

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Council Offices, Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury on Tuesday, 12 March 2019 commencing at 4:30 pm

Present:

Chair	Councillor P W Awford
Vice Chair	Councillor R E Allen

and Councillors:

G J Bocking, K J Cromwell, P A Godwin, R M Hatton, H C McLain, T A Spencer, P D Surman, M G Sztymiak, H A E Turbyfield and M J Williams

also present:

Councillors G F Blackwell and E J MacTiernan

OS.85 ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 85.1 The evacuation procedure, as noted on the Agenda, was advised to those present.
- 85.2 The Chair welcomed the representatives from Severn Trent Water to the meeting and indicated that they were in attendance for Agenda Item 9 – Review of Water Supply Outage Monitoring Report. He also welcomed Councillor MacTiernan, Chair of the Flood Risk Management Group, who was in attendance for Agenda Item 11 – Flood Risk Management Group Annual Report. In addition, it was noted that the Lead Member for Organisational Development was present as an observer.

OS.86 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

- 86.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J E Day, D T Foyle and P E Stokes. There were no substitutions for the meeting.

OS.87 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 87.1 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.

87.2 The following declaration was made:

Councillor	Application No./Item	Nature of Interest (where disclosed)	Declared Action in respect of Disclosure
M G Sztymiak	Item 7 – Review of Water Supply Outage Monitoring Report.	Is a Member of Tewkesbury Town Council which owned the Ham.	Would speak and vote.

87.3 There were no further declarations made on this occasion.

OS.88 MINUTES

88.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2019, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

OS.89 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN

89.1 Attention was drawn to the Executive Committee Forward Plan, circulated at Pages No. 12-19. 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.

89.2 It was

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

OS.90 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19

90.1 Attention was drawn to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2018/19, circulated at Pages No. 20-23, which Members were asked to consider.

90.2 A Member sought an update on the progress of the Single Use Plastic Policy which was in the pending items section of the Work Programme. The Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that workloads had meant it had not been possible to bring a report to the Committee as yet but he provided assurance that Officers were working to eliminate single use plastic within the organisation - some had already been removed e.g. cups, stirrers, and consideration was being given to additional elements such as the use of plastic bags for trade waste. With regard to the other pending items, the Head of Corporate Services advised that the Corporate Enforcement Policy was being considered by the Corporate Management Team and his team was working on the Review of Complaints Policy which was gaining traction.

90.3 It was

RESOLVED That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2018/19 be **NOTED**.

OS.91 REVIEW OF WATER SUPPLY OUTAGE MONITORING REPORT

- 91.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Head of Community Services, circulated at Pages No. 24-34, which provided an update on progress against the action plan arising from the Scrutiny Review of Water Supply Outage. Members were asked to consider the progress made and to determine what, if any, further monitoring arrangements were required, including timescales, or whether they were content to sign-off the plan.
- 91.2 The Head of Community Services indicated that it was now 15 months on from the water outage event in December 2017 which had affected over 10,000 residential properties, a significant number of businesses, schools, agricultural farmers, the community hospital and nursing homes. Given the significance of the event, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had agreed to undertake a review of the outage which had resulted in an action plan comprising 20 recommendations, attached at Appendix 1 to the report. The Severn Trent Water Head of Water Quality and Environment was pleased to report that good progress had been made on all the actions assigned to Severn Trent Water. He had brought with him two colleagues who were responsible for running the alternative supplies team and co-ordinating asset surveys and projects on the Ham who would be pleased to answer any specific questions. A number of recommendations related to better joint working prior to incidents and he confirmed that Severn Trent Water had been working closely with the Gloucestershire Local Resilience Forum and the teams across the county and had been asked to share this with Thames Water and other groups as best practice.
- 91.3 Members were advised that some of the key actions were around understanding the network and ensuring that records were accurate. He confirmed that the network from Mythe Water Treatment Works, up to the reservoirs at Churchdown, had been walked and inspected with assets reconfirmed and records updated. Whilst traditional techniques were able to detect leaks but not necessarily identify where they were, new technology had been used which allowed leaks to be pinpointed. The structure and condition of the pipes had been checked and any leaks that had been discovered had been repaired giving the team confidence in the network on the Ham and the wider area. These techniques gave valuable intelligence but they were not straightforward or without risk so a lot of planning and preparation was required. Checks would now be undertaken on a rolling basis until the pipes were replaced to ensure that leaks could be identified at an early stage. If there was any evidence of pooling, a chlorine sample would be taken to determine whether it was from rainfall or the pipe. Severn Trent Water had previously indicated that it intended to either replace or re-line the mid-level pipes across the Ham. Re-lining could be cheaper and less disruptive, it would be challenging on this particular site due to the number of assets to navigate, access pits required and reduction in the capacity of the pipes, as well as the increased operational risk as one of the two pipes would be out of supply at any one time. Severn Trent Water had been liaising closely with the Severn Ham Committee and Natural England and both had been helpful and supportive in terms of the work and how best to minimise the impact. Conversations had also taken place around how to use the disruption to better the site when the work was completed, for example, by inverting the soil and making it more suitable for habitats, seed mix etc. The preferred option was to replace both mid-level pipes across the Ham as it offered the best balance in terms of a secure long-term solution, disturbance to the site/environment and operational risk, both short and long-term. The action plan contained a target date of August 2020 and he had been pushing the team to start the project during the current year; however, it was a challenging site in terms of flooding, environmental constraints and the nesting season and there was a lot of planning to do before work commenced, for example, pre-agreed driving routes, to mitigate disruption to the site. The Head of Community Services indicated that, whilst it was a very inconvenient event for the

community, the review had been a good learning experience, which was not just restricted to Tewkesbury Borough, and good progress had been made against the action plan.

- 91.4 A Member questioned whether there would be additional pressure on any other pipes in the network when the pipes on the Ham were replaced. One of the Severn Trent Water representatives advised that replacing the pipes gave the ability to increase the capacity to feed into the area as a way of futureproofing. The risk was in making the connections as the pipe would need to be removed but this would be carefully managed and a contingency would be in place if required. The Member queried whether there would be a negative impact on the network once the renewed pipes came back online and it was reiterated that the entire system had been checked from the Mythe Water Treatment Works to the Churchdown reservoirs. Although the pressure changed as the water left the Ham, with good connections that pipe did not need to be in the same condition as the one across the Ham. A Member thanked the representatives from Severn Trent Water for attending the Committee and for its commitment to delivering the actions arising from the review. He was pleased to hear that work was likely to commence on replacing the pipes later in the year and sought confirmation that the target date of August 2020 would be achieved. The Severn Trent Water Head of Water Quality and Environment advised that investment for the project had been allocated and the necessary surveys were being undertaken. It was important to balance carrying out the work as quickly as possible with being sensitive to other users of the site and the environmental constraints etc. He indicated that he would do his very best to get the work done by the target date and, at this point in time, he felt it was achievable.
- 91.5 With regard to Recommendation 15 – encourage and assist businesses to put contingency plans in place for emergencies, a Member questioned whether businesses would be actively encouraged to put plans in place and the Head of Community Services confirmed that was the case. Tewkesbury Borough Council was keen to support businesses as much as possible and Officers were looking at opportunities to share learning through the Growth Hub. Another Member queried what was being done in terms of assisting farmers who received their water supply through a third party and was advised that a meeting had taken place between Severn Trent Water and the National Farmers' Union. It was important to help farmers to help themselves by ensuring that there were plans in place to connect to an alternative water supply or to store water on site. Severn Trent Water had also been working with retailers about how to communicate better with farmers, for instance, putting out information in Farmers Weekly etc. A Member noted that the outstanding recommendations all related to businesses with the exception of Recommendation 11 – Explore the potential for the Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service to supply water to farms in an emergency. The Head of Community Services explained that, unfortunately, a lack of resources had meant it had not been possible to proactively advise businesses in terms of the water supply outage actions, although Officers had been supporting them in other areas - notably around Brexit. He confirmed that compiling promotional material would be a priority once the Community Services team was at full capacity; he would need to give some thought to what else needed to be done and how best to engage businesses but, in terms of a timeframe, he confirmed that the team would certainly be in a position to take positive action by the summer.

91.6 The Chair thanked the representatives from Severn Trent Water for their attendance and it was

RESOLVED

1. That the progress against the action plan arising from the Scrutiny Review of Water Supply Outage be **NOTED**.
2. That the actions attributed to Severn Trent Water be signed-off as complete and a further report on the outstanding actions be brought back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in six months' time.

OS.92 PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 3 2018/19

92.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 35-79, attached performance management information for the third quarter of 2018/19. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was asked to review and scrutinise the performance information and, where appropriate, identify any issues to refer to the Executive Committee for clarification or further action to be taken.

92.2 Members were advised that this was the third quarterly monitoring report for 2018/19 and progress against delivering the objectives and actions for each of the Council Plan priorities was reported through the Performance Tracker, attached at Appendix 1 to the report. Key actions for the quarter were highlighted at Paragraph 2.3 of the report and included: approval of the Medium Term Financial Strategy at Council in January; approval of the Commercial Strategy by the Executive Committee in November; official launch of the Growth Hub which had received national recognition with features in publications such as the Municipal Journal; refurbishment of the Lower Lode Depot car park; progression of the pool car project with a 'go live' date of 26 March 2019; income from garden waste renewals reaching £250,000 in its first week and rising to £500,000 currently; delivery of 262 affordable homes in 2018/19 against a target of 200; and, consultation on the Ashchurch Masterplan, the draft Supplementary Planning Document for Tewkesbury Town and the Tewkesbury Borough Plan. As was often the case, due to the complex nature of the actions being delivered, it was inevitable that some would not progress as smoothly or quickly as envisaged and details of these were set out at Paragraph 2.4 of the report. It was particularly noted that the action around exploring options for the regeneration of Spring Gardens had only been delayed by one month due to reporting timeframes and although the action to explore the potential to increase the heritage offer at the Battlefield site had slipped on four occasions, it was hoped that it now had feasible implementation dates and would not need to be flagged to the Committee again.

92.3 In terms of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), Members were informed that the status of each indicator was set out at Paragraph 3.2 of the report. Of the 17 indicators with targets, three had not been achieved as at the end of the third quarter. It was particularly noted that the number of visitors to the Growth Hub (KPI 7) was 369 during the first quarter of opening and, in terms of planning performance (KPIs 12 and 13), the targets for the 2017/18 outturns had been exceeded. The Head of Corporate Services also pointed out that a further 36 community groups had been assisted with funding advice (KPI 19) resulting in over £587,000 of external grants being raised.

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

Priority: Finance and Resources

P44 – Objective 1 – Action a) Deliver the Council’s transformation programme to deliver a balanced budget – A Member welcomed the roll-out of the car pool pilot but questioned what the Council was doing in terms of the provision of charging points, given that the majority of the vehicles would be electric – he had been informed that the closest points were currently in Gloucester and Strensham.

The Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that it was intended to install charging points at the Public Services Centre which would be available for public use, as well as by staff. A communication plan for this would be produced in the new financial year once it had been properly scoped. In response to a query as to when the charging points might be available, he advised that this was likely to be during the second quarter of 2019/20.

Priority: Promoting and Supporting Economic Growth

P51 – Objective 5 – Action a) Explore with partners – including the Battlefield Society – the potential to increase the heritage offer at the Battlefield site – A Member questioned whether this should be removed from the performance tracker, given that it was reliant on third parties, and if it would be more appropriate for the Committee to receive separate update reports as it progressed.

The Head of Development Services confirmed that a meeting had been held with the Battlefield Society the previous day to discuss the project. The Council had a more facilitative role as many of the issues affecting the site, and the timeframe for delivery, were outside of its control. Notwithstanding this, it was beneficial for the project to be included within the performance tracker in order to demonstrate the Council’s commitment to the other parties and, whilst progress could not be guaranteed, it was important to have a project plan.

P52 – Objective 5 – Action b) Develop a programme to work with existing tourism attractions within the borough to promote historic heritage – A Member was disappointed that little was being done to promote Gwinnett’s Tomb as an important heritage and tourist attraction.

The Head of Development Services advised that Officers were working with Cotswold Tourism and other key agencies on how best to promote the tourism offering within the borough and she assured Members that all attractions were being discussed in that context, including Gwinnett’s Tomb. She undertook to ensure Members were updated on the details as this progressed.

P52 – Objective 5 – Action c) Review the tourism resources to maximise the tourist provisions in the borough – A Member sought an update on the delivery of the Tewkesbury Tourist Information Centre (TIC).

The Head of Development Services explained that this was part of the overall strategy for tourism which would be presented to Members shortly. There had been various conversations in relation to the TIC and the opportunity for a service agreement with Tewkesbury Abbey; however, there were issues around the use of the Hat Shop building, where the TIC was currently situated, and how this fitted with the conditions of the grant, so Officers had been working to ensure compliance.

Priority: Growing and Supporting Communities

P56 – Objective 1 – Action e) With partners, explore options for the provision of modular and innovative housing to meet housing needs – A Member considered it unfair to give this action a sad face given that two to three modular housing projects were being progressed.

The Head of Community Services thanked the Member for this comment and agreed that a straight face would be a more accurate assessment.

P58 – Objective 3 - Action c) Produce a business case for improvements to the A40 at Longford, including improvements to Longford roundabout – A Member queried how the plans for Longford roundabout were progressing.

The Head of Development Services confirmed that this was progressing well; consultation had taken place at the end of 2018 and a business case was being worked up, so it was anticipated the target date would be achieved.

Key Performance Indicators for Customer Focused Services

P70 – KPI 18 – Number of reported enviro-crimes – A Member indicated that Radio Gloucestershire had recently reported on the amount of enviro-crime, particularly fly-tipping, around the county and he had been pleased to note that Tewkesbury Borough Council was the only authority which had not been mentioned.

The Head of Community Services advised that the Environmental Health team had been working hard to address fly-tipping and to publicise any prosecutions; however, these reports were not always picked up by the press so he welcomed this comment.

P71 – KPI 20 – Benefits Caseload and KPI 21 - Average number of days to process new benefit claims – A Member noted that the housing benefit caseload continued to fall following the roll-out of Universal Credit with large scale movement unlikely to begin until November 2020; however, in terms of processing new benefits claims, the comments stated that the team continued to face an increasing workload. He expected the workload to continue to increase given the amount of additional affordable housing and new development that would be coming forward in the borough via the Joint Core Strategy and questioned whether the team could be supported.

The Head of Corporate Services explained that, whilst caseloads had fallen, this was not to the extent that had been predicted and the council tax reduction scheme element meant that change of circumstances still had to be processed. He reassured Members that he was monitoring performance and would raise any potential resourcing issues with Management Team.

P73 – KPI 25 – Number of anti-social behaviour incidents – A Member was shocked that the number of incidents had reduced by 14.78% given that anti-social behaviour was generally increasing across the county. He questioned whether this was because incidents were not being reported and if there was anything that could be done to encourage reporting.

The Head of Community Services explained that it was not unusual to see a dip in the number of anti-social behaviour incidents during the winter but he undertook to investigate this following the meeting. He confirmed that the Tewkesbury Borough Community Safety Partnership had been reconvened and Safer Gloucestershire had set its priorities which would be launched in the summer and would include considering how anti-social behaviour could be better recorded.

P73 – KPI 27 – Average number of sick days per full time equivalent – A Member noted from the figures that there had been a slight decrease in quarter three but that the target was unlikely to be achieved for the year and questioned if she had understood this correctly.

The Head of Corporate Services confirmed that was the case – although several members of staff who had been on long-term sick leave had returned to work during the quarter, and more positive figures were expected for quarter four, it would still be above target.

P74 – KPI 30 – Food establishment hygiene ratings – A Member questioned whether food establishments with a hygiene rating of three or below were re-visited and whether there was any correlation between the size of the establishment and the score.

The Head of Community Services clarified that there was a set period within which establishments were re-checked depending on the level of risk. He confirmed that the programme of food inspections was being achieved each year and the number of lower scores were reducing. Whilst some larger companies had better strategies in place for food hygiene, there was generally no correlation between the size of establishment and the score.

- 92.5 Turning to the financial information, the Head of Finance and Asset Management was pleased to report a £664,478 surplus against the budgeted profile as at the end of quarter three. The table at Page No. 40, Paragraph 4.2 of the report showed how that surplus had been generated. It was noted that the majority of savings - £337,960 - related to employee costs which were mainly through staff vacancies and time lags between replacing individuals etc. Income was also doing well with a surplus of £127,444 from Community Services in relation to the garden waste scheme. Treasury activities too had been positive and investment properties had generated a healthy surplus as a result of securing additional properties sooner than anticipated. In addition, the retained business rates scheme was also progressing very well this year resulting in a net surplus of almost £300,000 in relation to the Council's position within the 50% standalone scheme. It was noted that the Council was also involved in the countywide 100% pilot and reports at quarter three suggested that, as an individual authority, Tewkesbury Borough Council could be in line for a windfall of approximately £800,000.
- 92.6 In terms of deficits, the most significant overspend was in relation to the Ubico contract; Ubico had reported a projected overspend of £230,887 as at the end of quarter three which was an increase of £89,265 from quarter two. There were a number of reasons for the overspend with the two main ones being: employee costs – mostly in relation to using agency staff to cover an increased number of long-term sickness absences; and transport costs – the majority of which related to the maintenance of the recycling and grounds maintenance equipment and vehicles, increased fuel costs and hire charges, and an overspend on tyres and other supplies. The overspend was significant and Officers had been working closely with colleagues at Ubico to understand the reasons for the deficit, and to make improvements to financial reporting and management to ensure the Council was aware of the issues at the time, rather than at the end of the quarterly reporting. Planning meetings were taking place every three weeks which were attended by the Deputy Chief Executive, the Head of Community Services, the Head of Finance and Asset Management and the Managing Director of Ubico. Members were advised that Ubico had recently appointed a new Financial Controller and, having met with them on several occasions, the Finance Team was impressed with what they were doing and their vision for the future. Whilst there were a number of practical issues to be resolved, the Head of Finance and Asset Management was confident they could be addressed and that the accounting practices would be checked to ensure they were correct. More detail about the surplus and the overspend could be found in the budget report, attached at Appendix 2 to the report, which set out the variances for each Head of Service. Appendix 3 to the report set out the capital budget position and the usage of available reserves was set out at Appendix 4.
- 92.7 During the debate which ensued regarding the Ubico overspend, a Member raised particular concern about the overspend of £59,000 in relation to tyres and questioned whether this was due to operator error and, if so, what was being done to address it. The Head of Community Services recognised this was a significant amount and advised that a detailed analysis was being undertaken to establish how

that figure had been arrived at. Members were right to be concerned but it was important for Officers to understand the reasons for the overspend – it could be that the tyres had not been budgeted for correctly – and he provided assurance that robust questions were being asked of Ubico. A Member felt that budgeting seemed to be a particular problem and she found the increase in the deficit between quarter two and three to be completely unacceptable. The Head of Finance and Asset Management shared this view and confirmed that it had been raised with Ubico. The financial forecasting had not been to an acceptable standard, but this was something he hoped would be resolved with the introduction of the new Financial Controller. He recognised there was a lot of work to be done but he hoped this would give Members some assurance. A Member queried whether the Council was liable for the whole deficit and was advised that it paid the costs incurred for the year so it would be required to pay the whole amount, provided that the costs had been correctly allocated which was being thoroughly checked. A Member indicated that, when Members of the Committee had visited the depot in 2018 they had witnessed a refuse vehicle getting a puncture when it had driven across the yard to exit the depot. The Head of Community Services indicated that the condition of the depot and operator error may both be contributing factors but reiterated the need to wait for the detailed analysis rather than jumping to conclusions.

92.8 A Member questioned whether any justification was provided for overspends. The Head of Community Services advised that Ubico did give an assumption of overspends and underspends but it was inadequate and the Finance team was not getting the answers needed so this would be taken up with the Managing Director of Ubico. The Head of Finance and Asset Management explained that this type of service always attracted overspends, for example, through use of agency staff to cover sickness absence, but these were generally offset through surpluses in other parts of the contract. In this instance, there were question marks over a number of areas which Officers were working to get to the bottom of and that information would be brought back to Members in due course. In response to a Member comment regarding the amount of Officer time being invested in Ubico by the Council, the Head of Finance and Asset Management confirmed that the Council was responsible for managing the Ubico contract; he did not want to be in a position where he had to report such a significant deficit to Members, therefore, it was necessary to put in time and effort to make improvements and he was happy to do so provided that this was reflected by Ubico. A Member questioned whether it would be appropriate to carry out an audit of Ubico and was advised that Ubico had its own audit team which worked closely with the Council's audit teams. The Council had access to the Ubico audit plan for the current and forthcoming year so if there were any gaps, or if further assistance was needed, it was possible to use the Council's audit teams. In response to a query as to whether it was possible to compare the figures with partner authorities, the Head of Finance and Asset Management confirmed that he had access to the high-level figures and a number of other authorities were also in deficit with Ubico for various reasons. The Chief Executive assured Members that Officers were taking a robust approach with Ubico. Whilst there had been concerns about service issues previously, this was the first time there had been a problem of this level with the Ubico contract framework and, although some of the overspend was understandable, the deficit for the quarter was significant and the information being provided had been very limited. It was in the Council's interest to understand the reasons for the deficit and to work with Ubico to ensure it had proper controls in place.

92.9 With regard to the revenue budget at Appendix 2 to the report, a Member drew attention to note seven which stated that the quarter one report had shown that the Housing Benefit team had processed a higher than predicted level of overpayments but this had not continued over quarters two and three and therefore the impact on the budget had been reduced by £32,000. He felt a reduction of that level – from £59,000 to £32,000 – was superb and should be celebrated. With regard to the

Finance and Asset Management service budget, a Member noted that income from car parking and permits was higher than budgeted and he indicated that there was an expectation from the public that some money would be re-invested in maintaining the car parks and ensuring they were safe and secure. The Head of Finance and Asset Management confirmed that the car parking policy was due for review in 2019/20 so that could be picked up at that time.

92.10 It was

RESOLVED That the performance management report for quarter three of 2018/19 be **NOTED**.

OS.93 REVIEW OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

93.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 80-96, introduced the Workforce Development Strategy for the Council covering the period 2019-24. Members were asked to endorse the strategy and recommend to the Executive Committee that it be approved.

93.2 The Interim HR Manager explained that the Council's previous peer review had recommended that a Workforce Development Strategy be put in place to support the delivery of the Council's priorities. This had coincided with the new Local Government Workforce Strategy being promoted nationally by the Local Government Association. He explained that UK employers faced unprecedented challenges in recruiting and retaining staff and this had been explored at the Overview and Scrutiny workshop held on 26 February where Members had discussed employment demographics in the context of the Council's future requirements. The purpose of the strategy, attached at Appendix 1, was to position the Council to respond effectively to the challenges posed by continuing economic growth and competition for skills and to be at the forefront of a candidate-driven market. The strategy was a response to the Council's own plans and priorities with an outlook on local government and used local and national demographic data, as well as internal data, to identify work and recruitment patterns. The strategy had been considered by the Corporate Management Team and other managers and discussions had taken place with trade unions and staff as well as Lead Members and Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. There were five core strategic themes in the strategy: releasing productivity; digital transformation; commercialisation; workforce resilience; and, being a great place to work. Each theme was supported by action areas which described what needed to be done - detailed actions would be included as part of the annual service plans and the strategy set the overall direction and context for those plans.

93.3 A Member indicated that he had found the workshop to be very informative and he questioned how the issues that had been raised would be dealt with. In response, the Interim HR Manager advised that two of the issues had been included in the strategy in relation to younger workers leaving the area, thus intensifying competition for the Council, and making the Council more attractive as an employer to candidates of all ages. The Member queried how Members fitted with the strategy and the Chief Executive explained that this strategy was particularly about staff; Members would be addressed via the Member development programme which would re-commence with the induction programme and subsequent training for the new Council in May. He provided assurance that Member development would be looked at carefully and there would be engagement with Members over the coming months to establish what they might find useful. It was subsequently

RESOLVED That the Workforce Development Strategy be **ENDORSED** and that it be **RECOMMENDED TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE** for **APPROVAL**.

OS.94 HEALINGS MILL

- 94.1 The report of the Head of Development Services, circulated at Pages No. 97-100, provided an update on the progress being made to secure a suitable development scheme for Healings Mill. Members were asked to consider the report and to agree to receive updates as any significant changes arose.
- 94.2 Members were informed that Healings Mill was an important piece of the fabric of Tewkesbury Town Centre and was recognised as such in the emerging Tewkesbury Borough Plan and the draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Tewkesbury Town Centre. The report focussed on progress in three areas: planning strategy; discussions with external agencies; and funding. The Head of Development Services advised that Officers had met with agents working on behalf of the owners of Healings Mill and, whilst these discussions remained confidential at the current time, they were confident that a strategy for the planning framework and delivery of a scheme to regenerate the Mill in accordance with the Council's aspirations would be forthcoming. Officers would continue to work with the agents to find a viable solution which brought it in line with the strategic objectives. Several conversations had also taken place with Historic England and the Environment Agency in relation to the very specific requirements of the site and the significant impact of development. The Head of Development Services advised that the government had recently announced a fund to revitalise high streets and the Council would shortly be submitting a bid focusing on Tewkesbury Town Centre which would include the Healings Mill site, Spring Gardens and the wider High Street. This would present an opportunity to set out the vision for the area and, whilst there would not necessarily be specific funding for Healings Mill, it would highlight the opportunities for that part of the town. It was important to recognise that the Council had no direct control over the timeframe for the project and its role was an enabler and facilitator.
- 94.3 In response to a query, the Head of Development Services clarified that Healings Mill had been vacant since 2006. A Member indicated that there was obvious frustration from people in the town about what was happening with the building. He felt it was unfortunate that the Council had no direct control and questioned whether the possibility of the Council purchasing the building had been considered. The Head of Development Services advised that Officers shared the frustrations about the progression of the site; however, there was an opportunity to work with the current developer and owner and they were confident that discussions would result in a viable scheme for the site. If that proved not to be the case, it would be necessary to reassess the options - the Council becoming a more active partner may be one of those conversations but that was not what was intended currently. The Member was not aware of a business case for the site and questioned whether this had received Committee approval. He also asked whether the High Street fund bid would influence the business case and if the Healings Mill site would be eligible for that funding. In response, the Head of Development Services clarified that a business case had not been presented to Officers, and therefore had not been approved by a Committee, and she stressed that no detailed work had been done in relation to the Council purchasing the site. In terms of the High Street fund, there was no definite proposal and consideration was being given to the overall uses for the area in order to work up a bid. A Member queried whether the developer and owner were keen for the Council to play a part in developing the site and clarification was provided that they had not expressed an interest in the Council being part of the development company; conversations to date had involved the Council as the local planning authority in terms of acceptable uses for the site. In response to a query, the Head of Development Services confirmed that the Council had not incurred any costs in relation to the project.

94.4 A Member noted that there was an empty garage at the rear of the site and he questioned whether it was worth exploring a temporary use, for example, as a boxing gym or indoor skate park, as it would be a good opportunity for a new club to get up and running. The Head of Development Services explained that security was a concern in terms of allowing a “meanwhile” use and there were other health and safety issues which would need to be addressed. In her view, the best approach was to look for a long-term solution for the site - there may well be opportunities for short-term uses as the site was developed over that time.

94.5 The Chair indicated that the recommendation was for the Committee to receive updates as and when any significant changes arose. A Member expressed the view that the Council needed to be more proactive where it could be. He did not share the Officers’ confidence that a scheme would be delivered given that no private enterprise had been prepared to develop the site to date. The Chair acknowledged this sentiment and it was subsequently

RESOLVED That an update on the progress being made to secure a suitable development scheme for Healings Mill be brought to the Committee in six months’ time.

OS.95 FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT GROUP ANNUAL REPORT

95.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Flood Risk Management Group, circulated at Pages No. 101-106, which provided an annual summary of the work of the Group. Members were asked to consider the report.

95.2 The Chair of the Flood Risk Management Group explained that the Flood Risk Management Group met quarterly with the last meeting taking place on 18 February 2019. The Group monitored land drainage and flood risk projects by way of reference to the Flood Risk Management Action Plan which was a ‘living’ document to which funding and partnership opportunities could be added as and when they arose. In terms of the live capital projects, the most significant related to the Grange Field in Bishop’s Cleeve. There was an approved allocation of £180,000 for the project which was being match funded against the European Regional Development Fund. It had been a very successful project and the feedback from residents and users of the land had been overwhelmingly positive. The majority of work had been completed but it would take time for the plants to develop over the next few seasons. She went on to explain that the Council owned various parcels of land across the borough with watercourses running through, or adjacent to, them meaning it was a riparian owner with responsibilities to maintain those watercourses in good condition. The Group monitored the Tewkesbury Borough Council Programme of Watercourse Maintenance and 95 projects had been completed during 2018/19 to date incorporating desilting, blockage clearance, flail cutting and hedge cutting as well as reactionary work such as felling and removing trees. This amounted to a spend of £41,465 out of an allocation of £45,000 at the time of writing the report. The Group had expressed concern at the size of the budget which had not been increased for many years; this was something which the Group would be considering over the coming months. Members were advised that a tender for a call-off contract to cover the Council’s maintenance liabilities had been offered in 2017 for a period of three years with an option for a two year extension and two contractors had been successfully procured; this had resulted in a saving from the previous arrangements. Furthermore, the Council had received compliments regarding the contractors’ workmanship and interaction with the public. It was noted that Tewkesbury Borough Council worked in partnership with Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) to help communities increase their knowledge and resilience against flooding and the Group received regular reports from the representative from GRCC who delivered flood warden training events throughout the year.

95.3 The Chair of the Committee thanked the Chair of the Flood Risk Management Group for her report and it was

RESOLVED That the annual summary report of the Flood Risk Management Group be **NOTED**.

OS.96 GLOUCESTERSHIRE HEALTH AND CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE

96.1 Members received an update from the Council's reserve representative on the Gloucestershire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee on matters discussed at its last meeting held on 20 February 2019.

96.2 Members were advised that this additional meeting had been called to examine evidence from the Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust about its General Surgery Reconfiguration Pilot, and to hear the Clinical Commissioning Group's response to Motion 825, passed by Cheltenham Borough Council on 21 January 2019. 58 senior doctors had signed a letter to the Hospitals Trust expressing fears about the pilot. Many of those fears concerned patient safety – not only in Gloucestershire but in Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Wiltshire, because patients from those areas were also treated in Cheltenham General Hospital and may well be adversely affected by the changes envisaged.

96.3 The Trust's proposals were described as a 'pilot', but this designation introduced its own complications. Firstly, because the Gloucestershire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee could not stop a pilot from being brought into being and could only act as a 'critical friend'. Secondly, because putting the pilot into effect would entail breaking-up the current service arrangements, with the clear risk that a reversal would not be possible. The view taken by those opposing the Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust's proposals was that alternatives should have been fully explored in advance; assurances had supposedly been given to Gloucestershire Members of Parliament in September 2018 that other options would be worked on before the 'pilot' went live, but this had not happened

96.4 The Council's reserve representative explained that the Gloucestershire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee's strongest allowable action, as advised by the Gloucestershire County Council Officer, was to write to the Secretary of State for Health expressing the Committee's concerns about the Trust's proposals and Committee Members had voted unanimously for the Chair to do so.

96.5 The Chair thanked the Council's reserve representative for his update and indicated that it would be circulated to the Committee following the meeting. It was subsequently

RESOLVED That the Gloucestershire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee update be **NOTED**.

OS.97 GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE

97.1 The Chair indicated that he was the Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee but, as he had been unable to attend the last meeting held on 20 February 2019, the Chair of that Committee would give a brief update.

97.2 Members were advised that the Committee had considered views from the Forest of Dean District Council in terms of its aspirations for economic growth. It was noted that the main priority was building on the industrial offering but it was recognised that there were challenges to overcome, not least connectivity.

97.3

It was

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

The meeting closed at 6:35 pm