

**Questions raised by Overview and Scrutiny Committee at meeting held on
18 June 2019**

Questions raised by Overview and Scrutiny	Response from officers
Performance Tracker - Priority: Finance and Resources	
<p>P70 – Objective 3 – Action b) <i>Undertake a review of the discretionary trade waste service to ensure it is operating on a viable commercial level</i></p> <p>A Member noted that the commentary for this action stated that this included an action plan for increased marketing of the service and he questioned if this was necessary at this stage given that the service was under review.</p>	<p>The Head of Community Services explained that the Council had a legal duty to deal with trade waste. The service was currently not far from a break-even point and the review had demonstrated that the customer base could be increased quite easily; as such, it was important that the service was in as strong a position as possible should Members resolve to retain it in-house.</p>
Performance Tracker – Priority: Promoting and Supporting Economic Growth	
<p>P72 – Objective 1 – Action c) <i>Conduct a retail study in partnership with Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucester City Council</i></p> <p>A Member noted that a dedicated consultant had been employed to undertake the study but raised concern that Tewkesbury Borough was very different to Cheltenham Borough and Gloucester City. She also questioned whether the consultant would be able to deliver the study on time.</p>	<p>The Head of Development Services explained that it was important to keep a relatively similar methodology as it would inform the Joint Core Strategy policy. She agreed that Tewkesbury Borough was a very different area, with a different customer base, and she provided assurance that the methodology was sophisticated enough to recognise this. She did not believe there would be an issue with the timeframe, certainly in relation to formation of the policy, which was the purpose of the work.</p>
<p>P75 – Objective 4 – Action b) <i>Develop a programme with partners to progress Healings Mill and other key development opportunity sites to support the regeneration of Tewkesbury.</i></p> <p>A Member questioned who owned Healings Mill.</p>	<p>The Head of Development Services confirmed that Healings Mill was owned privately by a subsidiary company of the St Francis Group.</p>

<p>P77 – Objective 5 – Action c) <i>Review the tourism resources to maximise the tourist provisions in the borough.</i></p> <p>A Member noted that this had been given a revised target date of October 2019 and he questioned whether resources had been reviewed in order to achieve the new date.</p>	<p>The Head of Development Services advised that there were many issues which were changing the fact of tourism locally and nationally, and consideration was being given to what other authorities were doing in terms of digitalisation, for example, interactive screens similar to those used in shopping centres at tourist locations and other hotspots across the borough. She hoped to be in a position to update Members on the Old Hat Shop shortly and indicated that discussions were taking place with Winchcombe Town Trust regarding the Tourist Information Centre following its successful bid for LEADER funding to develop a new heritage centre. Whilst the October target date was achievable in terms of being able to present the Council's position, it was reliant on external factors in terms of how far things had progressed.</p>
<p>Key Performance Indicators for Priority: Promoting and Supporting Economic Growth</p>	
<p>P77 – KPI 1 – Employment rates 16-64 year olds.</p>	<p>A Member congratulated staff on the outturn of 84.7% which was significantly higher than both the 2017/18 outturn of 74.3% and the national rate of 75% and a fantastic achievement.</p>
<p>P78 - KPI 5 - <i>Number of visits to Tewkesbury Tourist Information Centre (TIC)</i> and KPI 6 - <i>Number of visits to Winchcombe Tourist Information Centre (TIC).</i></p> <p>A Member noted that the figures were slightly down and he sought a view on the future of the TICs, particularly given the increasing reliance on electronic methods of communication.</p>	<p>The Head of Development Services advised that one of the key pieces of work for the forthcoming year was around a strategic approach to tourism and keeping up with the latest technology and customer demand. She pointed out that the TICs were not just about information but also acted as a welcome point in each town.</p>

Performance Tracker – Priority: Growing and Supporting Communities	
<p>P80 – Objective 1 – Action d) <i>Develop housing growth plans associated with the Junction 9 masterplan.</i></p> <p>A Member questioned whether improvements to Junction 9 and the surrounding area would open it up to speculative development and whether that was a legitimate concern.</p>	<p>The Head of Development Services explained that speculative development was always a concern, and this was why the preparation of the Tewkesbury Borough Plan and the review of the Joint Core Strategy were so important. Although planning applications may come forward, they would need to be considered on their own planning merits and meet with the relevant transport assessments etc. In response to a query as to whether Members could be updated on any speculative planning applications coming forward on a weekly or monthly basis, the Head of Development Services explained that all Members could sign-up to receive notifications about planning applications in their Ward - or across the borough as a whole should they wish - and she would be happy to go through this with the Member outside of the meeting.</p>
<p>P82 – Objective 3 – Action a) <i>Monitor annually the delivery of homes within the borough.</i></p> <p>A Member questioned whether this figure had been rolled-over from 2017/18 given that there was often a time lag between planning permission being granted and homes being built.</p>	<p>Confirmation was provided that the total of 945 new homes represented homes that had been delivered in the borough between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019.</p>
<p>P82 – Objective 3 – Action c) <i>Produce a business case for improvements to the A40 at Longford, including improvements to Longford roundabout.</i></p> <p>A Member questioned how the local authority was able to deliver the link.</p>	<p>The Head of Development Services indicated that some Members would be aware that the Council had submitted a funding bid for this infrastructure at the same time as the bid for the bridge at Ashchurch - but it had been unsuccessful. The Council was not able to deliver the A40 link itself due to the cost, therefore it was looking for other funding opportunities and it had been discussed in the conversations around the improvements to Junction 10 but nothing concrete had been agreed. At this stage, she could only reassure Members that Officers were looking into it and would take any opportunities that came forward.</p>

<p>P83 – Objective 4 – Action b) <i>Achieve the Council's affordable homes target by working with local housing providers.</i></p> <p>A Member congratulated Officers on delivering 277 new affordable homes and questioned whether the target – currently set at 200 – should be increased.</p>	<p>The Head of Community Services confirmed that the target would be reviewed. In response to a query as to where the target had come from, he indicated that he believed it was a stretch target, although it had been set before he had joined the authority. The new target would be informed by the housing needs assessments and it was noted that the rural assessments were being carried out currently; the Council's Housing Strategy was due to end in 2020 so now was the right time to do this work and set a new target. In response to a query as to whether the strategy review could be brought forward to align with the Joint Core Strategy and Tewkesbury Borough Plan, the Head of Community Services indicated that it had been set as a five-year strategy but it was something he would look at.</p>
<p>P84 – Objective 4 – Action c) <i>Work in partnership to deliver the Council's Housing and Homeless Strategy.</i></p> <p>A Member asked for up-to-date figures on rough sleepers and questioned how many had migrated from Cheltenham or Gloucester; he also queried whether any mental health checks were carried out.</p>	<p>The Head of Community Services advised that a rough sleeper count was carried out annually on a national basis. Tewkesbury Borough had extremely low numbers of rough sleepers with only one recorded in the previous year. He provided assurance that Officers provided all of the support they could and worked very closely with partners to give financial and medical advice; however, the Council tended to focus more on prevention of homelessness and people at risk. Unfortunately, there was no information available as to whether rough sleepers were transient, and he pointed out that it was not unusual to find that some rough sleepers actually did have a place to stay.</p> <p>In response to a query as to whether the Council was represented on the board at Bromford Housing Association, as it had been previously on the Severn Vale Housing Society Board following the transfer of housing stock, the Chief Executive advised that the whole system had effectively changed and was now regulated by Homes England, as such, there was no automated place on boards following stock transfer so the Council was not represented and was not permitted to have any representation.</p>

Key Performance Indicators for Priority: Growing and Supporting Communities	
<p>P87 – KPI 12– <i>Percentage of ‘major’ applications determined within 13 weeks or alternative period agreed with the applicant</i> – and KPI 14 – <i>Percentage of ‘other’ applications determined within eight weeks or alternative period agreed with the applicant.</i></p> <p>A Member noted that, whilst performance in relation to KPI 12 had improved, performance in respect of KPI 14 had deteriorated and he questioned whether improving one had a negative correlation with the other.</p>	<p>The Head of Development Services provided assurance that this was not the case. She clarified that ‘major’ applications were for 10 dwellings or more, ‘minor’ applications were for nine dwellings or fewer and ‘other’ applications covered householder applications, certificate of lawfulness applications, conditional discharge applications etc. Major applications were clearly a focus for the Planning department and required significant Officer resources; notwithstanding this, other applications were wide-ranging and could also generate a lot of work. She explained that the team was currently trialling a new process for certificate of lawfulness applications as some other authorities were able to turn around those applications within 14 days as they did not require as much consultation as other applications types. With this in mind, she hoped to see an improvement in respect of ‘other’ applications by the end of the first quarter of 2019/20.</p>
Performance Tracker – Priority: Customer-focused services	
<p>P92 – Objective 3 – Action b) <i>Introduce the option for paperless billing for council tax and business rates.</i></p> <p>A Member questioned whether there was a resource issue within IT services which needed to be addressed in order for the project to be delivered.</p>	<p>The Head of Corporate Services advised that an IT Strategy was currently being developed and there was money available to improve the infrastructure. Notwithstanding this, he clarified that the issues with the paperless billing project were not IT-related.</p>
Key Performance Indicators for Priority: Customer Focused Services	
<p>P95 – KPI 19 – <i>Community groups assisted with funding advice.</i></p> <p>A Member felt that this was fantastic work and asked whether it was possible to have a list of the groups which had been supported and their objectives and outcomes.</p>	<p>The Head of Development Services undertook to provide a list to Members and confirmed that £2M of community grants had been received over the last two years.</p>

P98 – KPI 28 – *Percentage of waste recycled or composted.*

A Member questioned why the outturn had reduced.

The Head of Community Services indicated that Page No. 61 of the report incorrectly stated that 52.6% of waste had been recycled and composted during 2018/19 when in fact that was the quarter four outturn; the full year outturn 54.72% which was on a par with 2017/18 (54.55%) and above the 52% target.

A Member questioned how Tewkesbury Borough Council compared to other local authorities and what the target was for the current year. In response, the Head of Community Services advised that it was in the top quartile and he undertook to provide the 2019/20 target following the meeting. The Member also asked if the target was increased year on year and was advised that it was a countywide target set with the Gloucestershire Joint Waste Committee and it was generally increased.

A Member understood that Stroud District Council had an exceptionally high success rate in terms of percentage of waste recycled or composted and he questioned what that authority did differently. The Head of Community Services expressed the view that this was likely to be down to social demographics and the willingness of residents to recycle, particularly in respect of food waste. A Member queried whether the Council had any educational policies in respect of waste, and encouraging people to recycle more, and whether there were any plans to increase the number of items that could be recycled. Members were informed that various campaigns – both national and countywide – were run throughout the year and the Committee would receive details of those campaigns in the report from the Gloucestershire Joint Waste Team. In terms of recycling more, the Head of Community Services explained that the waste hierarchy set out that re-using products and reducing waste should be encouraged alongside recycling which could be difficult to expand as there was a limited market for certain products, for example, there was no local market for hard plastics, so those products ended up in landfill. Notwithstanding this, consideration was always being given to what else could be done; Officers were currently looking at the potential for recycling small electrical items.

A Member noted that performance had been hindered by the increased level of contamination and he sought clarification as to what this meant and what was being done to address it. The Head of Community Services explained that contamination was often non-recyclables being put into recycling bins which could result in waste being rejected when it was tested at the Materials Recovery Facility in Avonmouth. There had been a particular issue in the last quarter of 2018/19 and Officers were trying to identify exactly what that was in order to work with residents to ensure it did not continue. Notwithstanding this, the outturn for the year was positive following a strong performance on the first three quarters of the year and he pointed out that the direction of travel for this indicator should be up, rather than down as set out in the report.

A Member indicated that recycling had reduced from 56.53% in quarter one to 52.6% in quarter four and, should it continue at that rate it would be below the 52% target within the next two quarters; on that basis, he questioned whether any actions for improvement were needed. In response, the Head of Community Services advised that discussions were taking place with other authorities in the County about the best measurements for recyclate as a 'pure' recycling target was not necessarily an accurate reflection of what was happening.