

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Committee held at the Council Offices,
Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury on Wednesday, 2 February 2022 commencing at
2:00 pm**

Present:

Chair
Vice Chair

Councillor R A Bird
Councillor J R Mason

and Councillors:

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

also present:

Councillor J W Murphy

EX.77 ANNOUNCEMENTS

77.1 The evacuation procedure, as noted on the Agenda, was advised to those present.

EX.78 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

78.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M A Gore. Councillor R D East would be acting as a substitute for the meeting.

EX.79 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

79.1 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.

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

EX.80 MINUTES

80.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 January 2022, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

EX.81 ITEMS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

81.1 There were no items from members of the public.

EX.82 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN

82.1 Attention was drawn to the Committee's Forward Plan, circulated at Pages No. 11-14. Members were asked to consider the Plan.

82.2 Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED: That the Committee's Forward Plan be **NOTED**.

EX.83 COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE TRACKER AND COVID-19 RECOVERY TRACKER - QUARTER TWO 2021/22

83.1 The report of the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, circulated at Pages No. 15-108, asked Members to review and, if appropriate, take action on the observations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee following its review of the Quarter Two 2021/22 Council Plan performance tracker and COVID-19 recovery tracker information.

83.2 The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee explained that the review of the performance information at the meeting had covered several areas rather than focussing in depth on one particular area. The main things to bring to the attention of the Executive Committee were the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) – Members had asked the reason for appointing Deloitte, where the budget came from, the scope of the work and how it had been authorised - the Head of Development Services had provided a detailed response; the Planning Improvement Plan – Members had questioned the progress made and the Head of Development Services had indicated that there were many problems to solve and, whilst there would be some quick fixes, the plan needed to be realistic and it was likely to be 12-24 months before any major improvements were noticeable; Freedom of Information requests - the Head of Corporate Services had given assurances they were dealt with in a timely manner and the Committee had requested a further breakdown of response rates in service areas; local list of non-designated heritage assets - the Committee had questioned the weight associated with planning permissions, along with the format of the Panel that approved the list, and had been advised that the composition of the Panel was yet to be decided. Members had further questioned if they would be involved and whether the postholder contracted to undertake the work would be able to provide full input before the contract ended; fly-tipping - Members had been told this was decreasing but Ubico had specified an overspend in the fly-tipping budget so officers had been asked for clarification. There had also been a discussion about whether the booking system still being used for the household recycling centres was contributing to the problem but Officers felt it was not; and the Welcome Back Fund - some Members had indicated they had seen little evidence of the fund being spent in their area and had been advised that local Members and Parishes had been contacted for ideas which were being worked through prior to being communicated to Members. The Chair felt that, overall, the picture was positive despite the ongoing challenge of the pandemic. He also advised that an external training facilitator had observed the meeting and was complimentary about the Committee's operation and had been positive about the format of the performance report.

83.3 The Head of Corporate Services advised that the Officer responses to outstanding items may generate some additional work but the report had been positive and it was good to have gained compliments on the way Members had interacted at the meeting and the set-up of the report. At the subsequent training session with the external training facilitator, the interaction between the Overview and Scrutiny and Executive Committees had been discussed and Members were reminded that they should look at the Forward Plan and identify anything they wanted the Overview

and Scrutiny Committee to look at in depth.

83.4 During the discussion which ensued, there were some concerns raised about the ongoing use of the booking system at the household recycling centres. Members were reminded this was a County Council decision and it had been decided to continue with online bookings as many people liked the system and found it easier to get onto the site with their waste than when it was run on a first come, first served basis. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee explained that the Committee had asked for the costs associated with disposal of fly-tips so some further consideration would be given to the issues raised.

83.5 Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED: That the findings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's review of the quarter two performance management and recovery information be **NOTED**.

EX.84 BUDGET 2022/23

84.1 The report of the Head of Finance and Asset Management, circulated at Pages No. 109-134, set out the proposals for the 2022/23 budget which the Committee was asked to recommend to Council. Attention was drawn to two amendments, which had been circulated separately, and Members were advised that, if agreed, the report to Council would be amended to include those matters.

84.2 The Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that Members were very familiar with the budget proposals so he would not talk through those. He referred to the amendments which had been circulated and explained that the first referred to clarification from the government on the accounting treatment relating to the new COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF). The scheme was aimed at providing business rate relief for businesses which had not benefitted from funding packages that had been available during the pandemic. At the same time, the government would cancel all appeals made by businesses in relation to a Material Change in Circumstances as a result of COVID and, to support that scheme, the government had awarded Councils additional S31 grant funding – for Tewkesbury Borough, the total funding was £2,340,291 with the share attributable to the Borough Council's part of the retention scheme being £936,116. The CARF support was likely to run from February through to 30 September and would result in reliefs being applied against 2021/22 business rates; this would reduce business rates income in 2021/22 creating a larger collection fund deficit at year-end which would be met by the S31 grant allocation from the government so there was no impact on the net position of the budget. This information had not been included in the original report and the subsequent amendments suggested to the budget report were included for information. The second amendment related to an offer made by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) to settle the outstanding appeal by Virgin Media against one of its current appeals. The offer was to reduce the rateable value of the hereditament from £4.0million to £2.97million with effect from April 2017 – this was a reduction of 25.5% and was in excess of the specific provisions made for the appeal, although substantial general provisions did exist. Given the size of the reduction offered by the VOA, the Council's NNDR1 return to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), which detailed business rates retention estimates for the forthcoming year, had been amended to reflect the latest position and, in turn, the proposed budget also needed to be amended. The reduction in rateable value of £1.03million impacted on many elements of the retention calculation including the net rates collectable, the levy, the multiplier cap and the collection fund deficit and would see the Council's level of retention fall by £342,046 overall. In order to balance the budget it would be necessary to draw on reserves and, whilst the budget for 2022/23 could be balanced without any impact

on the growth items included in the proposals, it was noted that the offer by the VOA had an ongoing impact on the Council's retained business rates position of approximately £142,000.

84.3 Members expressed frustration on behalf of the Head of Finance and Asset Management for the late information being received. A Member noted the adjustments were sizeable but felt the effectiveness of the Council's financial management was testament to the way they could be addressed.

84.4 Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED:

That it be **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** that:

1. a net budget of £9,821,535 be **APPROVED**;
2. a Band D Council Tax of £134.36, an increase of £5.00pa, be **APPROVED**;
3. growth items be included within the budget for 2022/23, as proposed in Appendix A to the report; and
4. the capital programme, as proposed in Appendix B to the report, be **APPROVED**.

The meeting closed at 2:50 pm