

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Council Offices, Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury on Tuesday, 8 June 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:

Councillor M A Gore

OS.5 ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 5.1 The evacuation procedure, as noted on the Agenda, was advised to those present.
- 5.2 The Chair welcomed the representatives from Severn Trent Water to the meeting and indicated that they would be giving a presentation at Agenda Item 7. He also welcomed the Lead Member for Built Environment who was in attendance to observe the meeting.

OS.6 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

- 6.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P D Surman and M J Williams. There were no substitutions for the meeting.

OS.7 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

OS.8 MINUTES

- 8.1 The Minutes of the meetings held on 6 April and 4 May 2021, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

OS.9 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN

9.1 Attention was drawn to the Executive Committee Forward Plan, circulated at Pages No. 10-18. 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.

9.2 The Head of Corporate Services advised that the Executive Committee Forward Plan would be further informed by the corporate list of policies and strategies due for review which was included at Agenda Item 9 of the current Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agenda. A Member noted that the parking strategy review was included within the pending items section of the plan and questioned whether this would be opened up for public consultation given that it was such a hot topic amongst members of the public. In response, the Head of Finance and Asset Management explained that he was currently looking at the timetable for the review in terms of resource availability and hoped to restart the Working Group conducting the review in September/October. The draft strategy would be taken to the Overview and Scrutiny and Executive Committees and would go out for public consultation later in the year.

9.3 Accordingly, it was

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

OS.10 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22

10.1 Attention was drawn to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2021/11, circulated at Pages No. 19-28, which Members were asked to consider.

10.2 It was

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

OS.11 PRESENTATION FROM SEVERN TRENT WATER

11.1 The Chair indicated that two representatives from Severn Trent Water had attended the meeting to give an update on the works that had been carried out to the Severn Ham as a result of the Scrutiny Review of Water Supply Outage undertaken in 2019.

11.2 The representatives from Severn Trent explained that, in terms of monitoring, an automated system was being used to oversee the mains under the Ham 24 hours per day, seven days a week, with a daily check carried out to ensure that any leaks across the Ham could be identified and repaired immediately; this system would remain until the works had been completed and the new mains were in place. Severn Trent operatives were currently on site and were making good progress. When they had last attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the representatives from Severn Trent had explained that it was intended to either replace or re-line the mid-level pipes across the Severn Ham. One of the benefits of this was that it would create resilience in the pipes – this was not necessary but, given that it was a challenging site, there was always a risk of no supply events when the system failed. Furthermore, the site was valuable in environmental terms - being a Site of Special Scientific Interest - and replacing the mains would significantly reduce the likelihood of leaks on the Ham which caused disruption when Severn Trent had to access the area to repair them; it would also reduce the risk of sudden bursts which caused even greater disturbance to the Ham for emergency repairs. As such, Severn Trent had proceeded with the preferred option of replacing the pipes which offered the best long term solution in terms of

disturbance to the site and operational risk. Nevertheless, it remained a complex site on which to work and flooding and COVID-19 had made this particularly challenging over the last year. Notwithstanding this, significant progress had been made since March 2021 with the main focus at this time being on the laying of the pipes which would be followed by pipe testing/sampling in August along with the initial reinstatement of three quarters of the working area. Connections and commissioning of the new mains was planned for September and there would then be further reinstatement - Severn Trent was working closely with the Severn Ham Committee, Natural England and others in terms of how to do that. The primary risk for delivery of the scheme was wet weather and flooded fields but, as things stood, there was no reason why the programme would not be completed on time.

11.3 In terms of communications, Members were advised that Severn Trent recognised the valuable nature of the site and the importance of engaging with stakeholders to agree how best to carry out the work, reinstate the land and obtain various permissions. Weekly updates were provided to the Severn Ham Committee which were uploaded to social media and posters were being put up within the information boards on site. This had gone well to date and Severn Trent had received positive feedback about how they had engaged so it was hoped everyone had a good understanding of what they were doing and why. Particular reference was made to the fact that Curlew inhabited the site and operatives were taking particular care to stay away from any nesting areas with bird dissuasion measures being implemented to discourage nesting in the working area.

11.4 A Member questioned whether the connections and commissioning stage would involve any water outages for residents. In response, the representative from Severn Trent confirmed that there were two mains pipes, one of which would be switched off and isolated whilst the other remained active meaning no loss of water for residents. Another Member queried whether there had been any leaks from other pipes across the Ham and was advised that one leak had been picked up last summer which Severn Trent had responded to accordingly; there had been no further leaks since that time. A Member sought assurance that all valves had now been located and were working properly as this was an issue that had been identified by the scrutiny review. The representative from Severn Trent confirmed that this work had been done shortly after the original water outage incident and remained up to date and in place.

11.5 The Chair thanked the representatives from Severn Trent for their informative presentation and their proactive response to the review of the water supply outage. It was

RESOLVED That the update on the works carried out to the Severn Ham as a result of the Scrutiny Review of Water Supply Outage in 2019 be **NOTED**.

OS.12 COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE TRACKER AND COVID-19 RECOVERY TRACKER - QUARTER FOUR 2020/21

12.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 29-117, attached the performance management and COVID-19 recovery information for quarter four of 2020/21. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was asked to review and scrutinise the information and, where appropriate, identify any issues to refer to the Executive Committee for clarification or further action to be taken.

- 12.2 Members were advised that this was the final quarterly monitoring report for 2020/21 and represented the latest information in terms of the status of the actions set out in the Council Plan and the Corporate Recovery Plan. Progress against delivering the objectives and actions for each of the six Council Plan priorities was reported through the performance tracker, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, which was a combined document that also included a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). In addition, a corporate COVID-19 recovery plan had been established based on the Council Plan priorities and a recovery plan tracker, attached at Appendix 2 to the report, had been created to monitor progress in delivering those actions and objectives. Key financial information was usually reported alongside the tracker documents but, given the complexities of the year end closedown, this was not yet available and would be presented directly to the Executive Committee in July.
- 12.3 Key actions for the quarter were highlighted at Paragraph 2.3 of the report and included the new long-term let of Cleeve Hill Golf Club; five homeless properties now being managed in-house by the Property team resulting in significant savings; development and implementation of a new digital platform with the bulky waste, missed bin and assisted waste collection services going live in April; and the Business Transformation team assisting with the implementation of a new bulky waste service which had reduced wait times from 5-6 weeks to just one week and had received very positive feedback from the public. The Head of Corporate Services felt this demonstrated there had been some real successes within the quarter alongside the recovery from COVID-19. Nevertheless, he reminded Members that, due to the complex nature of actions being delivered, it was inevitable that some would not progress as smoothly or as quickly as envisaged and the details of those actions, which related to the Joint Core Strategy, Tewkesbury Borough Plan and the planning service improvement plan, were set out at Paragraph 2.5 of the report. Some actions within the Council Plan had been put on hold as staff resource had been deployed to the response and recovery from COVID-19 and they were outlined at Paragraph 2.6 of the report. In terms of the KPIs, Members were informed that the status of each indicator was set out at Paragraph 3.2 of the report. KPIs where performance was not as good as the previous year and/or where the target had not been achieved, were set out at Paragraph 3.3. of the report. With regard to the COVID-19 recovery tracker, key activities to bring to Members' attention were set out at Paragraph 4.2 of the report and included the successful reopening of Tewkesbury Leisure Centre on 12 April 2021 in line with the government roadmap which meant that the financial recovery was likely to be quicker than had been anticipated. Paragraph 4.3 of the report referenced those actions within the tracker which had not progressed as intended. The Head of Corporate Services advised that the Council Plan and Corporate Recovery Plan would be refreshed over the coming weeks.

12.4 During the debate which ensued, the following queries and comments were made in relation to the Council Plan and Recovery Plan trackers:

Priority: Finance and Resources

P91 – Action – Refocus a)
Continue to work with partners to ensure adequate measures are in place on our high streets to enable social distancing – A Member pointed out that he had not seen any hand sanitiser or signage recently on the high streets and he queried whether it was still in place and who was responsible for its maintenance.

The Head of Development Services explained that hand sanitisers had been installed in Tewkesbury, Bishop's Cleeve and Winchcombe high streets but some had been vandalised and they had needed to be constantly repaired and refilled, plus the stickers had come loose during bad weather and had been blown away; as such, the decision had reluctantly been taken to remove them. Spray paint was now being used on pavements for social distancing markers. The Member suggested it would be beneficial to work with local businesses who could maintain hand sanitising stations outside of their own properties and could take them inside at the end of the day. The Head of Development Services explained that the Council was the accountable body with money for such measures coming from the authority; furthermore, the hand sanitising stations were fixed to the pavements so could not be removed at the end of the day. She confirmed that it was no longer intended to supply hand sanitiser in localities as people were now used to taking their own with them and using the ones provided within the shops and businesses in the High Streets.

P44 – Objective 4 – Action a)
Develop a business case to ensure our trade waste service operates more commercially – A Member noted that the recruitment process for the project manager had commenced and he questioned whether there was any update on that.

In response, the Head of Community Services confirmed that the project manager post had been recruited to along with a Waste Services Manager to replace another member of staff who had recently left the authority.

Priority: Economic Growth

P47 – Objective 2 – Action a)
 Deliver employment land through allocating land in the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and Tewkesbury Borough Plan – A Member indicated that every Parish Council meeting he had attended since he had joined the Council had highlighted concerns about the JCS and urban extensions within the borough and yet it seemed that the Council was at the mercy of developers as it was not meeting its quotas in terms of housing delivery so he questioned how the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could input into that process.

In addition, he questioned how Members could input into planning, where appropriate, in terms of what they might consider to be suitable housing design as another regular complaint from Parish Councils was in relation to the amount of homogenous development within the borough.

P50 – Objective 3 – Action b)
 Bring forward plans for the redevelopment of Spring Gardens – A Member noted that the project had not yet been delivered but the reserve allocated had been spent.

The Head of Development Services clarified that the JCS was under review so there would be a number of opportunities for Members to get involved. Work was ongoing with the Planning Policy Reference Panel and consideration was starting to be given to development opportunities and development type, urban extensions on new settlements and the quantum of development.

In terms of housing design, the government had recognised that greater quality was needed and the national design guide was currently being consulted upon. There was a clear desire to move away from standardised housing types in character areas and housing design was something that would be closely considered as part of the Council's ambitious growth agenda with the Garden Town acting as one of the key drivers for changing the principles of design going forward. She indicated that she would be happy to discuss both of these matters with the Member in more detail outside of the meeting and reminded the Committee that all Members were welcome to attend the Planning Policy Reference Panel where these issues would be discussed in more detail. If Members so wished, she could also arrange a Member seminar on design in the future.

The Head of Finance and Asset Management explained that up until early 2020, MACE consultants had been used by the Council to move this action forward; he confirmed that all of the works that had been paid for during that time had been completed.

Priority: Housing and Communities

P51 – Objective 4 – Action b)
Promote through the Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) the heritage offer of Tewkesbury through the cultural consortium – A Member noted that one of the projects which would be covered as part of ‘Rise Up Tewkesbury Culture’ was setting up a ‘youth space’ and he asked what this was.

The Head of Development Services explained that, as part of the three year Heritage Action Zone programme, the Tewkesbury culture consortium – known as ‘Tewkesbury Culture’ – had successfully secured funding from Historic England. A number of working groups had been set-up as a result, one of which was an engagement group with Tewkesbury schools and youth groups who were concerned there was no central place for young people to get involved with conservation. As such, attempts were being made to identify a dedicated space within the High Street for 12-18 year olds, for instance, this could involve a trial pop-up youth centre in an empty shop. The redeveloped front of Tewkesbury Methodist Church was a place where they could come together in the interim to build a strategy and programme of partnerships to engage young people in conservation and heritage within Tewkesbury.

In response to a query as to whether a Heritage Action Zone could be set-up in any area, the Chief Executive clarified that a bid had been made to Historic England for funding which was specifically for historic towns and was why Tewkesbury had qualified; the Heritage Action Zone had come forward on that basis.

P52 – Objective 4 – Action c)
Celebrate with partners the significance of 2021 for Tewkesbury – A Member noted that the Council had awarded £25,000 toward the 2021 celebrations and he questioned whether that was just for Tewkesbury Abbey. He also pointed out that Members had been told they would receive updates from the Community and Economic Development Manager on the 2021 Committee and what was being done in that regard.

The Head of Development Services clarified that a steering group, which included Tewkesbury Abbey, the Medieval Society and others, was proposing that the money be spent on three key areas and she indicated that she would speak to the Community and Economic Development Manager to ensure Member Updates were sent out in a timely fashion.

In terms of the son et lumiere, Members were informed that this project was being led by the Roses Theatre and a working group had been set-up to take it forward. The son et lumiere was proposed to be held at Tewkesbury Abbey on 3-4 November 2021; it would be a ticketed event which was expected to attract approximately 10,000 visitors.

A Member sought further information in respect of the son et lumiere.

<p>P55 – Objective 1 – General - Deliver the housing needs of our communities – A Member raised concern that residents' view was that affordable housing meant social housing as opposed to the wider scope, e.g. right to buy, partial lets etc. and he questioned how the definition of affordable housing could be addressed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, or other relevant Committees.</p>	<p>The Head of Community Services advised that the definition of affordable housing was set by national planning policy and was linked to factors such as local housing rates etc. The point made by the Member had been recognised as a concern and the House of Commons was carrying out research as to what affordable housing was and whether it was truly affordable. He indicated that the Council's Housing Strategy was in the process of being reviewed and the revised strategy would be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration later in the year.</p>
<p>P55 – Objective 1 – Action b) Finalise and adopt the Tewkesbury Borough Plan – A Member asked for an overview of the steps that needed to be taken to get from the current position to the adoption of the Borough Plan and she questioned what input Members would have into the process.</p>	<p>The Head of Development Services advised that the next stage was receipt of the examination in public findings and a letter was expected from the Inspector within the next few weeks. This would set out whether the Council needed to do further work or may suggest a number of modifications in order to make the plan sound; if it was the latter, it would be necessary to take any modifications to the Executive Committee and Council for approval for consultation and any representations received would go straight to the Inspector. She clarified that any modifications the Inspector recommended would be to move the plan forward and, if the Council decided it did not wish to proceed with those modifications, this would effectively mean that it would not have a sound plan and the local plan would not be adopted.</p>
<p>P59 – Objective 3 – Action a) Work with partners, infrastructure providers and developers to progress the delivery of key sites – With regard to the developments at South Churchdown and Brockworth, a Member sought clarification as to whether the Section 106 funding had been received from developers.</p>	<p>The Head of Development Services explained that she would need to check the triggers for the Section 106 payments and whether the money had been paid and she would update the Member following the meeting.</p>

P65 – KPIs 12 and 13 – Percentage of ‘major’ applications determined within 13 weeks or alternative period agreed with the applicant and percentage of ‘minor’ applications determined within eight weeks or alternative period agreed with the applicant – A Member noted that performance was significantly lower during quarter four compared to previous quarters and she sought an explanation for this.

The Head of Development Services advised there were a number of contributing factors that had led to the downturn in performance and the team was working incredibly hard against a backdrop of changing how they worked. She explained that certain applications took longer to determine, particularly those which needed to go to Planning Committee; the second lockdowns had meant that officers had been unable to undertake visits once again; and a number of staff had been off sick. Nevertheless, she accepted that performance was a concern - this was one of the reasons for the review of the service that had commenced earlier in the year – and additional staffing resources were being brought in to assist the team.

Another Member expressed the view that performance in relation to KPI 13 was particularly concerning – he could understand that ‘major’ applications would be more complex and time consuming given their nature but he was still unclear as to why determination of ‘minor’ applications was taking so long. He noted there was an option to agree an extension of time with applicants and questioned how much worse the figures would be if that was not possible. From his perspective, extending a house was likely to be a very significant and important part of an individual’s life and one of the roles of the Planning team was to make this process as simple as possible. He was especially concerned at comments that had been made to him about applicants not being able to reach officers or find out the status of their applications and this was something which must be urgently addressed. The Head of Development Services undertook to look into this further to establish response rates in terms of officers getting back to customers.

P68/69 – KPIs 16,17 and 18 – Investigate category B cases within five working days, investigate category C cases within 10 working days and investigate category D cases within 15 working days – A Member raised concern regarding enforcement performance.

The Head of Development Services advised that a category A case, as detailed at Page No. 67 (KPI 15), had taken up a lot of officer time and there had also been an increase in the number of cases with more being reported over the last few months. The Council had unsuccessfully tried to recruit to the vacant Senior Enforcement Officer role early last year and that post would shortly be re-advertised.

Another Member indicated that he had previously requested that the email Councillors were sent regarding enforcement cases in their area be updated to include

information about the action taken and the reasons behind that as currently it only gave the address which was very unhelpful. The Head of Development Services confirmed that consideration was being given to an enforcement tracker which would be available on the Member area of the intranet; unfortunately this had not yet been completed but she provided assurance that it was an action for the Business Transformation Officer and she undertook to find out the timetable for delivery. The Chief Executive advised that officers were currently looking at a corporate system for tracking Member questions in order to understand when they were not being answered and to chase up responses from a corporate point of view. In terms of enforcement, he acknowledged that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had raised concerns before and officers had given a commitment to providing Members with feedback on enforcement cases; however, that was not what had happened and he provided assurance that this would be pursued as a matter of urgency.

A Member noted that category B enforcement cases were defined as development causing, or likely to cause, irreparable harm or damage and she questioned whether the Council was responsible if these were not dealt with in the timescales. The Head of Development Services explained that the situation would be assessed and responded to appropriately – for instance, if work to a listed building had been carried out five years earlier, the response required was not the same as if the work had just commenced. She assured Members that in the latter situation, officers would respond very quickly.

Priority: Customer First

P71 – Objective 1 – Action c)
 Deliver the planning service improvement plan – A
 Member acknowledged that a new review had commenced in April and questioned when it was likely to be finished and whether it would be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

The Head of Development Services confirmed that consultants had been commissioned to undertake a review of the systems, processes and procedures within the Development Management service. The report was expected in July from which an action plan would need to be produced and November was the target date for that. It was proposed to use Transform Working Group as the vehicle for updating Members on the actions arising from the review. The Chief Executive indicated that, should Members feel it appropriate, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may wish to recommend to the Executive Committee that delivery of the

action plan arising from the review be monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members agreed this would be appropriate and that this should be recommended to the Executive Committee when it received the action plan arising from the review.

In response to a query as to whether the report would make recommendations in respect of new staffing structures and systems for the Development Management service, the Chief Executive indicated that it was not clear at this stage exactly what the report would recommend but it was expected that it would make recommendations in terms of how the planning service should operate in order to improve performance. The service had some very good staff who worked extremely hard on behalf of the Council but there were issues with the current systems within the service and performance had fluctuated over the year due to a number of factors. The consultants that had been commissioned were planning professionals with knowledge of best practice across the country so were well placed to assess the current structures and systems and make recommendations on the best way of operating the service now and in the future; this may or may not include staffing structures but the main point was ensuring that the right resources were in place and that would be addressed when the report and recommendations came forward.

In response to a query as to whether there were any quick wins which could be achieved between now and November when the action plan would be available, the Head of Development Services confirmed that it was hoped to recruit to Senior Planning Officer and Enforcement Officer posts over the next few weeks as well as securing some additional support from temporary posts to assist with the current officer caseload. The Chief Executive reiterated that provision could be made for additional resources in the long term depending upon the outcome of the review.

P78 – KPI 26 and 27 – Percentage of council tax and National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) collected – A Member noted that COVID-19 had negatively impacted council tax and business rates collection and he questioned whether it was anticipated that this could be recovered when the courts re-opened.

The Head of Finance and Asset Management stressed that the Council always fully intended to recover any debts owed to the housing benefit and revenue section and any other sundry debtors; however, circumstances may dictate that some debts were irrecoverable. Notwithstanding this, he advised that the impact over the last year was not as significant as expected and the government had provided funding to support the position on council tax and business rates. He gave assurance that the Council would pursue collection via the normal processes as soon as it was able. The Head of Corporate Services indicated that, in May 2021, the Council had taken a £1,800 summons for non-payment of council tax and £700 of that had now been paid. He felt it would be a couple of years before there was a clear picture of the impact of COVID-19 on debt recovery.

P79 – KPI 28 – Average number of sick days per full time equivalent – A Member was pleased to see that the average number of sick days had reduced quite significantly from 12.62 to 9.68 days and he questioned whether this included COVID-19 related absences.

The Head of Corporate Services confirmed that 168 days had been lost to COVID-19 absence and they were included within the figures; in terms of self-isolation, whether those figures were included depended on if the person was sick or not. The Member indicated that, if the COVID-19 related absences were removed from the figures, the average number of sick days would actually be around 8 which was in line with the local target so that was a great achievement.

Priority: Sustainable Environment

P86 – Objective 2 – Action b) Improve bio-diversity across the borough and educate communities on its benefits – A Member noted that this action had been deferred for six months; however, only Grange Field was referenced in the tracker and she asked what other biodiversity schemes were being deferred.

The Head of Development Services undertook to ask the Community and Economic Development Manager to circulate a list following the meeting.

P88 – KPI 32 – Number of reported enviro-crimes – A Member raised concern that the number of reported enviro-crimes was particularly high and he questioned whether this could be attributed to an increase in reporting as he was aware there had been a drive to encourage that amongst members of the public, particularly in Brockworth.

The Head of Community Services advised that, unfortunately, the increase was not due to greater reporting and explained that there was considerable flytipping across the county which was significantly adding to officer workloads. Discussions were taking place with Gloucestershire County Council around a countywide awareness campaign and he confirmed that Tewkesbury Borough Council was still doing all it could to deter people in terms of issuing Fixed Penalty Notices, advertising etc; however, the courts had been closed due to COVID-19 which meant it had been unable to take any prosecutions and, although there were some pending, it was difficult to balance the increased workload of those carrying out the investigations. One of the conversations with the County Council had been around the booking system currently in place for the Household Recycling Centres and whether that had contributed to increased flytipping and officers would make a case for it being changed should that be shown to be correct. A Member indicated that she was amazed by how quickly any reported flytipping was being removed and she had found this very impressive. In response, the Head of Community Services advised that this was due to a combination of the new system in place and the fact that the bulky waste service was no longer undertaken by Ubico which had freed up more capacity to pick up flytipping.

Another Member went on raise concern that a lot of litter pickers were frustrated that they were unable to carry out litter picking on certain roads. He referred to a specific case in Brockworth where 12 fly tips had been left for several weeks on a particular section of the bypass, with litter spread all across the road and down the verges, but nothing could be done for at least another month whilst Tewkesbury Borough Council obtained the relevant permissions and he questioned whether anything could be done to speed up this process. In response, the Head of Community Services explained that the authority had a statutory duty to close certain roads in order for litter picking to be undertaken due to health and safety and, unfortunately, this did not happen overnight. There was a process to go through with the County Council which included going out to consultation and it was expensive; nevertheless, road closures were

programmed in regularly for the locations which were known to be problematic. He stressed that volunteer litter pickers would not be insured without these road closures and the position would be taken away from anyone found to be litter picking without the necessary closures in place. The Head of Community Services indicated that he would speak to the County Council to see if there was a faster way to obtain a road closure and would report back to Members. Furthermore, should the Member want him to attend a community group meeting to explain why that particular road closure was taking so long, he would be more than happy to do so.

12.5 Having considered the information provided, it was

RESOLVED

1. That the performance management information and COVID-19 recovery information for quarter four of 2020/21 be **NOTED**.
2. That it be **RECOMMENDED TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE** that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitor delivery of the action plan arising from the review of the systems and procedures of the Development Management service.

OS.13 CORPORATE LIST OF POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

13.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 118-126, which asked Members to consider the corporate list of policies and strategies, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, which would inform the Executive Committee Work Programme during 2021/22.

13.2 The Head of Corporate Services explained that this was an annual report, although it had not been brought to the Committee in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had previously requested that a list of policies and strategies be produced to give an overview of what would be coming forward during the year for consideration by the Executive Committee and to identify areas where the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may be able to provide support. The list at Appendix 1 to the report included those policies and strategies that had been put forward by the Heads of Service as being due for review during 2021/22 and this would be used to populate the Executive Committee Forward Plan. In due course, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may wish to review some of the policies and strategies within the list and that could be built into the Work Programme of the Committee; however, it was to be borne in mind that some of the policies and strategies would be considered by other Committees, for instance, the Risk Management Strategy would be taken to the Audit and Governance Committee, and it was important to avoid "double handling".

13.3 It was

RESOLVED

- That the corporate list of policies and strategies attached at Appendix 1 to the report be **NOTED**.

OS.14 CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE - PROGRESS OF ACTION PLAN

- 14.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 127-152, provided an update on the progress that had been made in delivering the corporate peer challenge action plan. Members were asked to consider the report.
- 14.2 The Head of Corporate Services reminded Members that Tewkesbury Borough Council had undergone a Local Government Association corporate peer challenge during March 2020 and the final report was attached at Appendix 1 to the Committee report. Whilst the report was very positive about the Council's performance, as with all challenges, areas for improvement had been identified and an internal action plan comprising the five key recommendations had been approved by Council in December 2020 where responsibility for monitoring delivery of the actions had been delegated to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The action plan was attached at Appendix 2 to the Committee report with progress to date set out in the final column. It was noted that the actions were at various stages of delivery with some actions having been completed, some making good progress and others being deferred. It was hoped that all actions would be complete when the report was brought back to the Committee on 23 November 2021.
- 14.3 A Member felt that the Communications team should be congratulated as there had been a notable increase in the amount of communications about what was happening at the Council. He drew attention to Page No. 149 of the report, recommendation 5, which related to reviewing the timings of meetings so that all Members could contribute effectively and he questioned whether now was an appropriate time to consider whether Members were happy with the timing of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In response, the Head of Democratic Services advised that, should Members wish to discuss the timing of the Committee, an item could be put on the Agenda for the next meeting in order for that debate to take place. The Chief Executive explained that officers had been surprised this had come forward as a peer review recommendation; he clarified that there were no formal start times for Committee meetings - the timing was down to the individual Committee or Working Group to determine the best time to meet. He recognised there had been a couple of occasions when the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agenda had been quite heavy, which was not helpful to anyone, so officers were aware of the need to take care not to overload Agenda and to discuss management of the meetings with the Chair. It was recognised that the timing of meetings was unlikely to suit every Member of the Committee. The Chair hoped that Members would approach him if they had any issues with the timing or length of meetings; he provided assurance that careful consideration was given to the work programme and the weighting of Agenda but there were inevitably times when a longer Agenda was unavoidable. One Member indicated that he liked the fact that Council and Committee meetings were at a variety of times as this gave options for different Members to attend – he had opted to sit on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee partly as the timing of the meetings suited him best.
- 14.4 In terms of Page No. 144, recommendation 1, a Member noted that the final column stated that the Council would need to budget for the shortfall in housing reward in the coming years following the phasing out of New Homes Bonus, and he questioned whether the net position of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy was known as yet. The Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that the last Medium Term Financial Strategy was approved in January 2021 and this had highlighted the withdrawal of New Homes Bonus; however, the replacement scheme and its value to Tewkesbury Borough Council was still unknown – consultation had closed in April and officers were awaiting feedback from the government. The Member drew attention to the recommendation around the Garden Town Programme and the Council being dependent on the funding being secured in order to deliver the bridge and he questioned whether the first

draw down had happened by December 2020 as expected. The Head of Finance and Asset Management confirmed that the first draw down had occurred, albeit slightly late but still within the financial year. With regard to recommendation 2, the Member noted that Page No. 147 stated that thought should be given to succession planning in order to fulfil the Council's leadership responsibilities and he queried whether any progress had been made in that regard. In response, the Chief Executive explained that a report was being taken to the Council meeting on 22 June 2021 which would address some of those issues. Finally, the Member noted that recommendation 7 included an action to hold a session with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to obtain its views on how to maximise the value of the Committee and he questioned whether the implementation date could be brought forward from December 2021. The Head of Corporate Services clarified that he had intended that this would be delivered by December 2021 at the latest and he planned to hold the session towards the end of the summer.

12.5 It was

RESOLVED That the progress made in delivering the corporate peer challenge action plan be **NOTED**.

OS.15 PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR HOUSING SCHEME

15.1 The report of the Head of Community Services, circulated at Pages No. 153-159, provided details of the private rented sector housing scheme. Members were asked to consider the achievements of the scheme and note that it had now closed.

15.2 The Head of Community Services explained that, in March 2019, a successful bid had been made to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for funding for a pilot project which met the criteria of the Private Sector Access Fund which supported innovative measures that provided additional support for single homeless people and/or reduced the number of households in temporary accommodation. The pilot scheme was around encouraging landlords in the private rented sector to take tenants on a lower income and involved all of the district councils in Gloucestershire as well as West Oxfordshire which was part of Homeseeker Plus, the mechanism used for bidding on properties. The appendix to the report provided a summary of the scheme and demonstrated that Tewkesbury Borough Council had supported 34 households into private rented accommodation at a cost of £45,694.16, mainly through providing rent in advance and deposits. The fact that it was a pilot scheme was important as it had meant that each authority could use different methodology which could be evaluated to establish what worked and what did not work. Members were informed there had been varying degrees of success as the pilot had secured 234 properties; however, feedback from landlords had suggested they did not really need financial incentives from the authority in a buoyant housing market. In light of this, whilst officers were always looking to improve relationships with private sector landlords, it was not proposed to actively take the scheme forward as a project. It should be noted that Tewkesbury Borough Council already had schemes in place to assist landlords and tenants e.g. rent deposits and rent in advance.

15.3 A Member indicated that it was his understanding that one of the landlords' main concerns was how much support they would get from the Council if they had any issues with tenants and he asked whether there had been any discussion with landlords as part of the pilot scheme. In response, the Head of Community Services clarified that this scheme was very much about the Council supporting tenants to maintain their tenancy but he felt that it had also helped the relationship with landlords which officers would look to maintain going forward. Another Member raised concern that he was aware of rented properties being snapped up by a collection of financial companies who were then changing the use to holiday lets, therefore depleting the housing stock, and he questioned whether this had been

happening in Tewkesbury Borough. The Head of Community Services advised that a countywide review of the condition of private sector housing stock was about to be undertaken so this issue may be flagged up as part of that. There were holiday lets within the borough, which were encouraged in terms of supporting tourism etc.; however, it was also important for the Council to maintain housing which it could control as property for its residents so he undertook to try to find out if this was a particular problem.

15.4 It was

RESOLVED That the achievements of the private rented sector housing pilot scheme be **NOTED**.

OS.16 SEPARATE BUSINESS

16.1 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.17 SEPARATE MINUTES

17.1 The separate Minutes of the meeting held on 6 April 2021, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The meeting closed at 6:20 pm