

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Committee held remotely on
Wednesday, 5 August 2020 commencing at 4:00 pm**

Present:

Chair
Vice Chair

Councillor R A Bird
Councillor J R Mason

and Councillors:

G F Blackwell, M Dean, M A Gore, D J Harwood, E J MacTiernan, C Softley, R J Stanley,
M G Sztymiak and R J E Vines

EX.21 ANNOUNCEMENTS

21.1 The Chair advised that the meeting was being held under the emergency provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 and, specifically, The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020. The meeting was being broadcast live via the internet, it was not being recorded by the Council but, under the usual transparency rules, it may be being recorded by others.

EX.22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

22.1 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.

22.2 There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

EX.23 MINUTES

23.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2020, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record.

EX.24 ITEMS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

24.1 There were no items from members of the public.

EX.25 COVID-19 CORPORATE RECOVERY PLAN

25.1 The report of the Deputy Chief Executive, circulated at Pages No. 12-64, updated Members on the need for a detailed COVID-19 recovery plan whilst emphasising the necessity for it to be a dynamic document that may be subject to change. Members were asked to adopt the recovery plan and agree that authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to vary the plan as may be required in response to circumstances arising as a consequence of COVID-19.

- 25.2 In introducing the report, the Deputy Chief Executive explained that the Council had faced significant challenges from COVID-19 and, across the county, there had been a collective effort to protect, shield and distribute grant funding to manage the crisis. Key workers and volunteers had worked tirelessly to help people throughout the pandemic and the Council had been well placed to respond particularly through the Growth Hub and its network of businesses; this had been exceptionally useful allowing timely and effective engagement with businesses as to how the Council could best support them. Council Officers had been directly involved in a number of countywide recovery initiatives, both at operational and strategic levels, with the collaborative approach maximising effort and minimising duplication; an excellent example of this was working with housing associations to address the homelessness issues that were arising from the pandemic. In addition, the housing, community services and community development teams had made a huge difference in terms of managing homelessness created as a result of the pandemic and supporting callers through the countywide help hub portal. Sharing the Council Offices with the Police, Department for Work and Pensions and the Children's and Adult Services of Gloucestershire County Council had enabled a multi-agency approach to address many of the complexities arising from the pandemic.
- 25.3 Members were advised that, looking to the future, the recovery plan aimed to help businesses, communities and the economy to recover. In terms of the recovery plan, it set a framework that was deliverable, financially viable and sustainable and covered the short, medium, and long term. This reflected the national approach and considered the three 'R's' - refocus, recover and rebuild. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that 'refocus' reflected the short-term analysis of the implications of COVID-19 - working closely with partners to understand how and what resources may need to be refocussed and where opportunities to collaborate on emerging recovery plans could help to gain a better understanding of what recovery looked like; 'recover' reflected the medium-term, primarily focussing on the creation of a recovery plan that set out the strategy and actions that would support businesses, communities and voluntary groups allowing them to survive, stabilise and adapt to the challenges of COVID-19; and 'rebuild' reflected the longer-term measures required to allow businesses, communities and voluntary groups to rebuild and develop resilience to a post COVID-19 environment.
- 25.4 At its meeting in June, the Executive Committee had considered an initial report on the recovery plan and had agreed that the detailed corporate recovery plan should align with the Council Plan priorities and objectives; this would enable the recovery plan to be monitored using the Council's established performance tracker process. The tracker would detail each individual action, a feasible implementation date, accountable officer, a status column and comments column to provide an overview of delivery. Similar to the Council Plan performance tracker, the recovery tracker would be presented and scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis and then reported through the Chair of that Committee to the Executive Committee with remedial action taken where appropriate. Executive Committee Members would have a lead role in the recovery process as it related to their portfolios; however, all Members would play an important role as the recovery process developed, particularly in terms of community support and community contact. There were dedicated service plans below the recovery plan which set out the specific detail of what each service was doing with actions, milestone dates and Lead Officers; it was felt important to show residents what the Council was doing in terms of support 'on the ground' and also to ensure Officers understood how they fitted into the process and were leading the recovery effort.

- 25.5 The Deputy Chief Executive advised that COVID-19 continued to present unprecedented challenges and, whilst it was hoped there would not be any secondary local or national outbreaks, the Council had to be prepared for the possibility. Tewkesbury Borough Council had been involved in the creation of a countywide Local Outbreak Management Plan which would be initiated as necessary. Each service had reviewed its pre-COVID-19 workstreams and revised / reprioritised where required to facilitate the recovery process. There would inevitably be resource implications as teams sought to deliver recovery work in addition to business as usual and consideration must be given as to how to resource and prioritise the backlog of service delivery once it was possible to do so. Resource implications would be managed in the normal way in terms of a combination of Officer and Member decision-making as appropriate. The Council had established a recovery fund which demonstrated its commitment to supporting its communities and would help it contribute to local and countywide initiatives. Some of the preparatory actions undertaken to help inform the plan were listed within the report at Pages No. 16 and 17 and included business engagement, community engagement and staff and Member engagement. Overall, there were several key messages from the one-to-one meetings and workshops undertaken which had helped to shape the corporate recovery plan and those were summarised within the report at Pages No. 17 and 18. Particular attention was drawn to the increased workloads of Officers whilst maintaining high standards; new ways of working and staff generally being happy to continue working from home with limited office time – this would need to be a key consideration in how the Council operated moving forward; the use of digital options by both staff and Members; the future role of the Council in new partnerships and relationships and its role as an ‘anchor institution’ showing leadership and coordination to stakeholders as well as being a capacity builder and facilitator; the increase in volunteering and community activity being harnessed; and the review of local assets being key to setting the direction of the recovery plan.
- 25.6 During the discussion which ensued, a Member questioned whether there would be a local track and trace system as the national one was not thorough enough and the Local Government Association had recently commented that local authorities were well placed to carry out that work. In response, the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that Tewkesbury Borough Council had worked closely with the County Council on the Local Outbreak Management Plan, taking account of best practice from other areas around the country. In terms of track and trace, local intelligence fed into the national system. In addition, the Chief Executive indicated that, in some parts of the country, the records had not been extensive enough so local resources had been needed for tracing; however, the Community Services teams had been working with high risk businesses to give advice and ensure record keeping was as extensive as possible. Another Member indicated that the document spoke a lot about harnessing the relationship with the voluntary and community sector and she questioned how that would be achieved. In response, the Deputy Chief Executive explained that there had been amazing examples of community spirit and engagement over the last few months which had led to there being several mechanisms for helping each other. The Council needed to be a facilitator for those groups moving forward. One of the things the community development team was considering was the use of a database of people/groups looking to continue to work to engage and assist others in the community. In addition, at a countywide level, discussions had been held about how to reach isolated and/or vulnerable residents and that work also needed to be taken forward with Member engagement.

25.7 A Member thanked the Council, Councillors and all those that had worked so hard over the last few months and suggested that the aims of the plan were reflected in that. He endorsed everything that the Deputy Chief Executive had said but raised some concern about the funding needed for the recovery effort given the small amount of help received from central government to date. In response, he was advised that the Council continued to make its financial returns to government and would continue to indicate the level of support needed. The Council had a small recovery fund and any measures required would have to be implemented efficiently and effectively. In terms of the actions taken, the Deputy Chief Executive reiterated that the recovery performance tracker would be scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis with any changes reported, and justification provided, in the same way as for the performance tracker. It was not envisaged there would be huge changes in the recovery plan itself but the timescales and measures to be delivered would be subject to change in the service plans and the delegation to himself and the Leader would allow those changes to take place quickly. Members generally agreed it was a very professional plan and, vitally, was dynamic and would allow effective and efficient responses to any changing circumstances regarding the pandemic.

25.8 Referring to Page No. 37, a Member questioned what financial compensation had been made to the operator of Tewkesbury Leisure Centre. In response, the Chief Executive confirmed that payments were due to be made to Places Leisure based on the contract provisions that required this to happen in an emergency. Through the Local Government Association, District Councils Network and South West Councils, Tewkesbury Borough Council was still pushing for the government to provide support for arm's length leisure services as it had for those which were provided directly by local authorities but this was still being discussed by Ministers. The Council had reached an agreement in principle with Places Leisure on the contract sum owed but the details of the payment were still being worked on. In addition, the Member raised a concern that the comment on Page No. 42 which referred to the Council responding positively to changes to government planning policy, which was due at the end of July, was of concern to her as the Council would not necessarily agree with it and, in that case, may not wish to respond positively. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the idea was the Council would be responsive and adaptable in any changes put forward to ensure it was not holding up the system. Another Member agreed that it was possible to be positive in its approach without necessarily agreeing with the changes. In response, the Borough Solicitor suggested the use of the word 'proactively' rather than 'positively' which was welcomed by the Member.

25.9 Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED:

1. That the Corporate Recovery Plan be **ADOPTED** subject to amendments on Pages No. 42 and 43 to change the word 'positively' to 'proactively' when referring to the Council responding to the government's planning policy paper.
2. That the Corporate Recovery Plan be **NOTED** as being a dynamic document which may change.
3. That authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to vary the plan as may be required in response to circumstances arising as a consequence of COVID-19.

The meeting closed at 5:00 pm