

21 September 2020

<b>Committee</b>	Council
<b>Date</b>	Tuesday, 29 September 2020
<b>Time of Meeting</b>	6:30 pm

This is a remote meeting in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Members of the public will be able to view this meeting whilst it is in session by clicking on the link that will be available on the [Agenda publication](#) page immediately prior to the commencement of the meeting.

## Agenda

### 1. ANNOUNCEMENTS

To receive any announcements from the Chair of the Meeting and/or the Chief Executive.

### 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

### 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Pursuant to the adoption by the Council on 26 June 2012 of the Tewkesbury Borough Council Code of Conduct, effective from 1 July 2012, as set out in Minute No. CL.34, Members are invited to declare any interest they may have in the business set out on the Agenda to which the approved Code applies.

### 4. MINUTES

1 - 14

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2020.



## 5. ITEMS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

- a) To receive any questions, deputations or petitions submitted under Council Rule of Procedure.12.

*(The deadline for public participation submissions for this meeting is 23 September 2020).*

- b) To receive any petitions submitted under the Council's Petitions Scheme.

## 6. MEMBER QUESTIONS PROPERLY SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

To receive any questions submitted under Rule of Procedure 13. Any items received will be circulated on 29 September 2020.

*(Any questions must be submitted in writing to Democratic Services by, not later than, 10.00am on the working day immediately preceding the date of the meeting).*

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Council is asked to consider and determine recommendations of a policy nature arising from the Executive Committee as follows:-

### (a) Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Discounts 2021/22

15 - 20

At its meeting on 26 August 2020 the Executive Committee considered the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Discounts for 2021/22 and **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:**

1. That the default Council Tax Reduction Scheme be **ADOPTED** effective from 1 April 2021 with a minor revision to the national working age regulations to allow for a de minimis tolerance for income changes.
2. That authority be delegated to the Head of Finance and Asset Management, in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance and Asset Management, to agree the uprating of the working age regulations incorporated into the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme in line with those announced by the Department for Work and Pensions.
3. That the following Council Tax discounts be **ADOPTED** effective from 1 April 2021:
  - The discount for unoccupied and substantially unfurnished properties is 25% for a maximum period of six months.
  - The discount for properties which are vacant and require major repair work to render them habitable is 25% for a maximum period of 12 months.
  - The discount for unoccupied furnished properties (second homes) is zero.

- An empty homes premium of an additional 100% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for at least two years, but less than five years.
- An empty homes premium of an additional 200% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for at least five years, but less than ten years.
- An empty homes premium of an additional 300% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for at least ten years.

**8. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT** 21 - 53

To receive the annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**9. AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20** 54 - 64

To receive a report from the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee.

*Any amendments made by the Audit and Governance Committee will be updated at the meeting.*

**10. NOTICES OF MOTION**

**(a) Local Electricity Bill**

Councillor Cody will propose and Councillor Carter will second:

Power for People is a campaign for more local, clean energy generation that would benefit local communities.

They are a not-for-profit organisation campaigning for the Local Electricity Bill – that they authored – to become law. The Bill is currently supported by a cross-party group of over 200 MPs including Tewkesbury's own MP Laurence Robertson.

The Bill aims to solve the current problem whereby local renewable energy generators, such as community energy groups, are unable to sell energy that they generate to local people. This is because of the huge setup and running costs involved in doing so.

The Bill would overcome this problem by establishing a Right to Local Supply that would make the costs of selling locally generated clean energy proportionate to the scale of the operation. This would benefit the existing community energy groups across the country and, even more excitingly, create the opportunity for huge growth in such groups and other local clean energy providers.

If the Bill became law it would be excellent news for public authorities that wished to set up their own energy companies to sell locally generated renewable energy to local people, as the set up and running costs involved would be proportionate and thus a fraction of what they are now. The revenues received by such authorities could be ploughed back into local emissions reduction schemes and other

local services and facilities.

A full copy of the Bill and the names of the 200+ MPs supporting it can be viewed via the following link

<https://powerforpeople.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Local-Electricity-Bill.pdf>

A copy has also been emailed to all Members of the Council

In light of the above, the Council is asked to:

1. sign up to the campaign [www.powerforpeople.org.uk/sign-up](http://www.powerforpeople.org.uk/sign-up) and
2. adopt the resolution set out below:

Tewkesbury Borough Council:

- (i) acknowledges that it has made efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable energy;
- (ii) recognises that Councils can play a central role in creating sustainable communities, particularly through the provision of locally generated renewable electricity;
- (iii) further recognises that:
  - a) very large financial setup and running costs involved in selling locally generated renewable electricity to local customers result in it being impossible for local renewable electricity generators to do so,
  - b) making these financial costs proportionate to the scale of a renewable electricity supplier's operation would create significant opportunities for Councils and Community Groups to be providers of locally generated renewable electricity directly to local people, businesses and organisations, and
  - c) revenues received by Councils that became local renewable electricity providers could be used to help fund local greenhouse gas emissions reduction measures and to help improve local services and facilities;
- (iv) in view of the above, the Council supports the Local Electricity Bill, currently supported by a cross-party group of more than 200 MPs, and which, if made law, would make the setup and running costs of selling renewable electricity to local customers proportionate by establishing a Right to Local Supply and will:
  - inform the local media of this decision,
  - write to local MPs, asking them to support the Bill, and
  - write to the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, Power for People, (at 8 Delancey Passage, Camden, London NW1 7NN or [info@powerforpeople.org.uk](mailto:info@powerforpeople.org.uk)) expressing its support.

**(b) Support for Increased Provision for Cyclists within Tewkesbury Borough**

Councillor Munro will propose and Councillor Stanley will second:

Cycling is an important component in plans to reduce traffic, improve air quality, keep our residents healthy and reduce our carbon emissions in the fight against climate change. The pandemic has shown that there is an appetite for cycling where this is safe and enjoyable, and it is important to build on this interest and continue to encourage those who do not usually cycle. The importance of cycling has been recognised by central government who are keen to develop cycle networks.

Similarly the Council has already included a commitment in its COVID-19 Corporate Recovery Plan to “build on our communities’ connections with green space, walking and cycling to encourage healthy, sustainable living and an appreciation of biodiversity”, and to include in our garden communities improved transport links and green infrastructure, including cycling routes.

Whilst recognising that cycling is primarily within the remit of Gloucestershire County Council, this Council is asked to do whatever it can to support safe cycling and the County Council in its efforts to develop a cycling network in our County. The County Council is proposing a cycle path to link Bishop’s Cleeve to Cheltenham, and Churchdown to Cheltenham which has the potential link to routes through to Tewkesbury, Ashchurch and the new Garden Town. Also, not to forget that small local journeys to our local shops, businesses and schools will reduce short journeys taken by car and it is short journeys that most people start to enjoy before moving to more ambitious cycle rides.

In view of the above it is a matter of concern that no work on the cycleway between Bishop’s Cleeve and Gotherington, which was agreed under a Section 106 Agreement to be built and paid for by developers, has commenced. The current position is that, while a date was given to start in April 2020, this was cancelled due to the pandemic and the latest information from the County Council is that the work is still with the highways legal team. This Council is asked to show its determination to get this cycle path built and demonstrate its commitment to improving cycle routes in our Borough.

Accordingly, the Council is asked to

- Make a public statement that it supports initiatives to increase the take up of cycling and will ensure that, in all planning applications for major developments, provision will be made for cycle paths for both local and longer journeys.
- Issue a statement of support to the County Council supporting its initiatives to develop a cycle network and its work to develop a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for Tewkesbury, including a requirement that funding for schemes is identified.

- Ask the County Council to prioritise the works of the highways legal team to ensure that the Bishop's Cleeve to Gotherington cycleway is not delayed further, with a request for work to start on building the cycleway by the end of the current financial year.

**(c) Transparency and Openness of Tewkesbury Borough Council Proceedings**

Councillor Stanley will propose and Councillor Munro will second:

This Motion is in line with our Council Value to 'Put Customers First' to listen, treat our residents fairly and continuously improve our culture.

Members of the public have the opportunity to ask questions at full Council but do not currently have the right to ask any supplementary questions. This is not in line with other Gloucestershire Councils including Cheltenham, Cotswolds, Stroud and Gloucestershire County Council who all allow members of the public the right to ask a supplementary question following on from the replies they receive.

In terms of Minutes of Council meetings, the current practice at Tewkesbury Borough Council is for the Minutes of the previous full Council meeting to be published with the Agenda for the next meeting. Accordingly, the minutes for the last full Council on 28 July are not available on the Council website until seven working days before the next meeting. The same practice is followed for all other Committee meetings with the exception of the Executive Committee where a Decision Notice is published within three working days of the meeting.

Officers are fully supported by Members for their work to deliver accurate minutes of meetings and are thanked for their hard work in supporting Borough Councillors and the functions of the Council. This Motion is a request to change process at Tewkesbury Borough Council to improve openness and transparency of the Council's proceedings.

Scrutiny is an essential part of the democratic process and therefore as many of the Council's decisions should be made available to the public as soon as possible after meetings to aid transparency and trust in Council decision-making. As the Council and Executive are the main decision-makers, it is proposed that a Decision Notice is published for full Council along the lines as already exists for the Executive Committee. It is understood that this is achievable without the need for additional resources.

Accordingly, the Council is asked to

1. Amend the scheme of Public Participation to allow members of the public the right to ask supplementary questions arising from the answers to their original questions, and
2. Adopt the same practice that is followed for the Executive Committee and publish a Decision Notice for full Council within three working days of the meeting.

**(d) Invitation to Gloucestershire Hospital NHS Foundation Trust to Present its Latest Proposals for Cheltenham A&E**

Councillor Stanley will propose and Councillor Jordan will second:

The Gloucestershire Health Overview Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) meeting on 15 September 2020 of the Gloucestershire Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, proposed to extend the three month closure of Cheltenham's Type 1 A&E Department for a further six months.

As a Council, the work that the NHS Trust has undertaken is very much appreciated and whilst the original three month closure was understood to help keep Cheltenham General 'COVID Free' during the height of the COVID transmission, in order that elective surgery could be resumed, the proposed extension requires further explanation.

In particular, the Council is concerned about the proposed six month extension both in terms of the A&E at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital having the capacity to cope with all A&E patients from the whole County together with the capacity of Emergency Ambulance services and that the additional six month extension could become a long term or permanent change.

The Council has previously received presentations from the Clinical Commissioning Group in April and October 2019.

In the light of the proposed extension of the closure of Cheltenham A&E the Council is asked to invite the Clinical Commissioning Group to a further all Member event to present their latest proposals; the detailed arrangements for which would be undertaken by Democratic Services.

**Recording of Meetings**

In accordance with the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, please be aware that the proceedings of this meeting may be recorded.

**Sara J Freckleton  
Borough Solicitor**

## TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Council held remotely on Tuesday, 28 July 2020  
commencing at 6:30 pm**

### **Present:**

The Worshipful the Mayor  
Deputy Mayor

Councillor G F Blackwell  
Councillor A S Reece

### **and Councillors:**

C L J Carter, C M Cody, M Dean, M A Gore, D W Gray, M L Jordan, E J MacTiernan, H C McLain, H S Munro, J W Murphy, C Reid, J K Smith, R J G Smith, V D Smith, C Softley, P D Surman, M G Sztymiak, S Thomson, R J E Vines, M J Williams and P N Workman

### **CL.10 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- 10.1 The Mayor advised that the meeting was being held under the emergency provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 and, specifically, The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020. The meeting was being broadcast live via the internet, it was not being recorded by the Council but, under the usual transparency rules, it may be being recorded by others.

### **CL.11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

- 11.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P E Smith and S A T Stevens.

### **CL.12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- 12.1 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.
- 12.2 There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

### **CL.13 MINUTES**

- 13.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2020, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record.

### **CL.14 ITEMS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

- 14.1 There were no items from members of the public.

**CL.15 MEMBER QUESTIONS PROPERLY SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES**

15.1 There were no Member questions on this occasion.

**CL.16 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE****Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Audit and Action Plan**

- 16.1 At its meeting on 8 July 2020, the Executive Committee had considered the climate change and carbon reduction audit and action plan and recommended to Council that it be agreed as having established the Council's current position and carbon baseline; and that agreement be given for detailed work and feasibility studies to commence in relation to the carbon reduction options set out in the action plan.
- 16.2 The report which was considered by the Executive Committee had been circulated with the Agenda for the current meeting at Pages No. 8-93.
- 16.3 The Chair of the Executive Committee proposed the recommendation and felt it was important to note that the action plan had come forward as a result of proposals agreed by the Council in October. The Climate Change and Flood Risk Management Group had been asked to take the work forward and, thanks to that Group, the action plan was an excellent document which had been approved by the Executive Committee for recommendation to Council. The recommendation was seconded by the Vice-Chair who felt it was a concise and forward-thinking action plan.
- 16.4 A Member thanked all who had worked on the report and was pleased with the suggested substantial savings – both in terms of carbon and financing - and felt this showed that 'green' investments could be beneficial in terms of the environment and business. Notwithstanding this, the original motion had first been introduced 12-months ago and he was concerned with the 10-year timescale given how long it had taken to get to this point, particularly when the motion only focussed on the Council's own buildings. He noted that climate change was an extremely important issue with consequences that would affect the whole world, so everyone had to play their part. Given the flooding issues faced across Tewkesbury Borough, he felt that all Members had a vested interest in improving the effects of climate change and he indicated that, whilst the action plan was a good document, he was concerned about the short and medium-term phasing and the fact that savings needed to be achieved in as short a timeframe as possible. For that reason, he proposed an amendment that the length of the medium-term be shortened to five years instead of seven years with the intention of completing those actions by 2025. In seconding the amendment, a Member reiterated the concerns and felt strongly that the climate change emergency needed to be urgently addressed. Members were advised that safe carbon levels were below 350 parts per million but sustainable practices had to be introduced to get down to that level – as at 26 July 2020 the carbon level was 413 parts per million so there was a long way to go. The Motion only covered Tewkesbury Borough Council owned buildings and, if left with the timetable of 2030, the Council would only have 20 years to ensure the rest of the borough met the government target in 2050. As the action plan had already taken a year to get to this point, the Member was concerned this would be an impossible task. She felt that phase one should be the easy part and if that was addressed quicker more time would be available to concentrate on phase 2. Members were all in this together and the Council must act as quickly as possible to address climate change, particularly now that sustainability was a key priority in the Council Plan.

16.5 The view was expressed by some Members that experts had been employed to undertake the audit and action plan work and it made sense to follow their advice. In addition, the plan had been agreed by both the Climate Change and Flood Risk Management Group and the Executive Committee so had been through the Council's due process. A Member indicated that the experts had not yet applied timescales to the actions so it would be premature to consider an amendment at this stage. Members were advised that Gloucestershire County Council had undertaken to achieve carbon zero across the county by 2050 which would obviously also be of benefit to Tewkesbury Borough. It was noted that the report proposed phased implementation of the actions which, for the medium term, would be from 24 months to seven years meaning they could be achieved within five years because there was already flexibility in the plan. It was noted that this was just the beginning of the plan and it did not make sense to make commitments at this stage that either would not be met or would not be affordable. It was also felt that the amendment could serve to delay things by shortening the medium term so some things that could have been achieved within seven years would instead be put into the longer term meaning they could take 10 years. There were some actions that could be taken immediately to make a difference, such as turning the heating in the Council Offices down, but there were questions about whether the Council could afford to do everything in a quicker timescale. The report before the Council had been carefully examined through the process and the report itself referenced the significant progress Tewkesbury Borough Council had already made in certain areas. Other Members expressed the view that the Council had the opportunity to do something positive in how it dealt with sustainability and climate change and that the amendment proposed was a constructive way to do that. They could not understand why Tewkesbury Borough Council would not wish to set a challenging target and lead by example on this issue. In supporting the amendment, a Member indicated that the first and foremost thing to remember was that the Council had acknowledged this was an emergency and by implication was urgent. The amendment was modest, sensible and achievable and made environmental and financial sense. The original Motion to declare a climate emergency had been put forward a year ago but then had been considered by Members and 'watered down' until it came back to Council in October; the longer the situation remained unaddressed the more it would cost both environmentally and financially. Actions such as putting photovoltaic panels on Council buildings would also provide jobs which was exactly what the country needed now. It was considered by many that the Council's funds were safer in climate action than in commercial property even though the returns were longer. It was an emergency and there was urgency so to bring the timescales forward from seven to five years was a bold but necessary move.

16.6 In summing up, the proposer of the amendment advised that he had heard a number of spurious arguments against reducing the medium term timescale but he believed it could be achieved for the benefit of the residents of the Borough and that the climate emergency had to be addressed sooner rather than later or the consequences could be dire. A recorded vote was requested and, upon receiving the appropriate level of support, voting was recorded as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstain</b>	<b>Absent</b>
C L J Carter	R A Bird	J H Evetts	P E Smith
C M Cody	G F Blackwell		C Softley
L A Gerrard	G J Bocking		S A T Stevens

D J Harwood	K J Cromwell
M L Jordan	M Dean
H S Munro	R D East
P W Ockelton	P A Godwin
R J G Smith	M A Gore
R J Stanley	D W Gray
M G Sztymiak	A Hollaway
S Thomson	E J MacTiernan
P N Workman	J R Mason
	H C McLain
	P D McLain
	J W Murphy
	A S Reece
	C Reid
	J K Smith
	V D Smith
	P D Surman
	R J E Vines
	M J Williams

16.7 With 12 votes in favour, 22 against and one abstention, the amendment was lost.

16.8 A Councillor proposed a further amendment that Officers bring back a report to Council in six-months' time detailing the business case of how to achieve implementation of photovoltaic installation (the cost of which would result in an overall saving to the Council after six years). She indicated that she was new to the Council but had noted that photovoltaic installation had not been looked at as a business case to date. She was also of the view that the funding the Council had been unable to invest in a commercial property could be used instead to achieve part of the photovoltaic programme; this would be identified as part of the business case. She had raised this issue at the Executive Committee meeting and the Head of Finance and Asset Management had indicated that a business case would be required which was the reason for proposing the current amendment. In addition, there was a possibility of the local electricity emergency bill coming through parliament and it made sense for the Council to join that as early as possible and move forward with this positive investment. In seconding the amendment, a Member indicated that it asked for a minor change to what was already suggested within the report with a reasonable 12-month timeframe. Officers had indicated that 12-months would be sufficient and achievable, so it made sense to formalise that position. In response to a query, the proposer of the amendment confirmed that, ideally, all the

Council's buildings would have photovoltaic panels but viability would need to be confirmed within the business case. The report stated that panels on the Roses Theatre could halve its bills so that in itself would be worth investigating. It was confirmed that the amendment asked for a business case to come forward within 12-months to understand the feasibility and what the returns would be.

- 16.9 During the discussion which ensued, a Member questioned whether funding that had been earmarked for commercial investment could be used for other things. In response, the Chief Executive confirmed that the Council would have to raise money for any capital investment, whether for commercial buildings or environmental matters. Another Member indicated that a lot of investments were insecure in the current climate, but the amendment as proposed would result in Tewkesbury Borough Council being greener and having more money in its pocket. At a time when the cost of electricity and fuel was increasing it made sense for the Council to be generating its own energy. He noted that respiratory disease affected one in five people and the annual economic burden of lung conditions, including lung cancer, cost £11billion so improving air quality would help save lives as well as improving the climate and saving money.
- 16.10 A Member suggested that the amendment could actually mean there would be a delay in bringing forward a business case for photovoltaic panels. In response it was confirmed that this was not anticipated to be the position. Officers had indicated they would not be able to do the work requested by the amendment within six months – which was what the proposer and seconder had originally wanted – but that the 12-month timescale would be achievable. Without the amendment the timescale would be completely open-ended and supporters of the amendment felt this would be unacceptable. They indicated that the amendment did not require the Council to spend money at this stage, it merely asked for a business case to see if photovoltaics would be cost effective. The idea was to introduce a timeframe for the work to be undertaken.
- 16.11 The consultant that had undertaken the carbon audit for the Council thanked Members for the interesting conversation. He felt the only aspect to raise from his perspective was the 12-month timeframe for photovoltaic panels. The main risk was that, if the panels were installed ahead of knowing the demand, the operator may not be able to export the additionally generated energy and the Council ran the risk of installing an excessively large system with the energy needing to be dumped rather than used. The action plan focussed on low / no cost measures to bring down the energy demand. Once the level was known, the photovoltaic panels could be sized accordingly to reflect demand across the Council's whole estate - 12 months was not unrealistic, but the demand / reduction side of things was a lot of work so there may become a pinch point on resources.
- 16.12 Speaking against the amendment, a Member reiterated that the action plan had been agreed as it had come forward and the Council had a structure in place to meet that action plan; as such, he felt Members needed to allow the process to continue and then push it as quickly as possible in a realistic way. He felt the experts must be allowed to do their job and advise the Council accordingly. Another Member agreed and indicated that the Council had a sensible action plan before it which prioritised actions in a rational way to ensure the most urgent things were addressed first. He advised that the Council currently had panels on its office building because it was a leader and was effective at doing the right thing at the right time. He also felt it would have been more effective to have had these discussions in Working Group meetings rather than trying to make ad-hoc amendments at Council.

16.13 A Member requested a recorded vote and, upon receiving the appropriate level of support, voting was recorded as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstain</b>	<b>Absent</b>
C L J Carter	R A Bird		P E Smith
C M Cody	G F Blackwell		C Softley
L A Gerrard	G J Bocking		S A T Stevens
D J Harwood	K J Cromwell		
M L Jordan	M Dean		
H S Munro	R D East		
P W Ockelton	J H Evetts		
R J G Smith	P A Godwin		
R J Stanley	M A Gore		
M G Sztymiak	D W Gray		
S Thomson	A Hollaway		
P N Workman	E J MacTiernan		
	J R Mason		
	H C McLain		
	P D McLain		
	J W Murphy		
	A S Reece		
	C Reid		
	J K Smith		
	V D Smith		
	P D Surman		
	R J E Vines		
	M J Williams		

16.14 With 12 votes in favour and 23 against, the amendment was lost.

16.15 With no further amendments, the original proposal was put to the vote and accordingly, it was

**RESOLVED**

1. That the audit report be **AGREED** as having established the Council's current position and carbon baseline.
2. That the action plan be **NOTED** and agreement given for the detailed work and feasibility studies to commence in relation to the carbon reduction options set out in the action plan.

**Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee - Extension of Operating Period**

16.16 At its meeting on 8 July 2020, the Executive Committee had considered an extension to the operating period of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee and recommended to Council that the notice period of 12 months, contained in the Inter Authority Agreement of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee in respect of the extension of that agreement, be waived and removed; that the Council works in partnership with all Gloucestershire local authorities to enable the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee to continue to operate for a further 18 months from 30 September 2020 until 31 March 2022, with Tewkesbury Borough Council as a member, under the terms of the existing Inter Authority Agreement; and that authority be delegated to the Borough Solicitor to conclude the necessary legal agreements associated with the previous two resolutions.

16.17 The report which was considered by the Executive Committee had been circulated with the Agenda for the current meeting at Pages No. 94-100.

16.18 The Chair of the Executive Committee proposed the recommendation and noted that the time limit of this important partnership was nearing an end and an extension was required to enable it to continue its good work. The recommendation was seconded by the Vice-Chair.

16.19 A Member questioned what the key successes of the Committee were. In response, the Chief Executive advised that the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee was the only joint decision-making body in the County for economic growth. It managed the Gloucestershire business rates pool; had set up a strategic economic development fund - which had peaked at £4.5 million in terms of its ability to support growth in the county - and had funded a range of projects and continued to do so; and had taken a principle role in co-ordinating the economic response to COVID-19 across the county. In essence, this was a very important Committee which held a lot of funding for projects in the county. The 18 month extension would also be used as time to look at the governance arrangements generally and understand the best approach going forward.

16.20 Accordingly, it was

**RESOLVED**

1. That the notice period of 12 months, contained in the Inter Authority Agreement of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee in respect of the extension of that agreement, be waived and removed.
2. That the Council works in partnership with all Gloucestershire local authorities to enable the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee to continue to operate for a further 18 months from 30 September 2020 until 31 March 2022, with Tewkesbury Borough Council as a member, under the

terms of the existing Inter Authority Agreement.

3. That authority be delegated to the Borough Solicitor to conclude the necessary legal agreements associated with resolutions 1 and 2 above.

## **CL.17 GOLDEN VALLEY DEVELOPMENT - SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

- 17.1 The report of the Planning Policy Manager, circulated at Pages No. 101-507, attached the Golden Valley Development Supplementary Planning Document which Members were asked to approve.
- 17.2 In making a proposal, the Lead Member for Built Environment advised that the strategic site at west Cheltenham had been allocated thorough the Joint Core Strategy when it was adopted in December 2017. The site was formally designated for approximately 1,100 new homes and 45 hectares of employment land to be focused on a cyber security hub. The site had also subsequently been awarded Garden Community status by the government. In order to proactively influence the development and drive up quality, it was agreed jointly by Tewkesbury and Cheltenham Borough Councils to develop a Supplementary Planning Document in order to provide further detailed and site specific guidance to steer the development and help determine future planning applications. In early 2019, consultants Avison Young had been commissioned to support the preparation of the Supplementary Planning Document. The document set out the vision and objectives for the development of the area as well as providing a strategic masterplanning framework to ensure a comprehensive approach to the site. The Supplementary Planning Document was based around five key objectives of sustainability; land use; landscape; movement; and design quality and, under each objective, there were a set of detailed principles to inform and guide future development. Following a series of early informal consultation events with key stakeholders to develop a draft, the document was published for a formal consultation period which took place over five weeks between January and February 2020. This had included a series of four community drop-in events which had been attended by 210 people and a dedicated consultation website which had been visited by over 2,800 people. The feedback to the consultation had been considered and, where appropriate, amendments made in response. The proposal was seconded.
- 17.3 Members were advised that the Supplementary Planning Document was a culmination of the work to date and was presented at Appendix 1 to the report – this marked the final stage of the process with the document becoming a material consideration in the determination of future planning applications once it was approved by both Councils. Cheltenham Borough Council had already approved the document at its Council meeting on 20 July 2020, so Tewkesbury Borough Council was now asked to approve it as set out in the report. The Lead Member clarified that, although the first recommendation in the report sought ‘approval’ of the Supplementary Planning Document, it should be worded as seeking ‘adoption’ of the document meaning the decision of the Council would be to formally adopt the Supplementary Planning Document.
- 17.4 During the discussion which ensued, a Member indicated that, whilst he broadly supported the Supplementary Planning Document, he was disappointed that it did not include a vision for high speed broadband for communities and he would like to see high speed internet for 100% of houses and businesses in the Borough in future. Another Member expressed the view that he had not had time to thoroughly understand and review the document; however, he had a number of queries: Page No. 35 of the consultation section made a comment referencing ‘Chapter one’, however, it was not clear where Chapter one was located; consultants Avison Young had been appointed at a cost of £189,832 and he queried who had agreed

the Terms of Reference and how much Tewkesbury Borough Council had contributed; the five week consultation period had run from 13 January to 17 February 2020 but how long had been set aside to quantify the results; the town's Golden Valley development would see the United Kingdom's first campus built around cyber technology, called Cyber Central, constructed with a 3,000 home Garden Community built next to GCHQ, Cheltenham Borough Council had said they had drawn up a list of six high calibre potential partners to deliver the project after its search closed earlier in the month – was the figure 1,100 or 3,000, how many were within Tewkesbury Borough and should that form part of the deliberations within the Planning Policy Reference Panel for the Joint Core Strategy review; the cyber business park; a campus focussed around the rapidly growing cyber technology sector would be completed by 2023 – was this a realistic target date; Cheltenham Borough Council had announced it had borrowed £37.5million from several Councils across the UK to purchase the land on the west of Cheltenham, next to Hesters Way, Fiddlers Green and Springbank – what was Tewkesbury Borough Council's liability, if any, with that loan; the cyber security sector had doubled in value in the last year and was now worth £8.3billion – would Tewkesbury Borough Council see any benefit from that increase; and, as Policy DS7 was three years out of date and there was uncertainty on the densities and final number of houses – what was the timescale for a traffic assessment across the Golden Valley and wider road networks leading to Junction 10. In response, the Planning Policy Manager explained that the reference to Chapter one referred to the introductory chapter; the site was allocated in the Joint Core Strategy for 1,100 – the 3,000 likely referred to the potential wider area including the safeguarded land which was being looked at as part of the Joint Core Strategy review but that still required assessment which was why the Supplementary Planning Document referred to 1,100; and Policy DS7 was the transport strategy and was part of the evidence base for the Joint Core Strategy – this had been done based on expected growth in the Joint Core Strategy including the west of Cheltenham site – the Supplementary Planning Document had done some high level work but any application would have to do its own transport modelling and the Joint Core Strategy review would review all transport work. The Chief Executive explained that Cheltenham Borough Council had invested in land for housing and commercial development which was the way it had decided to help bring development forward. Tewkesbury Borough Council was engaged in the process as a local planning authority for the area falling within the borough – it was not a landowner in the area. The growth in the cyber industry was a big success for the UK, that sector would continue to grow and would be of benefit to Tewkesbury Borough in terms of growth in the area so this was an extremely important project with the jobs to be created of national and international importance. The Planning Policy Manager explained that the consultation had closed in February and the consultant team and Officers had spent a couple of months going through them and considering the implications for the plan; the document had been jointly commissioned and Tewkesbury Borough Council had contributed to the costs; the development of the site was a long term project, particularly housing – the 2023 figure was probably more for the cyber central element which might come forward earlier due to the investment / need; and all delivery timescales were best estimates at the time. Referring to the Member's contention that the Council had not had long enough to consider the document, the Chief Executive reminded Members that the Council had received the draft document for approval for consultation previously and the changes since then had been minimal so the Council had seen the document as it had come through the stages to adoption. Clearly, the COVID-19 pandemic had resulted in some issues in terms of Member engagement being slightly delayed which was the reason the seminar had been held the day before the Council meeting - ideally that would have been held earlier but the intention was certainly not for Members to feel as though they had not had long enough to consider the document fully. It was quite a high level but vital document.

17.6 A Member indicated that he would vote in favour of adopting the Supplementary Planning Document; as with any project of this large scale there were some areas that everyone may not fully agree on but, on the whole, he was of the view it was a very exciting opportunity for job and high tech creation. In an ideal world, the Member seminar would have been held sooner but he understood why this had not been possible. Another Member agreed that she would vote for the adoption of the document but noted that she had struggled with such a large document and, whilst the seminar had been very informative, there had been a lot of information to absorb in a short time. She also asked for more notice to be provided for seminars so Members could schedule them into their diaries avoiding other commitments. The Chief Executive advised that those comments would be taken on board. In terms of the Planning Policy Reference Panel, Officers were already working on a schedule of meetings and work programme for the Panel which was linked to the Joint Core Strategy review.

17.7 Having considered the information provided, it was

- RESOLVED**
1. That the Golden Valley Development Supplementary Planning Document, as provided at Appendix 1 to the report, be **ADOPTED**.
  2. That authority be delegated to the Head of Development Services to make any minor editorial changes to the approved Supplementary Planning Document in terms of formatting, presentation and accuracy prior to final publication.

## **CL.18 APPOINTMENTS**

### **COVID-19 Health Protection Board - Member Engagement Board**

18.1 Attention was drawn to the Agenda which asked the Council to note the Leader and Deputy Leader's representation on the Member Engagement Board of the COVID-19 Health Protection Board.

18.2 Accordingly, it was

- RESOLVED** That the Leader and Deputy Leader's representation on the Member Engagement Board of the COVID-19 Health Protection Board be **NOTED**.

### **Pensions Committee**

18.3 Attention was drawn to the Agenda which asked the Council to note Councillor Gray's appointment to the Pensions Committee as the District Councils' representative.

18.4 Accordingly, it was

- RESOLVED** That Councillor Gray's appointment to the Pensions Committee as the District Councils' representative be **NOTED**.

## **CL.19 ADJOURNMENT**

19.1 The meeting was adjourned for a five-minute break at 8:40pm. The meeting reconvened at 8:45pm with the same Membership present.

**CL.20 NOTICES OF MOTION****Support for Tech Talent Charter**

- 20.1 The Worshipful the Mayor referred to the Notice of Motion set out on the Agenda and indicated that, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, it was necessary for the Council firstly to decide whether it wished to debate and determine the Motion at this evening's meeting, or whether it wished to refer the Motion, without debate, to a Committee for consideration with authority either to make a decision on the matter or to bring a recommendation back to Council.
- 20.2 Upon being put to the vote it was  
**RESOLVED** That the Motion be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

**Making a Change to Improve the Borough as a Lasting Consequence of the COVID-19 Emergency**

- 20.3 The Worshipful the Mayor referred to the Notice of Motion set out on the Agenda and indicated that, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, it was necessary for the Council firstly to decide whether it wished to debate and determine the Motion at this evening's meeting, or whether it wished to refer the Motion, without debate, to a Committee for consideration with authority either to make a decision on the matter or to bring a recommendation back to Council.
- 20.4 A recorded vote was requested and, upon receiving the appropriate level of support, voting was recorded as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstain</b>	<b>Absent</b>
R A Bird			P E Smith
G F Blackwell			C Softley
G J Bocking			S A T Stevens
C L J Carter			
C M Cody			
K J Cromwell			
M Dean			
R D East			
J H Evetts			
L A Gerrard			
P A Godwin			
M A Gore			
D W Gray			
D J Harwood			

A Hollaway

M L Jordan

E J MacTiernan

J R Mason

H C McLain

P D McLain

H S Munro

J W Murphy

P W Ockelton

A S Reece

C Reid

J K Smith

R J G Smith

V D Smith

R J Stanley

P D Surman

M G Sztymiak

S Thomson

R J E Vines

M J Williams

P N Workman

20.5 With 35 votes in favour it was unanimously agreed that the Motion would be discussed at this evening's Council meeting.

20.6 The Motion, as set out on the Agenda, was proposed and seconded. The proposer of the Motion felt that the world was currently living through the greatest health and economic crisis of a lifetime. As of 25 July, there had been 255 COVID-19 cases in Tewkesbury Borough and 580 deaths in the county and, nationally, over 45,000 people had lost their lives. Every citizen had been affected whether by lockdown, restricted travel, furlough, loss of jobs, self-isolation etc. Many had made resolutions on how to change their lives in the future and numerous great volunteer groups had been set up. She thanked volunteers and Officers for their hard work during this turbulent time and felt it was right to take the opportunity to make a change to improve the borough so that something positive could come from the pandemic and to commemorate the people who had lost their lives as well as celebrating the people who had done great things. The proposal was not for an expensive or elaborate scheme - ideas included planting wildflower seeds, providing certificates

to businesses to show how they had been champions in their area or writing letters of thanks to those individuals involved - but it was felt appropriate to include something in the Council's recovery plan to mark the pandemic. In seconding the Motion, a Member indicated that he had been struck by how everyone in the communities had come together in a way that was rarely seen in any other situation. The community spirit had been amazing and she felt it was right to have a tangible memorial of some description, possibly a memorial garden or space in each town/village in the borough for people to sit and reflect, this would fit into the recovery plan as well and it was hoped the Council could collectively pass the Motion as proposed.

20.7 In supporting the Motion, a Member noted that there were several different ideas, but the Motion asked the Council to explore what could be achieved. He strongly felt that something needed to be done in recognition of the efforts made by so many keyworkers. In offering an alternative view, another Member indicated that he could not support the Motion as it stood. He explained that the country was still amidst the emergency and it was therefore not appropriate to celebrate at this stage. He also expressed concern that there had already been different suggestions on how to fulfil the Motion and he felt it would be more helpful to have one idea. He suggested that a conversation about the way to commemorate the pandemic could be held when the recovery plan actions were considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Another Member agreed that excellent work had been undertaken across the borough and he commiserated with those that had lost loved ones; however, the recovery plan would look to make things better and learn lessons which was the reason it would be monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

20.8 It was agreed that the crisis was ongoing, and a Member pointed out that no one was talking about celebrating but rather marking, respecting and building goodwill for those who had gone above and beyond. That could be done at any point so there was no need to wait until the crisis was over. In response to a query regarding point 1 of the Motion, the proposer explained that the Council would put out a press release to the effect that it intended to make one significant change post-emergency for the benefit of its local residents. The County Council had recently unanimously approved a similar Motion and it was hoped the Borough Council could do the same. The Motion had deliberately not been made prescriptive in terms of the memorial as this was felt to be something the Council should agree together. Supporters of the Motion expressed concern at some of the comments that had been made and felt that parts of the discussion and debate had been offensive in terms of the Motion being 'a waste of time' and other Members felt they could not see any issue with the Motion as it stood as it was asking to make a change post-emergency and to support the idea of some kind of memorial. A suggestion was made that Parish/Town Councils were in a much better position to send letters to community volunteers and it was noted that some Parishes had already started to work on this by sending letters and flowers or putting memorial benches in place; however, others were not in a position to organise those kind of things. A Member indicated that people had worked really hard throughout the crisis and they deserved recognition from their elected representatives – it was not suggested the Borough Council would replace the work being done by Parishes but that, as the lead authority, it could do something positive for its communities in this difficult time.

20.9 A recorded vote was requested and, upon receiving the appropriate level of support, voting was recorded as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstain</b>	<b>Absent</b>
G F Blackwell	R A Bird	M Dean	P E Smith
C L J Carter	G J Bocking		C Softley
C M Cody	K J Cromwell		S A T Stevens
L A Gerrard	R D East		
D J Harwood	J H Evetts		
M L Jordan	P A Godwin		
E J MacTiernan	M A Gore		
H S Munro	D W Gray		
P W Ockelton	A Hollaway		
R J G Smith	J R Mason		
R J Stanley	H C McLain		
M G Sztymiak	P D McLain		
S Thomson	J W Murphy		
P N Workman	A S Reece		
	C Reid		
	J K Smith		
	V D Smith		
	P D Surman		
	R J E Vines		
	M J Williams		

20.10 With 14 votes in favour, 20 against and one abstention, the Motion was lost.

20.11 Accordingly, it was

**RESOLVED** That the Motion not be approved.

The meeting closed at 9:30 pm

## TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

<b>Report to:</b>	Executive Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	26 August 2020
<b>Subject:</b>	Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Discounts
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Corporate Services
<b>Corporate Lead:</b>	Deputy Chief Executive
<b>Lead Member:</b>	Lead Member for Finance and Asset Management
<b>Number of Appendices:</b>	None

### Executive Summary:

There is a requirement to have a Council Tax Reduction Scheme to support residents who qualify for assistance in paying Council Tax. The Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires each billing authority in England to make a scheme specifying the reductions which are to apply to amounts of Council Tax payable by persons, or classes or person, whom the authority considers are in financial need (“a Council Tax Reduction Scheme”).

The report also provides Members with an update on the annual review of Council Tax discounts and seeks approval for their adoption effective from 1 April 2021.

### Recommendation:

#### To RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:

1. That the default Council Tax Reduction Scheme be **ADOPTED** effective from 1 April 2021 with a minor revision to the national working age regulations to allow for a de minimis tolerance for income changes.
2. That authority is delegated to the Head of Finance and Asset Management, in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance and Asset Management, to agree the uprating of the working age regulations incorporated into the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme in line with those announced by the Department for Work and Pensions.
3. That the following Council Tax discounts be **ADOPTED** effective from 1 April 2021:
  - The discount for unoccupied and substantially unfurnished properties is 25% for a maximum period of six months.
  - The discount for properties which are vacant and require major repair work to render them habitable is 25% for a maximum period of 12 months.
  - The discount for unoccupied furnished properties (second homes) is zero.
  - An empty homes premium of an additional 100% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for at least two years, but less than five years.
  - An empty homes premium of an additional 200% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for at least five years, but less than ten years.
  - An empty homes premium of an additional 300% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for at least ten years.

**Reasons for Recommendation:**

The report recommends that the Council continues with the default Council Tax Reduction Scheme that was first adopted in April 2013. To reduce costs to the Council, changes would have to be made to the level of support provided to working age claimants. Most authorities have already incorporated a reduced level of support into their local scheme however it is not considered appropriate to do so at the present time having consideration to the continuing financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the residents of the Borough.

There was a minor revision made to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2020/21 in order to reduce the administrative complexity of the default scheme. This means income changes of £10 or less per week do not require the reassessment of Council Tax Reduction. This has proved successful in managing the workload of the Benefits Team and in giving claimants more certainty in managing their finances.

It is best practice to review Council Tax discounts annually to ensure they reflect any changes in legislation and best meet the financial needs of the Council.

**Resource Implications:**

The previous Council Tax Benefit scheme was fully funded by the government but with the move to Council Tax Reduction, an immediate 10% cut in funding was introduced. The remaining 90% funding was added to the Council's core needs based funding but this has subsequently been reduced by 55%. This means that out of the currently estimated proportion of the cost attributable to the Borough Council of £340,000, only £137,000 is now covered by central government with the balance of over £200,000 being a cost to the Borough Council. This cost is expected to increase as the number of working age claimant looks set to increase in the coming months. Whilst changes to the scheme may have reduced the theoretical cost to the Council, it is likely that the Council would experience increasing problems with Council Tax recovery given the national economic outlook and it is therefore unclear how much benefit would actually be derived at this time.

**Legal Implications:**

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished Council Tax Benefit and instead required each billing authority to design a scheme specifying the reductions which are to apply to amounts of Council Tax. The prescribed regulations set out the matters that must be included in such a scheme.

All authorities in England are required to have a scheme identifying the reductions payable by their constituents who are in financial need under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (updated in 2012). Schedule 1A paragraph 5 of the Act states that for each financial year, Councils must consider whether to revise their scheme or replace it with another scheme and that such decisions need to be made by 11 March in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement scheme is to take effect. If the Council does not make/revise its scheme by 11 March 2021, a default scheme will be imposed on the Council which will be effective from April 2021.

The Local Government Finance Act 2012 amended the Local Government Finance Act 1992. Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) requires each billing authority to make a scheme specifying the reductions which are to apply to the amount of Council Tax payable.

Section 11B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) allows the Council to charge a Council Tax premium. Section 67(2) of that Act provides that the power to decide to charge a premium can only be exercised by Council. Further, The Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax Empty Dwellings Act 2018 allows billing authorities, from 1 April 2020, to apply a premium of an additional 200% of the Council Tax due where a dwelling has been empty for five years and over. A premium of an additional 300% can be applied where the dwelling has been empty for ten years and over from April 2021.

**Risk Management Implications:**

To reduce the cost to the Council, changes would have to be made to the level of support made to working age claimants. Most local authorities have already incorporated a reduced level of support into their local schemes, which should be reviewed on an annual basis. There is a risk that the cost of maintaining the current local scheme will increase if the number of claimants rises due to the state of the local and national economy. This is particularly relevant now due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has seen the working age Council Tax reduction caseload rise significantly.

Changes to Council Tax discounts may mean it becomes difficult to collect the increased Council Tax due, but all available enforcement remedies will be used to mitigate this risk.

**Performance Management Follow-up:**

The impact of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and its costs will be closely monitored and updated through Lead Member briefings.

**Environmental Implications:**

None.

**1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

1.1 In January 2020, Council approved a Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) for the 2020/21 financial year. The Council has remained on the national default scheme since Council Tax Reduction was first introduced from 1 April 2013. Following public consultation on three options for a revised scheme, it was agreed that we would remain on the default scheme for working age claimants for 2020/21 with a minor revision of a tolerance for income changes. This was due to the impact of the rules regarding the reassessment of Universal Credit and its impact on Council Tax Reduction. It was also agreed that alternative options would again be reviewed to ensure any future scheme provides the right level of support for residents as well as its impact on the Council's wider financial position. Due to the current, and likely ongoing, impact of the COVID-19 pandemic the advice of officers is to remain on the default scheme for working age claimants for the 2021/22 financial year.

**2.0 BACKGROUND - COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME**

2.1 Since April 2013, the Council has been required to establish a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme to help working age people on a low income to pay their Council Tax. This scheme replaced the national scheme for Council Tax Benefit which was fully funded by central government. Tewkesbury Borough Council has remained on the default scheme since it was first introduced in April 2013.

- 2.2 The Council is also required to administer the prescribed government Council Tax Reduction Scheme for pension age customers and is not able to make any changes to this scheme.
- 2.3 Council Tax Reduction is currently provided to 4,803 households in Tewkesbury Borough at an annual cost of £4.7million. This includes working and pension age claimants. At present there are 2,935 working age claimants and the cost for these is currently £2.9million. The cost of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme is met by Tewkesbury Borough Council and the major precepting authorities in proportion to their share of the Council Tax.
- 2.4 Since March 2020 we have seen a significant increase in the working age Council Tax Reduction caseload due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and this continues to rise with a further 503 Council Tax Reduction claims in payment at the time of writing.
- 2.5 The legislation requires the Council to review its Council Tax Reduction Scheme on an annual basis. If there are amendments to be made to the scheme these must be done by 11 March 2021.
- 2.6 It is proposed that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme adopted for 2020/21, i.e the default national scheme with a tolerance level of income changes of £10 or less per week, is maintained for 2021/22. This will continue to reduce the level of administrative burden on the team who are required to reassess entitlement to Council Tax Reduction every time there is a change in a claimant's income. It will also make it easier for claimants to manage their finances as they will not need to receive a new Council Tax bill every time there is a change in their income.

### **Council Tax Discounts**

- 2.7 The Local Government Finance Act 2012 abolished certain Council Tax discounts with effect from 1 April 2013 and replaced them with discounts which can be determined locally. These have remained broadly the same since the 2013/14 financial year other than a change to the level of discount given to short term empty properties and the levying of an empty homes premium from 1 April 2019. Options for Council Tax discounts have been reviewed in conjunction with proposals for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme in order to determine the most effective use of local discretions.
- 2.8 Council determined that furnished chargeable dwellings which are not someone's sole or main residence (i.e. second homes) should no longer receive a discount. They had, prior to April 2013, received a discount of 10%. If we continue to set the discount at zero it is estimated that this will result in additional income of £45,000 of which the Council would retain approximately £3,592.
- 2.9 Council also determined that the discount in respect of unoccupied and substantially unfurnished properties should be 25% for six months. This was changed for 2020/21 (it has been a 100% discount for one month followed by a 25% discount for five months) to prevent landlord/tenant disputes regarding tenancy end dates. This change has proved successful and it is recommended the current level of discount is maintained for 2021/22. Reducing the level of discount results in additional Council Tax income of £152,000 of which the Council retains approximately £10,640.
- 2.10 Council further exercised its discretion to determine that chargeable dwellings which are vacant and undergoing major repair work to render them habitable should be given a discount of 25% for 12 months. This discount costs approximately £7,000 overall in lost Council Tax.

**2.11** Prior to 1 April 2013 billing authorities could charge up to a maximum 100% Council Tax on dwellings that have been empty for more than two years. From April 2013 billing authorities were given new powers to charge a premium of up to 50% of the Council Tax payable. New legislation was introduced which allows for a 100% empty homes premium to be levied from 1 April 2019. This was first agreed by Members in February 2019 and was again agreed for the 2020/21 financial year. The additional income from this premium currently stands at £119,000 and is levied on 98 properties. The Council's share of this income is approximately £8,500.

**2.12** From 1 April 2020 an additional power has been granted to allow the increase of the levy charge to 200% for properties which have been unoccupied and unfurnished for a period of over five years. Council adopted this option for the 2020/21 financial year and the premium is currently levied on 22 properties resulting in additional income of £61,000 with the Council retaining approximately £4,500.

**2.13** From April 2021, a further power will be granted to increase the empty homes premium to 300% for properties that have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than 10 years. There are six properties that meet this criteria and the levying of the additional charge results in further income of £10,000 with our share being minimal. More widely, however, it would continue to support the Council's strategy to bring empty properties back into use.

### **3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

**3.1** To not agree a Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2021/22. This would have financial implications for the Council and those residents affected by wider welfare reform as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **4.0 CONSULTATION**

**4.1** The legislation requires consultation prior to making a change to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, but there is no such requirement where no change is being made. Accordingly, no public consultation has taken place regarding the proposed scheme for 2021/22 as the proposal is that it remains unchanged.

### **5.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES**

**5.1** The Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

**5.2** Housing Strategy Action Plan 2017-2021 regarding bringing empty properties back into use.

### **6.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

**6.1** The Council is required to adopt a Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working age claimants on an annual basis.

**6.2** Legislation was drafted with an express intention to use Empty Homes Premium as a tool to support bringing empty properties back into use.

### **7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)**

**7.1** None directly associated with this report other than officer time.

**8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)**

**8.1** None.

**9.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)**

**9.1** To support the preferred option an equalities impact assessment will be produced.

**10.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS**

**10.1** None.

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**Background Papers:** None.

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**Appendices:** None.

## TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

<b>Report to:</b>	Council
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	29 September 2020
<b>Subject:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Report 2019/20
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Corporate Services
<b>Corporate Lead:</b>	Chief Executive
<b>Lead Member:</b>	Lead Member for Organisational Development
<b>Number of Appendices:</b>	One

**Executive Summary:**

The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to assure that the Council's work is transparent, the Council is held accountable for its decision-making, and that the needs of the community are considered. Reporting the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee through an annual report provides an opportunity for both the Council and the public to view the work of the Committee. It is also a requirement of the Council's Constitution that the Committee reports annually to Council. The draft Overview and Scrutiny Report 2019/20 was considered and approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1 September 2020.

**Recommendation:**

**To consider the contents of the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20.**

**Reasons for Recommendation:**

It is important to ensure the activities of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are promoted both internally and publicly to reinforce transparency and accountability in the democratic process. It is also a requirement of the Council's Constitution that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee must report annually to Council.

**Resource Implications:**

None.

**Legal Implications:**

None.

**Risk Management Implications:**

None.

**Performance Management Follow-up:**

An annual report detailing the work of the Committee provides transparency and accountability. As detailed in the report, the Committee has a forward looking work programme that provides a comprehensive overview of the Council's priorities.

**Environmental Implications:**

None.

**1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

**1.1** The Overview and Scrutiny Committee must deliver the work required of it as set out in the Council's Constitution. The Committee has a formal work programme for the year and it ensures the volume of work does not compromise the depth of examination required, does not duplicate the work of other Committees and adds value.

**2.0 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT**

**2.1** Not only is it a requirement of the Council's Constitution to report the activities of the Committee on an annual basis but it is good practice.

Over the past year, the Committee has once again been at the heart of the Council's decision-making process and acted as a critical friend to the Executive Committee in helping shape and inform the Council's decision making. This year's annual report includes a brief summary of the role and responsibilities of Overview and Scrutiny, the work undertaken over the past year and the various outcomes.

In summary, the work has been undertaken through a combination of the following:

- Progress reports from officers on the delivery of key strategies and policies. For example, the Committee receives update reports on key strategies such as Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, Housing Strategy, Communications Strategy etc.
- Quarterly performance management reporting – The Committee receives a quarterly performance tracker report on the progress of delivering Council Plan actions, Key Performance Indicators and financial outturn performance. Further scrutiny led to individual reports being received on planning performance and the trade waste service, looking at maximising the commercial opportunity of the service.
- Working Groups to review specific areas of interest - during the year, Working Groups were set up to review the Parking Strategy and Depot Services, as well as the final report from the Grounds Maintenance Working Group, which was formed to specifically tackle grass cutting concerns throughout the borough.
- Presentations from officers and external organisations - presentations were received during the year from organisations such as Citizens' Advice Bureau, Gfirst Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Growth Hub.
- A special meeting was held in August to look at the motion to declare a climate change emergency.
- Other general scrutiny reviews - the Committee reviewed multiple reports which varied from updates of the Single-Use Plastics action plan, Community Services and Development Services improvement plans and Tewkesbury Borough News review etc.

**2.2** Overall, the work of the Committee underlines the value it contributes to the Council's policy and assurance framework. As always, officers will work closely with the Committee during 2020/21, especially as there will be a new Council, Covid-19 recovery plan to monitor and to maximise its value. The 2019/20 annual report can be found in Appendix 1. The report was considered and approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 1 September 2020.

### **3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

**3.1** None.

### **4.0 CONSULTATION**

**4.1** None.

### **5.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES**

**5.1** None.

### **6.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

**6.1** None.

### **7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)**

**7.1** None.

### **8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)**

**8.1** None.

### **9.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)**

**9.1** None.

### **10.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS**

**10.1** None.

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**Background Papers:** None.

**Contact Officer:** Head of Corporate Services.

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**Appendices:** 1 – Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2019/20.

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee's annual report

**2019-20**



**August 2020**

# Message from the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Kevin Cromwell



I am pleased to present the 2019-20 Annual Report of Tewkesbury Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. At the beginning of the year, there was a significant change to the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as newly-elected members joined those that had served in previous years. This has been my first year as chair - with Councillor John Murphy as vice chair - and we are grateful to be supported by a group of very able and committed councillors.

Over the past year, the committee has once again been at the heart of the council's decision-making process and acted as a critical friend to the Executive Committee in helping shape and inform the council's decision making. This report includes a brief summary of the role and responsibilities of Overview and Scrutiny, the work undertaken over the past year and the various outcomes.

Our responsibility to scrutinise the performance of Council Plan actions continues, and we will have a further two priorities – 'garden communities' and 'sustainable environment' – to monitor moving forward, as the council's new Council Plan 2020 to 2024 was adopted earlier this year.

It remains important that the committee continues to build its knowledge and understanding of how our partners help to deliver our Council Plan priorities. To facilitate this, the committee has received some really informative presentations from key bodies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, Gfirst Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Growth Hub.

A key piece of work for the committee last year followed a motion to Council to declare a climate change emergency. The committee was asked to hold a special meeting to consider the proposal and it made a number of key recommendations. As a result, in October, Council joined other local authorities across the country in declaring a climate change emergency. Scrutiny will really be at the heart of this work, as I am chair of the working group that will oversee its delivery, and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will play an instrumental role in monitoring its action plan.

The committee has also continued to scrutinise and monitor the progress of important activities such as Ubico's

performance and enviro-crimes, as well as the delivery of key strategies such as the Housing Strategy and the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy.

In March, the council took part in a Local Government Association Peer Challenge. Myself and Cllr John Murphy supported this process through an interview, where we had the opportunity to explain the important role that our committee plays in the structure of the council. I am pleased to report that the peer team reported positively on the impact of our committee, and we now look forward to monitoring the recommendations and actions that are identified from the peer challenge team's final report.

Like organisations across the world, the biggest test the council has seen for many years has been responding to the national Covid-19 pandemic. I am extremely proud of our officers and councillors, who continue to go above and beyond to support our communities throughout this difficult period. The pandemic significantly changed how the council operates on a day-to-day basis, as the country went into lockdown, the council offices closed and all work was carried out remotely.

Indeed, the committee held its first-ever virtual meeting, thanks to the use of improved technology, which was a great success and it is now likely to be the way that we hold our committee meetings for the remainder of the municipal year.

There are clearly some great opportunities for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to support the council through its future challenges as it emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic. With this in mind, our 2020/21 workplan is currently being reviewed.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the committee members and council officers for their support and hard work facilitating the scrutiny process. I am sure that the same dedication will be shown to scrutinise the work of the council and external partners during the year ahead.

**Best wishes**  
**Councillor Kevin Cromwell**

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## The role of overview and scrutiny

The role of overview and scrutiny is an important one in the council's governance structure - it provides challenge and drives improvement and is often referred to as the "critical friend" of the council. The committee is not afraid to hold a magnifying glass over any areas of concern.

## Formal work programme

Tewkesbury Borough Council has a single overarching Overview and Scrutiny Committee that examines all areas of the council's business.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a number of roles within the council. These include:

- Holding the Executive Committee to account by thoroughly scrutinising their decisions to ensure that the council continues to provide the best services possible for Tewkesbury Borough residents. As part of this role, the committee has the power to 'call-in' decisions made by the Executive Committee and request that they consider them again, taking into account the issues raised by the committee.
- Supporting the Executive Committee by reviewing council policies and strategies, making recommendations where appropriate.
- Overviews of work areas or topics of interest to the committee and members of the council – including feedback from the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee, the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel and the Gloucestershire County Council Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Council Plan performance and financial monitoring, to ensure the council services are sustainable and to the highest possible standard.
- Commissioning reviews of services/topics that impact on the council or on the lives of Tewkesbury Borough residents.
- Pre-scrutiny of items prior to their consideration by the Executive Committee.

- Complaints – on an annual basis a report is received summarising customer complaints and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman complaints made in the year. This helps to identify trends and potential opportunities to learn from the complaints made.
- Setting up task and finish groups to focus on specific reviews and recommend ways to improve existing practices within the council. A flow chart on how to consider potential scrutiny reviews can be found at Appendix A.

## The year in numbers



## Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2019-2020

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Councillor Graham Bocking



Councillor Craig Carter



Councillor Kevin Cromwell  
**Chair**



Councillor Pauline Godwin



Councillor Heather McLain



Councillor Paul McLain



Councillor Helen Munro



Councillor John Murphy  
**Vice Chair**



Councillor Jill Smith



Councillor Richard Smith



Councillor Sara Stevens



Councillor Philip Surman



Councillor Scott Thomson



Councillor Mark Williams



Councillor Philip Workman

Photographs courtesy of Posers  
Photographic

## Overview and scrutiny activity during 2019-20

### Scrutiny reviews of policy and strategy

#### Communications strategy

18 June 2019 and 3 December 2019

Communications has a vital role to play in helping the council deliver its vision, priorities and objectives to local people across the borough. To communicate effectively means to listen as well as broadcast, and it only works when what we are saying is clear and easy to understand. Giving that we are a council delivering a wide range of complex services to more than 90,000 residents, we need a clear communications strategy to help face the challenges of communicating effectively.

Alongside regular promotion of council services, there are some significant projects in the pipeline - such as the response to Covid-19, pushing forward with business transformation, the Ashchurch Rail Bridge and the Garden Communities projects. It is therefore vital that the council has a clear strategy for communicating with the public and embraces modern digital methods. Utilising multimedia approaches is important to ensure the council reaches all audiences.

The communications strategy's action plan is reviewed annually by the committee allowing for scrutiny on the range of work that has been achieved to date. In December, a new communications strategy was presented to the committee setting out the key communication principles, and objectives moving forward. The committee was pleased with the content of the strategy and it was approved at the Executive committee on 8 January 2020.

#### Housing strategy monitoring report

9 April 2019 and 22 October 2019

The Housing Strategy recognises how important it is for residents to access good quality housing and housing-related services, which make a real difference to residents' lives. Not only is housing important for the health and well-being of individuals

and families, but it is an important part of building and maintaining strong communities and supporting the overall economic prosperity of the borough.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee plays a key role in monitoring the outcomes of the strategy. Throughout the year, the committee received updates on the progress made on the action plan. Members were pleased to hear the council was successful in its bid for the Ministry of Communities, Housing and Local Government (MCHLG) private sector access funding of £363,408, which will assist 180 households in one year through the homelessness prevention programme.

The committee was informed that the housing team had undergone some key improvements, which included revising Personal Housing Plans - a document which sets out steps taken to help prevent someone becoming homeless or to help secure accommodation. The new plans will help support those in need and have been updated to include a home visit service. Supporting the council's customer-focused priority, this way of working gives a better understanding of clients' situations in a less intimidating environment.

Members questioned the number of rough sleepers in the borough and asked what could be done to reduce the need for the use of B&B's as temporary accommodation. Overall, members felt that the low numbers across the borough were positive and a credit to the work of the housing team, which can often be dealing with very difficult circumstances.

#### Economic development and tourism strategy 18 June 2019

One of the council's key priorities is 'promoting and supporting economic growth', and this is reflected in the council's Economic Development and Tourism Strategy. The committee was pleased to hear that significant progress had been made in delivering the actions for the second year of the strategy. For example, the committee was updated about the launch and operation of Tewkesbury Growth Hub's first year at the Public Services Centre, and the launch of the 'Uncover the Cotswolds' project aimed at

attracting more visitors from European markets.

Following a range of questions from the committee - such as the potential surrounding the M5 J10 all-ways junction and the impact of the cyber park - the committee was happy to recommend to the Executive Committee that delegation be given to the deputy chief executive and head of development services, in consultation with the lead member for economic development/promotion, to make amendments to the strategy.

## **Safeguarding policy**

**11 February 2020**

Safeguarding is everybody's responsibility - all members and employees, and other statutory partners have a duty to report all safeguarding concerns to relevant safeguarding authorities.

The committee was informed that the council's Safeguarding Policy had originally been adopted in November 2016 and that it details issues around children and vulnerable adults and how to work with partners to respond to and report any incidents. Since the policy was adopted there have been significant changes to the policy, including the incorporation of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and a significant change in the way safeguarding, especially safeguarding children, is delivered countywide.

The committee focused its scrutiny around the training in place for staff and the requirement for volunteers to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. Overall, members supported the changes and the policy was approved at Executive Committee on 4 March 2020.

## **Presentations made to overview and scrutiny**

### **Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB)**

**10 September 2019**

The Citizens' Advice Bureau provides free, confidential, independent and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. The

service operates from 15 locations, seven of which are in Tewkesbury Borough. For several years, the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) have had a service level agreement with the council, supporting the work they provide - and the council awards a grant of £52,000 to the CAB. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee plays a key role in monitoring the effectiveness of this grant.

During the presentation in September, the CAB representative confirmed they had undergone a structure change and have now been renamed as 'North and West Gloucestershire Citizens' Advice' to reflect that the service now covers Tewkesbury, Cheltenham, Gloucester and the Forest of Dean. In the first nine months of 2019, the service had helped 1,229 clients - with the main issues being around benefits, debt, relationships, employment and housing. Since April 2019, clients had benefited from £1,832,984 of financial gains.

Members asked whether further outreach work was carried out in rural parishes and were pleased to hear that consideration would be given to new locations, provided there was sufficient demand for at least a half day's service.

### **Gfirst Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)**

**14 January 2020**

Gfirst Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) mission is to make Gloucestershire great by driving sustainable economic growth throughout the county, creating jobs and business opportunities for people.

During a presentation in January, the committee was updated on the LEP investments made within Tewkesbury Borough, as well as progress on the Growth Hub network, details on the inward investment team and the Local Industrial Strategy.

Successful cases were highlighted within the presentation, such as GFirst LEP securing £101m of growth deal funding, which has been used to fund high-profile projects within the county - including the £10million roundabout at Elmbridge Court to improve road infrastructure.

Updates were also given on other projects in Tewkesbury Borough and following a range of questions, members were given assurance that any project funded by the GFirst LEP had to go through scrutiny. The committee also received information comparing the statistics of the Growth Hubs within Gloucestershire which included; the number of visitors, reasons for visiting and our interventions. This highlighted that Tewkesbury's Growth Hub had attracted more than 1,700 visitors since its opening in October 2018.

## Growth Hub 11 February 2020

The Growth Hub is a business support programme to help growing businesses by offering advice and support. The hub celebrated its first year of operation in the council's Public Services Centre in November and its success was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny committee in February.

During the presentation, the committee heard that over 4,000 businesses had received support interactions, support had been provided for over 100 start-up businesses and multiple business events had been held in the hub. These statistics, when compared to other larger hubs, showed that the Tewkesbury Borough Growth Hub was 'punching above its weight'. Testimonials from previous and current growth hub tenants were also provided, highlighting how the programme provided key support for the success of these businesses' growth.

Members noted that the Tewkesbury Growth Hub had been described in the presentation as being the first Growth Hub in the world to be delivered in a local authority setting, which the committee found impressive. As part of on-going monitoring it was agreed an annual report on economic growth will be provided to the committee to include performance of the Growth Hub and the impact on businesses within the borough.



## Overview and Scrutiny working groups

### Grounds maintenance working groups 28 May 2019

In response to the Executive Committee's concerns, and the unacceptable level of complaints being received from residents in 2018 about the level and quality of grass cutting across the borough, a Grass Cutting Improvement Plan was adopted with the responsibility for monitoring given to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

This included the formation of a Grass Cutting Improvement Plan Working Group. The group successfully contributed to a number of improvements and provided suggestions to help expand the range of work carried out. One of the proposals was to establish a new working group, which would oversee the delivery of the council's maintenance service, and consider and develop a number of potential longer-term projects. The report and formation of a new Grounds Maintenance Working Group were approved by the Executive Committee on 6 March 2019.

The committee's working group met four times and produced a number of recommendations that included:

- A comprehensive schedule of rates to be considered - to ensure Ubico's pricing is competitive.
- Planning policy - to consider, where possible, innovative approaches to grounds maintenance and planning policies when it comes to new public open spaces.
- Wildflower planting - discussions around the use of wildflower planting, which could reduce the need for grass cutting in the future.
- Maintenance of land on behalf of Gloucestershire County Highways.
- Grass cutting standards - a new performance target to be set for Ubico to reduce the number of low-quality cuts carried out.
- Potential for hiring contract equipment or sharing equipment across Ubico partners.
- Officers to continue to work with partners e.g. parish councils, to identify opportunities to deliver efficiencies.

At its final meeting, the working group considered that while there is a continued role for members to play in terms of monitoring grounds maintenance, this should be included in the work of the Depot Services Working Group, which also has a wider remit to look at the Ubico contract. The report of the working group and the recommendation that future monitoring of grounds maintenance be undertaken by the Depot Services Working Group were approved at Executive Committee on 4 March 2020.

### **Depot services working group** 23 July 2019

Following regular reports at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the performance of the council's waste, recycling, street cleansing, grounds maintenance and trade waste service by Ubico, the committee raised concerns about a perceived lack of control and transparency. It was highlighted how important it is that members fully understand the relationship between Ubico and Tewkesbury Borough Council, including what being part of a teckal arrangement meant in terms of the level of control the council had over the company. In order to facilitate this, the committee was asked to establish a Depot Services Working Group, which would report back to the committee on a bi-annual basis.

The committee's working group has so far met twice and considered reports and information pertinent to the operation and strategic direction of the services Ubico provides. This included receiving and reviewing:

An overview of Ubico Ltd

- Partnership arrangements
- Governance structure
- Financial and performance information
- Operational aspects of the Ubico contract delivery
- Draft business plan for 2020/21 from Ubico.

A progress report from the group was due to be presented to the committee in April 2020. This was subsequently delayed following the emergency response to Covid-19 pandemic and will be reported to the committee at a later date.

### **Parking strategy working group** 18 June 2019

The committee was informed that the current Parking Strategy, adopted in 2015, was due for review and was asked to establish a working group of four members along with the lead member of economic development/ promotion and finance and asset management. The remit of the group was to consider current and future parking needs, create a strategy that supports the economic needs of the borough, consider further deployment of technology - including electric vehicle charging points and new pay and display machines - and to feed into the Gloucestershire County Council's on-street parking review, which will include parking in Tewkesbury Town.

The working group continues to meet regularly, and is gathering, considering and reviewing a range of information; including data, evidence and responses from focus groups - made up of representatives from town councils, local businesses and special interest groups. This will enable the group to produce a draft strategy, that will encompass not only specific car park-related issues but also ensure that the wider regeneration and the economic development requirements in our urban centres and the wider borough are factored in. Once finalised, the new strategy will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **Special meeting**

#### **Notice of motion declaring a climate change emergency** 13 August 2019

The issue of climate change is something that has an impact globally. The council has already shown a strong commitment to addressing this by establishing a single-use plastics policy and promoting the use of sustainable transport through its car-pool scheme.

At a Council meeting on 30 July 2019, members referred the motion to declare a climate change emergency to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee,

to consider the wording and make a recommendation back to Council. A special Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting was held in August to discuss the motion in detail.

The proposer of the motion addressed the committee in August and raised their concerns about the environment, explaining that declaring a climate change emergency would mean that carbon dioxide emissions would factor in all future decisions.

Following a detailed and useful discussion, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed amendments to the wording of the motion and a report outlining the recommendations was taken to Council in October 2019, where members declared a climate change emergency.

As part of this, members agreed to committing to make Tewkesbury Borough Council offices carbon neutral by 2030 and to working with partners in Gloucestershire to achieve countywide neutrality aims. It was also agreed to expand the remit of the existing Flood Risk Management Group to deal with climate change matters and to devise a detailed action plan for the delivery of this. Moving forward, the action plan will be monitored by Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The new Council Plan 2020-24 identifies 'sustainable environment' as one of its six key priorities. The council commits to carefully manage its carbon footprint and support the climate change declaration, which will be carefully monitored by this committee through the performance tracker.

## Other general areas of review

### Performance management

#### Quarterly reports

The committee has an important role in scrutinising the delivery of actions within the Council Plan. To achieve this, on a quarterly basis, the committee receives detailed information through the 'Council Plan Performance Tracker'. This provides a range of qualitative and quantitative information so the

committee can clearly see the progression of actions, review missed target dates, monitor financial performance and, where appropriate, refer for a response or action from the Executive Committee.

During the year, the committee has scrutinised a wide range of service activity including sickness absence, Spring Gardens regeneration site, planning processing times and the target dates of various actions, to assess whether they are realistic.

### Community Safety Partnership (CSP) update

9 April 2019

At its meeting in April, the committee received an update on the work Tewkesbury Borough Community Safety Partnership group had achieved in its first year, giving a multi-agency approach to dealing with issues such as anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse and hate crime. The partnership has an approved term of reference and it is now in the process of setting local priorities for the borough.

Work has begun on the Community Safety Strategy of the borough and once completed a draft will be brought back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members raised concerns on the lack of communication to local members about community safety issues but were pleased to hear that as a result of the new priorities local members would start to see an improvement to this.

### Customer care strategy action plan

9 April 2019

We commit to putting our customers first and in our Council Plan we make the promise that we will put the needs of our customers at the heart of what we do. The Customer Care strategy is an important step to making this a reality.

To help achieve this, the strategy is supported by an action plan, which is monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis. The committee was asked to review the progress made in the 2018/19 action plan, which highlighted the

achievement of embedding the customer care standards into the way each service conducts its work and the improvements made to online forms to support the council's digital ambition. The committee was pleased with the progress made, and following a discussion around the importance of ensuring customer care is seen as a corporate-wide responsibility, it was agreed a new Customer Care Strategy will be written for 2020/21 to reflect the changes that have been made and to factor in the new challenges relating to the recovery phase of Covid-19 emergency.

### **Enviro-crime report**

**18 June 2019 and 14 January 2020**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee played a key role in monitoring the approach to tackling enviro-crimes. Over several years the committee has been at the forefront of driving the council's enviro-crimes agenda and vast improvements have been made. Reports are provided to the committee on a six-monthly basis giving updates on the progress of the enviro-crimes action plan.

Members agreed at its meeting in January 2020, that they felt tackling enviro-crimes was fully embedded in the day-to-day operations of the Environmental Health team, and therefore no further reports would be brought back to the committee unless there was change to this position. Enviro-crimes will continue to be monitored on a quarterly basis through the performance tracker.

### **Single-use plastics update**

**18 June 2019**

In July 2018, Council passed a motion, recognising the staggering environmental impact caused by the use of single-use plastics. A report identifying central government's new waste strategy and actions to eliminate single-use plastics from the council operations by 2020 was endorsed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2019.

As a result, disposable drinking cups and lids have been replaced by cardboard alternatives, and vending

machines containing plastic water bottles have been removed from the Public Services Centre and replaced with water supply machines. Additional procedures were also put in place in the procurement process to ensure suppliers reduce and work towards avoiding single-use plastics where possible.

### **Ubico performance report**

**23 July 2019**

Waste, recycling, grounds maintenance and street cleansing are all services that have a direct impact on our communities, so it is important to ensure that they are delivered effectively and efficiently. Ubico has been delivering these services for Tewkesbury Borough Council since April 2015, with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee playing a key role in monitoring Ubico's performance.

As a high-profile service, the committee continues to monitor performance, particularly around financial outturn. A detailed report was brought to committee in July outlining the 2018/19 outturn performance on all services provided by Ubico. Following a request from this committee, the report contained newly adopted key performance indicators, health and safety statistics, the annual commissioner report and a corporate update outlining Ubico's progress throughout the year.

Following questions from members, it was agreed that changes to the way some of the figures were presented in the key performance indicators needed to be considered but overall it was felt Ubico had been on quite a journey and significant improvements had been made.

### **Trade waste**

**14 January 2020**

A commercial waste collection service is offered to businesses throughout the borough. The weekly service is delivered by our contractors Ubico, with a range of options to choose from.

Through the performance tracker, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee wanted to know more about the

effectiveness of the trade waste service and questioned whether it was providing a competitive service. The committee asked for a report to be provided, which sets out current service provision and any possible improvements.

This report was brought to the committee in February 2019 and questions were raised about the necessity of the trade waste service given the current cost to the council. It was agreed further work was to be carried out on all options, which included a recommendation on the long-term sustainability of the trade waste service going forward.

In January 2020, a confidential report was presented to the committee giving information on the council's existing service and the potential options for how the service might be delivered on a more commercial basis going forward. Debates were had and members amended the recommendation to the Executive Committee, so that a detailed business case for a pilot be prepared and reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee before a final decision is made. The recommendation was approved at Executive Committee.

As a result of effective scrutinising by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure the council continues to provide the best services possible for its communities, the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) has now been appointed to undertake a review of the service. This will include a detailed market analysis and assessments to form a detailed business case. On completion this will be brought back to a future Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider.

### **Development services review action plan**

**9 April 2019 and 22 October 2019**

The development services review action plan was brought to the committee meetings in April and October 2019. The committee was pleased to hear about the progress made on the action plan and noted that the majority of actions had been completed. The development services review was approved at Council in April 2018 and the action plan had been devised as a tool to help manage service improvement, with the Overview and Scrutiny

Committee specifically tasked with monitoring the progress.

The committee was informed of changes undertaken as a result of the action plan, including a new structure and additional monitoring reports consisting of key performance indicators.

Members requested a further report to be brought to the committee detailing the outcomes of a recent customer satisfaction survey, to gain assurance that the work carried out had benefited customers. This report has been delayed as a result of Covid-19 and will now be brought to a future Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

### **Review of planning enforcement plan**

**22 October 2019**

The Planning Enforcement Plan sets out the council's principles and approaches to delivering the planning enforcement service.

Members were given a detailed report of the team's performance between April and September 2019, which included the number of live and closed cases, timescales and issues that had arisen since the approval of the plan - for example the difficulty of replacing qualified and experienced enforcement officers who had left the authority.

The committee felt it was important it was kept regularly updated on the statistics of planning enforcement cases, and subsequently this will be included in future reports of the planning key performance indicators.

### **Annual review of planning committee overturns**

**23 July 2019**

As part of its monitoring of the Development Services Review action plan, the committee requested a separate report to review the annual template of Planning Committee Overturns. This was brought to the committee in July 2019.

Members raised concerns around the content of the template and felt there was a lack of statistics to

allow comparison from previous years to help identify trends and patterns, particularly in terms of policy impact. Officers indicated that, while possible, it would be resource-intensive and time-consuming to gather the data and it would inevitably impact on other projects such as the Planning Enforcement Plan review. A vote was undertaken by the committee and the motion was lost, the committee subsequently agreed the template would be populated looking forward as opposed to retrospectively for the two years preceding 2018/19.

### **Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) review monitoring report**

**18 June 2019**

As part of the committee's monitoring role, it receives reports on a bi-annual basis identifying the progress made to the recommendations following the DFG review. In June 2019, members were advised these were complete and closure of the review was approved.

The community services team will continue to work collaboratively with Gloucestershire County Council to determine the future delivery of DFGs across the borough and its ongoing success.

### **Community services improvement plan**

**23 July 2019**

The Community Services Review was approved by Council on 24 July 2018. The review was accompanied by an improvement plan setting out a range of actions aiming to become more customer-focussed and support more businesses within the borough.

The committee was pleased to see that several actions were complete but noted that recruitment difficulties had caused some actions not to progress as well as intended. The committee was pleased to hear that a change of approach was set to be adopted, which included contacting schools and colleges to engage with students who would like a career in Environmental Health.

### **Review of water supply outage monitoring report**

**10 September 2019**

In December 2017, 10,000 homes, a substantial number of businesses, agricultural farmers, the community hospital and 17 schools were left without water in the run-up to Christmas. The scale of the incident was significant and there was national coverage in the media. There had also been two previous outages in August and October 2017.

Due to the impact on the local community, an Overview and Scrutiny working group was established in 2018 to review the incident and capture any lessons that could be learnt. This was a significant piece of work, and included engaging through workshops and hearings with various agencies, businesses and members of the community to understand the impact it caused and how effective the response was.

In September 2019, an annual report was received and the committee noted the progress made against the action plan arising from the review, where all outstanding actions for Tewkesbury Borough Council had been achieved. Severn Trent Water confirmed new water pipes would be installed in the area on the Severn Ham, which proved to be where the failures had occurred. The committee invited Severn Trent Water to give a presentation upon completion of the works.

### **Complaints report**

**10 September 2019**

The committee receives an annual complaints report detailing the level of complaints received by the council and the service areas they relate to. Understanding and responding to complaints forms an important element of the council's customer care and helps indicate how well the council is performing. The council is consistently benchmarked as being one of the best performers nationally in relation to the low number of complaints received.

Between April 2018 and March 2019, 192 formal complaints were received, of which 175 related to council services. Of these, 99 related to the council's waste service - a high profile service with nearly 4million collections during the course of the year. The

majority of these were repeated missed bin collections over a course of time.

The committee also recognised a spike of complaints in the first quarter due to an increase in grass cutting complaints – and recognised this will not be an issue moving forward due to the improvements made through the Grass Cutting Improvement Plan. The committee was pleased to note that since introducing this plan, a comparison against the first quarter of 2020/21 showed a dramatic decrease in complaints with only one complaint received in relation to grass cutting - a significant improvement.

The complaints framework has been in place for four years and is due for review - this will be undertaken by the committee and officers in the new financial year.

## **Healings Mill**

### **10 September 2019**

Although the mill is not owned by the council, it is an important piece of the fabric of Tewkesbury Town Centre and the council has made clear its aspirations to see the mill redeveloped both in the emerging Tewkesbury Borough Plan and the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Tewkesbury Town Centre.

A report in September 2019 gave an update on the progress being made to secure a suitable development scheme for the mill. The committee was informed that discussions were ongoing with developers and agents regarding a potential scheme.

Members were also made aware that the council had submitted a bid for High Street Funding. This would go towards the regeneration of the town, and the redevelopment of Healings Mill would feed into the wider work of Spring Gardens and Oldbury Road sites.

Progress reports on the mill development would take time and members agreed, that as the council does not have direct influence over it, a further report would only be submitted to the committee should there be any significant development that members needed to be advised of.

## **Warm and Well scheme update**

### **22 October 2019**

One of the council's key priorities is 'growing and supporting communities', and in line with this, it is a member of the Warm and Well scheme. Along with other local councils, Tewkesbury Borough Council contributes £20,000 per year for services provided by Severn Wye Energy Agency (which leads the scheme) to help achieve affordable warmth and tackling fuel poverty across the borough.

In October, members noted the main achievements during 2018/19, which included performance figures. The committee was very pleased to hear that the scheme has led to an overall annual carbon saving of 265 tonnes and whilst helping our residents it is also helping our environment too.

As part of the scheme, Severn Wye Energy Agency runs training sessions on fuel poverty, members agreed for a session to be arranged in the new year to gain further knowledge of the scheme.

## **Tewkesbury Borough News review**

### **11 February 2020**

Tewkesbury Borough News is the council's main proactive communication tool, which is delivered to all households in the borough.

In 2019, a member working group was set up to review Tewkesbury Borough News, which resulted in the council moving from a newspaper to a magazine format. This enabled a different, and more informal, tone to be applied across the articles and lent itself well to more interviews and features on people and organisations across the borough.

There were some concerns among members that the delivery of the magazine wasn't consistent across the borough, and officers assured members work had been carried out to improve this and it would be investigated further.

Members were updated on the progress in terms of the review's final recommendations – including a contract with a new designer and excellent feedback from the council's Citizens' Panel - and as all recommendations had been implemented, it was agreed that no further reports needed to be brought.

**Gloucestershire health and care overview and scrutiny committee 2020/21 financial contribution 11 February 2020**

Along with all other Gloucestershire districts, Tewkesbury Borough Council makes a contribution of £2,500 to Gloucestershire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A member of our Overview and Scrutiny Committee represents the council on the committee and reports back on the work carried out and the action being taken at a county level.

On an annual basis, the committee is asked to consider if the council should continue to be involved in the health and care committee, and whether value for money is being achieved.

Given the wealth of reports on vital issues which impact the lives of people across the borough, and how it enables us to act as an advocate for the communities in the borough, members felt strongly that we continue to have a representative on the committee and that the payment is continued.



**Looking forward**

The Overview and Scrutiny committee’s work programme for the year ahead is now being reviewed, as the borough emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic. As always, the programme will be flexible so any new areas for review can be added when required. The 2020-2021 draft work programme can be found in Appendix B

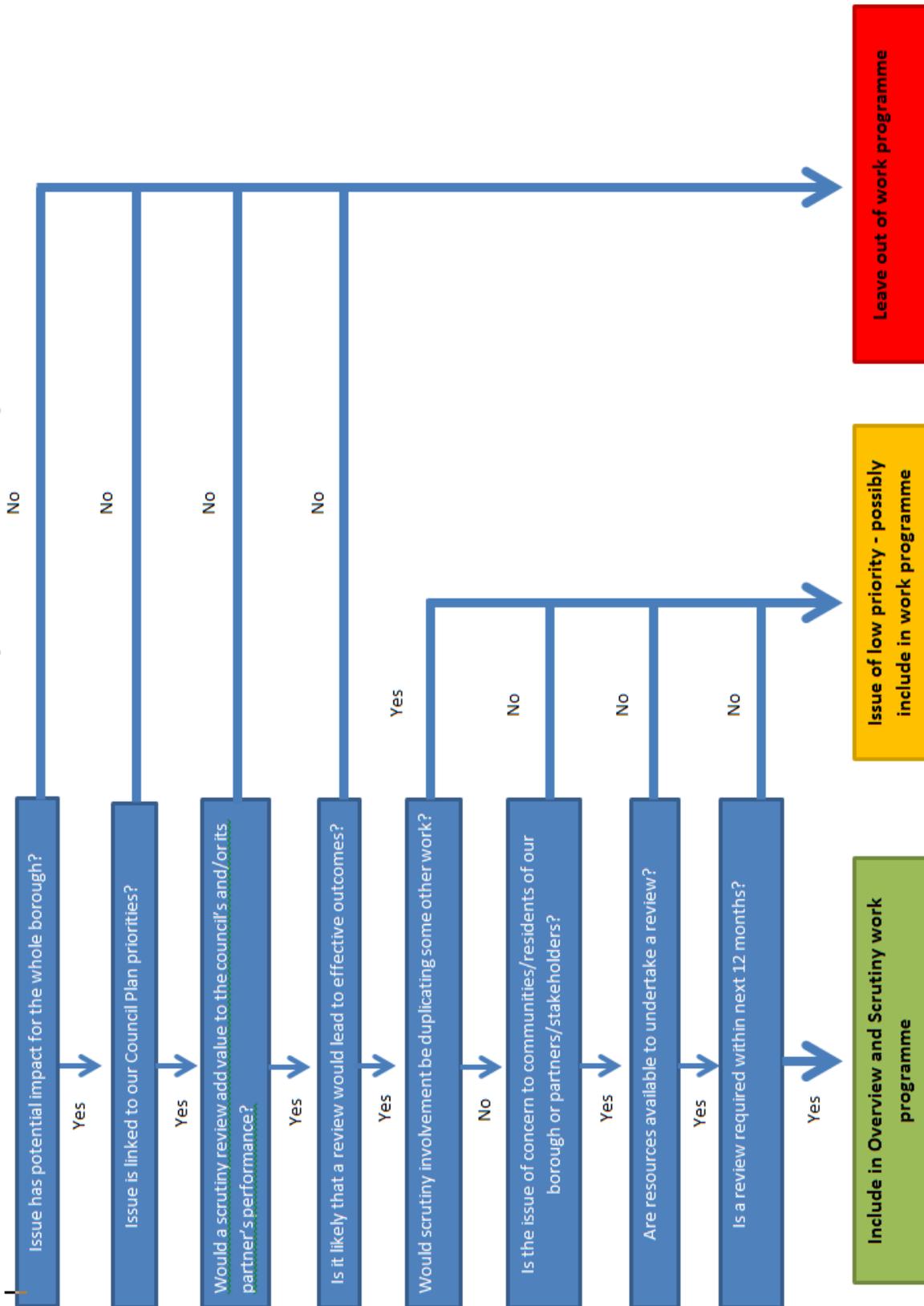
We know the impact of the pandemic will be felt for years to come. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be at the forefront of ensuring the council’s Covid-19 Corporate Recovery Plan is delivered effectively and efficiently. This will be achieved by monitoring and scrutinising the performance of the actions contained within the plan on a quarterly basis.

Alongside this, the committee will receive the first performance report of the new Council Plan (2020-2024), which includes two new priorities - ‘sustainable environment’ and ‘garden communities’. Other key areas of activity during the next financial year include monitoring the delivery of actions arising from the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge final report and ensuring other service-related improvements are delivered.

The committee looks forward to challenging its effectiveness and will be well supported at officer level, ensuring it continues to play an important role in helping deliver successful outcomes for both the council and its communities.



Flowchart on how to select a potential scrutiny review



## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

## REGULAR ITEMS:

- Executive Committee Forward Plan
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2020/21

<u>Additions to</u>
<u>Deletions from</u>

Committee Date: 1 September 2020			
Agenda Item	Overview of Agenda Item	Lead Officer	Has agenda item previously been deferred? Details and date of deferment required
Citizens' Advice Bureau Presentation	To consider the annual update on Citizens' Advice Bureau activity in the borough.	Economic and Community Development Manager	No.
Complaints Report	To consider the annual update to provide assurance that complaints are managed effectively.	Head of Corporate Services	No.
<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report</b>	<b>To approve the annual report as required by the Council's Constitution to ensure that the activities of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are promoted both internally and publicly to reinforce transparency and accountability in the democratic process.</b>	<b>Head of Corporate Services</b>	<b>Yes - moved from 14 April 2020 as meeting cancelled due to COVID-19.</b>

<b>Committee Date: 1 September 2020</b>			
<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Overview of Agenda Item</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Has agenda item previously been deferred? Details and date of deferment required</b>
Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel Update	To receive an update from the Council's representative on matters considered at the last meeting (17 July 2020).	N/A	No.
Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Update	To receive an update from the Council's representative on matters considered at the last meeting (14 July 2020).	N/A	No.
Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee Update	To receive an update from the Council's representative on matters considered at the last meeting (2 July 2020).	N/A	No.
<b>CONFIDENTIAL ITEM – Trade Waste Services</b>	<del>To consider the detailed business case on the pilot proposal and other third party options and to make a recommendation to the Executive Committee.</del> To receive a progress update.	Head of Community Services	Yes – moved from 16 June 2020 as meeting cancelled due to COVID-19.

<b>Committee Date: 13 October 2020</b>			
<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Overview of Agenda Item</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Has agenda item previously been deferred? Details and date of deferment required</b>
<b>Motion – Support for Tech Talent Charter</b>	To consider the motion and make a recommendation to Council in December.	Head of Corporate Services	No – motion deferred by Council on 28 July 2020.
<b>Performance Report – Quarter 1 2020/21</b>	To review and scrutinise the performance management information and, where appropriate, to require response or action from the Executive Committee.	Head of Corporate Services	Yes – moved from 1 September 2020 to allow new tracker to be produced and KPIs to be reviewed where necessary.  NB This may mean the recovery tracker (due to be approved at Executive Committee on 5 August 2020) can also be included.
<b>Review of Corporate Enforcement Policy</b>	To consider the revised Corporate Enforcement Policy and recommend to the Executive Committee that it be approved.	Head of Corporate Services / Counter Fraud Manager	Yes – moved from 14 April 2020 as meeting cancelled due to COVID-19.
<del>Depot Services Working Group Update</del>	<del>To receive the biannual update on the progress of the Depot Services Working Group.</del>	<del>Head of Community Services</del>	<b>Remove as the Working Group has not met for a number of months so no progress has been made. Next update scheduled for 6 April 2021.</b>

Committee Date: 13 October 2020			
Agenda Item	Overview of Agenda Item	Lead Officer	Has agenda item previously been deferred? Details and date of deferment required
Housing Strategy <b>Review</b> Monitoring Report	To consider the progress made in respect of the outcomes identified in the Housing Strategy Action Plan. <b>To approve the Terms of Reference and establish membership of the Working Group.</b>	Head of Community Services	<b>No – Working Group to be established to produce a new Housing Strategy. Proposed to take the draft revised strategy to O&amp;S on 21 April 2021.</b>
Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel Update	To receive an update from the Council's representative on matters considered at the last meeting (18 September 2020).	N/A	No.
Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Update	To receive an update from the Council's representative on matters considered at the last meeting (15 September 2020).	N/A	No.
Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee Update	To receive an update from the Council's representative on matters considered at the last meeting (16 September 2020).	N/A	No.

<b>Committee Date: 24 November 2020</b>			
<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Overview of Agenda Item</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Has agenda item previously been deferred? Details and date of deferment required</b>
<b>Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2017-21</b>	To consider the progress made against the delivery of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2017-21.	<b>Economic and Community Development Manager</b>	<b>Yes – moved from 16 June 2020 (meeting cancelled) to allow time for feedback from the business community and consider how COVID-19 impacts upon the strategy.</b>
<b>Update on Battlefield Project Plan, 2021 Group and Independent Tourism Review</b>	To receive an overview of the project plan and the 2021 group and an update on the independent tourism review <i>(as agreed at the O&amp;S meeting on 10 March 2020)</i> .	<b>Economic and Community Development Manager</b>	<b>Yes – moved from 1 September 2020 in order to tie in with the Economic Development Strategy due to its overlap.</b>
<b>Ubico Report 2019/20</b>	To consider the Ubico performance report for 2019/20.	<b>Head of Community Services</b>	<b>Yes – moved from 14 July 2020. The Ubico report needs to be revised significantly – performance monitoring resource at Ubico is limited and this will give time to review and revise the report for Committee.</b>
<b>Workforce Development Strategy Review</b>	To consider progress made against delivery of the Workforce Development Strategy.	<b>Head of Corporate Services</b>	<b>Yes – moved from 16 June 2020 (meeting cancelled) due to impact of COVID-19.</b>

<b>Committee Date: 24 November 2020</b>			
<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Overview of Agenda Item</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Has agenda item previously been deferred? Details and date of deferment required</b>
Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel Update	To receive an update from the Council's representative on matters considered at the last meeting (6 November 2020).	N/A	No.
Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Update	To receive an update from the Council's representative on matters considered at the last meeting (17 November 2020).	N/A	No.
Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee Update	To receive an update from the Council's representative on matters considered at the last meeting (21 October and 18 November 2020).	N/A	No.

<b>Committee Date: 12 January 2021</b>			
<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Overview of Agenda Item</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Has agenda item previously been deferred? Details and date of deferment required</b>
Performance Report – Quarter 2 2020/21 (including recovery plan tracker)	To review and scrutinise the performance management information and, where appropriate, to require response or action from the Executive Committee.	Head of Corporate Services.	No.
<b>Private Rented Housing Sector Scheme</b>	<b>To receive a report on progress of the Private Rented Housing Sector Scheme (as agreed at the O&amp;S meeting on 10 March 2020).</b>	<b>Head of Community Services</b>	<b>Yes – moved from 1 September 2020. The pilot was due to end in October but the countywide partnership is considering extending this – much of the work has paused due to COVID-19.</b>
<b>Parking Strategy Review</b>	<b>To endorse the findings of the Parking Strategy Review and approve the draft strategy for public consultation.</b>	<b>Head of Finance and Asset Management</b>	<b>Yes – moved from 16 June 2020. Working Group to recommence in September following a seven month hiatus – revised timetable suggests 1 July 2021 implementation rather than 1 April 2021.</b>
<b>Customer Care Strategy</b>	<b>To endorse the Customer Care Strategy and action plan for 2021/22.</b>	<b>Head of Corporate Services</b>	<b>Yes – moved from 14 April 2020 (meeting cancelled) due to impact of COVID-19.</b>
Communications Strategy 2020-24	To consider the progress made against the actions within the Communications Strategy during 2020/21 and to endorse the action plan for 2021/22.	Corporate Services Manager	No.

Committee Date: 12 January 2021			
Agenda Item	Overview of Agenda Item	Lead Officer	Has agenda item previously been deferred? Details and date of deferment required
Planning Committee Overturns	To review and scrutinise Planning Committee overturns 2019/20 (to include comparisons with other local authorities; a summary page to set out the trends that Officers had identified; and a Call-in section to include a reason for the application going to Planning Committee e.g. Member call-in, objection from Parish Council – <i>(as agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 23 July 2019)</i> ).	Head of Development Services	No.

Committee Date: 9 February 2021			
Agenda Item	Overview of Agenda Item	Lead Officer	Has agenda item previously been deferred? Details and date of deferment required
<b>Annual Report on Economic Growth</b>	<b>To receive an annual report on economic growth to include performance of the Growth Hub and businesses within the borough (as agreed at O&amp;S on 11 February 2020).</b>	<b>Economic and Community Development Manager.</b>	<b>No – previously in pending items.</b>
Gloucestershire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2021/22 Financial Contribution	To conduct the annual review of the effectiveness of the Council's involvement in the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee in order to authorise payment of the Council's contribution to the running costs for the forthcoming year.	Head of Corporate Services.	No.

<b>Committee Date: 9 March 2021</b>			
<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Overview of Agenda Item</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Has agenda item previously been deferred? Details and date of deferment required</b>
Performance Report – Quarter 3 2020/21 (including recovery plan tracker)	To review and scrutinise the performance management information and, where appropriate, to require response or action from the Executive Committee.	Head of Corporate Services	No.
<b>Parking Strategy Review</b>	<b>To review consultation responses and make a recommendation to the Executive Committee.</b>	<b>Head of Finance and Asset Management</b>	<b>Yes – moved from 1 September 2020. Working Group to recommence in September following a seven month hiatus – revised timetable suggests 1 July 2021 implementation rather than 1 April 2021.</b>
<b>Community Services Improvement Plan</b>	<b>To consider the progress made against the Community Services Improvement Plan.</b>	<b>Head of Community Services</b>	<b>Yes – moved from 14 July 2020. Little activity has taken place over recent months due to COVID-19.</b>

Committee Date: 6 April 2021			
Agenda Item	Overview of Agenda Item	Lead Officer	Has agenda item previously been deferred? Details and date of deferment required
Depot Services Working Group Update	To receive the biannual update on the progress of the Depot Services Working Group.	Head of Community Services	<b>No – however, this will be the first update to the Committee as a prior update has been removed from the meeting on 13 October.</b>  <b>The Working Group has not met for a number of months so no progress has been made.</b>
Housing Strategy <b>Review</b> Monitoring Report	<del>To consider the progress made in respect of the outcomes identified in the Housing Strategy Action Plan.</del> <b>To approve the revised Housing Strategy prior to consideration by Executive Committee/Council.</b>	Head of Community Services	No.
<del>Customer Care Strategy</del>	<del>To consider the progress made in relation to the actions contained within the Customer Care Strategy 2020/21 and to endorse the action plan for 2021/22.</del>	<del>Corporate Services Manager</del>	<b>No. – Update now scheduled for 12 January 2021 so this item will not be needed until April 2022.</b>
Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2020/21	To approve the annual report as required by the Council's Constitution to ensure that the activities of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are promoted, both internally and publicly, to reinforce transparency and accountability in the democratic process.	Head of Corporate Services.	No.

<b>PENDING ITEMS</b>	
<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Overview of Agenda Item</b>
<b>Council Tax Reduction Scheme Review</b>	<p><b>To approve Terms of Reference and establish membership of the Working Group.</b></p> <p><b>To endorse Working Group report and recommend it to the Executive Committee/Council for adoption</b></p> <p><i>Review previously scheduled to commence in April 2020, postponed as not appropriate in current climate.</i></p>
Review of Complaints Policy	Identified for review in the Corporate Policies and Strategies Report and agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 4 September 2018 – Overview and Scrutiny Committee advised at its meeting on 10 September 2019 that this will be via Workshop or Working Group.
Presentation from Severn Trent Water	Date to be agreed once work has finished (August 2020?) - To receive a presentation from Severn Trent Water on the works carried out to the Severn Ham as a result of the Scrutiny Review of Water Supply Outage – as agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 10 September 2019.
LGA Peer Challenge Report Action Plan	To monitor implementation of the action plan (currently awaiting peer challenge report).

ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN 2021/22 WORK PROGRAMME	
June 2021 – Corporate Policies and Strategies	<p>To consider the corporate polices and strategies and identify which will be reviewed by the Committee during 2020/21.</p> <p><i>Annual item but removed from 2020/21 work programme as unlikely to have capacity for additional reviews this year.</i></p>
July 2021 – Climate Change Strategy Annual Report	<p>To receive the annual report on the work of the Climate Change and Flood Risk Management Group.</p> <p><i>Annual report required 12 months after carbon audit and indicative action plan considered by Council.</i></p>
September 2021 – Development Services Improvement Plan	<p>To receive an update on the outcomes of the customer satisfaction survey on experience of planning application process and the pre-application planning advice service and, if relevant, an explanation on any outstanding actions</p> <p><i>Due to be taken to 16 June 2020 but delayed to allow time for the Technical Planning Manager to work with the team, including the new Head of Development Services, on survey results following decision for Business Transformation Manager to move to Gloucester City Council full-time.</i></p>

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# Audit and governance committee annual report

2019/20



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## Message from the Chair of Audit and Governance Committee



*Councillor Vernon Smith*

Welcome to the annual report of the Audit and Governance Committee. Having chaired the committee previously, I really appreciate the committee's breadth of work and I can dispel the myth it is all about financial matters. I would

encourage all members to read the reports presented at committee as they provide an excellent overview of the council's internal control environment.

For example, the committee has received reports from our internal audit team on the General Data Protection Regulation, Discretionary Housing Grants, Project Management, Serious and Organised Crime checklist, Emergency Planning etc. This is only a small snapshot but demonstrates the coverage across all council services.

We have a small but effective internal audit team who provide assurance to the committee as to what is working well or not. Likewise, we receive similar assurance from our external auditors, Grant Thornton. Between the two, they identify where improvements are required in relation to the various systems, processes and procedures operating across the Council. With regards to financial matters, it is comforting to report that the committee always receives positive reports on the quality of financial reporting and that the financial systems

supporting these reports are managed effectively. This can be directly credited to the council's Finance team. The Local Government Association Peer Challenge Team state in their final report 'there is an experienced and technically strong finance team'.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic at the end of the financial year. This has directly affected the committee. Like other council meetings, the impact of lockdown meant our March committee was cancelled. I would like to personally thank the Democratic Services Team and ICT team for jointly supporting our first ever virtual meeting in July. At this meeting, Members were also updated on the impact upon the internal audit team. During the early response stage to Covid-19, the three team members were re-deployed to support the administration of business grants. Assurance was received that some form of internal audit work would re-commence in the second half of the year.

Looking ahead, it is positive that the committee's work programme has been reviewed and re-synced. There is a great opportunity for the committee to support the council through its future challenges as it emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic. I look forward to receiving reports from our internal audit team, the finance team and our external auditors on how well the council has responded to and is recovering from Covid-19 and no doubt all will confirm our governance and internal control environments remain robust.

Finally, I thank all of the committee and officers for the support they provided me during the year. me during the year.

Best wishes,

**Councillor Vernon Smith**

## The role of Audit and Governance Committee

The role of the committee is an important one. The key role is that of assurance. The committee needs to be assured that the council's risk, governance and internal control environment is operating effectively. Given the council's complexity of services, processes, procedures and policies then there will always be occasions where improvements are required. Where these are identified, then the committee seek assurance the necessary improvements are monitored and implemented. The assurance provided to the committee comes from a number of sources including internal audit, external audit, the finance team and the Counter Fraud Unit.

## Work undertaken by the Audit and Governance Committee

### Annual Governance Statement (AGS)

It is a statutory requirement that the council publishes an AGS. In layman's terms, the document reflects the state of play in relation to the council's overall governance arrangements. A review of these arrangements is undertaken by the internal Corporate Governance Group. The AGS recognises improvements made to the governance framework during the year and identifies any significant governance issues that need addressing. As a result of Covid-19, final approval of the AGS has been extended from July 2020 to November 2020. This is in line with the national extension to approve the Council's Statement of Accounts. A draft AGS has been published and at present, the current significant governance issues identified are shown on page 3.

Governance issue	Proposed action	Timescale	Responsible officer/group
<b>1</b> Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) - governance arrangements	Deliver key internal audit recommendations; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall governance arrangements to be formalised</li> <li>• Operational processes to be agreed e.g. monitoring, reporting and reconciliation</li> <li>• Greater clarity of S123 list</li> </ul>	March 2021	CIL Working Group (Head of Development as lead officer)
<b>2</b> Local Code of Corporate Governance	Develop and approve a new code of governance.	April 2021	Head of Corporate Services
<b>3</b> COVID-19	In line with the CIPFA briefing note undertake a lessons learnt analysis from responding to COVID-19.	March 2021	Corporate Management Team
<b>4</b> Administration of Discretionary Housing Payments	Implementation of internal audit recommendations including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collection and assessment of evidence to support the integrity of DHP applications.</li> <li>• Review of the DHP policy including a review of non-essential items.</li> <li>• Independent verification check.</li> </ul>	October 2020	Revenues and Benefits manager
<b>5</b> General Data Protection Regulation	Development of a new GDPR action plan.	October 2020	Head of Corporate Services

The final AGS will be approved at Audit and Governance Committee on 4 November 2020. The committee then receive progress reports to gain assurance the issues are being resolved.

## Effectiveness of Audit and Governance Committee

It was pleasing that the recently published Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge report complimented the council on its member induction programme. With new members on the Audit and Governance Committee then the induction programme will hopefully have helped those members hit the ground running. It is important the effectiveness of the committee is maximised. For 2019/20 the membership of the committee was increased from 7 members to 9 members and the committee renamed to include 'Governance' within its title and its terms of reference updated accordingly. Throughout 2019/20 the internal audit team have continued to meet with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the committee and the Lead Member for Corporate Governance to provide an overview of internal audit activity. Moving forward, further training and development for the committee will be considered where appropriate.

## Internal Audit - Public Sector Internal Audit Standards

The work of internal audit is pivotal to the committee receiving independent assurance on how well the council's internal control environment is operating. All work of internal audit is governed by a set of standards – Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and the Chief Audit Executive (Head of Corporate Services) ensures compliance with these standards. Overall, it is comforting that the work of internal audit is undertaken in an independent, professional and objective manner. This provides assurance to the committee as to the standard of work being undertaken and they can place reliance upon that work.

## Annual summary of Internal Audit work

At each committee meeting, a monitoring report is presented of the areas audited by the internal audit team. Examples of audit assignments completed during the year include; emergency planning, debtors, fraud and corruption framework, serious and organised crime framework – licensing, procurement cards, disabled facility grants, GDPR, risk management, discretionary housing payments and complaints. In addition, the team have provided support to various aspects of corporate improvement, particularly around project work such as the pool cars, website review risk register and planning scanning cost analysis. For each area audited, an audit opinion is given on how well it is controlled. It is encouraging that the bulk of opinions conclude either a satisfactory or good level of control.

As the council is responsible for an array of services with varying degrees of complexity, then it should not be unexpected the opinion will not always be positive. In audit terms where the level of control is not as it should be, a 'limited' assurance opinion is given. Where there is a fundamental lapse in control, this can lead to an 'unsatisfactory' opinion. With regards to the latter, only one such opinion was reached during the course of the year. This was in relation to Discretionary Housing Payments. There are administered within the Revenues & Benefits Team and are payments made to those who are struggling to pay housing costs. The audit identified significant non-compliance with the agreed policy. This was discussed at Audit and Governance Committee on 29 July 2020 and the committee's concerns noted. A follow up report on the progress made in implementing the internal audit recommendations has been requested for the next meeting on 23 September 2020.

A key part of the work of the team is to follow up all recommendations made to give assurance they have actually been implemented. An allocated number of days are included in the internal audit plan to accommodate this work. Over 60 recommendations have been followed up during the year, the status of these recommendations are reported to the committee as they are followed up. Where recommendations have yet to be implemented, new dates for implementation are agreed and reported to committee. The committee have the ability to call-in officers where implementation dates have slipped. In terms of recommendations made, the team have put forward nearly 40 recommendations across the activities audited. Of these 40, only 3 were designated as 'high' which demonstrates the robustness of the general internal control environment.

### Impact of Covid-19 on the internal audit team

The COVID-19 pandemic presents the Council with a significant challenge to respond to the needs of our residents, businesses and communities. This includes working collectively with other key partners to protect, shield and support those in need, distribute grant funding to many of our businesses and implement remote working practices in order to manage the crisis and continue to deliver core services. The Council's response and recovery framework involves all service areas. In the very early stages of the response this meant redeploying resources to priority areas.

One key priority area was supporting and advising the business community and this initially involved setting up a dedicated business 'cell' essentially led by the Growth Hub team. Following the government's announcement and subsequent publication on 1 April

2020 of their financial support through the Small Business Grant Fund and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund this led to the creation of a 'sub-cell' to oversee the administration of these business grants. Led by the Operational Managers from Finance and Revenues and Benefits and supported by officers from both services plus the internal audit team, this has seen nearly £17 million of grants awarded to nearly 1,500 businesses. The internal audit team also supported the Local Discretionary Business Grant Scheme. This was set up to accommodate certain small businesses previously outside the scope of the original business grant funds scheme. As a result of redeploying the internal audit team, all business as usual internal audit work has been suspended.

Work will re-commence on 1 October 2020, albeit with a reduced resource. One member of the team will remain deployed within the business cell until March 2021. An internal audit work plan for the period October 2020- March 2021 will be presented to Audit and Governance Committee on 23 September 2020. The committee were appraised of the impact on internal audit at their July meeting. The committee expressed their gratitude for the role the team had played to support the businesses within the borough.

As a result of the pandemic and it's impact across all services, the team are currently working with operational managers to review and agree new implementation dates in relation to internal audit recommendations.

## Financial reporting

As you can see from the above, it isn't all about finance, though it does remain an integral part of the committee's remit. In relation to financial matters, the committee has received and considered the following reports: -

- At its meeting held on 24 July 2019, the committee considered and approved the council's 2018/19 Statement of Accounts (SoA). This is no mean task as they are technically complex. Excellent training is given by the finance team so the committee can understand the key elements. Committee were greatly impressed to receive a positive report from the council's external auditors, Grant Thornton on the accuracy and promptness of the accounts. The impact of Covid-19 on the council's finances and the administration of the financial framework is well recorded within various reports, updates and briefings to members. This is an impact on all councils and as such, the national deadline for the approval of the 2019/20 SoA has been amended from July 2020 to November 2020. A special Audit and Governance Committee will be held on 4 November to consider and approve the council's 2019/20 SoA.
- Letter of representation – prior to approving the accounts, committee consider a statement from the council's Head of Finance and Asset Management on the principles under which the accounts have been prepared.
- Statement of Accounting Policies and Critical Judgements – in advance of the year-end closedown and preparation of accounts, committee also received a report on the judgements that management have made in the process of applying the authority's accounting policies that have the most significant effect on the amounts recognised in the financial statements.

## External audit assurance

In addition to the work of internal audit, reliance on how well the council is performing is given by the council's external auditors, Grant Thornton. A summary of their findings during the year were as follows;

- The audit findings for year ended 31 March 2019 were presented to Audit and Governance Committee on 15 July 2019. This was a positive report and concluded that in relation to financial statements these give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council and its income and expenditure for the year and prepared in accordance with legislation. They were satisfied that, in all significant aspects, the Council had proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.
- A progress report on the audit of the 2019/20 financial year was presented to Audit and Governance Committee on 22 January 2020. This was mainly a scene setter to advise members on the approach to the audit and an overview of the interim fieldwork. Similar to the council, the work of Grant Thornton has been severely impacted by Covid-19. An audit of the council's 2019/20 SoA is currently in progress and as with most ways of working is being done remotely.

## Serious crime framework

The committee received an annual update on the Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) checklist to be used by Local Authorities to assess their serious and organised crime risk. The checklist is a relatively simple and resource light tool. First considered by committee in December 2018, the checklist is broken down across five themes. Each theme is underpinned by a number of questions. Each question is assessed

as either 'good', 'acceptable', or 'needs improvement'.  
The five themes are:

- Awareness, strategy, guidance and training.
- Risk management.
- Communication and information/intelligence sharing.
- Whistleblowing.
- Assurance.

It was positive to hear that the council is still considered low risk to the susceptibility of SOC. The work of both internal audit and the Counter Fraud Unit helps support ongoing assurance as to the adequacy of the council's arrangements to remain low risk.

## Gloucestershire Counter Fraud Unit update

The committee receives a six month update on the work of the Counter Fraud Unit (CFU). The CFU works directly on behalf of all the Gloucestershire authorities, West Oxfordshire District Council and other public sector bodies such as Cheltenham Borough Homes. Included within the updates were examples of how the CFU has supported the Council. These include;

- Delivery of fraud awareness training for staff and Members.
- Processing and investigation of cases identified through the National Fraud Initiative.
- Review of Business Rates valuation list.
- Investigation of benefit related fraud.
- Assisting with disciplinary investigations.
- Assisting with intelligence around enforcement offences such as planning and alleged fly tipping offences.
- The development and update of current and new policies such as whistleblowing, fraud and corruption, corporate enforcement etc.

As part of the operational Covid-19 recovery plan, officers will work with the CFU Manager to review and re-sync the 2020/21 work programme of the team.

## Health and Safety (H&S) annual report

H&S is a key part of the council's governance framework. As such, committee request an annual report to gain assurance that the council is a safe and healthy place to work. The key messages within the report were;

- The council has a health, safety and welfare policy which is reviewed regularly and supported by a suite of other related policies e.g. managing contractors safely policy, the control of substances hazardous to health, cemetery and memorial safety management, lone working etc.
- An annual action plan is in place.
- Quarterly reporting to corporate management team on both operational and strategic issues.
- The council being awarded re-accreditation for the Workforce Wellbeing Charter.
- The Keep Safe, Stay Healthy Group is a positive forum to oversee all operational aspects of the council's health and safety responsibilities.
- The completion of risk assessments for all service areas.
- Programme of training e.g. resilience training, assertiveness and dealing with difficult people, managing contractors safely, training for mental health first aiders
- Robust reporting mechanisms in place for the key contracts e.g. leisure centre, Ubico.

Moving forward into 2020/21 and the annual report due to be presented at Audit and Governance Committee in December 2020. This will no doubt provide an overview on how health and safety work was central to the council's response and recovery to Covid-19.

## Risk management

During 2019/20, committee received at each meeting the corporate risk register. The register is a useful tool to demonstrate in a concise manner that corporate risks are being considered and managed. The format of the register is one which is commonly used throughout local government. There is no statutory requirement to have a register in place but it is seen as good practice. It also helps the Audit and Governance Committee fulfil its risk management responsibilities. Internal Audit supports the Audit and Governance Committee in gaining assurance that the risks are being effectively managed. The risk register is currently under review to take account of the new council plan and the impact of Covid-19.

## Looking forward

As a committee we will get used to the 'new' norm and continue to operate in a virtual environment. The committee's work programme for 2020/21 has been reviewed and approved so we look forward to receiving the various reports that will hopefully continue to demonstrate how well the council is run. Key reports and activities will be to see the internal audit function back up and running, presentation of the delayed 2019/20 accounts and the updated risk register.

## 2019/20 Audit and Governance Committee members



Cllr Cate Cody



Cllr Kevin Cromwell  
(to 30 September 2019)



Cllr Louise Gerrard



Cllr Pauline Godwin



Cllr David Gray  
(from 1 October 2019)



Cllr Heather McLain  
VICE-CHAIR



Cllr Paul McLain



Cllr Helen Munro



Cllr Paul Smith



Cllr Vernon Smith  
CHAIR



Cllr Mike Sztymiak  
LEAD MEMBER

**Mike Dawson**  
**Chief Executive**  
Tewkesbury Borough Council

