

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the
Council Offices, Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury on Tuesday, 6 September 2022
commencing at 4:30 pm**

Present:

Chair
Vice Chair

Councillor J W Murphy
Councillor K Berliner

and Councillors:

G J Bocking, C L J Carter, K J Cromwell, P A Godwin, H C McLain, P D McLain, C E Mills,
H S Munro, J K Smith, R J G Smith, S Thomson and M J Williams

also present:

Councillor D J Harwood

OS.33 ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

OS.34 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

34.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P N Workman. There were no substitutes for the meeting.

OS.35 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

35.2 There were no declarations made on this occasion.

OS.36 MINUTES

36.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2022, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

OS.37 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN

37.1 Attention was drawn to the Executive Committee Forward Plan, circulated at Pages No.20-27. Members were asked to determine whether there were any questions for the relevant Lead Members and what support the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could give to the work contained within the plan.

37.2 The Corporate Services Manager advised that, following engagement with services across the Council, the Executive Committee Forward Pan was now looking more healthy with a number of items having been added. A Member noted that a report

on the Licensing Services Review and Restructure was due to be considered at the meeting on 5 October 2022; however, in the Council Plan Performance Tracker Quarter One 2022/23 report, due to be considered at Agenda Item 7 of today's meeting, it mentioned this had been delayed and could not be completed until January 2023 due to an IT issue. The Member also asked if the costs of GDPR administration for CCTV in taxis was being taken into account as he understood that consultation was currently underway. In response, the Head of Community Services confirmed this item had been delayed and would be taken to the Executive Committee later in the year, although he did not have a confirmed date for that as yet. In terms of CCTV in taxis, he advised that no decision would be made until consultation with the trade had finished. The outcomes of the consultation would be reported to the Licensing Committee in due course.

37.3

A Member noted that a report on the new draft Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule was due to be taken to the Executive Committee in November and he asked if that would address situations whereby other local authorities benefited from CIL monies for properties built within Tewkesbury Borough on allocated sites within the Joint Core Strategy. The Head of Development Services explained there was an agreement in place that 70% of strategic CIL money was collectively pooled by the three Joint Core Strategy authorities. It was noted that the CIL was a strategic money pot and was not spent on individual sites. All of the projects on the Infrastructure Funding Statement currently related to transport; these were all expensive projects with the majority costing around the £10m mark whereas the CIL pot was around £1-2m so no bids had been made to date. The Member raised concern there was a lot of outstanding infrastructure which was desperately needed in parts of the borough including schools, roads, flood defences etc. and he asked who decided where money from the CIL pot was actually spent as he was seeing more infrastructure within other authority areas than in Tewkesbury Borough which was the one with the most development. In response, the Head of Development Services advised that the Infrastructure Delivery Plan was part of the Joint Core Strategy; the total infrastructure for all transport required totalled £90m so the authorities were working with the County Council to establish key priorities and identify additional funding streams. She provided assurance that it would be a collective decision as to where money was spent, although the governance arrangements for how to make that decision had not yet been formally established. On the basis that CIL money was primarily for transport infrastructure, the Member asked if things like schools would ultimately be paid for by the CIL at some point. The Head of Development Services explained that one of the reasons for the review was the need to establish and see what could be added to the Infrastructure Funding Statement; she felt the next Infrastructure Funding Statement was likely to remain focused on transport but discussions were taking place with stakeholders such as the NHS to establish their requirements. She accepted it was a massive issue that the infrastructure needed to take the Joint Core Strategy forward cost so much and the money being recouped was not enough to facilitate all that was required. The Member went on to indicate that it had been identified via the County Council that, by 2023, there would be a seven form entry shortage at secondary school level in the Gloucestershire catchment area - particularly from development in Innsworth, Churchdown and Brockworth - which was a long way behind where it should be. With that in mind, he asked what the timescales were for schools to be included in the Infrastructure Funding Statement. The Head of Development Services advised that education provision did not have to be paid for by CIL; Gloucestershire County Council could request Section 106 contributions for primary and secondary school provision provided there was an evidence base for that. The CIL review would look at schemes across Tewkesbury Borough, Cheltenham Borough and Gloucester City; this was very much at the evidence stage and there would be engagement with Members prior to consultation with the public. The Member asked for an update to be provided on what was happening with schooling and the

Head of Development Services undertook to find out the school places strategy and advise Members accordingly.

- 37.4 A Member noted that the Parking Strategy Review was due to be considered by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 16 November; however, as set out in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme, this had been deferred several times since June 2022 so he asked if this would be coming forward soon and whether any meetings of the Parking Strategy Review Working Group would be required. The Head of Finance and Asset Management confirmed that responsibility for this lay with him. There had been a lot of changes since the Working Group had last met to agree the draft revised strategy in principle so he may need to reconvene the Group in order to consider the various factors in play. In response to a query regarding timescales, the Head of Finance and Asset Management indicated that he would need to find a solution over the next few weeks and hoped to be in a position to provide an update to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November.
- 37.5 A Member noted that Spring Gardens Regeneration Phase 1a was included within the pending items of the Executive Committee Forward Plan but he had understood this was not being progressed. The Head of Finance and Asset Management clarified it had been put on hold in 2020 due to budget considerations and the impact of COVID etc. but Officers were currently looking at scoping how the project could be progressed, bearing in mind the changes since the last discussion. It was an ambition of the Council and Officers to take this forward which was why it had remained in the Forward Plan; he expected it would be brought back into the Member arena by 2023.
- 37.6 A Member drew attention to Page No. 20 of the report which showed that the Homelessness Prevention Grant Funding Spending Plan was due to be taken to the Executive Committee in October. She noted this item had been deferred from August and, in view of the current situation, she assumed it would be a fairly high priority so she asked what progress had been made and whether the number of homeless people was expected to increase. In response, the Head of Community Services confirmed it was a very high priority and, in all likelihood he anticipated homelessness figures to rise. He explained that the report had been due to go to the Executive Committee in August but there had been a query from the Finance team regarding some of the figures and, unfortunately, the Officer who had written the report had been on leave at the time which was why it had been deferred. He provided assurance that it would be going to the Executive Committee meeting in October.
- 37.7 It was

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

OS.38 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23 AND ACTION LIST

- 38.1 Attention was drawn to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme, circulated at Pages No. 28-37, and the action list setting out the actions arising from meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee between October 2019 and June 2022, circulated at Pages No. 38-47. Members were asked to consider the Work Programme and action list.
- 38.2 The Corporate Services Manager advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee workshop to review the Capability Policy had taken place on 23 August where it had been agreed that a further session would be held to consider the draft

revised policy prior to bringing that to the Committee for endorsement. In order to facilitate the workshop, that item would now be moved to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 22 November 2022. Members were also advised that the Place Leisure Presentation which was currently included in the pending items section of the Work Programme had now been arranged for the meeting on 11 October 2022. Work was underway with other relevant Officers to schedule in the remaining pending items.

38.3 A Member noted that use of mobile surveillance equipment for fly-tipping investigations was still included in the pending items section and he asked if the cameras had been purchased and deployed as Members had asked to be notified when that had happened. The Head of Community Services confirmed that the cameras had been received about three weeks ago and these had been deployed to known hotspot areas; if Members were aware of any areas where there were regular problems, he asked them to let him know so they could be investigated.

38.4 In terms of the action list, the Corporate Services Manager advised that 13 of the 22 actions had been completed. Two actions related to the proposed training session on the Government's Housing Design Guide and it was hoped the target date of September would be achieved. It was noted that the two actions relating to Ubico, set out at Pages No. 40 and 44 of the report, would be removed from the action list as soon as the information was provided. The following issues were raised during the discussion:

Meeting Date: 22 October 2019

P38 – Warm and Well
Scheme Update.

A Member noted that this was intended to be provided at the Town and Parish Council Seminar in April 2023 and she questioned whether it could be brought forward given the concerns around rising energy costs and heating bills faced over the winter. The Head of Community Services undertook to see if this was possible and gave assurance that it was intended to provide information via the Borough News and Parish Newsletter so Parish Councils would have that in advance of the seminar. A Member asked whether social media would be used to promote messages and information throughout the winter and the Head of Community Services confirmed that would be the case. The Financial Inclusion Partnership had been reconvened to look at cost of living issues and Warm and Well had been invited to attend those meetings. He took on board the concerns about the cost of living and confirmed that the Council would do as much as possible to support residents. A Member suggested that information put out by the Borough Council should also be sent to Town and Parish Councils for inclusion within their communications, for instance, the majority had their own websites and some used social media. The Head of Community Services undertook to speak to colleagues in the Communications Team about the best way to do this.

Meeting Date: 8 March 2022

P42 – Agenda Item – Council Plan Performance Tracker and COVID-19 Recovery Tracker. A Member asked whether there was a date in mind for the session on the Government's Housing Design Guide and the Head of Development Services advised that the Garden Town team had commissioned LDA Design to create the design manual for the Garden Town and discussions were underway to provide the seminar in September if possible, although it may need to move to October.

38.5 Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2022/23 and the action list be **NOTED**.

OS.39 COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE TRACKER - QUARTER ONE 2022/23

39.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 48-107, attached the performance management information for quarter one of 2022/23. 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.

39.2 Members were informed that this was the first quarterly monitoring report for 2022/23 and represented the latest information in terms of the status of the actions set out in the Council Plan which was refreshed and adopted by Council on 26 July 2022. 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). The remaining actions from the COVID-19 Corporate Recovery Plan had been incorporated into the Council Plan Performance Tracker so there would be one strategic document going forward. Key financial information was also reported alongside the tracker documents with a revenue budget statement attached at Appendix 2 to the report, a capital monitoring statement attached at Appendix 3 to the report and a reserves position summary attached at Appendix 4 to the report.

39.3 Key actions for the quarter were highlighted at Paragraph 2.3 of the report and included adoption of the Tewkesbury Borough Plan; approval of an interim Medium Term Financial Strategy; submission of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan; and completion of the solar canopy in the rear car park at the Public Services Centre. 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 not all actions started at the same time so any which were yet to commence had been 'greyed out' in the tracker with indicative dates for commencement stated. 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 not on target, were set out at Paragraph 3.3. of the report. Particular reference was made to KPI 18 – Percentage of minor applications determined within eight weeks or alternative period agreed with the applicant - as the quarter one outturn figure was a significant improvement on the 2021/22 full year outturn despite the target figure not being met for the quarter. Similarly, performance in relation to KPI 22 – Investigate category C cases within 10 working days – had also improved when compared to the 2021/22 outturn figure albeit the target for quarter one had not

been achieved

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

Priority: Economic Growth

P67 – Objective 3 – Action c)
Develop an Investment Plan for the Borough through the Shared Prosperity Fund – A Member noted this was a requirement of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and he asked if it was a local plan and who could access it.

The Community and Economic Development Manager confirmed it was a plan for Tewkesbury Borough and he would be happy to circulate a synopsis to Members following the meeting.

Priority: Housing and Communities

P75 – Objective 3 – Action a)
Work with partners, infrastructure providers and developers to progress the delivery of key sites – A Member asked who the partners and infrastructure providers were in this case and how what was needed in communities was established.

The Head of Development Services advised that a range of contributions were secured through planning permissions for things such as education, communities facilities etc. and there were a number of statutory stakeholders under the planning framework. The Community and Economic Development Manager and his team worked closely with Parishes and communities on their requirements. The pre-application process and engaging with members of the public had been identified for review next year as part of the Development Management review and would consider how to bring together spatial issues - especially around the health agenda on larger developments.

The Community and Economic Development Manager confirmed that he worked closely with Parish Councils and encouraged them to look at priorities and community needs. Development of Neighbourhood Development Plans or Parish Plans required consultation with the community to understand need, especially in terms of infrastructure such as open spaces, parks, play areas, village halls, community centres etc. When planning applications were submitted, Officers liaised with the Parish Council to understand what they believed were the needs arising from a new development/population and consultation took place with the community and any relevant sports clubs, groups etc. When applications were approved, Officers ensured the agreed infrastructure was delivered and used appropriately.

The Member raised concern that a lot of residents did not feel connected to the planning process and development in their

areas and he felt it would be beneficial for Officers to conduct visits and attend meetings in the community, particularly in respect of large scale development. The Head of Development Services indicated that she was happy to have a discussion with individual Members in relation to any specific large scale planning applications about whether this was necessary and proportionate; however, it was important not to raise expectations given the available resources.

A Member asked which member of staff would be best-placed to deal with queries on Section 106 monies and was advised to contact the Section 106 Monitoring Officer. The Head of Development Services recognised there had been a huge issue with making information available and a lot of work had been done to move Section 106 information onto a new system; that work was nearing completion and it was hoped to have a single system in place that would be front-facing so Members would be able to look online to find out what Section 106 money had been spent.

Key Performance Indicators for priority: Housing and Communities

P81-82 – KPIs 17-19 – Percentage of planning applications determined – A Member recognised that, despite the unhappy faces for these indicators, there had been some improvement and she asked when the targets were likely to be achieved.

The Head of Development Services confirmed there had been improvement compared to the 2021/22 outturn and Officers were striving to meet the targets which had been set; however, the KPIs were very high and reflective of a top-performing authority. Whilst Officers wanted to raise the bar and push performance, that needed to be balanced against the fact that a full service review was currently being undertaken so work was being done to establish more realistic targets. It was demoralising for staff who were working so hard to continue to miss the targets each quarter. Given the Development Management review, performance needed to be assessed over a two to three year period and consideration was being given to introducing a stepped approach to targets and KPIs whereby they were increased over each quarter to ensure the rate was proportionate to what was being achieved through the wider review.

In response to a query regarding staffing, the Head of Development Services advised that there were now three team leaders in post following two internal promotions, the downside being this had left two senior planner posts vacant which would be

advertised shortly. January 2023 was being targeted to have permanent staff in place to be able to drive forward change – there was currently an Interim Development Manager and a number of contractors in post within the team so resources were being put in to deliver the service in the meantime.

Given the challenges with recruitment and retention, a Member indicated there would be budget implications and he asked what the timescales were for a report being brought back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; if that was not expected in the short to medium term he questioned whether an interim report was needed in advance of budget setting for 2023/24. The Head of Development Services explained that it had been agreed by the Executive Committee that reports on the progress of the Development Management review would be taken to Transform Working Group. With regard to funding, all processes were currently being reviewed to ensure they were fit for purpose and to check the right level of resources were in place for the type of applications being received. It was intended to change the structure to make it more robust with plans to recruit a Chief Planning Officer. If there were insufficient funds for resources, it would be necessary to submit this as a growth item. She was keen to ensure that processes were as efficient as possible before requesting more resources but that would need to be reviewed if there continued to be issues with caseloads and volumes. In terms of timeframes, she hoped to have a good indication of that by the end of the calendar year in time to have the necessary discussions if more Officers were required.

P86 – Objective 1 - Action f)
Carry out a full review of the licensing services – A Member understood this had been delayed by connectivity issues between the two systems and he asked what progress was being made to resolve the problems and whether the action was likely to be delivered by the end of January 2023.

The Corporate Services Manager advised that the issue lay with the Uniform system and the provider was doing its best to come up with a resolution. The Head of Community Services clarified this was just one aspect of the review and was not preventing other streams from progressing.

P87 – Objective 2 – Action a)
Carry out a review of our corporate website – A Member noted that the Council's web designer role was vacant, and two attempts had failed to recruit a candidate with the required skills, and he asked if there was any update on this.

The Corporate Services Manager explained that a market supplement had recently been approved to support recruitment to the role. Whilst advertising had attracted candidates, they had not been of the quality required. It was noted that the temporary web developer post had also recently become vacant as the postholder had received a job offer for a permanent position so that role would also need to be filled. She provided assurance that the current website still reflected best practice and was working as it should. A new provider had been identified and work was being undertaken with services across the authority to ensure that all of the information was ready to go onto the new website as soon as the post was filled.

The Member indicated that he had a problem with the planning portal crashing and he asked if anyone else had experienced this. The Head of Development Services confirmed that it had been identified that the portal could not be accessed after 8pm. IT had been made aware and were looking into it. The Corporate Services Manager clarified that the planning portal was separate from the Council's website but she undertook to pick this up with the IT team following the meeting.

P88 – Objective 2 – Action c)
Create a planning application tracker – A Member asked whether this was still expected to be delivered by the end of September.

The Head of Development Services confirmed that it was on target. A Member asked if it would be possible for Members to receive a demonstration of the tracker as it would be beneficial for them to understand how it worked prior to its public launch. The Head of Development Services indicated that she would be happy to arrange that.

Key Performance Indicators for Priority: Customer First

P92 – KPI 32 – Percentage of NNDR Collected – A Member noted that the average number of days to process change in circumstances to housing benefit claims had increased and she asked if there was a plan to turn this around.

The Corporate Services Manager advised that this KPI had been impacted by high staff turnover within the department and members of the team had also been providing support to other areas e.g. food vouchers, energy rebate. Recruitment had been successful and posts had been filled so it was anticipated there would be a positive change going forward; nevertheless, customer demand remained high and the Business Transformation team was looking at where it could offer digital solutions for some of the processes. It should be recognised that performance was still very good compared to other authorities nationally but assurance was provided that there were plans in place for improvement.

Priority: Garden Communities

P95 – Objective b) Prepare a design manual – A Member noted that consultation was being carried out and he asked how this was being undertaken and when.

The Garden Town Programme Director explained that the production of the design manual for the Garden Town was a 12 month process so Officers were still in the early stages of that work. Discussion had taken place with the Tewkesbury Garden Town Member Reference Panel and it was intended to continue to work very closely with Members as it developed through continuous liaison with the Panel. He indicated there was always an opportunity for other Members to attend the Panel meetings, if they so wished.

Priority: Sustainable Environment

P98 – Objective 1 – Action c) Source and secure funding opportunities to support the delivery of the carbon reduction programme – A Member noted that smaller funding awards were being sought to support the delivery of electric vehicle charging points and he asked if that was for the Council car park or for members of the public as it was often difficult for them to install their own charging points.

The Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that an Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy was being taken to the Climate Change and Flood Risk Management Group to support the roll-out of electric vehicle charging points within the borough. It was noted that Gloucestershire County Council had an on-street charging strategy so it was important to ensure there was no duplication; however, it was intended to obtain as much funding as possible for electric vehicle charging points, whether that be in the Council's car park or other car parks across the borough.

P101 – Objective 4 – Action
 a) Establish and publish a local list of non-designated heritage assets in the borough – A Member asked whether this was still on target for the end of September 2022 as she had looked at the link to the list on the Council's website which suggested it was still open for nominations. She also asked if Parish Councils had been involved.

The Head of Development Services confirmed that the majority of work had been done and the Parish Councils had been heavily involved. There had been a lot of submissions to the Council and the Panel had met to go through those. Once she had completed the decision notice the list would be published on the website.

39.5 Turning to the financial information, the Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that the financial budget summary for quarter one showed a projected surplus of £275,461 for the full year against the approved budget; however, a number of assumptions had been made for the report and there had already been an impact on the budget in the first three months of the year. The cost of living impact was only just starting to be felt in terms of the Council's expenditure so that would impact on services moving through the year.

39.6 The table at Paragraph 4.2 of the report highlighted the variances against budget. In terms of employees, the Head of Finance and Asset Management explained that the figure in the table was not comparable to the wording at Paragraph 4.5 – the table did not include the gross cost of the Garden Town team which was funded externally and showed a full year variance of £393,676, but the wording at Paragraph 4.5 highlighted a potential gross surplus of £591,914 – although taking into account the corporate expenditure target to save £100,000 from employment costs across the Council, the net position was a surplus of £491,914. Notwithstanding this, the pay award for April 2022 had not yet been determined; whilst the employment costs included an assumed 2% pay award which had been budgeted at the beginning of the year, it was likely to be in excess of that. The employer's side had responded in late July with an offer of £1,925 on every scale point plus an additional day of annual leave. This was a significant pay offer which was being driven by the need to increase the lowest scale point by an estimated 10.5% to meet the expected National Living Wage. If agreed, it was estimated it would cost the Council £500,000 - £300,000 above budget and there was potential for a higher award. If funds were insufficient and there was no surplus to meet the cost, it would be necessary to use the £500,000 reserves which been established for that purpose at year end. Payments to third parties highlighted a projected overspend of £1.68m; however, £1.5m of that was in relation to the grant received and paid over to Gloucestershire County Council regarding the M5/A46 project so the real overspend was projected to be £183,000. Of that, there was £240,000 deficit forecast against the Ubico budget with the rising cost of diesel accounting for £141,000 – since the forecast had been put together prices had dropped so it was hoped to see a reduction in quarter two. Other areas of overspend related to agency staff and increased cost of vehicle hire. It was noted that Ubico was also subject to the Council's pay award. Members were advised that, at the start of the financial year, after the budget had been set, Cheltenham Borough Council had advised of additional running costs in relation to Swindon Road depot; those costs had previously been borne by Cheltenham Borough Council and related to day-to-day running costs and maintenance requirements. As such, Tewkesbury Borough Council was now required to pay a service charge of £150,000 per annum. This would be off-set by a reduction in the gate fee for the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) which was expected to be £150,000 lower than budget, largely due to the

buoyant market for recycling collected which had resulted in the gate fee dropping from £67 per tonne to £26 per tonne. Income was positive in many areas with Development Management predicting a 20% increase in planning fees due to a rise in the number of planning applications; however, a number of other income streams were not doing as well with income from the Leisure Centre expected to be lower than budget as it continued to recover from the pandemic and the commercial unit on the top floor of the Council Offices remaining vacant.

- 39.7 In terms of corporate expenditure, there was an estimated surplus of £51,867. Treasury activities were expected to deliver savings in borrowing costs as, although rates had increased, the Council's borrowing requirements had reduced. The Council's commercial property portfolio was currently predicting a deficit for the year as a result of the expected temporary void at one office unit in Hertford; that unit had now been let on a 10 year basis so would start to generate income following the inducement period. The overall projected position on retained business rates was currently in line with budget expectations; however, this could be volatile and it would be interesting to see how the Government intended to support businesses through the winter. Members were informed there was an overall budget surplus projection of £275,000 for the year, although that was likely to change moving through the year. The Head of Finance and Asset Management indicated that no further funding was expected from the Government in the current year to support pressures on the budget.
- 39.8 The capital budget position as at quarter one was attached at Appendix 3 to the report and was currently showing an underspend of £525,000 against the profiled budget. The capital programme estimated total expenditure for the year to be circa £5.17m with the main elements being Ashchurch Bridge, vehicle replacement, solar canopy and Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs). An overspend was shown on DFGs as more grants had been paid out but that had no impact on the Tewkesbury Borough Council's financial position as it was funded by the County Council. Appendix 4 to the report provided a summary of the current usage of available reserves; as expected at the end of quarter one, reserves expenditure was relatively modest but it was anticipated there would be further significant expenditure incurred through the remainder of the year.
- 39.9 A Member noted that it may be necessary to use reserves to fund the pay award and he raised concern as to how the ongoing cost of the increase - and other increases around energy costs etc. - would be met going forward. Another Member drew attention to Page No. 54, Paragraph 4.2 of the report, and noted that the corporate expenditure included a corporate savings target which showed a deficit of £100,000 and he asked for an explanation on this. The Head of Finance and Asset Management explained that the level of employee turnover was generally the same each year; however, this year there had been more than normal and there was often a delay in making new appointments. The approach that had been taken was not to allocate savings targets to individual services. There was an overall surplus of £591,914 which was more than the net £100,000 target – when looking to set a target for the current year, it was set at a level whereby it could be increased to support the overall budget. With regard to the replacement of the Ubico fleet, the Member questioned whether the Council should be spending the money now rather than next year when vehicles were likely to be more expensive. In response, the Head of Community Services advised that there was a balance between trying to extend the life of the current fleet as much as possible and the cost of repairs but it would not be prudent to get rid of the vehicles any earlier than necessary. Currently the whole fleet was replaced at once so consideration was being given as to how that could be smoothed out. The Head of Finance and Asset Management indicated that, in normal circumstances, approximately £4m was spend on the replacement of the vehicle fleet every seven years – this was compounded now by increased prices, uncertainty on Government policy and the commitment to carbon reduction. How best to deliver the Council's waste and recycling service was a

complex piece of work but it was hoped there would be some outcomes over the coming months. The Member asked whether Managers were generally being encouraged to spend their budgets to deliver projects within the current year given that costs were likely to increase next year. The Head of Finance and Asset Management explained that, in general terms, if something was planned for the current year then it should be done within the original timeframe; however, there were particular instances where prices may reduce.

- 39.10 A Member asked what happened in terms of any overspend on the highway projects as he did not fully understand the mechanisms in place for funding. In response, the Garden Town Programme Director explained that there had been unprecedented inflation which nobody could have predicted within general risk management in the budget, for instance, the Junction 10 M5 project now cost many millions more than when the original bid was calculated so there had been a lot of discussion with the Government as to how the funding gap would be covered. The Member asked for clarification of the Borough Council's position in terms of costs and was informed that the funding for each project was slightly different – the J10 project was via the incoming infrastructure fund which the County Council had been eligible to bid for and the work would be done in collaboration with the Department for Transport and National Highways; Ashchurch Bridge was via the Housing Infrastructure Fund which Tewkesbury Borough Council had been eligible to bid for so the money had come direct to the Council which procured or commissioned the work; J9/A46 was the next potential scheme and was currently not funded – it was intended to bid for Department for Transport funds which had slightly different parameters and may be picked up by National Highways. He indicated that all funds were very different and the Council had to conform to criteria and bid accordingly. The Member asked if there was any chance Tewkesbury Borough Council could end up having to pay for any overspend on any project and the Garden Town Programme Director confirmed that there was some risk but it was managed through the individual contract and he provided assurance that, in relation to the large scale projects, the risk was with the County Council not Tewkesbury Borough Council.
- 39.11 A Member drew attention to Page No. 56, Paragraph 4.16 of the report, which related to the additional running costs associated with the Swindon Road Depot and he asked why this had changed. In response, the Head of Community Services advised that this had come as a surprise as Cheltenham Borough Council had previously covered the costs of running the depot; however, it was now intended to agree a work programme which would give Officers the ability to ask questions and push back if necessary. A Member noted that the additional development expected within the borough would have implications for Ubico and the services it provided so he asked if that had been included within the budget going forward. The Head of Community Services advised that, when the fleet had been designed seven years ago, some growth had been built in but that had now been used and the fleet was not far from capacity. Another food waste round was being added next year and a further two recycling rounds were planned for the following year so consideration was being given as to how Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) could be secured to provide the necessary infrastructure.
- 39.12 In response to a query regarding the Council's reserves, the Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that these were in a very good place having been built up over the last five to six years. A lot of this was external funding to support specific project delivery but also from budget surplus and business rates in-year. Given the current environment he would like to have more money within the reserves but he was comfortable with the level as it stood. Forecasting was difficult; however, it was likely to be necessary to draw upon reserves more frequently in the future.

- 39.13 Having considered the information provided, it was
RESOLVED That the performance management information for quarter one of 2022/23 be **NOTED**.

OS.40 REVIEW OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGY

- 40.1 The report of the Community and Economic Development Manager, circulated at Pages No. 108-112, set out, at Appendix 1, the proposed Terms of Reference for the review of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy which Members were asked to approve.
- 40.2 The Community and Economic Development Manager indicated that the Committee had expressed a desire to assist with the review of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy which played a key role in the Council's growth agenda. As the first stage of the review, consultants had been commissioned to undertake an economic assessment of the borough and it was recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, along with the Lead Member for Economic Development/Promotion, receive a presentation/workshop from the consultants on their findings, following which the draft strategy would be produced for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and approval by the Executive Committee.
- 40.3 Accordingly, it was
RESOLVED That the Terms of Reference for the review of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy be **APPROVED** as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

OS.41 GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE

- 41.1 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 21 July 2022.
- 41.2 The Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee advised that the meeting had focused on public transport and Members had received an overview of the mass transit project and how it related to decarbonisation. He indicated that ambitious actions were needed to close the emissions gap including reducing 7.5% of car trips and increasing the use of public transport by 100%. He advised that the aspiration was for an entirely integrated mass transit system alongside a fully developed express bus network and a high-quality interchange service for all areas which was accessible by public transport with simple and affordable fares and clear information about the system.
- 41.3 A Member questioned if there had been any indication as to how it was intended to achieve the target of increasing public transport usage by 100% and the Council's representative advised that had not been specified. Another Member raised concern that there was a lack of awareness of the cost of travelling on public transport and that would need to be addressed if the ambitions were to be realised – it mentioned affordable fares but they would need to be affordable for everyone.
- 41.4 A Member asked for clarification as to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's role in terms of actioning the proposals and how departments such as planning were assisting with the ambitions in terms of increasing public transport use. The Council's representative explained that transport and highways was a County Council issue; the Committee's role was to scrutinise the actions of County Officers. The Head of Development Services advised that, although the County Council was doing a lot of the work within the Local Transport Plan, it would be taken into account in the overall planning for the Joint Strategic Plan so she provided assurance Officers were keeping a close watching brief on the project. The

Member raised concern that one of the main issues was the lack of space for cycle/pedestrian routes etc. on existing development so he was keen to ensure that was being taken into consideration for new development. He felt that behavioural change was a significant factor so it was important to give people a choice – for instance, bus service provision was a problem, particularly in rural areas. Another Member agreed with the points raised about affordability and felt that was where efforts should be focused.

41.5 It was

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

OS.42 SEPARATE BUSINESS

42.1 The Chair 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.

OS.43 SEPARATE MINUTES

43.1 The separate Minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2022, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The meeting closed at 6:30 pm