

# TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held remotely on  
Tuesday, 9 February 2021 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, P D McLain, H S Munro, J K Smith,  
R J G Smith, S Thomson and P N Workman

## **also present:**

Councillors D J Harwood

## **OS.59 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

59.1 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.60 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

60.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors P D Surman and M J Williams. There were no substitutions on this occasion.

## **OS.61 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

61.1 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.

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

## **OS.62 MINUTES**

62.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2021, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record.

**OS.63 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN**

63.1 Attention was drawn to the Executive Committee Forward Plan, circulated at Pages No. 12-14. 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.

63.2 The Head of Corporate Services explained that, at the last Executive Committee meeting, it had been agreed that the Council Plan 2020/24 Refresh and COVID-19 Corporate Recovery Plan Refresh items would be deferred from 31 March 2021 and that the High Level Service Plan Summaries item would be removed from the Forward Plan – instead to be agreed with the Lead Members as a 'light touch' review and provided to all Members via a Member Update.

63.3 Accordingly, it was

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

**OS.64 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21**

64.1 Attention was drawn to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2020/21, circulated at Pages No. 15-18, which Members were asked to consider.

64.2 Members were advised that the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel Update and the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee Update would both be removed from the work programme on 6 April 2021 as the meeting would be within the purdah period for the Police Crime Commissioner and County Council elections. The updates would be circulated for information outside of the meeting. The work programme for 2021/22 would also come forward at the meeting on 6 April 2021. A Member suggested, and it was agreed, that the date the pending items had been added to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme and the Executive Committee Forward Plan would be included so it was easier to keep track of them and see how long they had been on the 'pending items' list.

64.3 In response to a query regarding flooding impacts, the Chief Executive confirmed that Officers were reviewing the recent flood incidents to see what could be done to mitigate the impacts in the future and those findings would be fed into the County scrutiny work as well as the Borough Council's own Climate Change and Flood Management Group. The Council was currently using existing resources to respond with any more specific work being undertaken with Gloucestershire County Council and, if necessary, specialist resources could be brought in. The Climate Change and Flood Risk Group would then report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

64.4 One Member questioned whether it would be possible to submit questions for Severn Trent prior to its presentation to the Committee and, in response, the Chair confirmed that this would be possible but that the questions must be related to the water outage which would be the subject of the presentation.

64.5 Accordingly, it was

**RESOLVED** That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2020/21 be **NOTED**, subject to:

- The Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel Update and Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee Update being removed from 6 April 2021 due to purdah.
- The work programme for 2021/22 being added to the meeting on 6 April 2021.

- That the pending items date be added to both Executive Committee Forward Plan and Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme to enable tracking of the items.

## **OS.65 REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS POLICY**

- 65.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 19-28, provided details of the formal complaints review, the new 'Have your Say' approach as well as how the new digital programme would help the Council to ensure feedback from customers was responded to appropriately and that the process was as streamlined and simple as possible. Members were asked to endorse the proposed new 'Have your Say' approach and formal complaints policy and recommend it to the Executive Committee for approval.
- 65.2 The Corporate Services Manager advised that the current formal complaints policy had been introduced four years ago and it was prudent to carry out a review of the policy and monitoring of complaints. The revised policy introduced new ways of customers providing feedback which had been created following a discussion with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the suggestion of an approach used by the NHS known as the four c's – compliments, comments, concerns and complaints. This approach would offer a clearer picture of residents satisfaction and would help those issues logged as formal complaints to be more specific. The revised complaints policy was attached to the report at Appendix 2; it was largely the same as the previous policy but had been updated to provide clarity about what could and could not be dealt with as a formal complaint; to enable the submission of complaints by email; and to give information about how stage two complaints would be handled. In terms of the new digital platform, it would offer additional benefits such as customers being given the option to log their issue as a concern or comment before accessing the formal complaints system and the benefits of doing that would be highlighted; customers could choose which service area their complaint was sent to from a detailed drop down list which would ensure the complaint reached the appropriate Officer sooner than it did currently; the Officer receiving the complaint could reallocate it if they felt it appropriate; stage two complaints would also be dealt within the new system which would allow for quicker response times, better monitoring and improved reporting; and the level of reporting would be vastly improved including the option for Members to receive details on the number and type of complaints in their Ward rather than just at Borough level.
- 65.3 During the discussion which ensued, a Member indicated that he was pleased to see best practice being brought in from other organisations. However, he questioned whether the paragraph on Page No. 25 should be amended to remove the second reference to Councillors and also whether the reference to 30 calendar days on Page No. 26 could be amended in line with the other timescales noted which were in 'working days'. In response to a query regarding the complaints policy on the website, the Corporate Services Manager advised that it would be on the website in the agreed form but when the new digital platform was up and running it would also be interactive. The Member also queried why the words 'comments' and 'complaints' were in bold in some of the documents. In response, the Corporate Services Manager advised that these were design formatting but she would have a look at it and see if any changes were needed.
- 65.4 A Member endorsed the work that had been done and the user friendly way in which communication was encouraged through the document. She also felt that recording compliments would provide a more balanced report and view of what residents thought of the Council. Another Member questioned in what circumstances local Members would or would not be informed of complaints within

their area. In addition, he questioned whether there could be a 'catch all' section at the end of the list of things that a resident could report in case their particular issue did not fall within one of the categories provided; the Councillor had an issue with this in the past when he had been reporting something for a resident and by choosing the option that best fitted the complaint rather than there being a specific category there had been some confusion caused within the system. In response, the Corporate Services Manager confirmed that the new online platform would be far more flexible than the current one but she would also ensure there was an additional 'catch all' category. In terms of complaints being notified to local Members 'where relevant' she explained that some complaints were not Ward specific and therefore would not be sent to a local Member and sometimes complainants specified that they did not want a Councillor informed and that request would be respected. The new online platform would allow improved reporting so Ward Councillors could see the type of complaints in their areas etc. ensuring they were much better informed. The system generated automatic emails to Ward Councillors where necessary so it was not something that would be forgotten.

- 65.5 Referring to the number of compliments received, the Corporate Services Manager advised that the Council did not receive many but they were reported through Management Team. Internally, the Council had started a culture and communications working group for staff which would also look at this type of thing and how accomplishments could be better celebrated; she would update Members as that work progressed. The Head of Corporate Services advised that the figures he had recently received showed five compliments in quarter 2 and two in quarter 3.
- 65.6 A Member noted a number of consistency and typographical errors which he asked to be addressed: Page No. 25 - under the heading 'Comments' – amend – 'You will receive an automatic reply to let you know we have received your comment **within five working days**, but you may not receive a response from us....' – this would ensure consistency of approach; Page No. 26 - second column, first paragraph, last sentence – amend – 'Each complaint will be given a unique reference **which will be given to the complainant**'; Page No. 27 - consider amending the phrase 'the learning' to 'lessons learnt'; Page No. 28 - consider splitting second paragraph into shorter sentences and consider the placement of quotation marks around 'vexatious'; and Page No. 26 - second column – fourth paragraph – amend 'this' to 'there'.
- 65.7 In terms of the three day response criteria, the Corporate Services Manager confirmed that she had consulted all Operational Managers and they agreed that the timescales would be achievable. Currently all complaints went through the Customer Services team and when the team was busy this could lead to delays. When complaints were sent straight to the specific departments they were dealt with more quickly. In addition, the online platform would send out automated reminders for Officers to respond to complaints etc. and this would be overseen by the Corporate Services Officer. In terms of the submission of complaints, she confirmed that whatever form they were submitted, they would be put onto the online platform. The complaints policy would be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval and then would be built onto the platform to go live in April at some point. Members would be kept up to date on progress via Member updates.

65.8 Upon being proposed and seconded, it was

**RESOLVED**

That the new 'Have your Say Approach' and formal complaints Policy be **RECOMMENDED TO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE** to be **APPROVED**, subject to the following amendments:

- Page 23 – consider why 'comments' and 'complaints' in the speech bubble are bold – is this necessary.
- Page 23 - check why heading 'Complaints' is in bold black text.
- Page 23 – under the heading 'Comments' – amend – 'You will receive an automatic reply to let you know we have received your comment **within five working days**, but you may not receive a response from us....'
- Page 25 - Under the heading 'What else cannot be dealt with under our formal complaints process?' fourth bullet point – amend - 'Complaints against ~~Councillors and~~ Parish Councillors'.
- Page 26 – Under the heading 'Stage 2 – investigation by an independent head of service' – amend – 'you must do this in writing within ~~30 calendar days~~ **30 working days** of our response'.
- Page 26 – second column, first paragraph, last sentence – amend – 'Each complaint will be given a unique reference **which will be given to the complainant**'.
- Page 26 - second column – fourth paragraph – amend 'this' to 'there'.
- Page 27 – consider amending the phrase 'the learning' to 'lessons learnt'.
- Page 28 – consider splitting second paragraph into shorter sentences.
- Page 28 - consider the placement of quotation marks around 'vexatious'.

**OS.66 GLOUCESTERSHIRE HEALTH AND CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2021/22 FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION**

66.1 The Chair left the meeting for the consideration of this item and the Vice-Chair took the chair.

66.2 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 29-32, asked the Committee to consider the effectiveness of the Council's continued involvement in the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that, subject to the Committee being satisfied that value for money is achieved, Officers be authorised to make the payment of £2,500 from the Council's base budget.

- 66.3 The Head of Corporate Services advised that this was an annual report which followed a legacy decision by the Executive Committee that asked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to endorse the payment which was made to support the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The contribution gave the Council a 'place at the table' and offered the opportunity for the Council to speak and ask questions within an area for which it had no direct responsibility but in which it had a particular interest.
- 66.4 The Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee indicated that she gained a lot of information through the Committee – she had found it a lot of work, particularly in recent times, with two meetings per month rather than one since adult social care had been separated from health. There was some information coming through which could not wait for the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee so she had been circulating that separately. All of the districts were represented at the meetings, so she felt it was important that Tewkesbury Borough Council continue to attend. She made summary reports of the meetings she attended but the full reports were always available on the County Council website should any Members wish to read the more in-depth information. She welcomed questions from Members to take back to the County group and advised that she often asked questions herself at the meetings.
- 66.5 A Member expressed the view that it was difficult to approve the ongoing commitment, and understand if the Council's contribution offered value for money, without any metrics to show the impact/influence Tewkesbury Borough Council had on the Committee. In response, the Head of Corporate Services confirmed that the Council did not have any formal metrics but if it did not attend the meetings it would lose its voice at them. The Member felt it might be helpful if there was an item on the Agenda for those meetings to ensure there was a way for the districts to input to the meetings. In response, the Council's representative advised that she would speak to the Chair and other Councillor representatives to see what they thought about that idea. The Chief Executive advised that £2,500 was not a very large contribution so there was not room to suggest things that would spend more than the contribution covered - such as asking for a lot of data that would be difficult to collate. The place at the table allowed the Council to find out about things that it would not necessarily know otherwise. There was nothing to stop the Council's representative requesting items to be placed on the Agenda for meetings so if Tewkesbury Borough Council wanted something specific raised then it could. It also allowed the Council to monitor health issues that were not within its remit but were of great interest to Councillors. The Head of Corporate Services reminded Members that, in the past, health representatives had attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a result of having a seat around the table.
- 66.6 A number of Members agreed that Tewkesbury Borough Council should not be the only district that did not participate and that the £2,500 contribution represented good value in terms of the Council having information about the important area of health within the Borough. The Council's representative agreed and felt that Members would notice if they did not receive the local information about matters such as Tewkesbury hospital.
- 66.7 In terms of the amount of influence the Council had on the County Committee, the Chief Executive advised that it was up to the Council to make its presence felt if it had a reason to do so. The Council had, in the past, asked for health representatives to talk to its Overview and Scrutiny Committee so that was always open to the Council; the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee focussed on health meaning the NHS but there was an element about health that was not well discussed, but was of great interest to the Council, which was public health and the health of its residents. There was a project across the county looking at public health and it may be possible, and of interest, to look at the effectiveness of such

partnerships as a scrutiny project in the future. He felt that public health was an interesting issue as, at a County level, adult social care and public health were combined under one Director. There was work ongoing on Integrated Health Partnerships which came from a reorganisation of the primary care system which would look at community health on a Borough basis rather than NHS boundaries. That work was just starting and was very much at Officer level but he was interested to see how it progressed and would ensure Members were briefed when there was something to report. He felt questions such as who did what and what the effect of the split was in terms of separating health from adult social care were interesting queries that would be picked up outside of the meeting.

66.8 Upon being proposed and seconded, it was

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Council continue its involvement in the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
2. That Officers be authorised to make the payment of £2,500 from the Council's base budget as its contribution to the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**OS.67 GLOUCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE**

67.1 The Chair advised that he would like the Committee to treat the County and Police Crime Panel updates in the same way as normal scrutiny reports in future. This meant Members should be reading them in advance and asking questions that could be taken back to those groups.

67.2 The representative on the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented her reports, circulated with the Agenda at Pages No. 33-37, for the meetings held on 12 January and 26 January 2021.

67.3 A Member noted that there had been a slight decrease for category one and two call outs in the Cotswolds and he questioned whether there had been any decrease in Tewkesbury. In response, the representative advised that this had not been discussed; the main area of discussion had been about the proximity of ambulances going out from Cheltenham to the Cotswolds. In response to a query regarding housebound residents having vaccinations at home, the representative confirmed that this programme had commenced – there were approximately 3,000 residents that needed it but she was not aware of how many had been carried out to date. Referring to Page No. 34, a Member questioned what the performance figures were in relation to urgent cancer treatment standards. In response, the representative undertook to send the links to the full reports to the Member; she knew that some services had been halted during the pandemic but cancer care was not one of those. In terms of the virtual COVID ward which had been set up, a Member questioned whether that had been done anywhere else in the country. In response, the representative indicated that Gloucestershire had been a pilot but she believed it had also now been rolled out in other places. This was the same as the long COVID clinic that had been running in the County. Referring to Page No. 35, a Member questioned whether extra Environmental Health staff had been employed or whether existing staff had been deployed to monitor premises. In response he was advised that Environmental Health staff had been deployed but additional COVID Marshalls had been employed to help. In addition, a Member questioned why lateral flow testing was being used for key workers, universities and schools when they were only around 50% accurate. In response it was confirmed that the volume of people involved could not be put through test centres quickly enough whilst lateral flow tests could be done at home with an immediate response.

67.4 The Head of Corporate Services indicated that Gloucestershire was a leader of vaccinations in the country - being the best performing County - which was great news for the area. Accordingly, it was

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

## **OS.68 GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE**

68.1 The Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee (GEGSC) presented the report, circulated with the Agenda at Pages No. 38-42, which contained a summary of the Committee's last meeting held on 20 January 2021.

68.2 In line with the Chair's previous statement, Members were invited to make comments and ask questions on the information presented in the written report.

68.3 A Member questioned whether the provision of broadband had been discussed in terms of digital and cyber growth and what Fastershire was doing to improve broadband in rural villages. In response, the representative was of the understanding that the vast majority of the County now had broadband with only 2-3% where coverage was not good. The Chief Executive confirmed that broadband provision did vary and he knew that there would be funding going from the business rates pool into cyber and digital growth which would help work up the benefits of cyber and digital technology across the County. There was a report available which showed how well Gloucestershire was doing in terms of new digital and cyber businesses outside of London and the £200,000 would look at how best Gloucestershire could benefit from that status as well as funding the development of Gloucestershire's Digital Strategy. One of the elements of that work was digital infrastructure and connectivity in the County – he was unsure of the scope at this stage but it was being led by the Chief Executive at Gloucester City Council.

68.4 The Chair indicated that he would find out the exact coverage of Fastershire and advise the Member. He knew the Cotswolds was the best area in the County for coverage and that the Forest of Dean was a particular area of concern.

68.5 Accordingly, it was

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

The meeting closed at 6:00 pm