

# TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held remotely on  
Tuesday, 6 April 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, P D McLain, H S Munro, J K Smith, R J G Smith,  
P D Surman and M J Williams

## **also present:**

Councillor J R Mason

## **OS.80 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

80.1 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.81 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

81.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H C McLain, S Thomson and P N Workman.

## **OS.82 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

82.1 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.

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

## **OS.83 MINUTES**

83.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2021, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record.

83.2 The Chief Executive advised that he would be circulating previously promised updates on the development at the airport, the A417 missing links and Junctions 9 and 10 of the M5 motorway to Members later in the week.

**OS.84 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN**

84.1 Attention was drawn to the Executive Committee Forward Plan, circulated at Pages No. 12-18. 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.

84.2 Accordingly, it was

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

**OS.85 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22**

85.1 Attention was drawn to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2021/22, circulated at Pages No. 19-32, which Members were asked to consider.

85.2 The Head of Corporate Services advised that the Work Programme was shaping up nicely and he drew attention to some key points of interest: the presentation from Severn Trent Water, which was an outstanding action following the scrutiny review of the water outage in 2019, had now been added for consideration at the meeting on 8 June; the monitoring of the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge Report Action Plan would be considered for the first time at the meeting on 8 June; and, on 13 July, the first annual report on the work of the Climate Change and Flood Risk Management Group would be received. There were still a number of items in the pending section and it was hoped they would be programmed in as soon as possible.

85.3 Accordingly, it was

**RESOLVED** That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2021/22 be **NOTED**.

**OS.86 GROWTH HUB PRESENTATION**

86.1 The Economic and Community Development Manager indicated that the presentation aimed to provide Members with the context of where the Borough was from an economic point of view. The presentation covered the following main points:

- The whole country had been affected by the COVID pandemic and Tewkesbury Borough was no different. The Borough had 4,390 businesses of which 3,875 were micro businesses (up to nine employees). The unemployment rate was 3.7% which equated to 2,090 people in February 2020 – the Gloucestershire rate was 4.4%. Up to March 2020, the total staff on furlough was 15,600 but as of January 2021 this was 6,400. Primarily the furlough was within the accommodation, hospitality, wholesale and retail sectors. This economic context had influenced, and would continue to influence, the Growth Hub delivery and service.
- Tewkesbury Growth Hub – flagship delivery – the Growth Hub had been opened in 2018 and was the first one in the world delivered within a local authority setting. The key aims of the Growth Hub network were to help businesses to start-up, grow and reach their full potential; to provide support for businesses to accelerate growth; and to enable businesses to meet, network and promote their services to each other. The Council's award winning Hub did all of that and continued to be a flagship for the County and Growth Hub network successfully delivering the unique selling point of linking hub support with Council services. The Hub currently had two full-time members of staff – Hub Manager and Navigator - yet it still punched

above its weight in terms of the work it did with, and support offered to, businesses.

- Growth Hub Service – offered a support solution for every business with the support available being dependent on the growth stage and ambition of each business. Advice was provided to pre, new start and growing businesses with a full business navigator service providing free online support – this would be face to face again when COVID rules allowed – including specialist advice and signposting with mentors, guides and delivery partners. It provided an online resource centre and business directory as well as workshops and one-to-one advice sessions. It also had the unique selling point of being a one-stop-shop for regulatory, planning and environmental health advice.
- Growth Hub Network – the network in Gloucestershire was unique in that it had a Hub in each district. This had started in Gloucester in 2014, followed by smaller access points in county libraries; Cirencester Hub had opened in 2018, followed shortly thereafter by Tewkesbury Growth Hub, and Stroud Hub had opened in 2020 – this meant it had opened and almost immediately had offered its services remotely due to the COVID pandemic. The Forest of Dean Hub was due to open later this year and Cheltenham was due to open properly in December 2021 – although it had been operating virtually since March 2021.
- Engagement – the Tewkesbury Growth Hub continued to achieve high engagement with Hub visitors at 1,967 to February 2020; delivery of 384 intensive growth business plans; delivery of over 5,000 business support interactions; delivery of 193 business events/webinars; and 770 attendees welcomed since opening in November 2018. As one of the smaller Hubs in the network the team was extremely proud of its engagement figures.
- Businesses supported – there was roughly a 40:60 ratio trend of start-up to existing businesses. The Borough coverage included a diverse range of sectors including manufacturing, food/drink, tourism and retail/hospitality. The key support themes included digital, marketing, growth strategy, diversification and staffing and the Tewkesbury Hub had worked with library Growth Hubs on a creative sector business group - which now had 30 Members – as well as on innovation labs. As part of its integrated delivery with other agencies within the Council Offices building it had worked with Job Centre Plus to deliver 14 confidence and upskilling workshop events. These had been successful and the teams were now looking at working together as a partnership to deliver a Youth Hub.
- How the Hub had adapted during COVID-19 – the Hub had acted rapidly to realign services to virtual business support with all Hub events and one-to-one sessions, including targeted COVID support – being moved online to deliver 107 events to 364 attendees. The COVID-19 business survey had been set up to ensure targeted support and that information was used to feed back to government - this had been reflected in some of the changes made to government support throughout the pandemic. Growth Hub mentors had run three panel Q&A sessions providing COVID support and advice and a 'thrive and survive' advice section had been developed on the Hub website – this helped people get support as quickly as possible as well as helping to manage the amount of telephone calls that were being received.
- Wider COVID support – as well as business support interactions, the Hub worked across a number of other areas: business cell support – supported the promotion and roll out of government schemes getting assistance out to companies as quickly as possible; proactively contacted over 2,000

businesses in lockdown to promote grants; offered a 'wraparound' business support and advice service; and gave advice to businesses which were not eligible for the grants/reliefs announced. Recovery cell support – delivery of the government's 'Reopening the High Street Safely' fund; proactively contacted businesses to signpost advice on reopening; business survey to capture feedback on current needs; town centre ambassadors programme; promotion of shop safe and shop local messages. The team had also administered business flood grants to those affected by flooding early in 2020.

- Wider support activities – European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for small and medium enterprises (SME); Recovery Grants for SME economic recovery and visitor economy; Scale Up 4 Growth funding programme which provided grants of £10,000 to £40,000 to help SMEs scale up and grow; peer networks which was a peer to peer networking programme for SMEs delivered locally by the Growth Hub Network; specialist guides which offered one to one advice in skills, digital, sustainability and change management; EU exit advisors who supported business which had EU exit questions; and a skills portal which worked with GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and provided careers and skills support.
- Case Studies – examples of some support provided included: a manufacturing company which had been supported with its growth plan, helped to identify funding opportunities for new equipment and to scale up and gain advice on apprentice opportunities and link with schools; a retail business that had been supported to build an online presence and shop, helped with skills development in marketing, including social media, and how to use video and photography to raise its profile; a pub which had been helped to adapt in line with government guidance to maintain viability and footfall as well as with its online presence; and a hospitality business had been advised on diversification of its business to maintain growth and viability, pivoting its offer and raising its profile through marketing, social media and development of its online presence.
- The Future – a plan was being developed for reopening Tewkesbury Growth Hub in line with government guidance. It was likely to take an appointment based approach initially and would also retain elements of the virtual offer and webinars going forward. Recovery work would form part of the everyday activities of the Hub for the foreseeable future and Tewkesbury's Growth Hub would work closely with key partners at the LEP, and across the Growth Hub network to support businesses with their recovery plans. In terms of recovery plan delivery, the effort in the coming months would be focussed on a potential Youth Hub; support grants; the 'support local' campaign; and sector focussed support.

86.2

A Member noted that the logistical challenges of face to face meetings would create additional work and take time to implement and he questioned whether, with two members of staff, the Hub was able to meet the challenges of the recovery work. In response, the Growth and Enterprise Manager advised that the Hub had the support of the wider Growth Hub network which was invaluable but she was also reviewing the resources within the Tewkesbury Growth Hub and there may be a need to bring in extra people to help. The team endeavoured to keep on top of its own staff training in order that it was able to continue to provide the best support and the team had already sat in on events which had been run by specialist advisors to ensure they were always learning and developing their own knowledge. In addition, the Head of Development Services confirmed that the Growth Hub had the support of a number of other teams within the Council and it was that wide range of knowledge and advice that made Tewkesbury's Growth Hub so

successful. There was also a really good network across the county which shared information to ensure the best support was offered to all businesses. In terms of the team members, she advised that she had recently gained approval for another post in the team which would provide the opportunity to bolster the resource within it.

- 86.3 In response to a query regarding charging for advice, the Growth and Enterprise Manager confirmed that ERDF funding was fully funded but there may be elements going forward that the Council could look at charging for outside of the standard Growth Hub advice and support and she would be looking at how that could work. For example, the Cirencester Hub charged for people to co-work there and this would be a possibility for Tewkesbury going forward; however, the priority at this stage was getting back into the Hub. In response to a query regarding the challenges throughout the year, the Growth and Enterprise Manager indicated that changing the whole offer to an online service had been immensely challenging and she was proud of the work that had been done. She felt that not being able to have face to face meetings had been restricting as that interaction was important in building relationships which was something Tewkesbury Growth Hub prided itself on so she was keen to return to the Hub as quickly as possible. All of the networking events, seminars etc. had been delivered online in the last year and all promotional material and paperwork had been converted to ensure they could be circulated digitally. It was fully understood that some businesses would not necessarily be going back to their offices so it was important to retain the options of face to face and digital interaction to run alongside each other.
- 86.4 Some Members questioned how businesses in their areas could gain advice and the Growth and Enterprise Manager confirmed that any business could go to any of the Growth Hubs in the county network. In normal times the Tewkesbury Growth Hub team would visit businesses that were not able to get to Tewkesbury but this had not been possible during the pandemic. The Hub was conscious of retaining its own specific identity and maintaining its own relationships, delivery partners and local providers so it could remain sustainable going forward. It had its own in-house services that businesses needed and that set Tewkesbury apart from other Growth Hubs within the county. Its setting, alongside other partners such as the Department for Work and Pensions via the Job Centre Plus, within the Council Offices enabled it to pursue new ideas like the creation of a Youth Hub to help young people with employment opportunities.
- 86.5 Members thanked the Officers for their informative presentation and, it was  
**RESOLVED** That the Growth Hub presentation be **NOTED**.

## **OS.87 DEPOT SERVICES WORKING GROUP UPDATE**

- 87.1 The report of the Head of Community Services, circulated at Pages No. 33-38, set out the progress made by the Depot Services Working Group and asked the Committee to agree that the Working Group continue its work for the forthcoming Municipal Year.
- 87.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair welcomed the Chair of the Depot Services Working Group (and Lead Member for Clean and Green Environment) to introduce the report. He explained that the Depot Services Working Group had now come to the end of the workstream it had been set up to complete but Members felt there was still a lot of work for the Working Group to do in respect of waste, recycling and grounds maintenance and it would like to continue if agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Ubico was growing and, as both a partner and user of the service, Members felt it would be prudent to keep a close eye on its contract to ensure it was being delivered in the best way possible. The Council had been looking at the different ways of delivering its commercial waste service and would soon start looking for a new depot – likely in partnership with

Cheltenham Borough Council – and it was hoped the Depot Services Working Group would be able to help with those workstreams.

87.3 The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee indicated that, as a Member of the Depot Services Working Group, he felt the Working Group should continue but that it may be beneficial for it to meet more regularly than the quarterly arrangement suggested. He was aware that it was grass cutting season and that, along with the commercial waste service changes, quarterly may not be frequent enough going forward. It was understood that there needed to be a balance between Members being kept informed and some projects not having much movement between meetings so it was agreed that an item would be included on the Agenda for the next Working Group meeting to consider the frequency of meetings.

87.4 Accordingly, it was

- RESOLVED**
1. That the progress of the Depot Services Working Group be **NOTED**.
  2. That the Depot Services Working Group continue to meet for the forthcoming Municipal Year.

#### **OS.88 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21**

88.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 39-56, set out the Committee's annual report for 2020/21 which Members were asked to approve.

88.2 The Committee was advised that it was a requirement of the Council's Constitution that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reported annually to Council and the report before Members sought to ensure the Council's scrutiny work was transparent and that the Council was held accountable for its decision-making with the needs of the community being considered. The annual report provided the opportunity for both the Council and the public to view the work of the Committee. The Head of Corporate Services advised that the Committee had undertaken fantastic work throughout 2020/21 and had more than fulfilled its Terms of Reference with Working Groups, speakers, Motions and strategy action plan reviews.

88.3 Members were advised that, within the report, it had been noted that the annual Overview and Scrutiny Committee report would be considered by the Council in April; subsequently that meeting had been cancelled and the report would now go to Council in June. In the meantime, if any Members wished to suggest any contextual amendments, which did not change the substance of the report, they were invited to email them to the Head of Corporate Services who would make the changes. Accordingly, it was

- RESOLVED**
1. That Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report 2020/21 be **APPROVED**.
  2. That any suggested contextual amendments be delegated to the Head of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, subject to them not changing the substance of the report.

**OS.89 SEPARATE BUSINESS**

89.1 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.90 SEPARATE MINUTES**

90.1 The separate Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2021, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record.

**OS.91 TRADE / COMMERCIAL WASTE SERVICE BUSINESS CASE - INITIAL PROJECT MILESTONES**

*(Exempt –Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 –Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information))*

91.1 The Committee noted the report which set out the initial project milestones for the trade/commercial waste service.

The meeting closed at 6:00 pm