

# TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held remotely on  
Tuesday, 24 November 2020 commencing at 4:30 pm**

## **Present:**

Chair  
Vice Chair

Councillor K J Cromwell  
Councillor J W Murphy

## **and Councillors:**

G J Bocking, C L J Carter, P A Godwin, H C McLain, H S Munro, J K Smith, P D Surman, S Thomson, P N Workman, D W Gray (Substitute for M J Williams) and V D Smith (Substitute for P D McLain)

## **also present:**

Councillors C M Cody and R A Bird

## **OS.34 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

34.1 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.

## **OS.35 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

35.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors P D McLain, R J G Smith and M J Williams. Councillors D J Gray and V D Smith would be acting as substitutes for the meeting.

## **OS.36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

36.1 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.

36.2 There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

## **OS.37 MINUTES**

37.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2020, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record.

**OS.38 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN**

38.1 Attention was drawn to the Executive Committee Forward Plan, circulated at Pages No. 23-29. 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.

38.2 It was

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

**OS.39 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21**

39.1 Attention was drawn to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2020/21, circulated at Pages No. 30-37, which Members were asked to consider.

39.2 Referring to amendments made since the last meeting, the Head of Corporate Services explained that the Review of Complaints Policy had been brought out of the 'pending items section' and added to the February meeting. As agreed at the last meeting, the Housing Strategy review had been removed from the Work Programme as it would be rolled on to next year. The Local Government Association (LGA) peer review report had been considered by the Executive Committee and recommended to Council with the action plan being monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee so, once approved, it would be added to the Work Programme.

39.3 Referring to the 12 January 2021 meeting, a Member questioned whether the Parking Strategy review would be ready for consideration at that time. In response, the Head of Finance and Asset Management indicated that this had been left in the Work Programme in hope of the review having been undertaken; however, the events of the last month in respect of COVID-19 and other priorities meant the Parking Strategy review had not moved forward. The Finance team was now focussed on the budget so it was unlikely the Parking Strategy would be considered until the spring. He would speak to Members and then confirm the timetable. Another Member questioned whether there was a confirmed date for the presentation by Severn Trent Water. In response, the Head of Community Services advised that there was no agreed date yet but he would try and get an indicative date as soon as possible.

39.4 Accordingly, it was

**RESOLVED** That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2020/21 be **NOTED**.

**OS.40 ANNUAL REVIEW OF UBICO**

40.1 The report of the Head of Community Services, circulated at Pages No. 38-77, provided the annual update on the Ubico contract for waste and recycling, street cleansing and grounds maintenance services. Members were asked to consider the 2019/20 outturn performance update on the services provided by Ubico Ltd.

40.2 In introducing the report, the Waste Contracts Manager explained that this was the annual service report and was provided to enable Members to monitor Ubico's performance in terms of service and financial performance. Appendix 1 contained the full performance report and Appendix 2 provided the annual corporate report. She advised that there was a lot of information contained within the report but this demonstrated the diverse environmental services contract the Council had with Ubico. Referring particularly to Paragraph 3.0, it was noted that the 2019/20 Ubico contract sum of £3,860,014 had been overspent by £302,198 which had resulted in

a full outturn contract cost of £4,162,212. In the main this was due to previously unidentified corporate costs and a grounds maintenance service support fund; the core service delivery budgets were well managed and the level of financial information provided by Ubico to the Council had improved significantly in recent months. A suitable amount had been allocated in reserves to cover those additional costs. Paragraph 4.0 set out the frontline services performance and showed a positive picture in terms of service delivery with relatively good performance. In terms of missed bins, the routes and rounds had been restructured so they worked better. There were also positive trends in health and safety and fleet management and, in terms of fleet management, Tewkesbury Borough Council's contract score was the highest for the current year.

- 40.3 During the discussion which ensued, a Member referred to Paragraph 4.4 and questioned how it could be established that the majority of street cleansing reports were completed and closed within timeframes when there were no planned routes for the street sweepers. In response, the Waste Contracts Manager indicated that there were some schedules in place. The scheduled work was about how the routes and rounds took place on a daily basis but Paragraph 4.4 referred to the reactive work e.g. telephone / online reports that were sent to Ubico for action – those issues were put on the system with an action date for the work to be carried out. Work was being undertaken on the street cleansing schedules as some of them were out of date; this was part of the street cleansing review which was currently ongoing. In addition, the team was looking at procuring a larger, more efficient sweeper.
- 40.4 Referring to Page No. 51 and the household waste target which was identified as 60%, the Waste Contracts Manager indicated that the target was incorrect and instead should be in line with the working plan. The Council was struggling slightly to meet targets for the year for various reasons but the COVID-19 pandemic had seen increases in all collections. In response to a query regarding the cost of COVID-19, the Head of Finance and Asset Management indicated that the Council had been notified by Ubico of additional costs in the region of £100,000 for items such as PPE/extra staffing to meet safety requirements etc. The general COVID-related grants from government currently stood at around £1.4 million so some of that would be used to offset the Ubico costs in the period. Ubico itself was not receiving any support directly although the furlough scheme had been utilised for some staff who could not work due to being in the shielded or clinically extremely vulnerable categories. Ubico had been maintaining a detailed separate list of COVID costs which it would provide to the Council's finance team to enable claims to be made, as appropriate, on that spend.
- 40.5 Referring to the information provided in the annual report, a Member felt it would be helpful to have more comparison information with previous years so that trends could be easily identified. In addition, at Page No. 53, the Member felt the number of new properties identified by Ubico did not seem to tally with the properties that were paying Council Tax which meant there could be some inaccuracies. He also referred to the number of household accidents and questioned whether this was correct as a refuse lorry had reversed into his gate in March 2020 and that incident was not mentioned in the list. In response, the Ubico Managing Director advised that she was unsure where the Ubico data came from for new households but she would discuss that with the Council's Waste Contracts Manager. In terms of the accident referred to, this would be recorded as a vehicle accident rather than a household one as it involved a vehicle, she understood this could be confusing but advised it was the way the recording for insurance purposes worked – she would ensure an explanatory note was included in future. Another Member felt the diagrams in the report were difficult to understand, particularly when they referred to bins per 100,000 and maintained it would be more useful to specify the finite figures. In response, the Ubico Managing Director confirmed this would be possible and the figures would be supplied in that way in future. It was suggested that the author of the annual report work with the Council's Corporate Services Team to better

understand the information which was of most use to Members and how it could be displayed to make it more readable in terms of identifying trends etc. as this would enable improved discussion and questioning.

40.6

In offering his thanks, a Member indicated that the feedback from the residents in his Ward had been that there was no significant change in the waste collections throughout the COVID-19 pandemic for which they were very grateful. Another Member agreed and also indicated that the grass cutting around the Borough had been significantly improved this year from the previous three years which was also great news. He felt the street cleansing could be improved by using maps and schedules in the same way as the grass cutting service. The Head of Community Services confirmed that this was being reviewed and Officers had been working hard on getting schedules in place for street cleansing but it should be borne in mind that this was a huge job as every single bin and road had to be plotted. When the larger sweeper was in place it would be better as the smaller vehicle needed to be tipped too regularly. As an example, the Head of Community Services advised that in Northway alone there were 90 street litter bins so, if this was expanded across the whole Borough with mapping and scheduling, it was easy to see what an enormous task it was. The review had been frustrated by COVID-19 and, having recently been reintegrated into the Borough Council from the County Waste Partnership, the Waste Contracts Manager was building a small team to be able to undertake some of the larger projects like the street cleansing review. In terms of Parishes, a formula was being put in place to enable them to make an assessment as to whether a street litter bin was required which should make the process more efficient. In terms of overweight vehicles, the Ubico Managing Director explained that there was a specified gross weight of vehicles and, whilst they were not usually significantly overweight, it was important that this did not happen at all. Generally speaking, it tended to be the smaller vehicles which could be overweight as what they collected fluctuated. Referring to Paragraph 3.2 (iii), (iv) and (vi) of the report, a Member questioned what the amounts were for those items and if they had been accounted for. In response, the Head of Community Services confirmed this was last year's report and the amounts would have been known. He undertook to get the information and forward it to Members following the meeting. In terms of the green waste service, the Head of Community Services confirmed this had been stopped during the first COVID-19 pandemic lockdown as it was a non-statutory service and Ubico had to concentrate on the services which it had a duty to collect; in addition, the priority of services was set out in the business continuity plan to ensure the team could quickly decide which services would run and which were stopped when necessary. The two garden waste rounds had been supported by a third in the heavy months last year and agency staff had been mixed with regular staff to try and ensure the knowledge of the service and the rounds was passed between staff as it had been felt that a vast number of the missed bins were due to a lack of round and geographical knowledge. In terms of the missed bins data, a Member questioned whether if a complete street was missed this would count as one miss or a number of misses. In response, the Waste Contracts Manager confirmed that the missed bin reports came through the Firmstep system, so if everyone in the street each reported a miss they would all be counted; however, if one person reported on behalf of the street it would be one miss. The information was also checked through Ubico to ensure it was an actual missed bin rather than a bin that was not put out on time. In terms of resident satisfaction, whilst Ubico did not undertake resident satisfaction surveys specifically around bin collections, the low number of complaints led the team to feel residents were relatively happy with the service. In addition, the Head of Corporate Services advised that a recommendation from the Corporate Peer review had been that the Council should undertake a resident satisfaction survey - the last survey results had shown waste and recycling at the top of the list. A Member expressed concern about the statement at Page No. 69 that Ubico was exploring opportunities of integration of services with Cheltenham Borough Council and questioned when and why this was being undertaken. In

response, the Head of Community Services advised that it was of course an aspiration for Ubico to become more commercial and to operate some services more closely with Cheltenham Borough Council given that parts of Tewkesbury Borough and Cheltenham Borough nearly overlapped. In addition, economies of scale meant it made sense to have a more joined up in approach.

- 40.7 The Chair thanked Ubico for the annual report and its efforts to improve the service and drive down complaints and, accordingly, it was

**RESOLVED** That the 2019/20 outturn performance update on the services provided by Ubico Ltd be **NOTED**.

#### **OS.41 GLOUCESTERSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL UPDATE**

- 41.1 The Council's representative on the Police and Crime Panel presented a feedback report, circulated with the Agenda at Pages No.78-79, on the meeting of the Panel which had taken place on 6 November 2020. The representative explained that the meeting had once again been conducted under COVID Regulations and had taken place via Zoom.
- 41.2 The matters covered by the meeting had included an update from the Police and Crime Commissioner; the COVID-19 Enforcement Plan; the Police and Crime Plan Refresh; the Criminal Justice Update; the opening of the Sabrina Centre; and the report from the Chief Executive of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. In terms of the update from the Police and Crime Commissioner, it had been advised that Police Officer numbers had been increasing as planned and had risen from 1,168 to 1,194 since the end of September. COVID had not delayed plans but had actually helped, as there had been fewer retirees than anticipated. The Gloucestershire Rural Crime Week, which ran from 23 October, had a number of areas of focus including hare coursing, rural criminals, illegal angling and dog theft. The use of 4x4s and drones had been publicised and, whilst nationally the Rural Crime Week was cancelled, the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable had decided that, given the nature of the County, it should proceed in Gloucestershire. The Bamfurlong Motor Patrol Centre at the junction of the A40 and M5 had been emptied of Police assets due to roadworks that had adversely affected response times, and in particular as they related to Gloucester, and Officers had been relocated to various locations to provide cover. A planning application had been submitted for an upgrade to the site and demolition of the existing site would commence in January 2021. Additional costs identified as occurring as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic amounted to £1.3 million so far, £1 million of which had been covered from reserves and the rest from central government grants. Crime had dropped by 6% as a result of COVID restrictions but this was less than the national average which was 20%. The Police and Crime Commissioner had suggested this was largely explained by the higher number of crimes being booked as a result of the recent negative conclusion of the review into the Force's activities, which was a practice consistent with the "every crime matters" focus in the Police Plan.
- 41.3 Referring to the COVID-19 Enforcement Plan, the approach in Gloucestershire had been to follow the four Es: Engage, Explain, Encourage and Enforce. The focus was now on enforcement and flagrant breaches of the regulations would attract fines. The Police and Crime Commissioner had emphasised the wide range of views amongst the public and the need to make sure that enforcement was seen to be proportionate, being sensitive to different communities and age groups. In this regard the new second national lockdown had actually made life easier as the rules were simpler to interpret.

- 41.4 The Police and Crime Plan covering the period 2020-2022 had been reviewed and the Police and Crime Panel had approved its themes. The areas of focus were: every crime matters, including improved recording of crimes; safer days and nights; young people becoming adults, particularly being a 'child friendly' county; older but not overlooked, considering the impact on mental health and the rise in dementia etc. which absorbed a lot of Police time looking for people who were missing; safe and social driving; and a green and pleasant county, including plans to make the force carbon neutral.
- 41.5 In terms of the criminal justice update, it was pointed out that the condition of the Courts was not directly an issue for the Police and Crime Commissioner or the Police as they had no jurisdiction there however, the continued failure to address the condition and accessibility of the Courts was something that COVID had worsened and this had consequences for the ability of the Police to deliver justice in a timely manner. Local politicians had been encouraged to bring the poor state of Gloucestershire's Courts to the attention of the government.
- 41.6 The new Sabrina Police Training Centre had now opened. As there were a number of new Police Officers coming onstream, the new facility was expected to yield benefits going forward in terms of the speed they could be brought through the system.
- 41.7 Members were advised that the next meeting of the Police and Crime Panel was scheduled to take place on 9 February 2021. The Chair asked that the representative find out how Gloucestershire ran its recruitment as a recent experience had shown it to be relatively slow when compared to other forces. Accordingly, it was

**RESOLVED** That the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel Update be **NOTED**.

#### **OS.42 GLOUCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE**

- 42.1 Members received an update from the Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) on matters discussed at the meetings on 22 October, 11 November and 17 November 2020. She referred Members to the fact that a report had been circulated with the Agenda at Pages No. 80-82 and separately at Pages No. 1-3 and she intended to highlight some of the salient points contained in those reports - Members should look at the full reports which were available on the County Council's website for the detailed information.
- 42.2 The representative advised that 22 October had been an additional meeting to look at progress with the Fit for the Future consultation and the consultation on the new hospital in the Forest of Dean. The Fit for the Future consultation had been discussed on numerous occasions during its progression but it had recently been slightly delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan was to look at acute hospitals and how they were functioning as well as how Centres of Excellence could be developed within existing resources. The public consultation was due to close on 17 December and everyone was encouraged to respond. In terms of the new hospital in the Forest of Dean, this would be a 24 bed ensuite facility built on the lower side of Cinderford. The current hospital provision at Lydney and the Dilke would be closed. The new hospital would have inpatient and outpatient facilities although further discussion and input was needed to determine what would be provided in the new hospital and what would be provided in Lydney at the proposed new health centre. It was anticipated that the new hospital would have an urgent care department which would include diagnostic services such as x-rays and would

run from 8am to 8pm seven days a week.

- 42.3 Referring to the meeting on 11 November, the representative explained that this was the annual briefing by the Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Trust. It was felt the merger earlier in the year had gone well and the benefits were starting to be seen. The Trust was part of the wider health care system, in association with acute hospital colleagues, and plans had been made to ensure they all got through the winter, meeting needs and coping with increased demands. There had also been an introduction of the Home First Scheme which encouraged discharge as soon as someone was medically fit to go home or to a re-enablement resource. A Rapid Resource Team was also in operation to try and prevent hospital admissions by care in the community – currently around 90% of the services were provided in the community which increased independence and life opportunities. All seven hospitals in the county were set up to take COVID positive patients alongside other patients and the general hospitals were continuing as previously, with Cheltenham being a ‘green’ site with no COVID patients and Gloucester Royal having all patients in specific wards. In terms of COVID testing, this was split into pillar one, all NHS frontline and care staff and families, and pillar two, for everyone else. High levels of mental health issues were being seen in Gloucester so a complex emotional needs team had been set up to help prevent admissions to Wotton Lawn Hospital – there was also a new street triage service whereby mental health nurses would go out with the Police if it was felt to be necessary. Everyone had been reminded that the crisis team operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- 42.4 The meeting on 17 November had discussed the public representation and feedback on the phlebotomy service. Virtual appointments had resulted in people being asked to go to the General Hospitals for blood tests, which had problems in people being able to get there by public transport. Even bigger problems were experienced from outlying areas like Fairford, where transport was even more difficult.
- 42.5 In terms of the COVID update for 2-8 November, Members had been advised that waves one and two could not be compared directly as there was better testing in wave two. However, it was known that whilst fewer care home patients had been seen there had been an increase in the number of patients from younger age groups. The numbers in Gloucester Royal Hospital were near to the numbers at the peak in wave one but there were not as many people in intensive care. Cluster outbreaks were being examined daily and investigated - care homes had seen less infections recently in residents but there had been an increase in staff infections so revised guidance and training was to be provided on the use of Personal Protective Equipment and on visitors to homes. The Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group performance report had also been considered and it had been noted that, in terms of cancer treatment targets, the two-week consultation target was still very good but the 52 days to treatment target had slipped slightly. In terms of the One Gloucestershire Integrated Care System Lead Report, a virtual COVID ward had been set up where people who had tested positive with symptoms were having their oxygen levels monitored on a daily basis – if they deteriorated they would be admitted - and if their levels improved it showed they were past the worst. In terms of the Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group Chair/Accountable Officer report, there was good information contained therein and the representative encouraged Members to read it but there were no highlights to bring to Members attention in particular.
- 42.6 The Chair thanked the representative for her report, and it was

**RESOLVED** That the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Update be **NOTED**.

**OS.43 GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE**

- 43.1 The Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee (GEGSC) presented the report, circulated with the Agenda at Pages No.83-84 and separately at Pages No. 4-8, which contained a summary of the Committee's meetings held on 21 October and 18 November 2020.
- 43.2 The two main parts of the meeting on 21 October had covered the Golden Valley Project and an update from GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The Golden Valley presentation, which the representative suggested would be worth viewing, had noted that Gloucestershire had the largest concentration of cyber businesses in the UK outside of London. In terms of economic growth, the development could potentially deliver more than 12,000 jobs and contribute approximately £800 million to the economy for the Golden Valley site alone. In terms of the GFirst LEP update, the paper provided was largely the same as the information presented at September's meeting but did include some additional information to provide a more complete context, which was helpful.
- 43.3 The meeting on 18 November had consisted of three parts: a Joint Committee update; a presentation on modern methods of housing construction; and an update from GFirst LEP. The main items in the Joint Committee update had been the Gloucestershire skills portal which provided job seekers with a list of local and national contacts and training opportunities; an overview of the Committee's work; an update on the Kings Quarter Regeneration Project in Gloucester; a document that delivered a snapshot of the current status of strategic and local plans in the county; and an update on the Business Rates Pool. Bromford Housing Association had delivered a presentation on modern methods of housing construction which the representative had found to be extremely interesting. The presentation had explained that, in future years, Gloucestershire would face significant housing growth to meet the demand for new homes and delivery of that housing would provide important challenges. It had been explained that modern methods of construction were not intended to replace traditional construction methods but to be used alongside them and it had been agreed that representatives from some private building developers would be invited to a meeting in the near future so their plans could be scrutinised and a summary report produced. Finally, in terms of the GFirst LEP update, Members had been advised that the total Gross Value Added (GVA) for Gloucestershire was estimated to be £16.5 billion; the number of young people (18-24 year olds) claiming benefits in Gloucestershire was currently 3,725 which was 19.6% of the total working age claimants in the county; the second phase of the Self Employment Income Scheme Grant had seen a total of 21,300 claims made in Gloucestershire up to 30 September with a take up rate of 62% of those potentially eligible; and the total value of loans offered to businesses in Gloucestershire, as part of the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and Bounce Back Loan Scheme now stood at £483 million.
- 43.4 The Chair thanked the representative for his update and reminded Members that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received reports from the county groups to ensure the District Councils were integrated in the work so it was useful if Members could ask questions and make comments that could be fed back by the representatives. Accordingly, it was

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

**OS.44 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGY**

- 44.1 The report of the Head of Development Services, circulated at Pages No. 85-113, outlined the progress to date on the three year action plan in respect of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, as well as outlining the actions for 2020/21. Members were asked to consider the progress made against the delivery of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy during year three and the actions identified for 2020/21.
- 44.2 Members were advised that there were five key priorities in the strategy: employment land planning; transport infrastructure improvement; business growth support; promoting Tewkesbury Borough; and employability, education and training. Under each of the headings were a number of objectives and under each objective were annual actions. The Economic Development and Tourism Strategy was a corporate strategy which involved contributions from across the Council. It was important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted on the action plan delivery but the teams had worked to move services online and to operate a 'virtual' offer. The Community and Economic Development Manager indicated that, of particular note, was that the Growth Hub team had acted rapidly to realign its service in response to COVID-19 and had developed an online webinar, one-to-one offers and focussed business support request forms and surveys to ensure targeted support. Looking forward, the team would be focussing on economic assessments, understanding the needs of businesses, recovery from COVID and how support could be offered going forward. The strategy had been due for refresh next year but this would be delayed due to the uncertainty in the business community - it was felt this would be more effectively undertaken in 2022 when there was a clearer picture of what was happening in the business community.
- 44.3 During the discussion which ensued, a Member queried the amount of smiley faces contained within the action plan. In response, the Community and Economic Development Manager explained that this was due to the way the actions were grouped and the emphasis on what had been achieved. Progress was undoubtedly quicker in some areas than others but on the whole what should be achieved was being achieved. He did however accept that the action plan needed to isolate actions better so they could be more accurately reflected. The Chair agreed that this was required and indicated that, as well as being told what was going well, Members also needed to know about those items which were not going as well, as the Committee may then be able to help progress things.
- 44.4 Having considered the report, it was
- RESOLVED** That progress made against the delivery of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy during year three, and the actions identified for 2020/21, be **NOTED**.

**OS.45 TOURISM REVIEW**

- 45.1 Attention was drawn to three specific projects by the Community and Economic Development Manager. Members were advised that the Battlefield Interpretation project, which was a Battlefield Society led project, was looking at providing a focus for the battlefield. It was felt something was needed which was accessible all year round and, whilst a number of options had been considered, the focus now was on the Gupshill Manor and an outbuilding on the site which could be used for interpretation and to act as a central point for walks into the Town Centre. The Gupshill Manor was very amenable to the ideas but was currently going through the process of getting support from Greene King which was taking quite a long time. In terms of Tewkesbury 2021, this was a project based around organising a series of events throughout 2021 to celebrate 900 years since the consecration of

Tewkesbury Abbey and 550 years since the Battle of Tewkesbury; the events would celebrate the culture and heritage of the Abbey. Unfortunately, the plans had been somewhat hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic as it was not known what could or could not go ahead but the Executive Committee had recently agreed to support the project with a grant of £25,000 which it was hoped would kickstart the planning process once more. Lastly, the tourism review had been delayed until the summer due to COVID-19 but a consultant had been appointed to look at the current offer, future offers and the resources required. The final report was due in January, and the consultant was present at today's meeting to provide a presentation of her findings.

- 45.2 Members were advised that the review had been split into two parts; an external market assessment (visitor behaviour and digital trends) and internal assessment (tourism product, current tourism resource and stakeholders). Recommendations had then been made in terms of the Council support which would be required for the key projects. In addition, a review of key partner stakeholders, business models, initiatives and the opportunities they presented had been undertaken. The recommendations being made were about the key priorities for strategic direction for tourism in the Borough to 2025, including the response to COVID-19; to engage and support tourism businesses, including working with Gloucestershire Airport, key events and the Tourist Information Centres; headline ideas for income generation and a business model; outline marketing focus to 2025; and a suggestion of the resources needed. The consultant outlined her experience in the tourism sector which included working for the Forestry Commission at Westonbirt; Visit Bristol; Visit Cheltenham and the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley. In terms of Tewkesbury Borough's tourism economy, Members were provided with a snapshot taken pre-COVID which had shown approximately 158 tourism businesses made up of 129 accommodation businesses and 27 attractions; 2,273 jobs in tourism in the Borough which was 5% of all employment; visitors to the Borough had spent just under £136 million in 2019; the impact of the tourism economy went far wider than 'traditional' tourism and included £23 million on accommodation, £16 million in attractions, £32 million in shopping and £41 million on food and drink. In terms of all staying trips in 2019, the comparison showed Tewkesbury Borough having an average performance which was above Stroud and the Forest of Dean Districts but below Gloucester City, Cheltenham Borough and Cotswolds District – it was noted that, since 2014, staying trips had increased by 19% spending approximately £47 million. In terms of day visits and day visit spend in 2019, Tewkesbury Borough had 1.8 million visitors spending £64 million which represented a fall of 5% since 2014. Tewkesbury Borough had the lowest day visitor spend of all of the Districts at £63.8; this compared to the highest spend in Cotswold District of £221.6. The tourism economy snapshot during COVID-19 had seen 12 commercial businesses/charities interviewed which had shown a mixed picture but all had lost significant income to varying degrees; potential closure for some bed and breakfasts, guest houses and smaller hotels with all corporate business and weddings lost; Great Western Railway had seen a 90% loss of income and Tewkesbury Abbey had lost 72% of its income; outdoor activities, self-catering, camping and caravanning had seen significant footfall in July and August for domestic day and staying leisure visitors; September and October had been much quieter with the usual older visitors, coach groups and overseas travellers not travelling; the Office of National Statistics reported in early November that accommodation and food service activities industry had the highest percentage of businesses with no cash reserves at 6% compared with 3% across all industries; and the accommodation and food service activities industry had the highest percentage of businesses with no or low confidence that their businesses would survive the next three months at 32%. In terms of the external assessment, the headlines looking forward were that lockdown and travel restrictions would continue into 2021 with people staying locally; the overseas market was not set to recover until 2024 with domestic tourism likely for the next 18 months, particularly in rural destinations and self-catering; there was consumer

demand for digitisation and need for experiences; the county strategy to support tourism would offer opportunities with Visit Gloucestershire, Cotswolds Tourism, Tourism Zones and the Tourism Sector Deal; the consumer focus was on being safe from COVID with less travel on public transport and interest in the environment continuing; the market would be competitive with 95 towns and villages in the wider Cotswolds; there was concern from local residents about attracting visitors who may bring COVID with them. In respect of the internal assessment, there were a lot of attractions across the Borough and there were opportunities in the towns of Tewkesbury and Winchcombe as hubs as well as walking and cycling opportunities; the current resource available to support tourism was minimal; there was no dedicated staff resource coordinating or leading on the visitor economy; there was no active public or private group to support or drive tourism in the Borough or in the towns; there was no cross-working resource to bring together other visitor economy related projects such as the Heritage Action Zone, the Garden Town or the Cultural Consortium; all projects/initiatives including Tewkesbury 2021, Heritage Park, Experience Winchcombe needed experienced tourism strategy, marketing and digital support input; Tewkesbury 2021 was a big year with an opportunity to deliver civic pride and a positive knock-on effect for promotion of the destination for visitors; there was a need for a clear distinction of destination brands for Winchcombe and Tewkesbury to include local culture, retail and hospitality; the product offer in the area was good, however traditionally lacked year-round experiences, particularly in Tewkesbury; there was no marketing plan or resource to proactively grow the visitor economy; and there was an opportunity to support place-making - not just tourism – for Tewkesbury Borough as a great place to live, work, visit and invest. The full report was due for completion in January but the next steps as she saw them were to ‘survive’ with immediate engagement and support for businesses in the short-term; ‘recover’ with support for businesses to make as much money as possible to continue trading; and to ‘thrive’ to become stronger more distinct brands within the Cotswolds family with proud engaged communities.

- 45.3 A Member noted that the map of tourist attractions provided did not include Gwinnett’s Tomb in Down Hatherley; he was the second signatory on the American Declaration of Independence and, whilst he was not buried there it was his family tomb. In response, the consultant indicated that there was much that was not included as it was not known about very widely; however, when working more digitally it was possible to create tourism resources at a low cost. In addition, information could be shared by people that understood it as part of a bigger story. This was the reason places needed someone to champion the area, tell the stories and share them widely – this was known as a destination marketer.
- 45.4 In response to a query about where the final report on the tourism review would go, the Head of Corporate Services indicated that this would depend on the content of the report e.g. if it required funding/resource then a report would be prepared to go to the Executive Committee. Another Member agreed with the central thrust of the information provided in the presentation. He explained that he had lived in the Borough for five years and pre-COVID he had had a lot of visitors but none of them had known about Tewkesbury Borough or its heritage assets and he felt the Council was missing a big opportunity in that regard. Another Member thanked the consultant for her interesting presentation, he understood the need for the Borough to better promote itself but he questioned whether she had taken into account the links the Growth Hub had with the business community and the promotion it already did in that regard. The Chief Executive agreed with the view and advised that it would be helpful for the final report to reference the work the Growth Hub did, he understood the need for more resources for tourism but felt the resource that was already available should not be forgotten. In addition, referring to Visit Gloucestershire, he advised that the Joint Committee for Economic Growth had identified tourism and tourism recovery as a key consideration for all Councils in the county and work around that was being done on behalf of the Joint Committee

which would receive proposals in due course. The County Council was proposing to make a grant to Visit Gloucestershire to look to supporting tourism next year and the Council's team was part of those discussions – he hoped all of this would be referenced. He explained that the Council had limited resources due its size, which had also been stretched by COVID-19, to the extent of having a potential deficit over the five year Medium Term Financial Strategy period of more than £5 million. This would lead to some tough challenges and decisions on the services it was able to support. There was a lot which was unclear at the current time and would depend on what the government was able to do to support local authorities going forward. A partnership approach would be essential between the public and private sector to ensure the tourism economy was supported and he would be interested to understand the various models and how to access funding; he understood this would be a choice for the Council but if it had private sector partners that drew in more support that would be helpful.

45.5 A Member noted that he had heard it commented frequently over the summer that the Tourist Information Centre in Tewkesbury was not open and he questioned why this was. In addition, he was of the view that the state of the building was not a good reflection on Tewkesbury and asked that the windows and doorway be cleaned. He also referred to the twinning links with Miesbach and felt this could be built upon more than it was currently. The consultant agreed that twinning was definitely an opportunity that needed to be communicated with the right people. The Visit Gloucestershire strategy would be really important as it would work with the districts on all of those ideas. There could be challenges faced with funding as often it was provided to destination marketing organisations which Gloucestershire did not currently have and she felt this did need to be urgently addressed. In response to the Tourist Information Centre query, the Economic and Community Development Manager explained that he would ensure the cleaning was undertaken. The Centre in Winchcombe was in the library and therefore had not been able to open. In addition, many of the staff in the Centres had been in the shielding category during the first lockdown. Once lockdown had been lifted, the decision had been taken, from a safety point of view, that the Tourist Information Centre in Tewkesbury would remain closed in line with the reception area at the Council Offices. The websites and social media channels continued to be updated and the calls to the Centres were being transferred to staff so were being answered. This situation was due to be reviewed shortly but Officers felt there had to be careful thought to the amount of marketing that could be done so visitors were not being encouraged to areas where there were restrictions in place.

45.6 Accordingly, it was

**RESOLVED** That the information provided in respect of the tourism review be **NOTED**.

#### **OS.46 WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY - ANNUAL REVIEW**

46.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 114-140, set out the progress on the actions contained in the Workforce Development Strategy which Members were asked to consider.

46.2 The Committee was reminded that the purpose of the Workforce Development Strategy was to identify how the Council would meet the current and future workforce needs to ensure it had skilled people to deliver high quality services. It set out the critical challenges, opportunities and threats regarding workforce requirements as well as a considered and flexible set of responses to meet them. The current Strategy had been approved by the Executive Committee on 3 April 2019 following consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and it was agreed that an annual update on the delivery of the Strategy would be presented at Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Strategy had five key themes: releasing

productivity; digital transformation; commercialisation; workforce resilience; and being a great place to work each of which were supported by high-level steps. The Strategy was attached to the report at Appendix 1. Appendix 2 provided an overview of the actions delivered and proposed actions moving forward and Appendix 3 set out the Key Performance Indicator metrics that were approved as part of the Strategy. Whilst the Strategy was led by the Human Resources team, it was an organisational strategy and had received full engagement from the Management Team.

- 46.3 The HR and OD Manager drew particular attention to key points from Appendix 3: candidate attraction was currently good with an average of 16 applications for every vacancy; there had been a drop in absence rates to 4.3 days per person – this would equate to 8.6 days across the year which was less than the 12.4 days per employee last year – mental health remained at the top of the reasons why people were having time off and the Council was continuing to put in support for that; the employee engagement opinion survey had not been done this year but had been replaced by a COVID specific survey and followed up by a ‘pulse check’ survey which had six multiple choice questions that would provide up to date and responsive data on how staff were doing – this would be run every quarter for the time being. In terms of the forward plan, Members were reminded that this was a five-year Strategy of which the Council was about to complete the first year. Already quite a lot had been covered and there was a lot in the plan for next year which was good. The plans were quite ambitious but if delivered the Council and its staff would be in a good place.
- 46.4 A Member noted that the Key Performance Indicators measured the cases of absence but he questioned whether there were detailed statistics available to enable the Council to hone in and focus on the biggest issues. In response, the HR and OD Manager explained that the figures came from the HR and payroll system and when people reported their sickness absence it was recorded into categories. This meant it was possible to run reports to show the number of days lost to stress, anxiety etc. and support was then tailored to the high areas of absence; this also included the services the absences were in so patterns could be identified. Historically, mental health training was run for all staff annually with additional training for managers but there was also a lot of day to day support and, during the COVID-19 pandemic, additional support was available such as a debriefing service for those that had difficult experiences on telephone calls etc. to enable them to work through what had happened. The Council also had in place a counselling service for all staff to access whereby they received eight sessions with a trained Counsellor. To date, this had been a well-used service with 44 sessions taken up in the last quarter. In addition, the Council had an Occupational Health Service which provided the opportunity to ‘jump on’ issues as quickly as possible and a mental health action plan that could be put into place, to try and avoid an Officer having to take sickness absence, by providing the support they required at an early stage. The Member also noted that while the voluntary turnover and retention values were shown as percentages, it would be more helpful to have them in number terms. The HR and OD Manager undertook to include those figures in reports going forward but for the current report this equated to three people for voluntary turnover – two of which had fixed-term contracts – and two in terms of retention. In addition, the Head of Corporate Services advised that the Strategy had been assessed externally against the Health and Wellbeing Charter across all categories and had been awarded excellence in five out of eight. One of those was around mental health so the Council had a good record in that regard. Another Member welcomed that news and questioned what percentage of staff were currently off with work-related stress. In response the HR and OD Manager undertook to identify that figure and circulate to Members following the meeting. Whilst staff were using the support services offered, currently, fewer people were making use of the Mental Health First Aiders across the Council and there was a plan to promote them with staff. There had been

sessions provided on wellbeing and a series of six sessions had recently been commissioned which would focus on mindfulness. A Member suggested that Councillors should also be included in the mental health and mindfulness training which was offered and the HR and OD Manager undertook to discuss this with the Head of Democratic Services.

46.5 Accordingly, it was

**RESOLVED** That the progress of the Workforce Development Strategy Actions be **NOTED**.

#### **OS.47 COUNCIL MOTION - SUPPORT FOR LOCAL ELECTRICITY BILL**

47.1 The Committee was reminded that at the meeting of the Council on 29 September 2020, the following Notice of Motion was referred to Overview and Scrutiny for consideration and recommendation to Executive Committee for a decision:

‘Power for People is a campaign for more local, clean energy generation that would benefit local communities.

They are a not-for-profit organisation campaigning for the Local Electricity Bill – that they authored – to become law. The Bill is currently supported by a cross-party group of over 200 MPs including Tewkesbury’s own MP Laurence Robertson.

The Bill aims to solve the current problem whereby local renewable energy generators, such as community energy groups, are unable to sell energy that they generate to local people. This is because of the huge setup and running costs involved in doing so.

The Bill would overcome this problem by establishing a Right to Local Supply that would make the costs of selling locally generated clean energy proportionate to the scale of the operation. This would benefit the existing community energy groups across the country and, even more excitingly, create the opportunity for huge growth in such groups and other local clean energy providers.

If the Bill became law it would be excellent news for public authorities that wished to set up their own energy companies to sell locally generated renewable energy to local people, as the set up and running costs involved would be proportionate and thus a fraction of what they are now. The revenues received by such authorities could be ploughed back into local emissions reduction schemes and other local services and facilities.

A full copy of the Bill and the names of the 200+ MPs supporting it can be viewed via the following link

<https://powerforpeople.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Local-Electricity-Bill.pdf>

A copy has also been emailed to all Members of the Council

In light of the above, the Council is asked to:

1. sign up to the campaign [www.powerforpeople.org.uk/sign-up](http://www.powerforpeople.org.uk/sign-up) and
2. adopt the resolution set out below:

Tewkesbury Borough Council:

- (i) acknowledges that it has made efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable energy;
- (ii) recognises that Councils can play a central role in creating sustainable communities, particularly through the provision of locally generated renewable electricity;

(iii) further recognises that:

- a) very large financial setup and running costs involved in selling locally generated renewable electricity to local customers result in it being impossible for local renewable electricity generators to do so,
- b) making these financial costs proportionate to the scale of a renewable electricity supplier's operation would create significant opportunities for Councils and Community Groups to be providers of locally generated renewable electricity directly to local people, businesses and organisations, and
- c) revenues received by Councils that became local renewable electricity providers could be used to help fund local greenhouse gas emissions reduction measures and to help improve local services and facilities;

(iv) in view of the above, the Council supports the Local Electricity Bill, currently supported by a cross-party group of more than 200 MPs, and which, if made law, would make the setup and running costs of selling renewable electricity to local customers proportionate by establishing a Right to Local Supply and will:

- inform the local media of this decision,
- write to local MPs, asking them to support the Bill, and
- write to the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, Power for People, (at 8 Delancey Passage, Camden, London NW1 7NN or [info@powerforpeople.org.uk](mailto:info@powerforpeople.org.uk)) expressing its support'.

47.2 The Chair explained that he would firstly ask the proposer of the Motion to present it to the Committee, followed by the Deputy Chief Executive presenting his report circulated with the Agenda at Pages No. 141-154. The item would then be opened up for questions and debate before determination of what response should be provided to the Executive Committee in respect of this Motion.

47.3 The proposer of the Motion indicated that, in her view, the issue was that the Country was not meeting its climate change targets – the United Kingdom was way off track to meet its carbon emissions targets in the Climate Change Act. Community-scale renewable energy had huge potential to help solve that problem and benefit local economies, yet it was currently blocked from doing so. If someone wanted to buy electricity from a local renewable source, such as the local school or village hall that had solar panels, they could not. The United Kingdom bought its electricity from utility companies that sourced it from anything connected to the National Grid, be it solar in Wiltshire or gas fired from a power station in Yorkshire. This meant a community with local renewables could not sell the energy it generated directly to local people but must sell it to a utility company which then sold it on to customers. This was happening because becoming a supplier of energy to customers involved millions in set-up and running costs. Those costs were due to grappling with highly complex grid balancing codes and network agreements controlled by the largest six utility companies. The heart of the problem was disproportionate costs - like someone wanting to set up a business baking bread in their kitchen and delivering to people in their local area, but instead of just paying the road tax for the delivery van they had to pay hundreds of thousands of pounds to use the roads, no matter how little bread they delivered; that situation meant they could never start their business and that was the reality for community-scale renewable energy in the United Kingdom. However, there was a solution which would see the costs and complexity of being able to sell locally generated energy to local people being made proportionate to the size of the local energy co-operative or business operation. The Local Electricity Bill had been drafted to lay out a

mechanism to do that. If made law, it would give electricity generators the right to become local suppliers – i.e. sell their energy directly to local people – and make it financially viable to do so. The Bill gave the task of setting up the new mechanism to the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (OFGEM) which was the energy market regulator. Critically, it required that OFGEM ensured local suppliers faced costs and complexity proportionate to the scale of their business. The Bill also required that OFGEM engaged appropriate experts and stakeholders in the formulation of the new process. Communities would benefit from selling local renewable energy and significant additional value would remain within local economies, meaning more investment in things like local services and more efficient homes. Communities could raise funds to build more renewable energy schemes and they would have a viable business model, meaning they could help ensure the United Kingdom met its climate change targets. Communities would see knock-on local economic benefits and there would be greater acceptance of the transition to 100% renewable energy. Local economies would be more resilient, local skilled jobs would be created and the UK's energy supply would be more secure. To date, the Bill was supported by 228 MPs, including the MP for Tewkesbury Borough; this was a Cross Party Bill with five of the 12 sponsors being Conservative; 65 County and local authorities had already supported the Bill; and Tewkesbury Town Council and Western Power Distribution (the regional distributor) had voted to express their support. In effect, Members were being asked to agree with and support them and the proposer felt that was not controversial. She indicated that the opening headline of GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) Gloucestershire Sustainable Energy Strategy Report from 2019 was that Gloucestershire, like everywhere else in the country, needed to contribute to achieving the United Kingdom's legally binding carbon emissions reduction target while sustaining reliable energy supplies and ensuring energy costs remained or, for some, became affordable. The proposer reminded Members that fuel poverty affected 25,000 households across Gloucestershire and that Tewkesbury was supposed to be "a place where a good quality of life is open to all". The LEPs opening paragraph stated that "our energy system needed to change and everywhere needed to play its part including a complete shift to very low or zero carbon electricity generation, mostly renewable and much of it decentralized and that the scale of these changes required was significant. Gloucestershire currently met at least 85% of its energy needs (for heating, power and transport) from fossil fuels and that needed to be close to zero by 2050. However, a key weakness was that the county was short of initiative-takers willing and/or able to take forward the many ideas and plans for action". In summing up, the proposer felt that Tewkesbury could show real leadership in this regard and therefore she asked Members to support the motion and to vote in favour of supporting the Local Electricity Bill - supporting the Bill did not commit the Council to do anything if the Bill did become law and, despite being called a Bill, it was not actually going to cost the Council a single penny.

- 47.4 In introducing his report, the Deputy Chief Executive advised that the Council had commissioned a consultant to help with its carbon reduction audit and action plan and he had been able to input to the report. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that should the Council sign up to the motion, and therefore the implications of the Local Electricity Bill, there could be resource implications. Currently the Council had a relatively small budget associated with its carbon reduction and climate change programme and the Executive Committee had previously agreed that the most cost-effective way to utilise that, in light of the absence of any internal expertise, was through the commissioning of a consultant. Should there be a need to divert some of that resource – equating to 2.5 days per week – to exploring and understanding the implications associated with the Local Electricity Bill, it was likely that would have to be at the expense of existing identified workstreams contained within the carbon reduction action plan. In addition, the Bill appeared to strongly advocate the role of local authorities as a supplier of local electricity and the Council did not currently have the infrastructure nor the mechanisms or resources in place to

undertake what would be a significant variation in its current business. In terms of legal implications, part of the motion asked the Council to sign up to a campaign which it could do should it so wish; however, if minded to sign up the Council would need to be careful not to inadvertently sign up to something that was, or could be seen to be, a more binding agreement/procurement policy for the authority. There may be positive environmental benefits in terms of the provision of locally produced electricity being provided directly to local communities, and that appeared to be one of the key drivers associated with the Bill however, detail in terms of managing capacity, supply, resilience and the breadth/radius of any local communities who may be able to benefit from local electricity was not clearly defined at this stage. According to its website Power for People was a not-for-profit organisation, campaigning for the United Kingdom to rapidly transition to 100% clean energy and for that to benefit local communities. They ran grass roots mobilisation campaigns, engaging and involving citizens and local communities and calling on them to lobby their elected representatives for changes in the law or in government policy. The website made it clear that the organisations which had signed up supported the Local Electricity Bill in principle and not necessarily its exact current wording and that the wording of the Bill may change as the campaign for it progressed. The Bill, scheduled for a second reading in January 2021, was four clauses long and if it was made law it would be intended to make the setup and running costs of selling electricity to local customers proportionate by establishing a right to local supply. At this stage no further detail was provided in terms of the implications of introducing a right to local supply or how the process would operate. In considering the implications of a right to local supply, the Committee would be advised to consider those at a local level. Local considerations could include the benefits and disbenefits of the Council becoming a local energy supplier; supply resilience and supporting and managing the customer base. The Council was often seen as the 'fourth emergency service' by businesses and communities and, as such, the implications of managing and responding to power outages to communities served by local suppliers, due for example to adverse weather events, changes in regulation or incomplete due diligence on behalf of the local supplier etc., should be considered. The Council was doing a lot of good work with its own assets and the Roses Theatre and grant applications were being submitted to secure significant amounts of funding to offset the capital costs of replacing the in-house boiler system. The Committee would need to consider the fact that the process of how the electricity sector worked, and how costs would be created and imposed on consumers through the system, was complex and local authorities may not be best placed in terms of having the expertise and knowledge needed in order to objectively assess the proposals suggested as part of the Power for People Bill. There may be multiple ways of promoting greater community-owned, distribution network-embedded renewable generation rather than solely the proposal, as set out in the Bill, of small generators becoming 'suppliers' in their own right. The Committee would need to consider whether there was sufficient information within the Bill at this or future points in time, and a sufficient knowledge base within the Council to objectively consider the merits or otherwise of the specific approaches proposed in the Bill.

- 47.5 In response, the proposer of the motion expressed disappointment not to have seen the report of the Deputy Chief Executive prior to publication as she could have answered some of the queries about the Local Electricity Bill. Referring to the resource implications set out, she confirmed that the Bill did not advocate for any local authority to do anything and she felt that to suggest so was misleading. She further explained that supporting the Bill did not commit the Council to do anything if it did become law. The Bill placed a requirement on Ofgem to establish a right to local supply and, as part of that, to ensure that costs faced by local energy generators wishing to sell directly to local customers faced proportionate costs which they did not at the moment due to energy market regulations. In reference to the fact that the wording in the Bill could change, she advised that this was not

dissimilar to the Climate Change Act which, in its first draft, was five pages but three years later when it became law it was 125 pages long however the core principle had remained the same. In terms of the report citing Bristol and Nottingham Cities ventures as failures, she was of the view that what happened to Robin Hood Energy highlighted the problem that the Bill aimed to fix. It had struggled and ultimately failed because of fundamental flaws in the energy market rules. Specifically, the set up and running costs involved in becoming a licensed supplier of electricity were extremely high and crucially not proportionate to the size of the supply business. If the costs were made proportionate, which was what the Local Electricity Bill would do, then Robin Hood Energy and similar others would have been empowered to create sustainable and viable local energy supply businesses. In addition, the current market rules were designed when the United Kingdom had a small number of large power stations generating electricity and sending it out across the grid to customers, since then, the energy system had dramatically changed but the rules had not. The rules were antiquated and not fit for purpose which was causing problems like the failure of Robin Hood Energy and others and this had been confirmed by the Energy Minister who had indicated that a lot of the structures that the country had today reflected the conditions that had operated 30 or 40 years ago.

- 47.6 A Member noted that the report discussed the resilience of local suppliers and the fact that the UK's network was set up by the national grid. He felt it was important to note that, should the generator fail, the national grid would have to supply energy so the local authorities would not be left liable. In response, another Member disagreed with that view and felt that local electricity being kept in the local area was about sectioning off the supply. He also felt that some of the criteria for the Bill were quite controversial and could result in a situation where there were dozens of little Javelin Parks. In response to a query as to whether the Bill advocated the role of local authorities as a supplier of electricity, the Deputy Chief Executive advised that there was a strong advocacy on the Power for People website, and in the Bill, that local authorities had an important part to play in the process and the website made the inference that this was what they wanted to happen wherever possible. The Council's consultant confirmed that there was a recognition that Councils had a central role to play. His view was that, in principle, the Bill was a good idea but at the moment it felt like the details were too vague and there was insufficient detail to enable the Council to make a fully informed decision. The inference was that it would not cost the Council anything but he was unsure whether there would be an expectation to move forward and how that would impact on the Council's existing carbon neutrality commitment.
- 47.7 A Member advised that there was a need to consider the facts carefully along with the possible financial implications. He understood the local MP and the Town Council were supportive of the Bill in principle but there were concerns about the need for further details. Javelin Park was an energy from waste plant so was making electricity and reducing carbon emissions already meaning the county was already doing something towards sustainable energy. He also noted that, if the Bill was made law, then all of the details would be available and the Council would have no choice but to meet its requirements. In response to a query as to how the costs of local energy compared to current providers, the proposer of the motion indicated that the motion was about the principle of the Bill not about the facts and the question of costs etc. would be down to the details which OFGEM would be specifying. To date no local authorities had signed up to anything in terms of funding. In addition, another Member indicated that there were a lot of rural communities in the Borough, many of which used gas or oil as energy and he felt bringing in local suppliers to help local communities would help to heat those homes and would be appreciated by residents. The proposer of the motion felt that, if the Bill was passed, it would enable local provision which would help the local economy by providing more local skilled jobs, more viable local businesses, creation of greater public support for renewables and provision of more secure energy with less

reliance on imports. She was of the view that this was not just about the Council but about the opportunities for its communities. In response, the Council's consultant indicated that there were potentially opportunities for local residents to benefit on the basis of joining up to the scheme but there was concern about what that might mean for those not in the scheme e.g. whether standing charges would be higher for those that remained on the normal supply. This was a very complicated issue; there was a need to achieve 40% demand reduction to support renewable energy and the cheapest way of doing that at the moment was by energy efficiency. In terms of the implications of the Bill, a Member expressed the view that it appeared to increase the opportunity for competition, gave residents other options and enabled local electricity, all of which were good things. He also felt that the more producers of electricity the better as it would lead to less outages etc. In essence, he felt supporting the Bill could only be a good thing for residents.

- 47.8 The Deputy Chief Executive agreed that the principle made a lot of sense and he felt everyone could agree on that. However, the report was looking at the detail and the Committee needed to determine whether there was enough detail and information at this point in time for the Committee to recommend that the Council signed up to the Bill. A Member recognised that the Council had been making progress with its efforts towards climate change, and that there were some questions about the detail, but the reality was that supporting the principle of the Bill would show the Council understood the direction of travel that the Country would inevitably be going, at some point.
- 47.9 In offering an alternative view, a Member felt it was important to look at the detail of the Motion – he would not be happy to sign up to the Power for People campaign as he did not feel that would necessarily be a good thing for the Council in time to come; he was happy to acknowledge the Council had done well and the crucial role it played but, in terms of support for the Bill, he felt it did not mention renewables which was a concern and there were some seriously high risks given that it did not cover infrastructure, costs on what individuals would produce and there was no security with a back-up supply. For those reasons, he proposed that, while the Committee was appreciative that the motion recognised this Council's climate change work and it also recognised the important role locally produced electricity can provide if properly integrated, it found the motion, at this current time, lacking in information on how it could work and it raised serious concerns over the infrastructure to deliver it, security of power supply delivery, cost and the potential financial and reputational damage implications for this Council. Consequently, this Committee recommends that the motion be rejected.
- 47.10 In concluding the debate on this matter, the proposer of the Council motion referred to the situation in Germany, whereby the big four companies controlled only about 40% of the market with the remainder through 1,000 mostly community led and mainly renewable, suppliers. In contrast, in the United Kingdom, the big six companies controlled around 80% of the market with only 50 other supply companies. Currently the United Kingdom's centralised system was dominated with fossil fuels and national/multi-national companies. She was extremely concerned about fuel poverty across Gloucestershire and she felt the Bill offered opportunities for cheaper energy for those that really needed it. Local energy generators were about enabling local provision which surely must be a good thing. In terms of the Bill, she advised that it had been drafted by Power for People and they were coordinating the national campaign but the three Directors of the organisation had written the original version of the Climate Change Act and ran the successful campaign for it as well as several other environmental laws including the Warm Homes Act and the Municipal Waste Recycling Act so they would not write a Bill that was likely to lead to non-renewable generators being promoted. In addition, the Bill could be amended to ensure any potential loopholes were closed that could lead to anything but renewable energy generation being promoted.

47.11 The motion proposed earlier, as set out in Paragraph 47.9, was seconded and upon being put to the vote, it was

**RESOLVED** That, while the Committee was appreciative that the motion recognised this Council's climate change work and it also recognised the important role locally produced electricity can provide if properly integrated, it found the motion, at this current time, lacking in information on how it could work and it raised serious concerns over the infrastructure to deliver it, security of power supply delivery, cost and the potential financial and reputational damage implications for this Council. Consequently this Committee recommends that the motion be rejected.

**OS.48 SEPARATE BUSINESS**

48.1 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.

**OS.49 SEPARATE MINUTES**

49.1 The separate Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2020, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record.

The meeting closed at 8:25 pm