additional grounds maintenance resources for Ubico. Assurance was provided that there was a contingency reserve to cover these costs should the contract be in deficit at year end. In addition, the allocation of depot-related costs had been reviewed following increased use by Tewkesbury Borough Council as a result of service changes in 2017 which had led to an increase in vehicles and staff at the site. As such, the cost apportionment to Tewkesbury Borough Council had been increased by £50,000, which was considered to be a fair reflection of usage of the site, and this would now be reviewed annually. The overspend on transfer payments related to housing benefit claimant payment and the recovery of expenditure from the government. It was noted that the Housing Benefit team had identified two significant overpayments as a result of claimant error which dated back several years. The Council only received government subsidy of 40% where claimant error was identified which meant that a loss was being predicted on the budgeted provision; however, the Council was entitled to 100% of the debt if it could be recovered from the claimant, therefore, the deficit could be eradicated in the long run. Members were advised that income was also showing a small deficit at the end of the quarter although Democratic Services had received additional grant for the European Parliamentary Elections, as previously mentioned, and garden waste income was up on the annual target. There was an £80,000 deficit in relation to planning income but it was expected this would be back on track by the end of the financial year. Appendix 2 to the report showed the summary position for each Head of Service. There was a significant budget deficit being shown on investment properties due to not being able to secure another commercial opportunity as expected but that had been offset through savings made on treasury activities. Whilst there was a net deficit, the situation was improving and the financial position was being closely monitored so that corrective action could be taken at the appropriate point in time, if necessary. Appendix 3 to the report showed the capital budget position as at quarter one which was currently showing an underspend as a result of the Council being unable to secure a commercial investment acquisition. Appendix 4 to the report provided a summary of the current usage of available reserves which showed a significant surplus of £104,000 against reserves of £8M; however, this was for the long term benefit of the Council rather than for short term spending and it was expected that the balance would be spent in the future.

- 40.6 A Member noted that, as well as employees, substantial savings were being made on interest costs which was concerning as this was something which was out of the Council's control and he understood that rates were expected to increase in future. The Head of Finance and Asset Management indicated that the forecasts the Council had received from its advisors were that interest rates would remain at a similar level, or reduce further over the coming months, and the medium term projection was for a very low rate which also applied to borrowing. There were ways the Council could borrow cheaply but this did impact on the treasury balance which informed the Medium Term Financial Plan so consideration was given to different ways to invest and borrow in order to deal with outside influences.
- 40.7 A Member noted that the negotiations were being progressed in terms of securing a commercial investment and queried whether this meant the current deficit would be recouped. The Head of Finance and Asset Management explained that although another property had passed the diligence test as set out in the report, unfortunately, this purchase had fallen through as the vendor had withdrawn the property from sale; however, other options had come forward recently and these were beginning to be explored. In response to a query regarding the Ubico overspend, Members were advised that this was due to a number of factors including staff sickness and hire of vehicles as well as the extra resources for grounds maintenance to avoid the issues that had been experienced with grass cutting during the previous year. A Member questioned whether enforcement

agencies were used to recover debts in relation to housing benefit and the Head of Finance and Asset Management confirmed that the Council used a variety of means to recover debts; whilst a lot was done in-house by the Revenues and Benefits team, Bristol and Sutor were also used to recover debts where possible. In response to a query regarding the Chancellor's announcement on the settlement for local authorities, the Head of Finance and Asset Management indicated that there would be significant investment in social care but the main impact for district authorities would be in respect of the 13% increase for funding to address homelessness; notwithstanding this, it would be necessary to wait for the full settlement to understand the individual figures.

40.8 Having considered the information provided, it was

**RESOLVED** That the performance management information for quarter one of 2019/20 be **NOTED**.

#### **OS.41 REVIEW OF WATER SUPPLY OUTAGE MONITORING REPORT**

41.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Head of Community Services, circulated at Pages No. 79-89, which provided an update on progress against the action plan arising from the Scrutiny Review of Water Supply Outage. Members were asked to consider the report and to determine whether any further action or reports were required on this matter.

41.2 The Head of Community Services explained that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had conducted a review of the significant water supply outage that had affected the borough in December 2017 which had resulted in a number of recommendations contained within an action plan. The Committee had received a progress update at its meeting in March 2019 where there were six actions outstanding, in progress or complete and a further update had been requested in six months' time. It was noted that the outstanding actions had now all been completed with the exception of the work to the pipes on the Severn Ham which was not due to finish until August 2020. Severn Trent Water had confirmed that operatives would be on site in Spring 2020 with the intention of having the new pipes in place by the target date and had offered to provide a verbal update to the Committee once all works were completed, should Members wish. It was also noted that a business resilience event was being planned for later in the year - although the date had changed from 13 November as stated in the report and was now likely to be 19 November - which would be hosted at the Public Services Centre and would focus on food businesses and producers, including the agricultural sector, who had been particularly impacted by the water outage.

41.3 A Member drew attention to Page No. 87, Recommendation 16 – Work with Town and Parish Councils to develop emergency plans – and raised concern that this was marked as complete, with a target date of April 2019, but the commentary stated that the work was due to be completed over the next 12-18 months. The Head of Community Services gave assurance that a programme had been drawn up to work with individual Town and Parish Councils in relation to their emergency plans but this would extend beyond 2019 so, although the action was marked as complete, work would be ongoing. The Chair indicated that, as there was only one action outstanding which was not due to complete until mid-2020, he felt it would be appropriate to close down the review and for the Committee to receive a presentation from Severn Trent Water once it had finished its work on the Severn Ham. It was subsequently

**RESOLVED**

1. That the progress against the action plan arising from the Scrutiny Review of Water Supply Outage be **NOTED**.
2. That closure of the review be **APPROVED** and that the invitation from Severn Trent Water to give a presentation to the

Committee once all works on the Severn Ham had been completed be accepted.

## **OS.42 HEALINGS MILL**

- 42.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Head of Development Services, circulated at Pages No. 90-93, which gave an update on progress being made to secure a suitable development scheme for Healings Mill. Members were asked to consider the report and to note that further reports would be submitted should there be any significant developments of which Members needed to be advised.
- 42.2 The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the Tewkesbury Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which was a joint venture between Tewkesbury Borough and Tewkesbury Town Councils, had now been completed and signed-off. The SPD included direct reference to Healings Mill being a priority in the regeneration proposals which was a step in the right direction and showed the Borough Council's desire to continue to push the boundaries of what it could influence; however, this influence was limited and there was a reliance on developers and agents bringing forward their own solutions. The Environment Agency had previously expressed concern about any regeneration on the site as it was known to flood but, following discussions, a joint letter of support in principle had been produced for developers who were looking to bring forward a scheme. This information was commercially sensitive but he confirmed that conversations were ongoing. He went on to advise that, following an unsuccessful bid for High Street Funding earlier in the year, the Council had submitted a bid for High Street Heritage Funding, which was thought to be more relevant to Tewkesbury, and the Head of Development Services was working closely with Historic England to shape that. The Council viewed the redevelopment of Healings Mill as part of the wider regeneration of the town and this would feed into the work on Spring Gardens and Oldbury Road so, although the Council had no direct influence over the project, Members could be assured that conversations were taking place and it was proposed that a further update be provided once information was available to share with the Committee.
- 42.3 In response to a query regarding the timescales for the High Street Heritage Funding bid, the Deputy Chief Executive indicated that he would report back to Members outside of the meeting. A Member went on to express the view that the regeneration of Healings Mill was a really important issue for Tewkesbury town and had been ongoing for many years. As such, he would be reluctant to effectively take this off the agenda and suggested that a further report be provided in three months' time so that Members could keep abreast of the situation. In response, the Deputy Chief Executive advised that the Committee needed to be confident that Officers were continuing to have conversations and would provide an update as soon as there was meaningful information that could be shared publicly rather than continuing to include it as an item on future meeting agendas when there was nothing further to report. If any Member wished to be updated in the interim, he would be more than happy to speak to them informally. The Member appreciated the work Officers had been doing but he was still uncomfortable with removing this from the Committee Work Programme and would prefer an update in three months. The Head of Corporate Services reminded Members that the regeneration of Healings Mill was an action in the performance tracker and therefore would still be reported to the Committee on a quarterly basis as part of the performance report so it would not be removed from the agenda completely.

42.4 The Chair indicated that the recommendation on the papers was for further reports to be submitted should there be any significant developments of which Members needed to be advised and, upon being put to the vote, it was

- RESOLVED**
1. That the update on progress being made to secure a suitable development scheme for Healings Mill be **NOTED**.
  2. That it be **AGREED** that further reports be submitted to the Committee should there be any significant developments of which Members needed to be advised.

### **OS.43 SUMMARY OF FORMAL COMPLAINTS 2018/19**

43.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 94-108, provided a summary of formal complaints received in 2018/19. Members were asked to consider the annual update to gain assurance that complaints were managed effectively and to identify any further action required.

43.2 Members were advised that 192 formal complaints had been received within the year, of which 175 related to Council services and 99 of those were in respect of the Council's waste and recycling service which was one of the highest profile services. It was noted that 55% of complaints had been upheld i.e. the Council had agreed they were justified, and 22% were partially justified. The Council aimed to respond to complaints within 20 working days and had achieved 93% against that target in 2018/19. If complainants were unhappy with the response to a complaint, it was referred to an independent Head of Service for investigation. A breakdown by service area, nature of complaint and remedy was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. In comparison to previous years, whilst the number of complaints was slightly higher this was not significant, fewer appeals had been upheld and the response time had remained consistent. Tewkesbury Borough Council performed well compared to other local authorities and remained in the top quartile nationally. Quarter one of 2018/19 had seen a spike in the number of complaints which reflected the increase in grass cutting complaints which Members would be well aware of. This had resulted in the introduction of a Grass Cutting Improvement Plan and it was pleasing to note that only one complaint had been received in relation to grass cutting in 2019/20 so this had made an impact. Once they had reached the end of the Council's complaints process, members of the public also had the option to complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the annual review letter setting out the number of complaints and enquiries received and the decisions made during 2018/19 was attached at Appendix 2 to the report. It was noted that the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman had received six complaints relating to Tewkesbury Borough Council but only one had been upheld. As the complaints framework had been in place for three years it was now due to be reviewed and it was intended to work with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to undertake this review over the coming months.

43.3 A Member queried how the majority of complaints were reported and was informed that they were mainly received online via the 'Report It' system. In response to a query regarding whether people were able to complain verbally, the Corporate Services Manager explained that it was very rare for anyone to request to make a verbal complaint and people were encouraged to make their complaint online or by email as it was important to have a written record in the complainants' own words; however, she stressed that, if someone was unable to use one of the electronic

channels, the team would always support them to ensure they were able to make a complaint. A Member indicated that several residents in his Ward found it difficult to use the 'Report It' system and he questioned if it was possible to produce a simple user guide; for instance, he suggested a short 'You Tube' style video might be helpful. The Corporate Services Manager stressed that the majority of communication methods used were very simple and self-explanatory but she would be happy to consider what additional guidance could be produced in relation to 'Report It' and she undertook to speak to the company that provided the Council's video support within the next month.

43.4 A Member questioned whether comments and concerns were taken into consideration as this could help to prevent formal complaints and the Corporate Services Manager advised that these were generally dealt within the relevant service; however, part of the review would be to look at lessons learnt, for instance, she reiterated that the action taken in response to the grass cutting complaints had made a significant difference. The Head of Corporate Services went on to indicate that the six month Internal Audit Plan for October 2019 to March 2020 allocated a number of days for the Internal Audit team to look at complaints in order to give assurance that service improvements were being made as a result of the complaints that were received.

43.5 A Member drew attention to the breakdown of complaints by remedy at Page No. 102 and noted that financial compensation had increased from one in 2016/17 and 2017/18 to seven in 2018/19. The Corporate Services Manager advised that six of these incidents had related to repeat missed collections of garden waste bins and the final one was due to a planning pre-application not being considered in time where a deduction had been made from the cost of the overall planning fee. The total amount of financial compensation awarded in 2018/19 was £87 so none of the compensatory amounts had been significant.

43.6 It was

**RESOLVED** That the summary of formal complaints 2018/19 be **NOTED**.

#### **OS.44 GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE**

44.1 Members received an update from the Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee on matters discussed at the last meeting held on 4 September 2019.

44.2 The Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee advised that the main aims of the meeting were to gain experience of the Gloucester Growth Hub; to gain an understanding of the Gloucestershire First Local Enterprise Partnership (GFirst LEP); to consider a report on the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS); to receive a report from the Strategic Adviser (Communities and Infrastructure); and to review the Committee's work plan. He indicated that the meeting had commenced with a visit to the Growth Hub situated in the Business School of the University of Gloucestershire's Oxstalls Campus in Gloucester – this was his first visit and he had been very impressed. A presentation was then given by the Chief Executive of GFirst LEP. There were 38 LEPs around the country; the GFirst LEP had started in 2011 and was responsible for driving and arranging funding for many projects. The presentation had provided an overview of several large projects that had been completed in 2018 including a state of the art education and training facility at Gloucester College in the Forest of Dean; opening up a site for development of a hangar at Gloucestershire Airport which had attracted £5M private investment and created 30 jobs which had acted as a catalyst for attracting a further £3.8M funding and 80 additional jobs; a new transport hub for Gloucester; and the Gloucester Growth Hub. The LEPs five key strategic areas were housing; employment land; mis-match skills i.e. helping ensure training

establishments provided the skills businesses needed; growing the whole county; and demographics e.g. attracting more young people to the county. The LEP had 10 business groupings: economy and tourism; retail and the High Street; energy; cyber-tech; construction and infrastructure; business and professional services; banking and finance; business membership group; agricultural, food and rural; and advanced manufacturing and engineering. It had an education team that aimed to create sustainable links between schools and businesses; their programmes reached thousands of young people each year and prepared children across Gloucestershire for a future in business. The LEP delivered mentorships, practice interviews, workplace visits, work simulations, business breakfasts, skills days and careers workshops. At the end of the presentation a GFirst LEP Assurance Framework flowchart had been introduced which provided an overview of the capital projects selection and funding process. An action arising from the presentation was to put in place a framework which complemented the existing Assurance Framework in order to assist with scrutiny.

- 44.3 A further presentation had been given around the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) which had five priorities: cyber/digital; agri-tech; climate change; opportunity i.e. the City/Region concept; and flexible work time. A report had also been received from the Strategic Adviser (Communities and Infrastructure) on the links that existed between the environment and economic growth which had included updates on highways, strategic infrastructure, community infrastructure and libraries. It was agreed that the reports would be more structured and populated in future to allow for effective scrutiny. The final item of business was agreement of the Committee's work plan.
- 44.4 A Member questioned what input Tewkesbury Borough Council had into the work plan and how it could tap into funding and investment such as the £90M grant for agri-tech. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee indicated that he also Chaired the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee and he clarified that this was the role of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee which was a statutory Committee made up of representatives from each of the local authorities in the county to co-ordinate their efforts in support of the Strategic Economic Plan and the growth deal. The Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee was responsible for reviewing decisions made by the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee. The Committee had noted on a number of occasions that the GFirst LEP was not being scrutinised and the presentation in September was the first stage of trying to improve that scrutiny; similarly, the report from the Strategic Adviser (Communities and Infrastructure) was an attempt to bring the link between the environment and economy to the fore and to ensure that work was also being properly scrutinised. Should Members wish to feedback on either of these issues, this should be done via the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive. He suggested that it might be helpful for the GFirst LEP to give a presentation at a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A Member queried whether it would be more appropriate to hold a presentation for all Councillors and the Deputy Chief Executive explained that a Member briefing had already taken place recently so his view was that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may have more directly relevant questions, particularly in relation to the Local Industrial Strategy and how that worked.
- 44.5 A Member questioned whether the Gloucester Growth Hub could be used by anyone or whether it was focused on assisting university students, given that it was based on the Oxstalls Campus. In response, the Deputy Chief Executive explained that the Growth Hub within the Public Services Centre was due to a £400,000 contribution from the GFirst LEP and it provided business support for anyone who wanted it, for instance, assistance with tapping into available funding opportunities. The Gloucester Growth Hub operated on the same basis. He felt it might be useful to incorporate a section on the Growth Hub into the presentation from GFirst LEP

and it was agreed this should be included in the Committee's Work Programme.

44.6 The Chair thanked the Council's representative for his update, which had been circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting, and it was subsequently

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee Update be **NOTED**.
2. That a joint presentation on the Growth Hub and the GFirst LEP be brought to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**OS.45 GLOUCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

45.1 Members received an update from the Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) on matters discussed at the joint meeting with the Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee on 30 July 2019.

45.2 The Council's representative on the HOSC explained that the main topic of discussion at the previous meeting of the HOSC had been in relation to the merge of Gloucestershire Care Services with the 2gether Trust and the joint meeting on 30 July 2019 had been arranged to look at the workforce plan and how implementation would affect staff. Members had considered recruitment initiatives and it had been noted there was a national shortage of learning disability nurses so consideration was being given to alternatives in adult social care such as apprenticeships, traineeships or joining a sector routeway. Specific reference had been made to the 'Proud to Care' scheme which was being promoted to raise the profile of the caring sector. It had been emphasised that staff were the major asset to any service and the importance of their health and wellbeing was recognised. She explained that retention of staff was a significant problem with 55% of qualified nurses starting their careers with the NHS but then moving away very quickly. It was also noted that the 'Our Gloucestershire' leadership programme had been commissioned by the Gloucestershire NHS Strategic Transformation Partnership. The programme consisted of four bodies - Gloucestershire Hospital Foundation Trust; 2gether NHS Foundation Trust; Gloucestershire Care Services; and Gloucestershire County Council – and aimed to support leaders to work across all four. The final item of business was in relation to Brexit with particular focus on staff without a British passport who were being asked to have their work status ratified; EU staff were being encouraged to have a "settled" status.

45.3 The Council's representative went on to explain that a HOSC workshop had been held on 4 September 2019 to give an opportunity to learn more about the effects of merging the two trusts and the care for patients; however, this had been very poorly attended which was disappointing given that the request had come from Members. Plans for the merger had first been announced in September 2017 and the new organisation would be formed by 1 October 2019. Benefits to the service user would include improved parity of care, for example, people suffering from bi-polar disorder were likely to die 15-20 years earlier on average largely due to the difficulty in accessing services; an increased understanding of co-morbidity; and increased focus on community health, wellbeing and prevention services. Examples of some of the Trusts' work were shared to illustrate the benefits of the new merged service and presentations were given by the four teams which comprised the Intensive

Health Outreach Team: the Perinatal Team (for people with mental health issues around pregnancy) which was working more jointly with midwives and health visitors to establish better communication networks; the Integrated Dementia Team – where all professionals were now co-located to work more proactively with carers and people with dementia to avoid emergency admissions to the Hospitals Trust; and the Rapid Response Team – Integrated Mental Health and Physical Health Services – which aimed to respond within four hours and provide an advance level of treatment at home.

- 45.4 A Member queried whether nurses leaving the NHS tended to come back as agency workers and the Council's representative indicated that was the case with many choosing to retire, take their pension and then go back as an agency worker. The Chair thanked the Council's representative for her update, which had been circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting, and it was subsequently

**RESOLVED** That the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Update be **NOTED**.

The meeting closed at 7:00 pm