

# TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Council Offices, Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury on Tuesday, 8 March 2022 commencing at 4:30 pm**

## **Present:**

Vice Chair in the chair

Councillor K Berliner

## **and Councillors:**

G J Bocking, C L J Carter, H C McLain, P D McLain, H S Munro, R J G Smith, P D Surman and S Thomson

### **OS.88 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

88.1 The evacuation procedure, as noted on the Agenda, was advised to those present.

### **OS.89 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

89.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P A Godwin, J W Murphy (Chair), J K Smith, M J Williams and P N Workman. There were no substitutions for the meeting.

### **OS.90 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

90.1 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.

90.2 There were no declarations made on this occasion.

### **OS.91 MINUTES**

91.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2022, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Vice-Chair in the chair.

### **OS.92 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN**

92.1 Attention was drawn to the Executive Committee Forward Plan, circulated at Pages No. 13-15. Members were asked to determine whether there were any questions for the relevant Lead Members and what support the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could give to the work contained within the plan.

92.2 A Member noted that the Medium Term Financial Strategy was due to be considered at the meeting on 30 March, having been deferred from January pending relevant information from the government, and he questioned if that had now been received. In response, the Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that, unfortunately, no information had been received to assist with the Council's financial position despite a wealth of information being expected in relation to funding reform, New Homes Bonus and business rates which were all areas that supported the Council budget. Whilst there was currently no clarity on funding beyond March 2023, he hoped to be able to provide an interim update for Members

by the end of the month.

92.3 It was

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

**OS.93 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22 AND ACTION LIST**

93.1 Attention was drawn to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme, circulated at Pages No. 16-18, and the action list setting out the actions arising from meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee between October 2019 and January 2022, circulated at Pages No. 19-30. Members were asked to consider the Work Programme and action list.

93.2 The Head of Corporate Services advised that, following the resolution made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its last meeting, the Executive Committee had agreed that, subject to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee representative's continued monitoring and regular reporting to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the specific consideration of the payment of the Council's contribution to the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis no longer be required. Accordingly, this would be removed from the 2022/23 Work Programme which was currently being drafted by Officers. A Member noted that, at the workshop on maximising the value of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in October, Members had asked to review the partners which reported to the Committee on a regular basis, and the agreements in place for monitoring, to establish whether they needed to continue to report to the Committee going forward and he asked if this had been progressed. In response, the Head of Corporate Services confirmed that a list of partner organisations and outside bodies would be compiled based on the Council Plan priorities from which the Committee could identify those it would like to hear from during the course of 2022/23.

93.3 In terms of the action list, the Head of Corporate Services explained that 12 of the 27 actions were outstanding. With regard to Page No. 20 and the action regarding the Grange Field maintenance plan, he understood that had now been shared with Councillor Munro and there had been a positive press release about the Grange Field recently. Councillor Munro advised that, based on a conversation with the Asset Manager the previous week, it was her understanding that the plan was not ready to share with Members so, whilst she did not think it was a problem, she had not actually received it. The Economic and Community Development Manager explained it had been shared verbally and the written form was waiting for final sign-off but should be with Members shortly. The Head of Corporate Services drew attention to Page No. 23 which indicated that Members and Parish Councils were now informed by email when enforcement cases were closed with reasons generally included. With regard to Page No. 26, he advised that the Tewkesbury Borough Council Domestic Waste and Recycling Collection Services Policy and Procedures had been considered by the Depot Services Working Group and approved by the Executive Committee the previous week. In terms of Page No. 29 and the discussion around the online booking system for the Household Recycling Centres, Members were informed that the County Council had undertaken a customer survey which had found that 86% were supportive of retaining the booking system. It was also noted that, as set out on Page No. 30, the Welcome Back Funding plans had been shared via a Member Update. The following issues were raised during the discussion:

**Meeting date: 22 October 2019**

P19 – Agenda Item 10 – A Member noted that Officers were awaiting

Warm and Well Scheme Update

prospective dates from the Severn Wye Energy Agency but this action had originally been agreed in October 2019 and it was now March 2022 so she questioned how much longer it would take. The Head of Community Services undertook to chase this up following the meeting. A Member felt it would have been useful to know when contact had first been made with Severn Wye Energy Agency and the Head of Community Services accepted that the commentary could have been better populated.

**Meeting date: 9 March 2021**

P22 – Agenda Item 9 – Council Plan Performance Tracker and COVID-19 Recovery Tracker – Quarter Three 2020/21.

A Member recognised that a briefing note was due to be circulated to Members in relation to Ashchurch bridge and she asked if this could be a wider briefing on the Garden Town project as a whole as she was unclear as to the milestones, the current position and what was coming up next. The Chief Executive had previously stated that the Garden Town was the Council's biggest project so she felt it was important all Members understood what was happening. The Head of Corporate Services indicated that no Officers from the Garden Town team were present at the meeting so he would take this away and ensure a response was provided following the meeting.

The Member went on to ask whether the Council had a strategy for convincing residents that the Ashchurch bridge was not a 'bridge to nowhere', as it was dubbed by some of the local community. Another Member indicated that he would like to know if the bridge was still under budget given rising costs within the building industry. With regard to the costs, the Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that, based on the last information from the Garden Town team, the bridge was under budget and there was significant contingency within the £8m grant from Homes England; nevertheless, the Member was quite right that costs were increasing so it would be helpful to have an up to date position on this. The Head of Corporate Services undertook to seek a response following the meeting.

**Meeting date: 8 June 2021**

P24 – Agenda Item 8 - Council Plan Performance Tracker and COVID-19 Recovery Tracker – Quarter Four 2020/21. A Member noted that a training session was to be arranged for Members on the government’s Housing Design Guide and she raised concern that a date was yet to be agreed almost a year on. The Head of Corporate Services undertook to speak to the Head of Development Services following the meeting. He also felt it would be beneficial to include more specific target dates within the action plan going forward and undertook to ensure the template was updated accordingly.

**Meeting date: 13 July 2021**

P25 – Agenda Item 11 – Carbon Reduction Action Plan. A Member noted that the action to circulate indicative costs identified by Severn Wye Energy Agency when conducting the survey of the Roses Theatre to Members was incomplete and she asked whether this was being followed-up. The Head of Finance and Asset Management confirmed this information was now available and would be provided to Members following the meeting.

**Meeting date: 11 January 2022**

P29 – Agenda Item - Council Plan Performance Tracker and COVID-19 Recovery Tracker – Quarter Two 2021/22. A Member asked when the information would be available in relation to the fly-tipping figures so that Members could understand whether they were up or down. The Head of Community Services undertook to provide this prior to the next meeting. A Member asked if this could include an indication of what was happening nationally as he understood the figures had increased significantly.

93.4 Accordingly, it was

**RESOLVED** That the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2021/22 and action list be **NOTED**.

**OS.94 MODERN METHODS OF CONSTRUCTION PRESENTATION**

94.1 The Head of Community Services welcomed the representative from Bromford to the meeting and indicated that he had been invited by the Chief Executive to give a presentation to Members on Modern Methods of Construction, both in general and in terms of what was being done by Bromford.

94.2 The following key points were made during the presentation:

- Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) Overview – Long term projection of worsening skills shortage within the construction industry; Brexit presenting further risks towards the construction workforce across the UK being migrant labour; supporting housing organisations in achieving their sustainability and carbon reduction agenda; supporting local authorities to embrace MMC delivery through their climate emergency and housing delivery agenda; Homes England driver to introduce MMC through partnering arrangement; contribute towards the desired new homes outputs within business plans; cited benefits of the MMC –

increased outputs, reduced delivery timeframes, increased quality, improved Energy Performance Certificates (EPC), reduced waste, less deliveries and disruption to surrounding communities; standardisation of design to achieve the desired business financial returns through an MMC appraisal approach.

- MMC Categories – Pre-manufacturing (3D primary structural systems); pre-manufacturing (2D primary structural systems); pre-manufacturing components (non-systemised primary structure); additive manufacturing (structural and non-structural); pre-manufacturing (non-structural assemblies and sub-assemblies); traditional building product-led site labour reduction/productivity improvements; site process-led site labour reduction/productivity/assurance improvements.
- Types of MMC – Volumetric construction, pods, panelised systems, sub-assemblies and components and site-based MMC.
- MMC Quality Assurance – Build Offsite Property Assurance Scheme (BOPAS) provided confidence that the construction system was fit for purpose; National House-Building Council (NHBC) assessed, reviewed and accepted nearly 50 MMC systems; Checkmate – warranty cover for MMC; Local Authority Building Control (LABC) – warranty practice scheme for MMC.
- Factory Production and Quality Control – Homes assembled in controlled conditions – Factories could produce around 3,500 per year at peak; quality checkpoints at every stage of the process to ensure homes conformed to design and building control; once the structure was finished, it was insulated and fitted-out with internal walls and floor coverings, surface finishes, plumbing and sanitary ware, electrical circuits and sockets, kitchen and bathroom units and fittings.
- Horizon Scanning – Outcomes: 2021 homes – assets rated against the new Bromford Standard, simplified planning rules, potentially less Section 106 Agreements, retrofits assessed against PAS2035, new build standards, uncertain market conditions; 2025 homes – Future Home Standards – high energy efficiency and low carbon heating in new homes, high speed broadband connectivity, increased fire safety regulation and compliance for flats, new homes 75-80% lower carbon emissions; 2030 homes – all private rented homes rated EPC C or above; 2050 homes – net zero carbon.
- Carbon Reduction Challenges: How MMC will support the carbon reduction agenda – June 2022 – Part L 2021 – 31% reduction (new sites); June 2023 – Part L – 31% reduction (transitionals); 2025 – Future Homes Standards – 75-80% reduction; 2030 – zero carbon – 100% reduction; 2050 – zero carbon 100% reduction (including regulated energy).
- Features of Zero Carbon Living – Like Homes could deliver net zero carbon living through the high performing external building fabric, water efficiency and LED lighting in combination with the introduction of a highly efficient air source heat pump and solar panels; smart metering and controls could be used to better understand and optimise comfort and energy use; integrated electric vehicle charging points enabled customers to complete their journey to an 'all electric' more sustainable lifestyle.
- Homes England – What the fund will deliver (MMC) – The fund placed significant focus and investment on increasing the uptake and development of MMC which was crucial to tackling the productivity, skills and materials challenges faced by the house building industry and to drive improvements in quality, safety and sustainability; MMC requirements: expectation that a significant number of homes will be delivered using MMC technologies that promoted improvements in productivity and quality, included a 25% MMC requirement for all strategic partners, seven categories of MMC eligible as defined in the government's MMC definition framework, recognised that building

with MMC could be more expensive upfront (though often cheaper over the longer term) and looking at how this could best be reflected in the bid assessment process, want to understand the delivery constraints to using MMC and keen to hear from partners; what support Bromford can provide: increasing MMC manufacturing capability – provided loans and equity to expand the capacity of existing providers and brought new providers into the market e.g. £90m joint venture with Urban Splash and international housebuilder Sekisui House; matching supply and demand – help to join up the supply chain and aggregate demand for MMC ensuring consistency, certainty of supply and reduced costs; increase understanding and share best practice – currently undertaking a pilot study across several sites to test the benefits of a range of MMC technologies.

- Social Housing Sector Update – Homes England Strategic Partnership 2021-26 – Homes England had committed almost £5.2bn funding in affordable housing grant to deliver nearly 90,000 grant-funded affordable homes; number of registered providers gaining grant – 31 strategic partnerships with 35 organisations; Bromford £239m – deliver an additional 4,000 homes (tenure types: social, affordable rent and shared ownership; percentage of MMC delivery varied across the strategic partnership bidders.
- Bromford – Stockwell Feasibility – Working with Cotswold District Council on delivering 29 units within 12 months built to net zero; Forest of Dean District Council delivering 51 houses and six flats for Guinness Partnerships – would be an exemplar site for the county.

94.3 The Head of Community Services advised that, although MMC houses could be constructed quickly, that did not reflect the significant amount of work which went on in the background in terms of financing etc. but he was pleased to see that some schemes were now being delivered. He welcomed the commitment to carbon reduction which would hugely benefit tenants and was preferable to retrofitting existing properties which was a mammoth task. The presentation helped to demonstrate how quickly things were moving forward – only a few years ago replacing gas boilers was considered to be more efficient but there were now completely new ideas.

94.4 A Member noted from the design of the scheme in the Forest of Dean that the housing density seemed lower than in traditional estates, with more garden and green space, and she asked whether that was actually the case in reality. The representative from Bromford explained that this was down to the planners and was dependent on the plans and location, but it was likely to be similar to a traditional site. Another Member asked if there were any drawbacks in terms of prefabrication and the representative from Bromford indicated that there had been in the past but a lot of work had been done to get through the approval process. In response to a query regarding the longevity of the properties, Members were advised that a traditional house was likely to last for two mortgage terms i.e. 60 years whereas mortgages were now being offered for three terms on modular housing i.e. 90 years. Another Member noted that the manufacturers were unlikely to be around for that period of time and he asked what guarantees were given to mortgage providers that they were viable assets to invest in. In response, the representative from Bromford explained this was offered through the accreditation.

94.5 A Member asked about the density of the foundations and was advised that traditional methods still tended to be used but there was a drive to use different methodology. A Member questioned how easy it was to retrofit modular properties once they were built if technologies etc. were to change and the representative from Bromford indicated there were some restrictions but they could be adapted. One of the advantages of modular housing was that pods could be replaced, for instance if a property was fire damaged, and additional pods could be added and removed which cost considerably less than a traditional extension; the roof could also be

removed so properties could be made into townhouses if required. A Member asked whether the soundproofing between properties was better than with traditional housing and was advised that the party wall insulation was much greater as two modular houses were effectively next to one another so there was double thickness. The Member went on to ask how variety of design could be achieved and the representative from Bromford indicated that it was possible to be creative - modular housing tended to be made to look traditional which he did not think it should be, for instance, access into the roof space was not allowed so a traditional pitched roof was unnecessary. Whilst the properties were fairly square, this maximised the space within them. There were examples of schemes with different design, for instance, in Bicester, and Bromford was working with Cotswold District Council on that – if it could be achieved in the Cotswolds it could be achieved anywhere.

- 94.6 A Member questioned whether hydrogen power was something Bromford might be interested in and gave the example of a small scheme in Gateshead where houses had been fitted with hydrogen power and indicated there were plans next year for a community village. The representative from Bromford advised that he was responsible for looking at innovation so that was something that would be considered if there was a particular interest in hydrogen. There was a need to work on energy aggregation and energy sharing; new homes needed to be EPC A as it was difficult for energy sharing to be achieved on properties rated EPC D or below. He was working with innovators to see how this could be achieved across Bromford's housing stock and expected a push from residents due to the rising energy costs.
- 94.7 A Member questioned when he could expect to see more of this type of housing within Tewkesbury borough and the representative advised that Bromford aimed to deliver circa 2,000 units per year and was keen to partner with Tewkesbury Borough Council to deliver units within the borough. The intention was to deliver social rented properties and that was a key driver for Bromford. The Head of Community Services provided assurance that the new Housing and Homelessness Strategy which was being recommended to Council for approval in April was focused on delivery of social rented properties which was a real priority for the Council.
- 94.8 The Vice-Chair in the chair thanked the representative from Bromford for their informative presentation and it was

**RESOLVED** That the presentation on Modern Methods of Construction be **NOTED**.

## **OS.95 COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE TRACKER AND COVID-19 RECOVERY TRACKER - QUARTER THREE 2021/22**

- 95.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 31-116, attached the performance management and COVID-19 recovery information for quarter three of 2021/22. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was asked to review and scrutinise the information and, where appropriate, identify any issues to refer to the Executive Committee for clarification or further action to be taken.
- 95.2 Members were advised that this was the third quarterly monitoring report for 2021/22 and represented the latest information in terms of the status of the actions set out in the Council Plan and the Corporate Recovery Plan. Progress against delivering the objectives and actions for each of the six Council Plan priorities was reported through the performance tracker, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, which was a combined document that also included a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). In addition, a Corporate COVID-19 Recovery Plan had been established based on the Council Plan priorities, and a recovery plan tracker, attached at Appendix 2 to the report, had been created to monitor progress in delivering those actions and objectives. Key financial information was also reported

alongside the tracker documents with a revenue budget statement attached at Appendix 3 to the report, a capital monitoring statement attached at Appendix 4 to the report and a reserves position summary attached at Appendix 5 to the report. Key actions for the quarter were highlighted at Paragraph 2.3 of the report and included the new Housing and Homelessness Strategy which had been considered by the Executive Committee the previous week and recommended to Council for approval; approval of the 2022/23 budget by Council in February; progression of the Tewkesbury Borough Plan with a summary of representations received during the public consultation on the main modifications being submitted to the Inspector; successful recruitment of a new Director of Law and a Carbon Reduction Programme Officer; and moving to the second phase of the HR project which was to implement a self-service tool for managers and staff to record information such as annual leave, sickness absence etc. Members were reminded that, due to the complex nature of the actions being delivered, it was inevitable that some would not progress as smoothly or as quickly as envisaged and the details of those actions were set out at Paragraph 2.4 of the report. It was noted that, where timescales had slipped, the majority had only done so by a quarter which was positive. In terms of KPIs, the status of each indicator was set out at Paragraph 3.2 of the report and KPIs where direction of travel was down and/or were not on target, were set out at Paragraph 3.3 of the report – it was noted that the first six were related to planning and enforcement and Members would be aware that a planning improvement plan was in place but changes would not happen overnight so it was important to be patient.

- 95.3 With regard to the COVID-19 recovery tracker, key activities to bring to Members' attention were set out at Paragraph 4.2 of the report and included: Tewkesbury Leisure Centre recovering well with no financial support being sought from the Council; fantastic work from the Growth Hub in supporting businesses; and contacting residents in relation to the Winter Food voucher scheme. Paragraph 4.3 of the report referenced those actions within the tracker which had not progressed as intended and it was pleasing to note there were only three actions listed. With regard to the launch of a new Tewkesbury Borough business grants scheme, Members were advised that the Council's scheme had been deferred until March 2022 to avoid any confusion with the launch of the government's new business grants. It was noted that the Council Plan was refreshed on an annual basis and it was intended to merge the COVID-19 recovery plan tracker back into the Council Plan performance tracker with a single tracker document being brought to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration from quarter one 2022/23.
- 95.4 During the debate which ensued, the following queries and comments were made in relation to the Council Plan and Recovery Plan trackers:

**Priority: Finance and Resources**

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| <p>P48 – Objective 4 – Action a)<br/>Deliver the approved trade waste business case to make the service commercially viable – A Member noted that the target was March 2022 and he asked if this would be achieved by the end of the month.</p> | <p>The Head of Community Services explained that the service would be reviewed and a project plan in place by the end of March 2022 but there would be no change to the service at that point.</p> |
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**Priority: Economic Growth**



P50 – Objective 1 – Action a) To deliver an economic assessment of businesses within Tewkesbury Borough – A Member asked whether the target date of June 2022 was realistic if quotes were still being obtained to carry out the assessment in the spring.

The Economic and Community Development Manager explained that Gloucester City Council was leading on the assessment, which would include a business survey and survey of economic data in the borough, and it was hoped the work would be completed within six weeks with the key recommendations being made by June 2022.

### **Priority: Housing and Communities**

P58 – Objective 1 – Action a) Work with partners to undertake the required review of the Joint Core Strategy – A Member noted this had first been due for completion in autumn 2019 and the commentary stated that a revised timetable was expected to be presented to Members in March 2022. She raised concern that this was a considerable delay and questioned whether the March deadline was achievable.

The Planning Policy Manager confirmed that the revised timetable was being taken to the Executive Committee on 30 March 2022.

P66-68 – KPIs 8-15 – A Member noted there were several new KPIs in relation to housing and she asked when the direction of travel and traffic light icons would be available as it was currently difficult to understand whether performance was good or bad.

The Head of Community Services advised that the KPIs were being reviewed for 2022/23 and would be updated to reflect the new Housing and Homelessness Strategy so he would ensure this was taken into consideration.

P69-70 – KPIs 18, 19 and 21 – Determination of ‘other’ applications and enforcement investigation of Category A and Category C cases – A Member noted these KPIs still had unhappy faces. She understood that the planning service was being reviewed and asked whether there had actually been any improvement to date.

The Interim Development Manager explained that Officers were working hard to address the backlog of applications and it was hoped that an upturn would be reflected in the figures over the next two months. He provided assurance that new applications were being dealt with in a timely manner.

A Member pointed out that there had been a dramatic improvement in terms of Category C and Category D cases being investigated within 10 working days during quarter three compared with previous quarters and the 2020/21 outturn which was positive.

### **Priority: Customer First**

P73 – Objective 2 – Action b) Implement an online offering for the licensing service – A Member noted this had been delayed a number of times - the new target date of December 2022 would be the fifth change - and he questioned whether there was enough resource to deliver by the new date and if there was any scope for it to be done sooner.

The Head of Community Services advised that the current paper-based system was very antiquated and did need to be replaced. This was being overseen by the Business Transformation team and, whilst he did not think it could be brought forward, he saw no reason why it would not be achieved by the new deadline, in accordance with the project plan which had been agreed.

The Head of Corporate Services clarified that the project went beyond the implementation of an online service with a complete review of the licensing function being undertaken. The project contained four workstreams: IT; governance; HR and the team structure; and finance with support for each element being provided by the relevant sections. He was confident the December deadline would be achieved with the resources backing the project.

P80 – KPI 34 – Average number of sick days per full time equivalent – A Member noted that long term illnesses were increasing once again and she queried whether this was for similar reasons as previously or if it was as a result of COVID.

The Head of Corporate Services confirmed that long term sickness had increased from 292 days to 501 days in quarter three; this was not COVID related but was due to significant long-term illnesses among six to eight members of staff for reasons similar to those which had been reported before.

P81 – KPI 37 – Percentage of formal complaints answered on time – A Member noted there was a downward trend with 80% of formal complaints answered in time during quarter one, 68% in quarter two and 65% in quarter three which was 73% overall against a target of 90%. He asked whether this was linked to the increased number of sick days and if plans had been put in place to secure improvement.

The Head of Corporate Services confirmed this was a cross-service issue so he did not believe it was connected to sickness absence; however, complaints could be complex and services were under pressure. The downturn had been discussed by Management Team and improvement was anticipated during quarter four. Top tips for dealing with complaints were communicated to staff, for instance, agreeing an extension of time with the complainant at an early stage if the complaint could not be resolved quickly. Although the demand on services was recognised, it was important that complaints were being dealt with in a timely manner.

A Member asked whether there was any way to improve the customer experience in relation to general queries as he was aware of residents finding it difficult to get a response from Officers. In response, the Head of Corporate Services explained there was no system for monitoring every piece of email communication which was received by the Council; however, there were customer service standards in place and he

encouraged Members to speak to him if they had any particular issues so he could investigate these further.

### **Priority: Sustainable Environment**

P88 – Objective 3 – Action a) The Head of Community Services advised that the team had been extremely busy; however, he provided assurance that the consultation was ready to go and would commence shortly.

Take a robust approach towards fly-tipping and other enviro-crimes – A Member queried whether consultation on the Public Space Protection Order had commenced at the start of the year as planned.

### **COVID-19 Recovery Tracker Priority: Economic Growth**

P100 – Action – Recover b) The Economic and Community Development Manager confirmed that the bid had been submitted and, whilst it was hoped it would be successful, there were no certainties until funding had been secured. Initial feedback was anticipated within the next two weeks.

Develop a bid to host a Department of Work and Pensions Youth Hub within the Tewkesbury Growth Hub – A Member asked when the draft bid was due to be submitted and how successful it was likely to be.

95.5 Turning to the financial information, the Head of Finance and Asset Management was pleased to report a healthy projected outturn surplus of £3,609,348 for the full year against the approved budget. A large percentage of the surplus had been generated in the last quarter through external funding, notably £1m for the transport modelling for the Joint Core Strategy, which had bolstered the position and would be allocated to specific projects. The table at Page No. 40, Paragraph 5.2 of the report, highlighted the specific parts which made up the overall position. The full year projection for employees showed a potential gross surplus of £663,191; however, there was a target to save £155,000 from employment costs across the Council, therefore, the net position was a surplus of £508,191 against target. Savings had accrued across the majority of service areas including One Legal, Development, Democratic and Corporate Services. A pay award of 1.75% had now been negotiated between the unions and employers; this was within the reserve that had been set aside which was good news. Payments to third parties highlighted a £284,732 underspend which was largely due to certain growth items not coming forward in-year as expected e.g. in-cab technology, digital growth within the Business Transformation team and additional support for the Joint Core Strategy – these would be rolled forward at year-end to fund future expenditure within those areas. In terms of savings, £112,000 had been budgeted for an additional food waste crew which had not been needed this year due to the additional demand being met through overtime and there had also been a significant saving in the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) gate contract since changing provider; however, this had been offset by other expenditure such as the market supplement for Ubico drivers. The full year cost in relation to the COVID pandemic was estimated at £442,917 and included the continued work of the business cell, additional costs for the provision of waste and recycling services and the continued support to Tewkesbury Leisure Centre. Income had recovered well from the impact of COVID with a number of streams back on budget or delivering a small surplus including development management, bulky waste, trade waste and licensing. Two areas

which had not performed as hoped were car parks and Tewkesbury Leisure Centre which would not provide its contract fee during the year. The income position had been boosted significantly by a £1m grant from the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee for transport modelling required for the Joint Core Strategy with grants also received for homeless prevention, delivery of elections and new areas of activity within revenues and benefits.

- 95.6 The expenditure associated with corporate activities showed an estimated surplus of £1,541,063 for the financial year. Core government funding was showing a significant surplus as a result of the additional COVID general grant fund of £424,927 and additional new burdens funding had been received for administering business grants and compensation for losses on sales, fees and charges. The retained business rates position had changed significantly from quarter two due to a multitude of variations within the calculation including the award of further business rates relief, additional Section 31 government grants, clarification of the accounting treatment for reliefs and grants, review of empty property provisions, bad debts and appeals and the impact of significant reductions to Virgin Media assessments. As a result, the anticipated retention of business rates income now showed a net surplus of approximately £0.8m from the original budget – a surplus release on business rates was not normally expected in-year. In addition, the Council was a member of the Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool which was able to retain additional business rates within the county and the latest estimate suggested a windfall of circa £500,000 for Tewkesbury. The surplus on net expenditure and the corporate net expenditure resulted in an overall budget surplus projection of £3.61m, plus a potential further £500,000 from the Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool.
- 95.7 The capital budget position as at quarter three was attached at Appendix 4 to the report and was currently showing an underspend of £2.2m against the profiled budget of £2.9m. The capital programme estimated total expenditure for the year to be circa £3.9m which was much reduced on previous years as a result of the end of the acquisition phase of the commercial investment property strategy. The main elements of this year's forecast included Ashchurch bridge, vehicle replacement, replacement of the heating system at the Council Offices – although this was no longer going ahead at this stage, the money was now being spent on a solar canopy in the rear car park of the Council Offices - and Disabled Facilities' Grants (DFGs). Appendix 5 to the report provided a summary of the current usage of available reserves and showed that £848,040 had been spent to date.
- 95.8 A Member was surprised that the Council had a Domestic Abuse Service and asked what that covered. In response, the Head of Community Services clarified that Tewkesbury Borough Council did not have its own service but it did have a duty around providing support and worked in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council on that. He advised that new burdens funding was being used to fund an Officer jointly for the county and he undertook to circulate the new Domestic Abuse Strategy to Members following the meeting. A Member drew attention to Appendix 4 which stated that fewer DFGs had been paid out in quarter three than expected and he questioned whether people did not know they were entitled to grant funding. The Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that over £1m was available for DFGs which was held by Gloucestershire County Council and drawn down by Tewkesbury Borough Council. The Head of Community Services explained that it was demand driven and DFGs were advertised on the Council's website but the grants were for very specific purposes and were means tested so people may not be eligible, or the adaptations covered by the grants were not recommended by the Occupational Therapists. There were approximately 75 applications per year but this seemed to be waning so Officers were working on countywide schemes to ensure the money was spent, for example, a recent project on insulating park homes. Another Member sought clarification in relation to community grants and was advised that this covered grants which had been awarded under the old community grants scheme but had not been drawn-down; clarification was provided

that the scheme was closed for new grants. With regard to Appendix 3 and payments to third parties, a Member noted the fantastic income from development services but he assumed that was partly due to the grant for the Joint Core Strategy transport modelling and questioned whether that was something which still needed to be paid for. The Head of Finance and Asset Management confirmed that, unfortunately, it was expenditure yet to be incurred and would be held within the balance on behalf of the Joint Core Strategy ready to match off.

95.9 Having considered the information provided, it was

**RESOLVED** That the performance management information and COVID-19 recovery information for quarter three of 2021/22 be **NOTED**.

The meeting closed at 6:04 pm