

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Council Offices, Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury on Tuesday, 5 April 2022 commencing at 4:30 pm

Present:

Chair Councillor J W Murphy

and Councillors:

C L J Carter, P A Godwin, H C McLain, P D McLain, H S Munro, J K Smith, R J G Smith, S Thomson, M J Williams and P N Workman

also present:

Councillor J R Mason

OS.96 ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

OS.97 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

97.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Berliner (Vice-Chair) and P D Surman. There were no substitutions for the meeting.

OS.98 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

98.1 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.

98.2 There were no declarations made on this occasion.

OS.99 MINUTES

99.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2022, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as correct record and signed by the Chair.

OS.100 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN

100.1 Attention was drawn to the Executive Committee Forward Plan, circulated at Pages No. 14-20. 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.

100.2 The Head of Corporate Services reminded Members that the Executive Committee Forward Plan was always fluid and additional items would emerge during the year, for example, Heads of Service were in the process of putting together their service plans which would start to populate the Forward Plan where necessary. A Member wished to make an observation that the Agenda for the meeting on 1 June 2022 was largely made up of items which had been deferred from previous meetings and she wondered what the reason was for this and whether that had impacted on what

had been planned for the June meeting. Another Member noted that an item on Ashchurch Bridge was due to be considered by the Executive Committee in June and he sought assurance that report would include all of the financial details as he was particularly concerned that any bid for top-up funding which may be necessary as the project progressed could be refused so he was keen to understand the options available further down the line. The Head of Corporate Services undertook to ensure this would be included in the report to Executive Committee.

100.3 It was

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

OS.101 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

101.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 21-35, which attached, at Appendix 1, the draft Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2022/23. Members were asked to approve the Work Programme.

101.2 The Head of Corporate Services advised that the draft Work Programme for 2022/23 was already reasonably populated but reminded Members that some of the Committee's work could not be planned as new areas of review emerged throughout the year, for example, in 2021/22 the Committee had received reports on trade waste, Active Gloucestershire and fly-tipping surveillance which had come forward during the year. One of the standing Agenda items was the performance report and review of the performance tracker often highlighted areas for Members to explore in more detail through separate reports. He felt it was a good programme which covered a lot of priority areas including economic development and tourism, housing and workforce development.

101.3 A Member queried whether the Parking Strategy, due to be considered on 7 June 2022, covered enforcement as this was virtually non-existent in his area – he asked if this was something which could potentially be reviewed by the Committee and whether that could be done via the strategy or if it would need to be separate. In response, the Head of Corporate Services indicated that he was unsure if enforcement was included in the scope of the Parking Strategy review so he would arrange for the Head of Finance and Asset Management to circulate a briefing note to the Committee setting out the situation.

101.4 A Member indicated that, at the workshop held in October on maximising the value of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 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 and for Members to consider who they would like to hear from during 2022/23 and she asked when that would be done. The Head of Corporate Services advised that this had been raised at the last meeting where he had explained it was intended to compile a list of key partners and outside bodies following the refresh of the Council Plan which was currently underway and he undertook to bring a report for discussion to the next meeting in June.

101.5 It was

RESOLVED That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2022/23 be **APPROVED**.

OS.102 GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE

102.1 Attention was drawn to the report from the Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee, circulated separately, which gave an update on matters considered at the meeting held on 31 March

2022.

- 102.2 The Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee advised that the first item of business was an update on the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 16 March 2022. This had included an update on broadband provision within Gloucestershire and it was noted there was currently 96.5% coverage in the county - whilst there remained a commitment to get to 100% coverage, the outstanding 3.5% coverage would be difficult to achieve. The business rate pool update included two significant requests that had been considered in relation to the Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF): a £150,000 bid for a "Made in Gloucestershire" brand which could be used by local businesses in their advertising which had been approved and a £850,000 bid for a Gloucestershire mass transit scheme based on buses which was supported in principle but refused due to a question mark over whether the funding should all come from the SEDF. The Committee had also received a report on the economic impacts of climate change and a presentation on youth unemployment from GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership and the County Council which had highlighted that funding streams were beginning to run out and, although a great deal of excellent work had been done in relation to NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training), they would not necessarily be the highest priority cohort in the future. The Executive Director's report was also included for noting and taken as read.
- 102.3 With regard to broadband provision, a Member noted there had been some delays in delivery and he asked if this had impacted any areas within Tewkesbury Borough. The Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee undertook to obtain this information following the meeting.

102.4 It was

RESOLVED That the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee update be **NOTED**.

OS.103 DEPOT SERVICES WORKING GROUP ANNUAL REPORT

- 103.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Head of Community Services, circulated at Pages No. 36-43, which asked Members to consider the progress made by the Depot Services Working Group during 2021/22; to agree that the Depot Services Working Group continue to meet until Ubico contract renewal in 2027 with the revised Terms of Reference as set out at Appendix 1 to the report; and to agree that Officers explore the mechanism for requesting additional capital funding for an additional waste vehicle, and develop a business case for adding the provision of a new waste collection depot to the Infrastructure List to enable Community Infrastructure Levy funding to be used, and to report back to the Executive Committee.
- 103.2 The Head of Community Services indicated that, from an Officer perspective, the Working Group had worked really well during the year, despite being impacted by COVID at the start, with meetings being held remotely. In terms of the recommendations, he would welcome a decision which would enable the Working Group to continue for the next five years due to the long-term nature of a number of projects underway such as trade waste, the depot and in-cab technology/connected workforce. The Chair of the Working Group, the Lead Member for Clean and Green Environment, wished to thank Members of the Working Group who had kept track of a range of projects, as well as routine work, over the course of the year with good progress being made. He made particular reference to the project to identify a new depot site being carried out with Cheltenham Borough Council which would help to protect Tewkesbury Borough Council as its waste service expanded in the future, the in-cab technology/connected workforce project and the street cleansing review. Standing Agenda items included financial and performance reports from Ubico as

well as updates on the grounds maintenance service which had improved considerably since the Working Group had been established. He was particularly pleased to see the recommendation to explore the mechanism for requesting capital funding for an additional waste vehicle and to develop a business case for adding the provision of a new waste collection depot to the Infrastructure List to enable Community Infrastructure Levy funding to be used and he hoped that the Committee would be supportive of this.

- 103.3 A Member expressed the view that the recommendation around investigating the potential for using Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy funding to support the waste service was a very sensible way forward. With regard to the trade waste project, a Member noted that a trial was due to begin in quarter one of 2022/23 and he asked if that had started. In response, the Head of Community Services confirmed it was currently on schedule to start during the quarter. In relation to grass cutting, a Member recognised this had been an ongoing issue for a number of years; she noted that checks were being carried out quarterly and she asked how these were actually done. The Head of Community Services explained that the Working Group had set certain standards for grass cutting which was graded A-D and an Officer undertook a physical check to compare the cut against the standards. Ubico had recently changed the way it operated its grass cutting service; this had been working well so far but reports would be taken back to the Working Group to assess the overall quality throughout the course of the year. A Member queried whether the grass cutting standards were complicated by wildflowers and pollinated patches and the Head of Community Services indicated that, provided there was good communication with the Parish Councils this could be accommodated. Another Member had learnt from the Grange Field project that wildflower meadows were quite complex, for instance, whilst they did not have to be cut as often, the cuttings had to be removed otherwise they enriched the soil too much. A Member asked whether consideration had been given to investing in technology to assist with the inspection of grass cutting in order to free up Officer time and the Head of Community Services confirmed this was part of the connected workforce project. With regard to grass cutting, the Head of Community Services indicated that Members would be interested to note that, in terms of the maintenance of land on behalf of Gloucestershire County Council, the Working Group had recently agreed to the areas which would be cut twice per year on a trial basis; however, the County Council had suggested it may be willing to increase the financial contribution to the Borough Council in order for the land to be cut more regularly, therefore, the trial was currently on hold.
- 103.4 A Member queried whether the street cleansing review included road sweeping and if a second road sweeper had been secured. In response, the Head of Community Services confirmed that road sweeping was included and he undertook to follow up the query on the road sweeper and come back to Members following the meeting.
- 103.5 A Member questioned whether the Working Group should have more of a focus, for instance, two projects which were time bound with specific business cases which could be delivered within a shorter timeframe of two or three years rather than the Working Group continuing until 2027 during which time it would potentially be looking mainly at updates. His understanding of a Working Group was that it should be task and finish with a clear scope of work but the Terms of Reference seemed to include a lot of items for monitoring. He indicated that, based on the quarterly performance reports received by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the KPIs for the waste service seemed to suggest there were very few concerns - none of the 11 KPIs which had not been achieved in the most recent report related to depot services - as such, he questioned whether there was a need for a dedicated Working Group in this area. The Head of Community Services explained that the Working Group had originally been set-up with a wide remit to look at any aspect of the Ubico contract and that could change throughout the year, for example, if grass cutting performance began to drop dramatically, the Working Group would want to

investigate. He felt that limiting the scope to two projects would be less productive as the majority of projects were very long-term and expected to run until 2027/28 – the depot project had been running for the last two years and it was only at the last meeting of the Working Group that there had been something meaningful to report. The Member continued to be of the view that a Working Group should have a particular focus rather than dipping in and out of different projects. The Head of Community Services indicated that he would be guided by the Committee in terms of how, and if, the Working Group continued to operate. The Chair of the Depot Services Working Group explained that the nature of the waste service meant that things could change in an instant – the service might be running perfectly but a change of crew or management could suddenly trigger a chain of events which meant that it started to fall apart. The waste service cost taxpayers £4m per year therefore it needed to operate effectively and the Working Group was a mechanism for getting back on track if things started to go wrong. A Member pointed out that, prior to the Working Group being established, Ubico had been a particular issue which was regularly discussed by the Committee and, in her view, it was essential for the Committee to continue to have an overview of the waste service via the Working Group for the reasons stated by the Chair of the Working Group. Another Member indicated that the point being made was that the purpose of the Working Group should be to focus on a clearly defined task and to report back on that, as opposed to being there in case anything went wrong.

103.6 The Chief Executive advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had a remit to look at any service across the Council but it had the ability to focus down on certain areas via Working Groups. As some of the Council's services and projects were larger and more complex, this could require input from Members with a detailed understanding of the service and the issues at play. Waste was a flagship service for the Council, as well as being its most expensive, so he felt it was probably right and proper to have a dedicated Depot Services Working Group with a wide remit. The Working Group had originally been borne out of concerns about grass cutting and grounds maintenance which had required a lot of Officer and Member input to resolve at the time. His personal view was that the Working Group had an important role to play in terms of delivering projects and monitoring other aspects of the Ubico contract which may be on track currently but could become an issue.

103.7 A Member asked if there was any way to thank Ubico when they had done a good job as she had recently spoken to an operative cutting grass in the Bishop's Cleeve cemetery who had shown real care and consideration for what he was doing and had gone the extra mile by giving her a tour. The Chair of the Depot Services Working Group advised that he regularly thanked Ubico for the work carried out and would be happy to pass on the Member's comment. He recognised that staff had continued to do their jobs throughout COVID and he agreed they often went above and beyond.

103.8 It was

RESOLVED

1. That the progress made by the Depot Services Working Group during 2021/22 be **NOTED**.
2. That it be **AGREED** that the Depot Services Working Group continue to meet until Ubico contract renewal in 2027 with the

revised Terms of Reference as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

3. That it be **AGREED** that Officers explore the mechanism for requesting additional capital funding for an additional waste vehicle, and develop a business case for adding the provision of a new waste collection depot to the Infrastructure List to enable Community Infrastructure Levy funding to be used, and report back to the Executive Committee.

OS.104 CUSTOMER CARE STRATEGY

- 104.1 The report of the Corporate Services Manager, circulated at Page No. 44-60, asked Members to consider the progress made against the actions within the Customer Care Strategy during 2021/22 and to endorse the action plan for 2022/23.
- 104.2 The Corporate Services Manager advised that customer care was a priority within the Council Plan and that commitment was conveyed through the Customer Care Strategy attached at Appendix 1 to the report. The annual Customer Care Strategy Action Plan focused on the strategy's six themes and how they would be delivered and good progress had been made over the last year with 10 of the 13 actions being completed. Particular highlights included customer care training for all front-facing staff; engaging with the Citizens' Panel to help shape emerging services; and the roll out of a new set of Customer Care Standards. Two actions had not been achieved, as set out at Page No. 46, Paragraph 2.3 of the report, and they had been included in the action plan for the forthcoming year, attached at Appendix 2 to the report.
- 104.3 A Member queried whether there was a customer care standard for residents to receive a response to an issue logged via the Report It function and if the response rate was monitored; Gloucestershire County Council advised residents by email that they would receive a response within 10 working days. The Corporate Services Manager advised that the general expectation within the Customer Care Standards was that a response should be received within five working days and she did not believe there was a more specific requirement in terms of the Report It system. Anyone submitting an enquiry through Report It should receive an automated acknowledgement email and she undertook to look into whether that could be made clearer in terms of timescales for the response.
- 104.4 A Member drew attention to Page No. 55 of the report and the action to review the Advice and Information Centres (AICs). She noted that, for 2022/23, it was intended to work with Parish Councils and other partners to provide access to Borough Council services depending on the success of the Brockworth arrangement and she asked if that had actually happened, what the outcome had been in terms of its success and how that was intended to be rolled out to other Parish Councils. In response, the Corporate Services Manager confirmed that Brockworth Parish Council had taken over the service provision on behalf of Tewkesbury Borough Council and this had been working well as it meant that anyone visiting could access the service at any time, as opposed to just two days per week as had been the case previously. It was hoped to replicate this in other areas and discussions were underway with Winchcombe Town Council. The Member welcomed this as a starting point but questioned how this would integrate with the smaller, rural parishes. The Corporate Services Manager explained that it would be impossible to offer a service in every parish across the borough; however, if there was an area of concern she would be happy to discuss this outside of the meeting. The purpose of this action was to make the Council's services more accessible so she welcomed any suggestions and views as to how that might be achieved. A local Ward Member for Brockworth confirmed that the

new arrangement was working well and staff training had been excellent; however, there was some concern about future funding and he asked what the intention was in terms of training and development for staff going forward. In response, the Corporate Services Manager clarified that Brockworth Parish Council had approached Tewkesbury Borough Council with the proposal to take over service provision on the basis that it was a waste of resource to use Council staff when its own staff were already on duty – the Parish Council had responded to all enquiries on behalf of the Borough Council during the pandemic and no concerns had been raised. The intention was for customers to serve themselves where possible and the Borough Council had supplied the IT equipment etc. for that to happen and would continue to provide training to staff.

104.5 It was

RESOLVED That the progress made against the actions within the Customer Care Strategy during 2021/22 be **NOTED** and the action plan for 2022/23 be **ENDORSED**.

OS.105 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2020-24 - ACTION PLAN ANNUAL REVIEW

105.1 The report of the Corporate Services Manager, circulated at Pages No. 61-80, asked Members to consider the progress made against the actions within the Communications Strategy during 2021/22 and to endorse the action plan for 2022/23.

105.2 The Corporate Services Manager advised that 2021/22 had been a busy year for the Communications team which had given a high level of support to the pandemic response and recovery and provided regular communications in relation to adverse weather emergencies as well as continuing to undertake the regular proactive work including press releases, internal communications, media enquiries, newsletters and social media. The team had also managed to deliver the majority of the Communications Strategy Action Plan, as set out at Appendix 2 to the report. Key highlights included effective campaigns to deliver messages around the pandemic including videos, animations and infographics; the recruitment of a Garden Communities Communications Officer; creation of a range of videos for the Council's recruitment microsite to help promote the Council and the borough as an attractive place to work; and delivery of an internal communications survey which had shown that staff were very satisfied with the channels available to them. Five actions had not been achieved, as set out at Page No. 63, Paragraph 2.3 of the report, and had been included in the 2022/23 action plan.

105.3 A Member asked whether there had been any discussion about the frequency of communications in relation to the Garden Town. The Corporate Services Manager advised that the Garden Town Communities Communications Officer worked 2.5 days per week and her role had initially involved finding out what had already taken place, how much people understood and the current position in terms of the public perception in order to put together a communication plan for the Garden Town. Members were informed that the Local Government Association (LGA) had offered some resource to assist with communication and marketing around the Garden Town and draft feedback from that had now been received. This had demonstrated that the work that had been done to date had been worthwhile and outlined the next steps to be taken – it was hoped to use more of the LGA's time to support this. Assurance was provided that there would be regular Member communication and a presence on social media going forward in order to drive the story of the Garden Town. A Member welcomed this as she did not feel that communications on this topic had been particularly good to date and she was concerned that the Parish Council had seemed better informed than she had been at times. She felt it would be helpful if Officers could respond to emails from Members to let them know when to expect a response – it would be better to receive a response which said they

were busy and would deal with it as soon as they could than to receive nothing at all. In addition, she asked if it would be possible to reinstate the place meetings which had previously been run via the Community Development team as they had been a great opportunity for Members to receive updates and ask questions on what was happening in that part of the borough, in her case the east area. The Corporate Services Manager explained that emails were subject to the Customer Care Standards as opposed to corporate communications and, in accordance with the standards, Members could expect a response within five working days. She accepted that it may be necessary to do some refresher training with staff to ensure this was being adhered to. With regard to the comment about the place meetings, she undertook to feed this back to the Economic and Community Development Manager following the meeting.

- 105.4 A Member indicated that the Borough News was still not being received by residents in his area and he asked if it could be added to the website rather than wasting money on delivery costs. In response, the Corporate Services Manager confirmed she was aware of issues with delivery and advised that the Council had not paid for the last distribution pending an investigation. Alternative options for distribution of the Borough News were being considered but this was not straightforward and it was important to recognise there would never be 100% coverage; notwithstanding this, it was not acceptable for whole areas to be missed. She confirmed that an online edition of the Borough News was available on the Council's website although it was interesting to note that authorities which had stopped producing magazines had gone back to doing this as the impact was significant in terms of getting information out to people who may not look for it themselves – this was clear from feedback received from the services which were promoted in the Borough News. She understood the need for the magazine to reach as many properties as possible and provided assurance that it was being worked on. A Member drew attention to Page No. 71 of the report which referenced the snapshot survey that had revealed the Borough News was still one of the main ways residents found out about Council-related news and he asked when that had been carried out and who had been surveyed. The Corporate Services Manager advised that the survey had been undertaken a couple of years ago using the Citizens' Panel who would have been asked a series of questions. The Member asked how many people comprised the Panel and was informed it was made up of approximately 260 people across all age ranges.

- 105.5 It was

RESOLVED That the progress made against the actions within the Communications Strategy during 2021/22 be **NOTED** and the action plan for 2022/23 be **ENDORSED**.

OS.106 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

- 106.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 81-118, attached, at Appendix 1, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2021/22. Members were asked to approve the report.
- 106.2 The Head of Corporate Services advised that the Council's Constitution required

that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee provide an annual report to Council on its activities and the report attached at Appendix 1 was due to be considered by the Council at its meeting on 12 April 2022. The report gave an outline of the work carried out by the Committee during the year and included, as appendices, the outcomes of the workshop on the effectiveness of the Committee and the Committee's draft work programme for 2022/23. Members were asked to approve the report prior to its consideration by Council.

106.3 Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2021/22 be **APPROVED**.

The meeting closed at 5:35 pm