

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Council held at the Council Offices, Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury on Tuesday, 24 January 2017 commencing at 6:00 pm

Present:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Deputy Mayor

Councillor Mrs G F Blackwell
Councillor H A E Turbyfield

and Councillors:

R E Allen, P W Awford, R A Bird, G J Bocking, K J Cromwell, D M M Davies, M Dean, R D East, A J Evans, D T Foyle, R Furolo, R E Garnham, Mrs P A Godwin, Mrs M A Gore, Mrs J Greening, Mrs R M Hatton, B C J Hesketh, Mrs S E Hillier-Richardson, Mrs A Hollaway, Mrs E J MacTiernan, J R Mason, Mrs H C McLain, T A Spencer, Mrs P E Stokes, P D Surman, M G Sztymiak, R J E Vines, D J Waters, M J Williams and P N Workman

CL.74 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

74.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs K J Berry, A S Reece and V D Smith.

CL.75 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

75.2 The following declaration was made:

Councillor	Application No./Item	Nature of Interest (where disclosed)	Declared Action in respect of Disclosure
J R Mason	Item 11 – Neighbourhood Plans – Winchcombe and Sudeley (Combined) and Highnam.	Is Chair of Winchcombe Town Council.	Would speak and vote.

75.3 There were no further declarations made on this occasion.

CL.76 MINUTES

76.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2016, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor, subject to an amendment to show that Councillor R E Garnham had been present at the meeting.

CL.77 ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 77.1 The evacuation procedure, as set out on the Agenda, was advised to those present.
- 77.2 The Mayor welcomed Mrs Christine Laird to the meeting and advised that she would be presenting the petition at Item 7 on the Agenda. She also introduced Richard Blamey (Chair of the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel) and the other Panel Members, Hugh Laird, Sue Lambert and Andrew Turner, who were all in attendance for Item 8 on the Agenda, Member Allowances Scheme 2017/18.

CL.78 ITEMS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

- 78.1 There were no items from members of the public on this occasion.

CL.79 MEMBER QUESTIONS PROPERLY SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

- 79.1 There were no Member questions on this occasion.

CL.80 PETITION - SALE OF GASTONS TO TEWKESBURY BATTLEFIELD SOCIETY

- 80.1 Members were advised that a petition had been received by the Council which asked that it communicate to the Governors of Tewkesbury School its disagreement with the decision not to sell the Gastons fields to the Tewkesbury Battlefield Society; to make clear any aspiration to sell the Gastons fields for development purposes was wholly inappropriate, given its historical significance, and would be vigorously opposed if attempted by the Trustees; and to consider formally designating the Gastons fields, in the Local Plan, as the intended site for the future creation of a Heritage Park for Tewkesbury and to work with the Society and residents to deliver that objective. The petition had received 2,741 signatures which was in excess of the 100 signatures required to trigger a Council debate and was the reason the current report was before Members. In addition, the Battlefield Society had undertaken its own online petition which contained 386 signatures. The report of the Head of Development Services, circulated at Pages No. 13-25, asked that Officers consider the issues raised within the petition through the Borough Plan process and explore with Tewkesbury Battlefield Society, the Tewkesbury School Trust and landowners the potential for improving the Battlefield as a cultural and heritage asset.
- 80.2 The Mayor invited Christine Laird, speaking as the petition organiser, to make her presentation to the Council. Mrs Laird explained that she had been asked to speak on behalf of the 3,000 people that had signed the two petitions which had been submitted to the Council. She explained that the Gastons fields were located at the heart of the site of the Battle of Tewkesbury and had been designated a national asset in 1983. The landscape was particularly rare because it remained much as it was in the fifteenth century. The fields were owned by the Tewkesbury School Trust, a charity owned and controlled by the governors of Tewkesbury School, and the endowment deed required the charity to comply with specific conditions to maintain and keep in good repair the barn, fields, boundaries and paths that made up the area. It was considered by those that had signed the petition that this requirement has not been complied with for more than 10 years as could be seen by the fencing that had fallen down and the hedgerows and pasture that were in very poor condition. In addition, the public footpaths that crossed the site had been impossible to use last year and a small barn located near the Gloucester Road was at real risk of falling down. Mrs Laird explained that the Gastons fields formed an important part of the Town's Battlefield trail but, sadly, it was not unusual to hear tourists comment adversely on the appearance of the fields when following the trail. For residents it was a source of shame that tourists thought Tewkesbury did not care about its heritage. The Battlefield Society had regularly requested that action was taken to address its concerns but nothing was done and Members were

advised that, in 2014, the governors had actively marketed the Gastons fields as a site suitable for speculative housing development. In response to that marketing campaign, an offer to purchase the fields had been received from New Dawn Homes of Cheltenham which was a company specialising in building executive homes. Action to prevent the sale was taken by registering the site as a community asset and the Battlefield Society had then led a successful effort to raise the money necessary to buy the fields. However, at the eleventh hour the governors had refused to sell with the reasons for doing so never being properly explained. The Battlefield Society was aware, from the Charity Commission, that no legal obstacles would have prevented sale of the land to the Battlefield Society and, recently, the suspicion that the sale was abandoned because the owners still wanted to sell the fields for housing was confirmed. It was the Battlefield Society's belief that the fields should be owned by people that appreciated their historical significance and potential to boost tourism and the local economy. The United Kingdom currently had no national park dedicated to the exploration of medieval history and it was felt that Tewkesbury would be the best place to create this as it was a medieval town which was home to the largest medieval festival in Europe. It was believed that the Heritage Lottery Fund and others would help fund its delivery. Mrs Laird advised that many residents had been angered that the issue was not about the actions of a faceless, profit driven company but the people in charge of the local school. One petitioner had commented that their children attended Tewkesbury School and they did not want them thinking it was acceptable to act like that. The petitioner believed the fields needed to be protected by the Council and asked that it formally designate the Gastons fields in the new Local Plan as the site of a future Medieval Heritage Park for Tewkesbury. In addition, the Battlefield Society supported the recent suggestion that a whole Battlefield approach to this issue may be merited. In the meantime it was hoped that, if there was anything the Council could do to press the governors to honour their repair and maintenance obligations, it would do so. For residents living by the fields it was now affecting their enjoyment of where they lived which was a source of sadness. Mrs Laird advised that the school seemed to have no democratic process to enable the Battlefield Society to engage directly with the board of governors and, although it had tried to secure change, it had no voice or influence over the board.

- 80.3 The Mayor thanked Mrs Laird for the information provided and invited the Economic and Community Development Manager to introduce the report. The Economic and Community Development Manager indicated that it was important to recognise the value and significance of the relationship between the Council and the Battlefield Society as well as the importance of the land in question. The Council would not usually wish to be involved in the relationship between two parties but the Gastons fields was covered by the Council's Policy HEN24: Historic Battlefields of the Adopted Tewkesbury Borough Local Plan which required that any proposals for development have regard to the conservation of the historic landscape; the supporting justification to that Policy stated that 'proposals should be able to demonstrate that they respect the character of the registered site and generally retained its openness'. Any proposal for development within the Battlefield would be judged against that Policy, as well as other saved Local Plan Policies and the National Planning Policy Framework. In addition, he advised that the Council currently promoted the Battlefield and there was scope to enhance it as a whole, not just the Gastons fields site, with an opportunity to explore, with the Battlefield Society and the landowners, the potential for the battlefield as a cultural, tourism and heritage asset. In 2014, the land had been nominated and listed as an asset of community value and this enabled the community to raise funds to bid for the land once it was put up for sale; that listing remained in place for five years.
- 80.4 During the discussion which ensued, a Member questioned whether anything could be done to try and help ensure the school met its obligations in respect of repair and maintenance of the area. In response, the Chief Executive indicated that this was a

difficult issue as, clearly, the two parties involved were both local organisations and it was not appropriate for the Council to 'take sides'; that being said, there was an issue that the Gastons fields were part of the battlefield which was a major historic site with huge potential for both the Town of Tewkesbury and the Borough as a whole in terms of cultural, economic and historical impact. He felt that there was great potential for the Council, the Battlefield Society and Tewkesbury School to work together to do more for the area in this regard. Having been registered, the Gastons fields had some protection in planning policy terms but it was suggested within the report that this could be reviewed through the Borough Plan process to see if there was more that could be done. Officers were committed to finding a way forward to suit all parties if possible. Another Member fully understood the historic site needed to be kept as such and she questioned whether the Council could do something to make that intent clearer. She was concerned that the current designation within the Local Plan would not, in reality, offer the level of protection required. In response, the Head of Development Services indicated that the Policy relating to the historic battlefield was not a planning protection but it was a material consideration to be taken into account in planning terms. She was conscious that the Borough Plan would take some time to come on-stream and suggested that there may be other effective ways forward such as the development of a Supplementary Planning Document or addressing this during the preparation of the Tewkesbury Neighbourhood Plan.

- 80.5 A Member considered that the Council had an important role to play in facilitating the exciting project which the Battlefield Society had planned for the area. He understood that the school wanted to get the best value for the land but felt that this was not necessarily through housing development. He considered the best way forward was to work with the Battlefield Society to try and achieve a heritage trail/interpretation site that the Borough could be proud of. Other Members agreed with the view that the Council should fully support the recommendations contained within the report and that they should be strengthened if possible. In terms of whether the Gastons fields, as part of the battlefield site, could be registered as a Scheduled Ancient Monument, the Head of Development Services advised that, as far as she was aware, only one part of the Battle Trail qualified as a Scheduled Ancient Monument and that was Queen Margaret's Camp. In addition she advised that for a site to gain that kind of recognition took a very long time. She felt it would be better to add some wording to the resolution which gave Officers the ability to consider the options available to obtain the outcome that Members wanted.
- 80.6 In terms of the maintenance issues, a Member questioned whether the Council could arbitrate an agreement between the parties involved to get some maintenance done. Another Member questioned what format the suggested meetings between the parties would take i.e. informally or in a Working Group situation. In response, the Economic and Community Development Manager advised that, in the first instance, he would get all of the parties together to discuss the current position and ways forward; thereafter, if a Working Group was required it could be set up.
- 80.7 It was suggested that the recommendation be reworded to allow the exploration of other options such as a Supplementary Planning Document, and a Member proposed that, in addition, the recommendation require Officers to report back to the Council within a two month period. It was felt that this was a good option, although a two month period might be unrealistic given the conversations that needed to be undertaken.
- 80.8 Accordingly, upon being proposed and seconded, it was
- RESOLVED** 1. That the Council is committed to the principle of developing the whole of Tewkesbury Battlefield as a heritage, cultural

and economic asset for the Borough and requests Officers to consider the issues raised within the petition through:

- a. the Borough Plan and other planning processes including supplementary planning guidance and enforcement; and
 - b. exploring with Tewkesbury Battlefield Society, the Tewkesbury School Trust and landowners the potential for improving the Battlefield as a cultural and heritage asset.
2. That an update report be presented to the Council within three months on the progress made.

CL.81 MEMBER ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2017/18

- 81.1 The report of the Head of Democratic Services, circulated at Pages No. 26-34, attached the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel following its consideration of the Council's Member Allowances Scheme. The report set out a number of recommendations made by the Panel which the Council was asked to consider when agreeing its Scheme of Allowances for 2017/18.
- 81.2 The Mayor invited the Chair of the Panel, Mr Richard Blamey, to address the Council. Mr Blamey explained that the current Panel had been appointed in February 2015 and he had been the Chair for much of that time. He was also a member of Gloucestershire County Council's Independent Remuneration Panel so he had quite a lot of experience of local authority allowances. This had been his second opportunity to address Tewkesbury Borough Council in relation to the Member Allowances Scheme for which he was grateful. Mr Blamey explained that, since the Panel's appointment, it had met over 30 Councillors and analysed a huge amount of data. The Panel had found meeting with Councillors extremely helpful as it provided a much better understanding of the role and duties that they undertook and the Panel looked forward to meeting more Members throughout the forthcoming year. In terms of the Basic Allowance, Tewkesbury Borough was still the highest in the country; however, the Panel did not think it appropriate or fair to recommend a cut in that allowance. In terms of Special Responsibility Allowances, the Council's payments were on the low side so they were recommended for an increase; he felt it should be borne in mind that, even with that increase, they remained low in comparison to others. The Panel was recommending a new Special Responsibility Allowance for Support Members of £175.00 per year which would act as recognition for the additional work that they undertook to support their Lead Members. The cost of the recommendations equated to a 1.3% increase on the overall allowances budget.
- 81.3 During the discussion which ensued, a Member questioned whether the comparison data that the Panel had looked at had taken account of the fact that Tewkesbury Borough ran a Committee system rather than a Cabinet system. In response, Mr Blamey advised that the Panel had been very thorough so had looked at data across the country and then 'drilled down' to look at the like for like authorities. In relation to the Scheme proposed being for a period of one year, a Member questioned whether the Panel would start its deliberations again soon and, in response, Mr Blamey indicated that the Panel would meet as many Councillors as it could and look at the data over the year to enable it to make a recommendation in 2018.
- 81.4 In proposing the recommendations of the Panel, the Leader of the Council thanked the Panel for the work that it had undertaken and the very thorough way it had conducted its research. He felt that its recommendations would result in a fair and reasonable Allowances Scheme and he hoped the Panel would return again as its

members were now well versed in how the Council ran its business. The Deputy Leader echoed those sentiments and seconded the proposal.

81.5 During the discussion which ensued, a Member felt that the inflationary increase was unfair when the Council's Basic Allowance was already higher than others; she therefore proposed, and it was seconded, that recommendation 4.2 of the Panel's report, which recommended that the Council consider including an inflationary increase within the Medium Term Financial Strategy for the Members' Allowances budget, be removed. The seconder of the amendment agreed that this did not feel appropriate in the circumstances in terms of the Basic Allowance and, overall, he would not support an increase in the Special Responsibility Allowances either.

81.6 In debating the amendment, a Member suggested that the recommendation at 4.2 was merely asking that an inflationary increase be included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy rather than actually agreeing an annual increase; he felt this seemed sensible as the Medium Term Financial Strategy was the document used to help the Council plan its future finances. Mr Blamey agreed that the Panel had raised this so that the Council knew it was an issue rather than suggesting that it would wish to recommend an annual increase in allowances paid.

81.7 Upon being put to the vote the amendment that recommendation 4.2 be removed from the Panel's report, was lost. Accordingly, it was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED

1. That the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for the 2017/18 Scheme of Allowances be **AGREED** as follows:

- That the Basic Allowance payable to all Councillors remain at £7,200.
- That the following Special Responsibility Allowances be payable:

Leader of the Council £8,800pa

Deputy Leader £6,600pa

Lead Members (7) £4,400pa

Committee Chairmen (5) £2,200pa

Planning Committee

Licensing Committee

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Audit Committee

Standards Committee

Mayor £2,200pa

Deputy Mayor £1,350pa

Support Members (9) £175pa

2. That all other aspects of the Scheme of Allowances remain unchanged.

3. That Officers' consider including an inflationary increase on the Member Allowances budget within the Medium Term Financial Strategy to allow greater scope for amending the

Scheme in future.

CL.82 APPOINTMENT OF CIVIC HEADS FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

Mayor

82.1 Upon being proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED That Councillor H A E Turbyfield, be appointed Mayor for the ensuing Municipal Year.

Deputy Mayor

82.2 Upon being proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED That Councillor T A Spencer be appointed as Deputy Mayor for the ensuing Municipal Year.

CL.83 LEAD MEMBER PRESENTATION - FINANCE AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

83.1 The Mayor invited the Lead Member for Finance and Asset Management, Councillor D J Waters, to make his presentation to the Council.

83.2 The presentation covered the following main points:

- What the Finance and Asset Management Portfolio covered; some of the achievements of the teams; and some of the challenges faced.
- Finance – the team looked after all of the Council's accounts, budgets, payroll and finances.
- Asset Management – in line with S151 Regulations, the team looked after the Council's physical assets, buildings, trees etc. The team also looked at disposing of, and acquiring, assets.
- Revenues – this was the team that brought the money into the Council as well as that which was owed to the Parishes, the County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office through Council Tax.
- Benefits – the team managed the Housing and Council Tax Benefits which residents were owed; ensuring that they received the correct payments in a timely manner.
- Finance Achievements – one of the biggest achievements was the unqualified audit opinion which had been attained; this meant there had been no faults identified with the finances or the processes behind them which was excellent news. The procurement of new insurances and cash collection contracts had saved over £30,000 per year, which was significant, and a new purchase ordering and commitment accounting module had been installed which would mean better purchasing arrangements. Improvements made in financial reporting to both Officers and Members had resulted in financial challenge panels for Service Managers being implemented and it was hoped this would, in turn, result in a better understanding of the finances in different areas. In addition to this, the finance team supported many corporate projects the most intensive this year being the waste fleet and Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) procurement.
- Asset Achievements – the team had analysed whether the Council could benefit from the building of a crematorium; a lot of work had gone into the options appraisal but, unfortunately, it had been found not to be cost effective at this time. A new tree management system had been put into place which made use of electronic mapping technology. In addition, a Watercourse

Management Strategy was now in place which was very important, as was the new Investment Strategy which looked at the procurement of commercial properties to help the Council's income streams, and a new 'Property' helpdesk had been introduced which would log issues around the building so that they could be dealt with more efficiently. One of the main successes over the last year had been the completion of the Leisure Centre on time and on budget and the subsequent demolition of Cascades. In terms of Spring Gardens the plans to develop the site were first class and it was hoped that, in time, this was something that could be picked up again. The Riverside Walk had been delivered after around 60 years following the successful negotiation of the 'missing link' piece of land and solar panels had been installed on the roof of the Public Services Centre just before the end of the grants for green energy schemes. The purchase of a £15 million commercial property would bring £940,000 per year in revenue to the Council; a lot of lessons had learnt during that process and the Lead Member had been encouraged by the way the team had worked on that negotiation. Finally, it was his view that the Asset team had done a fantastic job in helping to facilitate the refurbishment at the Roses Theatre which was now a superb building.

- Revenues Achievements – due to the considerable growth in new homes being seen in the Borough, an additional £2 million was being collected in Council Tax and the previous year's collection was 98.1% above the national average. In terms of business rates, the Borough was seeing significant growth resulting in an additional £1.5 million to be collected on the previous year; to date £1.3 million had been collected above last year. Last year's collection of business rates was at 99.1% which was way above the national average.
- Benefits Achievements – the processing of new claims was at 16.6 days against the national average of 21 days and change in circumstances processing was completed in 6.8 days which was below the national average of 8 days. Welfare reforms including the bedroom subsidy, the benefit cap and the early stages of universal credit had all offered some challenges to the team and the work of the Financial Inclusion Partnership had brought together various organisations to assist those that needed help in the face of financial difficulties; take-up for the Partnership had not been great but this was not the fault of the team and Officers were working to try to improve that. Current claims to housing benefit were falling gradually as were Council Tax support claims.
- Asset Challenges – the team was looking to review opportunities for service efficiency and explore additional fee earning services such as securing tenants for the next phase of the refurbishment of the Public Services Centre; the hope was that the services that worked from the Public Services Centre could be increased as this brought in additional revenue to the Council as well as additional services for residents. The top floor of the building needed to be let so that it was bringing in revenue. The team was about to deliver a signage project for Tewkesbury Town which would help with tourism and the promotion of walks around the town. Particular attention was drawn to the 'Gazebo' building by the river and the Lead Member explained that this was a listed building for which it would be nice to find a use; if anyone had any ideas they should let him know.
- Revenues and Benefits Challenges – the main challenge would be the roll-out of universal credit. From December 2017, the Department for Work and Pensions would start the full roll-out and new claims for working age claimants would no longer be processed by the Borough Council instead they would be included in universal credit claims. The Borough Council would still

be required to administer existing working age claims on its caseload but these would gradually reduce as many found work or increased their earnings and dropped out of housing benefit. The Borough Council would still be required to administer housing benefit claims for pensioners but, in time, it was expected that they would also be moved onto universal credit.

- Finance Challenges – replacement of the income management systems, optimisation of the Council's payment channels, selection of new external auditors and the introduction of a Fees and Charging Strategy were all on the team's programme of work.
- The Budget – this was a significant financial challenge. The headlines included: £2.2 million deficit over the next five years; reduction in funding including the revenue support grant and new homes bonus; increases in staff costs; pension deficit; and service growth. The budget would still be short by around £824,000 even if the government's Council Tax limit of £5 on a Band D property was used. 2017/18 could be financed with the use of reserves and new homes bonus but the challenges for the future would be great.
- Summary – the portfolio consisted of two small teams that provided both internal and external support and made a real difference to the lives of residents. The teams had a number of important achievements and, whilst there were massive challenges to come, he felt sure staff would rise to them.

83.3 The Lead Member offered his thanks to the staff for their hard work over the past year and to the Transform Working Group for its support, challenge and ideas all of which had helped the Council maintain momentum and meet the financial challenges it faced. The Mayor thanked the Lead Member for his informative presentation and invited questions from Members.

83.4 A Member queried what the numbers were regarding benefit fraud faced by the Council. In response, the Head of Finance and Asset Management explained that he did not have the figures to hand but there was a lot of work done within the Revenues and Benefits teams to tackle Housing Benefit fraud and Council Tax fraud. There was a report on the Agenda for the current meeting which sought to build on the work already undertaken by the Counter Fraud Unit which had saved the Council a significant amount of money during its pilot period. In terms of the future for business rates, the Lead Member indicated that no one knew what the new Scheme would be as there was currently no detail from the government. His personal view was that, whatever the scheme was in the end, there would have to be some equalisation across it so that the authorities that benefited from it shared with those that did not. In addition, the Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that the Council would continue to collect business rates but there would most likely be a tariff so most of the money collected went back to the government for redistribution. In addition, it was likely that the potential retained income would be outweighed by successful appeals; the current year was the third year in which the Council would be in a safety net position in terms of business rates retention. All businesses were looking at the recent revaluation and there were a large number of appeals likely. In terms of new homes bonus, the Lead Member indicated that the government had already top sliced the funding and reduced the scheme to four years; the funding could pick up again depending on the level of building being undertaken so it was hoped this would be an advantage to Tewkesbury Borough.

83.5 Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED That the presentation provided by the Lead Member for Finance and Asset Management be **NOTED**.

CL.84 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS - WINCHCOMBE AND SUDELEY (COMBINED) AND HIGHNAM

- 84.1 The report of the Planning Policy Officer, circulated at Pages No. 35-78, provided details of the next stage in the process regarding the adoption of the Neighbourhood Plans for Winchcombe and Sudeley (Combined) and Highnam. Members were asked to agree that the Neighbourhood Plans be made part of the Development Plan for Tewkesbury Borough; and that authority be delegated to the Head of Development Services, in agreement with the relevant qualifying body, to correct any minor errors, such as spelling, grammar, typographical or formatting errors, that did not affect the substantive content of the Plans.
- 84.2 The Head of Development Services explained that the report before Members was significant as the Neighbourhood Plans for Winchcombe and Sudeley (Combined) and Highnam were the first to go through the whole process, including referendums, which was a huge achievement. Across the Borough there were 13 Neighbourhood Plans covering 18 Parishes; the procedure was a huge commitment by Parishes both in terms of time and effort. The Neighbourhood Plan process itself was very new and the Council had a duty to support Parishes through it which was a huge learning curve both for the Borough and the Parishes. Attention was drawn to Page No. 35 of the Council papers which set out the question that was asked at the referendum and the results which were recorded. At the referendum stage, Neighbourhood Development Plans were required to gain a simple majority of those voting in favour in order for them to be adopted by the local planning authority and the authority then had a legal duty to bring the plans into force.
- 84.3 In proposing the recommendation on the paper, a Member indicated that he had been involved in the development of the Winchcombe and Sudeley (Combined) Neighbourhood Plan and had found it to be an extremely difficult process. He thanked Borough Council Officers for their help in getting to this point and understood that, whilst the Plan did not please everyone in the community, it was an opportunity for the community to have some say in its own future. The proposal was seconded and, upon being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED

1. That the 'Winchcombe and Sudeley Combined Neighbourhood Plan' and the 'Highnam Neighbourhood Plan' be made part of the Development Plan for Tewkesbury Borough.
2. That authority be delegated to the Head of Development Services, in agreement with the relevant qualifying body, to correct any minor errors, such as spelling, grammar, typographical or formatting errors, that do not affect the substantive content of the Plans.

CL.85 HOUSING STRATEGY 2017-2021

- 85.1 The report of the Housing Strategy Review Working Group, circulated at Pages No. 79-250, attached the Housing Strategy 2017-2021 which Members were asked to adopt.
- 85.2 In proposing the adoption of the Strategy, the Lead Member for Built Environment, and Chair of the Housing Strategy Review Working Group, explained that the five year overarching document took into account the national and local issues that were likely to affect the Borough in the foreseeable future. It also played a key part in delivering the Council Plan and included the statutory requirement for both a Homelessness Strategy and a Tenancy Strategy. The Housing Strategy had been developed by Officers and Members through an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group; the Housing Strategy Review Working Group. During the process, Members had agreed priorities and objectives that had been presented in an evidence base document for public and stakeholder consultation. A number of areas of concern had been raised within the consultation which had been addressed within the document before the Council and the evidence base had found there to be an extensive number of challenges for the Council which were set out within four key priorities: increasing housing supply; homelessness and homelessness prevention; meeting the needs of specific groups; and improving the health and wellbeing of local people. The detail of those challenges could be found at Page No. 107 of the Council papers where all of the housing challenges, and explanation of how the Council intended to address those issues through the four key priorities, could be found. Under each priority there were objectives which would be focused on over the next five years and those were set out at Page No. 109. The targets and outcomes for delivering those objectives would be included in a detailed action plan and, for year one, an action plan had already been put forward by the Working Group at Page No. 111 of the Council papers. It was proposed that the action plan would be updated annually so the Council could be proactive, as well as reactive, to the challenging needs of the community. It also meant the Council could respond when new government policies were implemented. It was suggested that the action plan would be as flexible as possible so the Council could start new actions when appropriate over the five year period and that it would be approved by the Executive Committee annually with biannual monitoring by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 85.3 In seconding the proposal, the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee thanked the Working Group and the Officers involved for their quick and effective review of the Housing Strategy. He felt the work undertaken had shown the value of scrutiny work. Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED That the Housing Strategy 2017-2021 be **ADOPTED**.

CL.86 APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

- 86.1 At its meeting on 14 December 2016, the Audit Committee had considered a report which set out details in respect of the appointment of the Council's External Auditors from 2018/19. The Audit Committee had recommended to Council that it should opt-in to the Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) as the Sector Led Body (SLB) for the appointment of the Council's external auditors from 2018/19.
- 86.2 The report which was considered by the Audit Committee had been circulated with the Agenda for the current meeting at Pages No. 251-256.

86.3 In proposing the recommendation from the Audit Committee, the Chair of the Committee advised that, following the cessation of the Audit Commission, transitional arrangements had been put into place to provide local authorities and NHS bodies with external audit contracts up to, and including, the audit of the 2017/18 accounts. The Council now had a responsibility to ensure that an auditor was appointed for future years. The relevant legislation allowed local authorities three routes to making the necessary appointment and, having considered the benefits and risks of each approach, the Audit Committee had recommended to Council that the option to opt-in to the Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd as the Sector Led Body for the appointment of the Council's external auditors from 2018/18 be approved.

86.4 Accordingly, it was seconded and

RESOLVED That the Council opt-in to the Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) as the Sector Led Body (SLB) for the appointment of the Council's external auditors from 2018/19.

CL.87 COUNTER FRAUD UNIT BUSINESS CASE

87.1 At its meeting on 14 December 2016, the Audit Committee had considered a report which set out a business case for the permanent establishment of a Counter Fraud Unit. The Audit Committee had recommended to Council that it approve option 3 of the business case to establish a permanent Counter Fraud Unit, subject to similar approval being made at all partner authorities and that, should all necessary approvals not be forthcoming, option 2 be the Council's default position.

87.2 The report which was considered by the Audit Committee had been circulated with the Agenda for the current meeting at Pages No. 257-298.

87.3 In proposing the recommendation from the Audit Committee, the Chair of the Committee advised that, at the meeting in December, Members had been presented with a progress report on the work undertaken by the Counter Fraud Unit and he was pleased to report that additional work had now been undertaken with business rate payers which had resulted in increased rateable values totalling £335,000 being added to the valuation list of the Council. The work undertaken was part of a pilot exercise investigating the potential of forming a Countywide Counter Fraud Unit. A business case had been prepared based on initial findings and was being presented to all of the Councils in Gloucestershire as well as West Oxfordshire District Council. To date, four Councils had agreed to become full members of the Unit and another two were to make decisions in the coming weeks. The County Council, Ubico Ltd. and a number of housing providers had also agreed to purchase services from the new Unit. The Audit Committee had considered the work of the Unit, along with the options within the business case, and considered that full membership of the Counter Fraud Unit was appropriate for the Council.

87.4 A Member questioned when the replies of the other partner authorities would be known and, in response, the Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that Stroud District and Gloucester City Councils would be making decisions shortly. All other Gloucestershire authorities and West Oxfordshire District Council had already agreed that they would be full members of the Unit. The Head of Finance and Asset Management undertook to provide an update via email on the status of the remaining partners that were considering becoming members of the Unit.

87.5 Having been seconded, it was

RESOLVED That option three of the business case, to establish a permanent Counter Fraud Unit, be **APPROVED**, subject to similar approval being made at all partner authorities; should all necessary approvals not be forthcoming, option two will be the Council's default position.

CL.88 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2017/18

88.1 The report of the Head of Democratic Services, circulated at Pages No. 297-300, set out the proposed Schedule of Meetings for 2017/18. Members were asked to adopt the Schedule as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

88.2 Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED That the Schedule of Meetings for 2017/18, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, be **ADOPTED**.

CL.89 ROYAL GARDEN PARTY

89.1 It was

RESOLVED That Councillor Mrs K J Berry and guest accompany the Mayor and Mayoress as the Council's nominees at the Royal Garden Party in May/June 2017.

89.2 It was agreed that Councillor Mrs J Greening be nominated as a reserve to attend in the event that Councillor Berry should be unable to make the date.

CL.90 SEPARATE BUSINESS

90.1 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.

CL.91 SEPARATE MINUTES

91.1 The Separate Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2016, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor, subject to an amendment to show that Councillor R E Garnham had been present at the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8:00 pm