

# TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Council held at the Council Offices, Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury on Tuesday, 12 April 2022 commencing at 6:00 pm**

## **Present:**

The Worshipful the Mayor

Councillor A S Reece

## **and Councillors:**

K Berliner, R A Bird, G F Blackwell, G J Bocking, C L J Carter, C M Cody, K J Cromwell, M Dean, R D East, P A Godwin, M A Gore, D J Harwood, M L Jordan, E J MacTiernan, J R Mason, H C McLain, P D McLain, C E Mills, H S Munro, C Reid, J K Smith, R J G Smith, V D Smith, C Softley, R J Stanley, P D Surman, M G Szymiak, M J Williams and P N Workman

## **CL.73 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- 73.1 The evacuation procedure, as noted on the Agenda, was advised to those present.
- 73.2 Councillor Mason led a short tribute to Honorary Alderman Major Tom Hancock DL who had sadly passed away and whose memorial was being held later in the month. Councillor Mason explained that the Hancock family had arrived in Winchcombe in the early 1970s and Major Tom had become a Borough Councillor in 1975, serving as Borough Mayor in 1986/87 and becoming an Honorary Alderman in 1995. He had several community-based interests including being president of the Winchcombe branch of the Royal British Legion, Chair of the Gloucestershire Playing Field Association and his work for Winchcombe Church and Probus among others. The tribute was followed by one minute's silence.
- 73.3 The Mayor made a statement regarding the war in Ukraine:
- Elected Members of Tewkesbury Borough Council condemn Russia's brutal, unprovoked invasion of the democratic, sovereign nation of Ukraine. We support democracy, sovereignty, the rule of law and the rights of individuals, which must always prevail against violence and oppression.
- Our thoughts are with all Ukrainian people in dealing with this terrible ordeal, and this Council is focused on taking the practical actions available to support Ukrainian refugees who have been offered places to stay in our Borough. It's also important to confirm that this Council has no direct financial links with Russia, either investments or purchases, in particular energy.
- Together with the people from our communities who have kindly offered accommodation to Ukrainian guests, we will seek to ensure that they receive the warmest possible Gloucestershire welcome.

## **CL.74 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

- 74.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J H Evetts, D W Gray, J W Murphy (Deputy Mayor and Vice-Chair), P W Ockelton, P E Smith, S Thomson and R J E Vines.

## **CL.75 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

75.1 The Committee's attention was drawn to the Tewkesbury Borough Council Code of Conduct which was adopted by the Council on 26 June 2012 and took effect from 1 July 2012.

75.2 The following declarations were made:

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Application No./Item</b>	<b>Nature of Interest (where disclosed)</b>	<b>Declared Action in respect of Disclosure</b>
K J Cromwell	Item 9 – Shopfronts, Shutters and Signage: Design Guidance for Tewkesbury Borough Supplementary Planning Document.	The Councillor owned two shops on the High Street.	Would speak and vote.
H C McLain	Item 10 – Tewkesbury Borough Heritage Strategy.	The Councillor owned a scheduled ancient monument on land in the Borough.	Would not speak or vote and would leave the meeting for consideration of the item.
P D McLain	Item 10 – Tewkesbury Borough Heritage Strategy.	The Councillor owned a scheduled ancient monument on land in the Borough.	Would not speak or vote and would leave the meeting for consideration of the item.

75.3 There were no further declarations made on this occasion.

#### **CL.76 MINUTES**

76.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2022, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

#### **CL.77 ITEMS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

77.1 There were no items from members of the public.

#### **CL.78 MEMBER QUESTIONS PROPERLY SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES**

78.1 There were no Member questions on this occasion.

#### **CL.79 STATE OF THE BOROUGH PRESENTATION**

79.1 The Leader of the Council introduced his state of the Borough presentation which

set out the Council's key achievements for 2021/22:

- Finance and Resources Key Achievements – the budget for 2022/23, despite the financial challenges facing the Council, included the addition of £450,050 of ongoing growth in services and £392,548 of one-off growth to further support services and Council Plan ambitions; Council Tax remained one of the lowest in the country; a saving of £77,000 had been made on the successful completion of the Council's end-to-end bulky waste review; four new leases were agreed within the commercial property portfolio thereby mitigating any void tenancies – overall annual rental income was £3.2million; and in its first year, the Business Transformation Team had been recognised nationally by winning bronze at the iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards for the Best Transformation Team and were shortlisted for the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Team of the Year award.
- Economic Growth Key Achievements – the shop front grant scheme had successfully launched in September 2021 which was one of the key strands of the £2.1million High Street Heritage Action Zone programme with other strands including the public realm, upper floors scheme, traditional skills and Healings Mill; the Growth Hub had delivered 53 events throughout the year which included one to one events, online business workshops to help support businesses with branding, social media, developing eco-businesses etc; continued to work closely with Gloucestershire County Council to secure transport improvements for the delivery of an all-ways Junction at J10 on the M5; and, in November 2021, the Council worked with partners to celebrate the significance of 2021 for Tewkesbury with one of the key events – Tewkesbury Festival of Light – attracting more than 5,000 attendees.
- Housing and Communities Key Achievements – a new Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2022-26 had been developed and was ready for adoption at the current Council meeting; consultation on the main modifications Tewkesbury Borough Local Plan had finished in January 2022 with adoption expected in Spring 2022; the Council had continued to work with partners within Tewkesbury and Brockworth through the Integrated Locality Partnership Scheme which looked at community wellbeing and building community resilience to help lead to positive health outcomes; the Council had supported over 300 community groups with funding advice, delivered over 150 affordable homes within the Borough, prevented 137 homelessness cases and provided housing advice to a further 170 cases.
- Customer First Key Achievements – the Business Transformation team had implemented the new digital platform Liberty Create with over 50 processes being reviewed and improved helping the Council to provide its customers with a significantly enhanced online experience; the bulky waste service had been completely transformed with a new contractor having been appointed and now included a recycling option and the facility to book the service online - income had increased by over 100% and customer wait times had reduced from five/six weeks to less than one week; the Council had implemented a new 4Cs 'have your say' framework for customers, was committed to continuous service improvement and had implemented service reviews in key service areas: Development Management, Licensing and One Legal; and a new digital recruitment system had been launched supported with a new recruitment microsite. In terms of Development Management, this was the most substantial service review the Council had undertaken with a reserve of £80,000 to support delivery plus corporate support – this meant the review was significantly different to others as it was resourced, had a corporate profile, was not siloed and had a 'whole 'team'

approach. The project comprised five workstreams looking at performance, structure and resources, procedures and processes, customer focus and engagement and Planning Committee effectiveness. The review had three underlying principles of customer focus, culture and transformation. The Development Management service review was still in its infancy but a monthly update newsletter had already been introduced, a set of objectives was being developed to show what the team wanted the service to look like, customer care training was being set up and a grant had been received from the government for a pilot project to develop a digital planning application tracker. There had also been a significant reduction in the backlog of older applications as well as an uplift in planning decisions/recommendations and early signs of improvement in householder application decisions.

- Garden Communities Key Achievements – a Communications Officer had been recruited to provide dedicated support to the Garden Town Team; Tewkesbury Borough Council had been working closely with Cheltenham Borough Council and landowners to deliver the Golden Valley Garden Community, with HBD X Factory being selected as its preferred development partner; work had started on producing a sustainable strategy for Tewkesbury Garden Town; and the Council had been working with stakeholders and SEC Newgate (engagement consultants) to prepare and create a community engagement strategy for the Garden Town.
- Sustainable Environment Key Achievements – the Council had delivered the first year of its climate change and carbon reduction action plan and had recently appointed a Carbon Reduction Programme Officer to further its ambitions; the Garden Waste Club had nearly 20,000 customers enabling them to dispose of garden waste in a sustainable way; the Council had introduced a small Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) kerbside recycling scheme and had collected over seven tonnes of equipment to date; a Heritage Engagement Officer had been appointed to review a local list of non-designated heritage assets within the Borough; multiple improvements had been carried out to the Grangefield public open space in Bishops Cleeve which had enhanced the biodiversity and natural habitats for wildlife; and £700,000 (external grant funding/internal reserve) had been approved for the solar canopy in the Council Offices car park which would provide 75% of the energy consumed by the Council with the rest exported to the Leisure Centre. In addition, solar powered car parking machines had been installed across the Borough and monitoring and reporting procedures were in place across the Council's estate. The majority of the pool cars were now electric, an electric/hybrid salary sacrifice scheme was being explored by the Human Resources team, a new tree management policy had been approved, with small amounts of tree planting and biodiversity improvements undertaken on Council owned land, and surveys of all key buildings e.g. Roses Theatre were being undertaken.
- Our COVID-19 Response – the ongoing work of the business grants team had been phenomenal administering over 18 grant schemes throughout the year resulting in 5,477 individual grants being awarded in excess of £31.6million; measures had been put in place to enable the safe reopening of all the Council's buildings in line with the government's roadmap; the Council had awarded a total of £423,600 to residents through the COVID-19 test and trace support scheme; worked with Gloucestershire County Council in delivering the holiday activities fund and providing food vouchers during the summer and winter school holidays - over 2,070 food vouchers were issued; supported various voluntary and community sector groups with COVID-19 small community grants since the scheme started in April 2020,

more than £128,499 had been awarded; the Countywide COVID Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) provided £29,000 to help more than 20 households; actively supported the countywide response and recovery to homelessness; the Growth Hub had continued to support business throughout the pandemic with a dedicated 'survive and thrive' section on its website which helped provide COVID-19 support; the welcome back fund had been delivered and the reopening of the High Street safely fund had been extended; the successful operational recovery of Tewkesbury Leisure Centre had been supported in partnership with Places Leisure; and Ubico, particularly in relation to waste collection, had continued its excellent work to minimise the number of missed collections across the pandemic period.

- Looking Forward – the Council would continue to deliver its Council Plan priorities incorporating the ongoing COVID-19 recovery to help support the communities within the Borough; the Business Transformation team would continue to build upon its successes to date and the team's new priorities would include support to licensing, planning, community safety and trade waste; the challenging financial climate drove a desire to improve further and do more with less – with austerity came innovation and the Council had proven over the years to be good at that; support would be provided for central government policies like Ukrainian refugees and the Council Tax energy rebate scheme; and the Council remained committed to its ethos 'Better for Customers, Better for Business' as it wanted to ensure its customers could interact with the Council in a way that worked for them. Delivery of the year two carbon reduction action plan would be a major project including the introduction of carbon reduction champions for each service area supported with carbon literacy training for key members of staff. There would be further improvements made to the Public Services Centre including the potential retrofit of LED lighting, water flow restrictors and reducing the out of hours energy consumption, the installation of EV charging points across Council owned car parks, commencement of the Roses Theatre decarbonisation plans, further improvements to the energy efficiency of the Council's domestic housing stock and development of a Boroughwide carbon reduction plan to support residents, communities and businesses. The Council aimed to be carbon neutral by 2030.

79.2 During the discussion which ensued, a Member requested an update on the Golden Valley Garden Community and was advised that a session would be provided for all Members in due course. Members thanked Officers for their hard work throughout the pandemic and felt the achievements which had been outlined highlighted the commitment of the Council's Officers to the Borough. One Member expressed her concerns about the work of the Integrated Local Health Partnership in Brockworth and its lack of meetings and the Chief Executive undertook to speak to the Member outside of the meeting to resolve her concerns. Another Member referred to the recently refreshed and relaunched armed forces covenant which the Council had signed up to and he advised that he had attended a very interesting presentation on the subject which he felt would be useful for all Members to receive so they could learn about the important work the covenant promoted.

79.3 Accordingly, it was

**RESOLVED** That the state of the Borough presentation be **NOTED**.

**CL.80 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE****Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2022-26**

- 80.1 At its meeting on 2 March 2022, the Executive Committee had considered the Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2022-26 and recommended that the Strategy be approved, subject to the wording around Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople being reviewed for consistency.
- 80.2 The report which was considered by the Executive Committee had been circulated with the Agenda for the current meeting at Pages No. 11-41. The Strategy circulated with the Agenda had been updated following the Executive Committee.
- 80.3 The Chair of the Executive Committee proposed the recommendation of the Executive Committee and the Vice-Chair seconded.
- 80.4 A Member expressed the view that the objectives were very good and she thanked Officers for their hard work under difficult circumstances. Referring to the consultation responses, she felt the response rate was quite poor and questioned whether this was to do with the jargon used, website navigation issues or the fact that people could not complete the consultation online easily. She also felt the statement that 9% of households were in fuel poverty would likely be out of date soon, that only managing to house 17% was poor given the 510 empty homes in the Borough, that a lot of people could be housed within Healings Mill if it was redeveloped for housing and that the lack of five year housing supply was an ongoing issue that needed to be addressed. She was also concerned that developers were not reducing the impact on the environment as they were still building properties with no solar, no electric vehicle (EV) points, without decent insulation and grey water capability which she felt was a great loss. She also noted that Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) did not allow for the installation of dropped kerbs which was something many disabled people needed. Another Member indicated that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had recently received an interesting presentation from Bromford Housing about modular housing which was eco-friendly and she questioned whether Tewkesbury Borough had considered anything similar. In response, the Lead Member for Clean and Green Environment confirmed that a similar development was proposed to be built in Winchcombe. The development had planning permission, but work had not yet commenced.
- 80.5 Accordingly, it was
- RESOLVED** That the Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2022-26 be **APPROVED**.

**Statement of Community Involvement**

- 80.6 At its meeting on 30 March 2022, the Executive Committee had considered the Statement of Community Involvement and recommended that it be adopted.
- 80.7 The report which was considered by the Executive Committee had been circulated with the Agenda for the current meeting at Pages No. 42-89.
- 80.8 The Chair of the Executive Committee proposed the recommendation of the Executive Committee and the Vice-Chair seconded.
- 80.9 A Member questioned whether Parish Councils had been consulted and was advised that they had, with several representations having been received. Amendments had been made in accordance with comments made about the Statement of Community Involvement. Another Member expressed the view that the approach outlined in the Statement of Community Involvement was a big step forward and that individuals being written to about development in their immediate

area was much more helpful than just putting up green Notices in the proximity of a planning application.

80.10 Accordingly, it was

**RESOLVED** That the Statement of Community Involvement be **ADOPTED**.

#### **Local Development Scheme**

80.11 At its meeting on 30 March 2022, the Executive Committee had considered the Local Development Plan and recommended that it be adopted.

80.12 The report which was considered by the Executive Committee had been circulated with the Agenda for the current meeting at Pages No. 90-101.

80.13 The Chair of the Executive Committee proposed the recommendation of the Executive Committee and the Vice-Chair seconded.

80.14 The Head of Development Services confirmed that the Inspector's report on the Borough Plan had now been received and Officers would be examining it before it was presented to Councillors, but it was intended that would be sometime in Spring 2022.

80.15 Accordingly, it was

**RESOLVED** That the Local Development Scheme be **ADOPTED**.

#### **CL.81 SHOPFRONTS, SHUTTERS AND SIGNAGE: DESIGN GUIDANCE FOR TEWKESBURY BOROUGH SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

81.1 The report of the Interim Planning Policy Manager, circulated at Pages No. 102-121, attached the Shopfronts, Shutters and Signage: Design Guidance for Tewkesbury Borough Supplementary Planning Document which Members were asked to adopt. The report also asked that authority be delegated to the Head of Development Services to make any necessary final minor amendments to the document in order for it to be published in final form.

81.2 The Lead Member for Built Environment explained that the local planning authority may prepare Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to set out more detailed guidance as required. This SPD promoted good shop front and signage design across the Borough and best practice whilst encouraging innovation and design and supporting the historic environment. The SPD would complement the High Street Action Zone scheme within Tewkesbury Town. In line with the regulations, the SPD had been published twice for consultation. No new substantive comments had been received in relation to the second consultation and, accordingly, the Council was asked to adopt the SPD.

81.3 A Member expressed concern about how the guidance could be imposed on shop owners in retrospect and how new owners would know about the SPD before they designed their shop front and signage. In response, the Head of Development Services explained that it would be key to publicise the SPD as widely as possible so everyone was aware of the best practice contained within in. It was the responsibility of the property owner / occupant to ensure they had looked into any guidance that should be followed but, equally, Officers understood how important communication was. The SPD put the 'meat on the bones' of the policies in the Development Plan to ensure people had a full understanding of what was expected and what the Council did and did not want to see in its High Streets. The effect of the SPD would be monitored and owners worked with proactively over the next few months which it was felt was a positive approach. Another Member questioned whether all shopkeepers would be written to about the requirements and whether a certification of appreciation could be provided to those that followed it. The Head of Development Services confirmed this was not the intention as that approach would

be extremely resource intensive and costly to the Council; however, she would be working with the Council's Communications team to ensure the right messages were sent out, and with Town and Parish Councils to spread the word to as many people as possible. The SPD was not meant to deter businesses but to make the High Streets more attractive. National chains did have their own branding but were usually able to change that in line with local guidelines so it was not something that would discourage a retailer from opening in a particular place.

81.4 In respect of the number of shopfronts which were currently not compliant, the Head of Development Services advised this was not information she had to hand but she was aware of several enforcement cases across the Borough. She reiterated that the SPD set out what the Council considered to be acceptable. A Member welcomed the document and thanked Officers for the level of detail that it contained; she was of the view that the Council needed to aim high to bring tourists in.

81.5 Upon being proposed and seconded, it was

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Shopfronts, Shutters and Signage: Design Guidance for Tewkesbury Borough Supplementary Planning Document be **ADOPTED**.
2. That authority be delegated to the Head of Development Services to make any necessary final minor amendments to the document in order for it to be published in final form.

**CL.82 TEWKESBURY BOROUGH HERITAGE STRATEGY**

82.1 The report of the Interim Planning Policy Manager, circulated at Pages No. 122-147, attached the draft Tewkesbury Heritage Strategy which Members were asked to adopt. The report also asked that authority be delegated to the Head of Development Services to make any necessary minor amendments to the draft document in order for it to be published in final form.

82.2 The Lead Member for Built Environment advised that the Strategy had been drafted to reflect the rich cultural heritage of the Borough and its implementation had been encouraged by Historic England when it had provided its comments on the Borough Plan. The Council had statutory duties and powers and an action plan for future initiatives and the strategy reflected those duties. The initial draft of the strategy had been considered by the Executive Committee in September 2021 and public consultation had been held between September and October 2021 with a wide range of organisations being asked to comment. The responses received were detailed at Appendix 2 to the report and, in accordance with the Executive Committee's resolution that subject to there being no substantive comments raised during the consultation, the Council was asked to adopt the Heritage Strategy.

82.3 A Member noted that Healings Mill in Tewkesbury was in a terrible condition and he questioned whether there was anything in the strategy which would enable the building to be saved/developed. In response, the Conservation Officer confirmed that the strategy recognised there was an issue with the building and it was an objective to do something to address that. The Council had to work with private owners and they were looking at taking some funds from the Heritage Action Zone to address some of the issues. Another Member indicated that she had been a Member of the Council since 2011 and Healings Mill had been in a state of disrepair since before that. She questioned how long the Council could go on dealing with owners who were perfectly happy to let the building fall further into disrepair without doing anything about it – it was her view that the time for talking had passed. The Head of Development Services reassured the Council that conversations were ongoing with the existing owners and there were options being considered.

82.4 A Member referred to point 10 at Page No. 134 and questioned whether what was

written was actually what was meant as it seemed to infer that the perceived threat of climate change would produce lower temperatures, but her understanding was that it was generally accepted that climate change would increase temperatures. In response, a Member felt it would be more accurate to refer to 'extremes of temperatures' and the Head of Development Services agreed this would be a good amendment. Another Member questioned whether the Church at Stanley Pontlarge, which was a Grade II\* listed building, could be included in the Schedule of Ancient Monuments. The Conservation Officer confirmed that Scheduled Ancient Monument status was designated by the Secretary of State not the Council.

82.5 Upon being proposed and seconded, it was

- RESOLVED**
1. That the draft Tewkesbury Borough Heritage Strategy be **ADOPTED**, subject to the amendment of point 10 on Page No. 134, to refer to 'extremes of temperatures'.
  2. That authority be delegated to the Head of Development Services to make any necessary minor amendments to the draft document in order for it to be published in final form.

### **CL.83 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT**

83.1 Attention was drawn to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report 2021/22, circulated with the Agenda at Pages No. 148-182, which Members were asked to note.

83.2 In the absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee advised that it had been positive that for the majority of the year Councillors had been able to meet face to face. In terms of the Committee's work programme during the year, it had been comprehensive and varied. It continued to monitor the delivery of the Council Plan and COVID-19 Corporate Recovery Plan, had reviewed the delivery of key strategies such as Economic Development and Tourism, Housing and Homelessness and Workforce Development and considered strategies on the Council's digital approach and social media prior to approval by Executive Committee. It had also received informative presentations from external bodies such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau, Bromford Housing, Severn Trent and Ubico. The Committee would look to build on this even more as it moved into 2022/23.

83.3 On behalf of the Committee, she offered thanks to Councillors David Gray, John Murphy and Jill Smith who kept the Committee updated on the Police and Crime Panel, Gloucestershire Health Overview Scrutiny Committee and the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee. Moving forward the Committee was looking to build on its effectiveness and its work programme for next year was shaping up well. She offered her thanks to all Members of the Committee for their sterling work during the year and for all Officers who supported the Committee, in particular the Chief Executive who was due to retire in June – he had been a staunch advocate of the Committee and rarely missed a meeting.

83.4 Accordingly, it was

- RESOLVED** That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report 2021/22 be **NOTED**.

**CL.84 SEPARATE BUSINESS**

84.1 The Mayor proposed, and it was

**RESOLVED** That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involve the likely discussion of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

**CL.85 SEPARATE MINUTES**

85.1 The separate Minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2022, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

The meeting closed at 7:40 pm