

# TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the  
Council Offices, Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury on Tuesday, 11 October 2022  
commencing at 4:30 pm**

## **Present:**

Chair	Councillor J W Murphy
Vice Chair	Councillor K Berliner

## **and Councillors:**

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

### **OS.44 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- 44.1 The evacuation procedure, as noted on the Agenda, was advised to those present.
- 44.2 The Chair welcomed the representatives from Places Leisure to the meeting and indicated that they would be giving a presentation at Agenda Item 7.

### **OS.45 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

- 45.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H C McLain, J K Smith and C Softley. There were no substitutes for the meeting.

### **OS.46 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- 46.1 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.
- 46.2 There were no declarations made on this occasion.

### **OS.47 MINUTES**

- 47.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2022, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **OS.48 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN**

- 48.1 Attention was drawn to the Executive Committee Forward Plan, circulated at Pages No. 16-22. 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.
- 48.2 The Head of Corporate Services advised that two workshops had now been held in relation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's review of the Council's Capability Policy with the draft revised policy due to be considered at its meeting on 22 November 2022. Accordingly, the policy would be taken to the Executive Committee on 4 January 2023 rather than 16 November 2022 as set out in the Forward Plan. In addition, the first floor refurbishment project which was also due to be considered by the Executive Committee in November would also be delayed

until the January meeting to allow a report to be taken to Transform Working Group in November. It was also noted that the Parking Strategy Review was currently included on the Executive Committee Forward Plan for 16 November 2022 but, as Members would be aware, this had not yet been taken to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee so that date would not be achieved. A Member raised concern that there was still no further information regarding the Parking Strategy Review and whether it would be necessary to reconvene the Working Group. The Head of Corporate Services undertook to raise this with the Head of Finance and Asset Management following the meeting.

48.3 With regard to the pending items section of the Forward Plan, Members were informed there were currently two duplicate items in relation to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) draft charging schedule so one would need to be removed.

48.4 It was

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

#### **OS.49 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23**

49.1 Attention was drawn to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme, circulated at Pages No. 23-30. Members were asked to consider the Work Programme.

49.2 The Head of Corporate Services advised that the Council Plan Performance Tracker – Quarter Two 2022/23 was currently due to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 10 January 2023; however, given that quarter two had ended on 30 September, it was felt it would be more appropriate to bring this forward to the meeting on 22 November 2022. In order to accommodate this, it was proposed to move the Active Gloucestershire report on the progress of its 'We Can Move' project and the Depot Services Working Group Update from the meeting on 22 November to 10 January 2023.

49.3 A Member indicated that the Committee had previously been advised that the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in relation to Planning, particularly the statistics around the determination of major, minor and other applications, were not fit for purpose and he asked when they would be reviewed. The Corporate Services Manager confirmed that the KPIs were being revised as part of the wider Development Management review and it was hoped to bring a report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November.

49.4 A Member noted that the Use of Mobile Surveillance Equipment for Fly-Tipping Investigations was still included in the pending items section of the Work Programme and he asked if there was any update in relation to this. The Head of Corporate Services confirmed the cameras had been deployed in September and a report would be brought to the Committee at its meeting on 4 April 2023 so the Work Programme would be updated to reflect that.

49.5 It was

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be **NOTED**.
2. That the Council Plan Performance Tracker – Quarter Two 2022/23 be moved from 10 January 2023 to 22 November 2022 and, in order to accommodate that, the Active Gloucestershire report on the progress of its 'We Can Move' project and the Depot Services Working Group Update be moved from the meeting on 22 November to 10 January 2023.

**OS.50 PLACES LEISURE PRESENTATION**

- 50.1 The Asset Manager indicated that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had asked for an update on how Tewkesbury Leisure Centre was recovering from the COVID pandemic and coping with the cost of living situation and his colleagues from Places Leisure were in attendance to give a presentation to Members.
- 50.2 By way of background, the Asset Manager explained that a decision had been taken by the Council in November 2013 to move away from the Cascades site and build a new leisure facility at the Council Offices site. A contract had been awarded to Places Leisure based on an operational management agreement which had commenced in May 2016. Tewkesbury Leisure Centre had closed on 23 March 2020 when England had gone into lockdown, and during subsequent lockdowns in line with Government announcements. This had been particularly problematic as it was often unclear what was happening from one week to the next. Places Leisure had minimised the impact by reducing energy costs etc. whilst being mindful of the need to be ready to open with only 24 or 48 hours notice. During the pandemic, Places Leisure had used the Government furlough scheme which had helped with staff retention but there had been natural redundancies as people moved on to new opportunities etc. A review of staffing had been undertaken with regard to how front of house was run and that model was still operational post-COVID. The Council had supported the Leisure Centre with funding of £573,880 of which £181,672 was grant funded through the National Leisure Recovery Fund. Members may recall that Cascades Leisure Centre was very old and outdated and had cost the authority £270,000 per year whilst in operation whereas the management contract for Tewkesbury Leisure Centre included an index-linked contract sum of £148,197 for the purpose of running the site so the Council currently received around £170,000 for the management of the facility. A confidential report had recently been considered by the Executive Committee in relation to contract terms post-COVID. The Asset Manager explained there had been a contractual change of law clause enacted during the pandemic whereby an open book policy had been applied which required the Council to cover any losses; post-COVID that no longer applied so it reverted back to the original contract. Notwithstanding this, Places Leisure had approached the Council in March to ask for a reduction in the contract sum which had been agreed on the basis that a number of additions and initiatives were being planned to support the viability of the Leisure Centre and to continue to grow the business going forward. Members were encouraged to refer to the Executive Committee report for details on the figures.
- 50.3 The Places Leisure Regional Manager thanked Members for inviting them to give a presentation to the Committee and indicated that it would cover what was done during the pandemic; steps to recover the business; and future plans to improve services and customer experience. He felt that Places Leisure had a very strong relationship with the Council and he attended weekly meetings with the Places Leisure Area Manager, the Tewkesbury Leisure Centre Manager and the Council's Asset Manager where they discussed how the facility currently operated and future plans in an open and transparent way working towards common goals such as putting the customer first. As the Asset Manager had mentioned, the furlough scheme had been utilised during COVID to minimise costs and retain staff and he wished to put on record his appreciation to the Council for supporting the Leisure Centre through this period using the relief fund; it had been a desperate time for the leisure industry but it was now coming out of that as focus moved to understanding what customers were looking for. Members were advised that the Tewkesbury Leisure Centre offer was split into fitness and swimming; nationally, the fitness sector had been slow to recover after COVID as people had found other ways to exercise such as home gyms, running outside etc. but the sector had recovered to 98.7% of pre-COVID levels. Swimming had not been so easy to

replicate during COVID, with the exception of open water swimming, and had recovered nationally to 108% of pre-COVID levels. In terms of Tewkesbury Leisure Centre, fitness had recovered to 81% and swimming to 128%. There had been other issues with staff finding new roles and not wanting to return to leisure instead pursuing new vocations and re-training so recruitment had been difficult, particularly in terms of swimming instructors due to the demand for lessons. A proactive approach had been taken in terms of putting on courses in order to train and upskill. The rise in energy prices and the cost of living generally was also a challenge and Members were advised that the gas costs had peaked at 20p per kwh compared to 2.6p pre-COVID with electricity increasing from 13p per kwh to 52p per hour. These were worrying times for operators as leisure centres required a lot of energy to heat them; however, he hoped the presentation would reassure Members that this was not simply being accepted and a lot of research was being carried out to establish what the public wanted and how the facility could be enhanced.

- 50.4 From a fitness perspective, recovery had been slow which was attributed to the rising cost of living – a gym membership was often an easy direct debit to cancel – and people finding different ways to exercise. A lot of surveys had been undertaken which had shown that people had been nervous of returning due to issues of contamination etc. and, based on that feedback, a range of measures had been put in place to ensure people felt safe working out in the facility. Energy costs were being mitigated through installation of LED lights and passive infrared (PIR) sensors as well as educating staff to switch off lights/monitors - energy use monitoring was a daily task for managers. Consideration had also been given to reducing pool temperatures but there was a balance between reducing costs and providing the best service possible – it was not worth reducing the pool temperature if it meant that nobody wanted to get in the pool. To assist with this, a Net Promoter Score was used which effectively allowed customers to be surveyed to understand if they were happy or not – this was reviewed each day and any red flags were responded to. It was noted that, between April 2022 and August 2022 there had been very little growth in fitness recovery in Tewkesbury; however, there had been some growth in the second quarter so fitness members were starting to be encouraged back to the Leisure Centre.
- 50.5 In terms of marketing and promotion, the Tewkesbury Leisure Centre Manager advised that 16 new residential developments had been identified in the borough where flyers and letter drops could be used to make new residents aware of the facility. It was also intended to create a greater social media presence to attract new customers with Facebook, Instagram and Twitter being the main platforms used. The partnership with the Council was crucial for the Leisure Centre to move forward as both had clear goals. Other innovative ideas being explored were visiting solicitors and estate agents to establish who was moving into the borough and to include information about the Leisure Centre in their sales packs. In addition, use was made of the Tewkesbury Borough News as this was delivered to every household in the borough and it was hoped to include a five day pass to use the Leisure Centre in the November edition. Consideration was also being given to using Tewkesbury Direct to promote the centre. When he had become Tewkesbury Leisure Centre Manager he had been keen to understand who his clients were and had produced a chart to show where customers were coming from. Interestingly, 25.6% customers were from outside of the borough including Longlevens (0.6%) and Pershore (1%). Tewkesbury (Back of Avon) accounted for 18.8% of membership customers and Tewkesbury (including Ashchurch/Teddington/Alderton) accounted for 18%. With regard to staffing, a new Placemakers model had been implemented based on a one-stop shop with the whole front of house team being upskilled to perform any task within the sales process including fitness and memberships, swimming lessons, food and beverage and re-sales. This had a huge impact in terms of improving the customer journey

and an additional layer in the Placemaker structure had been invested in which included an Assistant Placemaker Manager to provide support to the Manager to drive the commerciality of the centre and accelerate the recovery process. The Tewkesbury Leisure Centre Manager indicated that they were continually looking to support the current workforce and offer opportunities to progress their careers whether that be through internal promotions, training or external qualifications and, within the last year, the positions of General Manager, Operational Manager, Fitness Manager and Swimming Manager had all been promoted to from within. An online recruitment system, eArcu, was used to help with more efficient recruitment. Staff support and benefits included the Places Rewards scheme and Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) as well as on-site mental health advisers and SMART spending help with tips on how to maximise rewards.

50.6 Moving on to swimming, Members were informed that the return of the Learn to Swim programme had been extremely positive rising from 1,196 swim learners pre-COVID to 1,489 currently - an increase of 24%. The month on month growth had required agile management including constant programming changes, recruitment, training and the appointment of a Swimming Manager. The Leisure Centre had not been able to keep up with the rise in new swim learners due to an industry shortage of qualified swim teachers so the facility had invested in growth of the programme and had upskilled two of the swimming team and was hoping to host a swimming teacher course at the Leisure Centre within the next few months. It was noted that the success of the swimming lessons contributed to rising costs with more teachers needed on duty and the need for more staff to achieve qualifications moving forward. In future it was planned to go out into the community to preschools, primary schools etc. to offer water safety talks as it was vital for children to know how to be safe around water given Tewkesbury's location at the confluence of two rivers as well as when on holiday in swimming pools and the sea. With regard to fitness, this continued to struggle to get back to pre-COVID levels and, as had previously been mentioned, customer feedback suggested that people had been reluctant to re-join due to the cost of living, energy cap rise and the introduction of home gyms. The Tewkesbury Leisure Centre Manager indicated that the team was working hard to bring back customers and reach out to new prospective customers via the promotions and opportunities referenced earlier and the company was continually looking at new innovations and ventures that would set them apart. For instance, it was proposed to introduce a virtual class offering that could not be experienced elsewhere in the borough. Fitness was currently 18% down on July 2019 and the company was invested in reducing that deficit. Customer service was a key part of the offer and the team would continue to interact with all customers that visited the centre. Members were shown a chart which provided a breakdown of income pre and post COVID. This showed that swimming had come back a lot quicker than fitness showing growth at £51,215 in June 2022 and £63,005 in July 2022 compared to £56,805 in June 2019, whereas fitness was at £39,703 in July 2022 compared to £51,620 in June 2019. Wet courses had improved from £31,262 in June 2019 to £35,871 in June 2022 rising to £36,337 in July 2022.

50.7 The Places Leisure Area Manager went on to discuss customer feedback which was sought at every opportunity in order to appraise how the Leisure Centre was operating. One of the mechanisms used was Places pulse, a Net Promoter Score, which surveyed customers randomly each month using pre-set questions relating to the business concentrating on service and quality and asking customers to rate them. The scoring system was 1-10 with 10 being the highest – a score of 9-10 was given a green flag and banded as a 'promoter' i.e. customers who would promote the service by telling their friends etc. about how well the facility was doing, a score of between 5-8 was banded as 'passive' i.e. customers who were predominately happy and would neither promote or damage the facility's reputation and those giving a score of 1-4 were categorised as 'detractors' and given a red

flag as those customers were essentially unhappy with the service and could potentially cause damage to the facility's reputation. Any 'detractors' were contacted to establish what was going wrong so changes could be made where possible. He was extremely proud to say that Tewkesbury Leisure Centre was currently performing at double the company average - in the top quartile of the business – with consistent results month on month so the Tewkesbury Leisure Centre Manager and his team were doing a fantastic job.

- 50.8 In terms of what was next, Members were advised that there would be investment in a new birthday party package which would operate from the studio, complementing the swimming pool birthday parties, and in virtual group cycling within the gym with its own sound and light system as well as a softplay in the foyer area. The marketing strategy had been expanded further into the community with letterbox mailing taking place throughout the summer. It was recognised that there would be people in the community who were struggling with the cost of living therefore it was intended to provide a warm space at the Leisure Centre for those who needed it. Also in the pipeline was a community van, something which had been operated successfully in the north of the region and could be used to carry out health checks and outreach activities promoting health and wellbeing projects within the community.
- 50.9 A Member drew attention to the demographics of the customer base and indicated that he represented the fastest growing Parishes in Tewkesbury Borough with 3,000 new dwellings being built in Innsworth, Twigworth and Longford yet those areas did not seem to be represented and he had not heard of any promotion from Tewkesbury Leisure Centre within those places. The Tewkesbury Leisure Centre Manager advised it was his job to reach out to those areas and attract residents to use the Leisure Centre so he would take this on board and contact developers in those areas as well as targeting properties for letterbox leafleting. The Member went on to indicate that a leisure centre was on the "wishlist" for the Innsworth site and he asked how that might impact on Tewkesbury Leisure Centre should it be built. In response, the Asset Manager advised that competition was considered healthy within the business. Location had been assessed when building the new Leisure Centre and Tewkesbury was considered the mid-point in terms of where customers were coming from. The key factor was ensuring that Tewkesbury Leisure Centre was the best facility in order to attract customers. There were different categories of customers, for instance, the "gym bunnies" who wanted to go to the newest facilities with the latest innovations, others used leisure facilities as a family on a regular basis, for instance, parents may use the gym whilst their children were having swimming lessons, and there were those who did not exercise which was the most profitable market and the customers which the various leisure centres were vying for. Perception of a quality environment was important – customers may never use the virtual studio but it was about having the opportunity to do so. The softplay proposed for Tewkesbury Leisure Centre was focused on uplifting memberships and the overall package on offer. The Places Leisure Regional Manager explained that the new proposals were intended to futureproof the business by turning Tewkesbury Leisure Centre into a one-stop shop for fitness, swimming, softplay, parties and anything else which customers might want. The community van was about facilitating community engagement with harder to reach groups, such as those on low incomes. Marketing campaigns would be launched alongside the new offerings with a slightly different strategy for the softplay which would target different customers/areas who would not otherwise know about the leisure centre.
- 50.10 A Member indicated that she had been happy to see Tewkesbury Leisure Centre helping families on low incomes with free child swimming over the summer. She asked how staff felt about the Placemaker model which had been introduced and whether it was demoralising in the sense that some may feel overqualified to serve food etc. and also how customers might react to their personal trainer being

required to undertake other duties in terms of the perception of their qualifications and specialisms. In response, the Places Leisure Regional Manager clarified that the Placemaker model was very much aimed at the customer service – the fitness staff focused on what they were qualified to do and nothing detracted from that. Staff were finding their roles more varied under the new way of working as this allowed them to expand their knowledge rather than just being a receptionist or a swim co-ordinator. Under the old model, customers wanting to book swimming lessons would have to speak to a swim co-ordinator who may not be working on that particular day whereas customer services staff had been upskilled to deal with a range of customer queries. The Member went on to question whether consideration had been given to introducing a creche as childcare was a barrier to fitness for many parents. The Places Leisure Regional Manager advised that Places Leisure did not offer creches as a company and that would not be part of the offer at Tewkesbury Leisure Centre due to the staffing ratios required etc. The Member suggested that parent and child classes could be something to consider going forward and the Tewkesbury Leisure Centre Manager confirmed that consideration was being given to purchasing some stay and play equipment e.g. inflatables, mats etc. for times when the studio was not in use. A Member observed that the softplay sessions run by places like the Cheltenham Trust were grossly underused whereas the commercial ones seemed to be very successful so he asked whether this would be viable for Tewkesbury Leisure Centre. In response the Tewkesbury Leisure Centre Manager advised that it would be part of the experience being offered, for instance, children might be attending swimming lessons and also use the softplay at the same time so it was felt it would be a good idea to push forward.

- 50.11 With regard to energy costs, a Member asked if there had been any impact as a result of the solar canopy. The Asset Manager indicated that it was very early days with the solar canopy effectively being switched on in August but he provided assurance that opportunities to go into public power agreements with different providers were being considered in order to keep prices down for the Council. In response to a query about savings, he advised that data would be taken to the Executive Committee in due course which could be shared more widely with Members at that time. Another Member noted that consideration had been given to reducing pool temperatures and he asked if there was potential for other energy efficiency measures such as putting more solar panels onto the roof of the Leisure Centre. The Asset Manager stressed it was in the interests of Places Leisure to keep energy costs as low as possible and everything was on the table to be looked at – in terms of solar panels, the Leisure Centre roof was facing the wrong way; however, solar panels were becoming more effective so it was possible to look at 50% if they were primarily south facing.
- 50.12 A Member pointed out that COVID was still in existence with the number of cases on the rise again and he asked what was being done to build confidence among those who were still concerned about returning to Tewkesbury Leisure Centre for that reason. In response, the Places Leisure Regional Manager advised that some COVID protocols were being maintained such as use of hand sanitiser and asking people to wipe down equipment before and after use. The screens from reception had been removed but were being kept on site so could be reinstalled if necessary. He was pleased to report that they were no longer getting the same sort of feedback from customers about being nervous to return as they had when restrictions had originally been removed. The Member indicated that the ones who were worried about returning were not the ones using the facility so he asked how they could be reassured it was safe and the Places Leisure Regional Manager indicated that was where the outreach van would play a role alongside social media, leaflet drops and the website which still included a COVID area so customers could understand any protocols in place. The Member pointed out that the Tewkesbury Borough News was not always received by every household in the

borough and he asked how it was intended to deal with people who wanted to make use of the five day pass but did not have a copy of the newsletter. The Tewkesbury Leisure Centre Manager indicated that additional letterbox drops could be arranged for any areas where the Tewkesbury Borough News was not delivered and the Places Leisure Area Manager provided assurance that customers who had missed out on a copy would be dealt with in a positive manner. A Member asked if Borough Councillors could be provided with an email address they could pass on to residents who did not receive the five day pass as they would have an understanding of those who may be missed and the Tewkesbury Leisure Centre Manager confirmed he would be happy to be the contact for that. In response to a query as to whether the remote classes which had been run during the pandemic were still being offered, Members were informed that customers could become Places Members which gave them access to the Places Locker app where they could download a range of classes to do at home. There was also an Essential Virtual Studio membership which cost £5 and included access to Les Mills classes.

- 50.13 A Member noted that nationally fitness had recovered to 98.7% of pre-COVID levels but Tewkesbury Leisure Centre had only recovered to 81% and she asked what was different about Tewkesbury. The Asset Manager advised that this could be due to the geographical area as people in the borough had been more able to exercise outside, riding bikes and running etc. It was thought that this may change over the winter as people who would normally be outside began to start using the facility. The Member recognised that inflation was currently at around 10% and salaries for most people were not keeping pace with that so she asked what the pricing strategy would be and whether the Council had any say in that. The Asset Manager confirmed that the Council was able to input in accordance with the contract and the important thing was to ensure any increase was proportionate. The swimming lesson programme was one of the lowest priced in the area and would increase slightly - Places Leisure had approached the Council for a steeper increase which Officers were not in favour of; however, it was possible there would be a further increase going into Christmas but that may still be delayed until April to take account of the increased energy costs people would be paying over the winter. He advised that two Members sat on the strategic management board for the Leisure Centre and, although it was not a decision-making body, they would have input into discussions.
- 50.14 A Member raised concern about capacity given the statistics about swimming lesson take-up and the Tewkesbury Leisure Centre Manager confirmed this was at 91-93% capacity and he had already touched on the challenges around expanding the programme; however, work was continuing to ensure it could be achieved with the appointment of the Swim Manager and upskilling staff to be able to teach. The Places Leisure Area Manager felt there was a balance to be struck between swimming lessons and normal swim sessions so there was something on the timetable for the whole community. Regular discussions took place with the Asset Manager to talk through the programme to ensure that decisions were not having a detrimental effect in the longer term. Another Member asked if there was a waiting list for swimming lessons as he assumed there would be a lot of children who would have missed out for up to two years during the various lockdowns. The Tewkesbury Leisure Centre Manager explained that it depended on the stage but, generally, when people enquired about lessons they would be signed up to the next suitable available session as classes ran Monday-Saturday; if people wanted a particular day this was accommodated where possible but they tended not to have a waiting list, although that may become necessary in the future. There were certainly people catching up and he predicted there would be an upward trend moving forward. In terms of staffing, a Member noted that a lot of recent recruitment had been internal which meant that the Leisure Centre may be missing out in terms of getting new ideas about what others were doing and injecting some

new blood into the facility. The Places Leisure Regional Manager confirmed that all vacancies were advertised on the open market and anyone internal looking to develop their careers were encouraged to apply. The Placemaker Manager had been recruited externally on the basis of their experience. In response to a query, confirmation was provided that apprenticeships were offered.

- 50.15 A Member queried how the Leisure Centre was being maintained to ensure it could compete with new facilities and the Asset Manager advised that the contractual agreement with Places Leisure was a full repair and maintenance lease so there was a requirement for them to continue to invest in the facility. He knew from his weekly visits that cosmetic work such as decorating continued to be undertaken and there was a replacement programme for gym equipment etc. which required capital expenditure – Tewkesbury Leisure Centre operated a 40 station gym but was able to accommodate 60 stations so there had been an allowance for growth. He was comfortable having conversations about any matters which needed to be resolved and was happy that the Places team resolved these as quickly as possible so he had no concerns in terms of that element of the contract. A Member pointed out that Cascades had suffered from a number of issues which could not be repaired and he asked if Tewkesbury Leisure Centre had been futureproofed against those issues. The Asset Manager advised that Tewkesbury Leisure Centre had a lifespan of approximately 40-50 years. Some of the issues the Member was referring to had been managed out by developments in technology, for instance, Cascades had been built in the 1970s when pipework had been made from cast iron whereas the new Leisure Centre used PVC.
- 50.16 A Member indicated that he represented one of the most deprived areas in the borough with many vulnerable and low income families who were not able to swim but still faced dangers from brooks and streams and he asked if the community bus could be used to provide transport to the Leisure Centre given that lack of public transport meant that it was a two hour trip from Brockworth to Tewkesbury. The Places Leisure Regional Manager indicated that, unfortunately, it was a van and not a bus and would be used for going out into the community rather than bringing people to the Leisure Centre; however, various funding streams were being investigated which may help families on low incomes with free swimming, albeit not with transport. This may be something which could be looked at if schemes became available to assist with travel costs but it was not within remit at the moment. The Member suggested it may be possible to work with Parish Councils to establish if there were any grants which could help with the transport issue and the Places Leisure Regional Manager welcomed that suggestion. Another Member suggested that there may be separate funding available for care leavers. He had recently met with the Accountable Officer at the Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group who was passionate about social prescribing, particularly among the hard to reach, so it may be beneficial to make contact with her. The Places Leisure Regional Manager undertook to pass this on to the Health Community Manager who oversaw Tewkesbury. A Member suggested that Parish Councils should be notified of any initiatives coming forward as they could promote them to residents via their Facebook pages. The Asset Manager undertook to put the Places Leisure representatives in touch with the Community and Economic Development Manager in order to facilitate contact with the Parish Councils.
- 50.17 A Member congratulated the representatives from Places Leisure on what had been delivered – when Cascades had closed he had wondered whether funding would be available for a new swimming pool and what coverage it would get so he was heartened to see what had been achieved. He was particularly impressed with the geographical reach of its customer base. The Chair thanked the representatives on behalf of the Committee for an informative presentation and suggested that Places Leisure be invited back to give an update in a year's time. It was subsequently

**RESOLVED** That the Places Leisure presentation be **NOTED** and that the representatives be invited to give an update to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in a year's time.

**OS.51 HAVE YOUR SAY (4CS) ANNUAL UPDATE**

- 51.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 31-52, which provided a summary of compliments, comments, concerns and complaints received during 2021/22. Members were asked to consider the annual update.
- 51.2 The Corporate Services Manager advised that compliments, comments, concerns and complaints (the 4Cs) made up the Have Your Say approach which had been approved by the Executive Committee in March 2021. The 4Cs framework was built on the Council's digital platform, Liberty Create, which helped Officers to gain a clear understanding of the compliments, comments, concerns and complaints in their service areas. It also allowed the Corporate Services Officer to produce more detailed reports and Appendix 1 to the report attached the first annual report using the new framework. In terms of highlights, there had been an increase of 56.25% in the number of compliments received during 2021/22 compared to the previous year which was largely because there was more clarity around how customers could report them. It was noted that 172 concerns had been submitted which had a direct impact on the number of formal complaints with a 61% reduction in complaints relating to waste and recycling. Customers were now also able to submit comments and examples ranged from Section 106 enquiries to change of circumstances for Council Tax payments. In terms of formal complaints, there had been a reduction of 41 compared to 2020/21 and a breakdown of the nature of complaints and how many had been answered within the 20 working day timescale was set out within the report. It was planned to deliver further training for relevant Officers around responding to complaints and the importance of responding on time.
- 51.3 A Member indicated that Councillors often received complaints from residents and he was particularly concerned about the number of complaints he had received in relation to residents not being able to contact Planning Officers by telephone. In response, the Corporate Services Manager encouraged Members to advise herself or the Head of Corporate Services if residents were experiencing difficulties so they could investigate. She indicated that a number of compliments had been received for the Planning department so some people were having a good experience but she accepted there was still a lot more work to be done. A Member indicated that she had always received a prompt response from the Officers within the Planning department; if her original call could not be answered she had always received a call back within the hour and had been directed to someone else who could help if a particular Officer was on leave. The Head of Corporate Services understood the concerns regarding Planning and the issues within the service had been acknowledged through the Development Services review that was now 12 months in. A lot of work was being done behind the scenes and there had been difficulties in relation to agency staff which had stalled certain elements but the review had the full backing of the Chief Executive and the Head of Corporate Services was confident it would deliver. He urged Members to be patient but recognised the importance of getting the fundamentals right and he was sure the Corporate Services Manager would pick up the points raised regarding the telephones as a matter of urgency.
- 51.4 A Member was interested to see a spike in the number of comments received in relation to revenues and benefits, as set out at Page No. 40 of the report, and he asked if there was a specific reason for this. In response, the Corporate Services Manager explained that it was likely a reflection of the amount of customer contact as anything which went through the Revenues and Benefits team was logged as a

comment including emails etc. The Member drew attention to Page No. 45 of the report and the number of stage one complaints answered within 20 working days and he asked if it was possible to have this as a percentage rather than the number of complaints as that made it easier for comparison year on year. The Corporate Services Manager undertook to ensure this was included going forward. The Member noted that there had been a 21% reduction in the number of complaints being responded to on time and he asked why this was the case. The Corporate Services Manager advised that the system notified staff when complaints were coming to the end of their deadline for response so it was felt this was a training issue hence the session which would be delivered by the Corporate Director in November.

- 51.5 A Member asked if it was possible for third parties to log the 4Cs as Members were often contacted directly by residents. The Corporate Services Manager confirmed that Members could already use the system to log comments with an option to choose whether a response was needed and she undertook to circulate a Member Update setting out how to do this. Another Member drew attention to Page No. 39 of the report and asked what the compliment received by the licensing service was in relation to as she was aware there had been some structural changes within the team and a backlog of work in certain areas. In response, the Corporate Services Manager advised that the specific compliment was in relation to taxi licensing and she undertook to make this clear going forward. The Member thanked the Officers for the report which she found very easy to read and understand.
- 51.6 A Member drew attention to Page No. 44 of the report which referenced two stage one complainants receiving a total of £948.50 in financial remedy, and Page No. 46 of the report which stated that three stage two complainants were offered a one-off payment totalling £1,150, and she sought assurance that appropriate procedures had now been put in place for the issues raised to ensure this did not happen again. The Corporate Services Manager confirmed that, in cases where the Council had been required to make a payment, there would be lessons to be learnt and she provided assurance they would be implemented accordingly. The Head of Corporate Services advised there was a requirement for the Internal Audit team to undertake a sample check to ensure lessons learnt had been implemented with the results reported to the Audit and Governance Committee.
- 51.7 A Member pointed out that Pages No. 47 and 48 of the report referenced 2020/21 and he asked if this was a typographical error. The Corporate Services Manager confirmed it should read 2021/22. The Member went on to draw attention to Page No. 52 of the report which provided the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's letter and showed that 67% of complaints investigated in relation to Tewkesbury Borough Council had been upheld compared to an average of 51% in similar organisations and he asked if this was something Officers were concerned by. In response, the Corporate Services Manager confirmed that two of three complaints investigated had been upheld which was a very low number, particularly compared to others, so it was no cause for concern.

51.8 It was

**RESOLVED** That the Have Your Say (4Cs) annual update be **NOTED**.

## **OS.52 GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE**

- 52.1 Attention was drawn to the report from the Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee, circulated at Pages No. 53-57, which gave an update on matters considered at the meeting held on 22 September 2022.

52.2 The Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee advised that the majority of the meeting had focused on the Golden Valley development project and he was happy to take any questions from Members. A Member understood that GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was currently going out for funding for projects and he asked if funding for this project was secure for this year and what the projections were going forward. The Council's representative advised there had been no feedback specific to GFirst LEP and another Member indicated that the Golden Valley project was funded by central Government. A Member asked whether Tewkesbury Borough Council was learning from this for its own Garden Town project and what links were in place to share best practice. The Head of Corporate Services undertook to seek a response from the Garden Town team following the meeting. A Member noted that the level of affordable housing provision would be 35% and she asked for clarification as to whether this was standard – other Members had suggested it was normally 40% so, if that was the case, she wanted to know why it was below that level. The Council's representative undertook to ask this question and report back to the Committee. Another Member asked if any reference had been made to the areas being considered for the Economic Investment Zone as, whilst Gloucestershire County Council was the driver, it would impact on planning requirements. The Council's representative indicated that he was not aware of anything but he pointed out there was extensive information within the links provided in his report.

52.3 It was

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

The meeting closed at 6:30 pm