

# TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Council Offices, Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury on Tuesday, 7 June 2022 commencing at 4:30 pm**

**Present:**

Chair  
Vice Chair

Councillor J W Murphy  
Councillor K Berliner

**and Councillors:**

G J Bocking, C L J Carter, K J Cromwell, P A Godwin, P D McLain, J K Smith, M J Williams and P N Workman

**also present:**

Councillor D J Harwood

**OS.5 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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

**OS.6 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

6.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H C McLain, H S Munro, C E Mills and R J G Smith. 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 made on this occasion.

**OS.8 MINUTES**

8.1 The Minutes of the meetings held on 5 April and 17 May 2022, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as correct records 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. 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.

9.2 The Head of Corporate Services advised that service plans had been endorsed by the Executive Committee at its meeting last week so he would be working with Democratic Services to identify any relevant items for inclusion within the Executive Committee Forward Plan, therefore, Members could expect the Plan to be more densely populated moving forward.

9.3 It was

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

## **OS.10 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23 AND ACTION LIST**

10.1 Attention was drawn to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme, circulated at Pages No. 19-29, and the action list setting out the actions arising from meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee between October 2019 and March 2022, circulated at Pages No. 30-44. Members were asked to consider the Work Programme and action list.

10.2 The Head of Corporate Services pointed out that the Community Services Improvement Review which had previously been in the pending items section of the Work Programme had now been scheduled for the meeting on 7 February 2023. The Head of Democratic Services advised that NHS Gloucestershire would be attending the meeting on 12 July 2022 to give a presentation on Fit for the Future 2, a new engagement which focused on the medium and long-term future of some of its health services. Whilst the general consultation events finished at the end of June, the NHS was continuing to engage with people until the end of August so it was felt it would be beneficial for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to gain an understanding of what this would mean for Tewkesbury Borough. The Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee advised that the next meeting of that Committee was on 12 July 2022, which was the same date as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, therefore, she would give a brief verbal update on matters discussed with a more detailed report to follow by email.

10.3 A Member noted that the Committee was due to consider the results of a trial of mobile surveillance equipment for fly-tipping investigations but this had been in the pending items section of the Work Programme since 12 October 2021 and he asked whether the cameras had been purchased and deployed. The Environmental Health Manager explained that purchase of the cameras had been delayed due to legal issues with procurement; however, that had now been resolved and it was hoped the cameras would be available for roll-out within the next month. The Member asked whether it was intended to consult Members about potential locations for the cameras and the Environmental Health Manager indicated that he would be happy to speak to Members on an individual basis to identify feasible hotspot locations. As soon as he was in a position to do so, he would email all Members to notify them about the cameras and to invite suggestions.

10.4 In terms of the action list, the Head of Corporate Services advised that only six of the 29 actions were outstanding; two of these were in relation to a Member seminar on the Government's Housing Design Guide and, whilst this had not yet been delivered, there was now a target date of September 2022. Overall, good progress had been made in terms of delivery of the actions. The following issues were raised during the discussion:

**Meeting Date: 11 January 2022**

P36 - Council Plan Performance Tracker and COVID-19 Recovery Tracker Quarter Two 2021/22 – KPI 38 – Number of reported enviro-crimes.

A Member noted that the target date for Members to be provided with information on the costs of cleaning up various enviro-crimes was June 2022 and he asked whether that was still achievable given it was already 7 June 2022. The Environmental Health Manager indicated that he would discuss this with the Head of Community Services and make it a priority to ensure it was available within the next couple of weeks.

**Meeting Date: 8 February 2022**

P38 – Agenda Item – Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2022-26

A Member noted that a question had been raised about how many of the 1,814 people on the housing register in September 2021 had been rehoused but he did not feel this had been fully answered by the commentary provided which stated that there had been 274 lettings for properties in the area, of which, 243 had been allocated to applicants who had registered before 1 September 2021. He asked for clarification on how many of the 1,814 were included in the lettings figures. The Head of Corporate Services undertook to take this away to get an answer from the relevant Officer.

**Meeting Date: 8 March 2022**

P42 – Agenda Item – Council Plan Performance Tracker and COVID-19 Recovery Tracker.

A Member asked for clarification as to whether the Government's Housing Design Guide would be produced before the Design Manual which was referenced at Page No. 93 of the Agenda in the performance tracker. The Head of Development Services explained that the Member training included in the action list was specifically around the National Planning Policy Framework which included new design criteria. In addition, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill meant that the Council was required to produce a boroughwide Design Guide and that would also be picked up in the training. The Design Manual was something separate which would be taken forward by the Garden Town team.

A Member noted that the commentary in relation to the action to prepare a Design Guide, set out at Pages No. 93-94 of the Agenda, stated that final approvals were currently being obtained to formalise the contract and the work would run for 12 months; he sought clarification as to when that had started. The Garden Town Programme

Director advised that LDA Design had been selected to commission the Manual and that process would run from now until approximately June 2023.

10.5 Accordingly, it was

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

## **OS.11 UPDATE ON LOCAL POLICING ARRANGEMENTS**

11.1 The Chief Executive explained that the Committee had historically been interested in local policing arrangements and community safety and he was pleased to report that the vacancy for the local police commander for the Tewkesbury policing area had now been filled. Given the importance of this role, the new Chief Inspector was in attendance at today's meeting, together with the Chief Inspector for the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Policing Area, to give a brief update on the appointment and local policing; however, it was to be borne in mind that the new Chief Inspector had only been in post for three weeks so it may be beneficial for the Committee to invite him back to a future meeting when he was in a position to provide a more detailed update.

11.2 The Chief Inspector for the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Policing Area advised that she had a 26 year background in the Police and had spent the majority of her career in Gloucester as a Neighbourhood Inspector and working in community harm and reduction. She was also the Constabulary Liaison Officer in the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. In terms of the policing structure within Cheltenham and Tewkesbury, there was one Superintendent for the whole area and the teams were split into neighbourhood policing and local policing i.e. the response function. The local policing team worked 24/7 shift patterns and the Duty Inspector covered all areas. There were three Sergeants for Cheltenham and Tewkesbury and 15 Police Constables per response shift. The new Chief Inspector for Tewkesbury would be supported by two Sergeants on the local neighbourhood policing team and five Police Constables and Police Community Support Officers per shift pattern. Due to its rural location and the fact there was no nightclub, staff on the Tewkesbury team worked until 0200 hours whereas those in Cheltenham worked until 0500 hours. Each Police Community Support Officer had a detailed area for which they were responsible and those were listed on the Gloucestershire Constabulary website. The Police Community Support Officers were supported by a Beat Officer who helped with enforcement, arrests and investigations. In addition, following a bid for resources, the Operation Vanguard Team was also supporting the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Local Policing Team – that Team focused on serious crimes, such as drug dealing and residential burglaries, and comprised an Inspector, Detective Sergeant, Uniform Sergeant and 10 other Police Officers with a varied skill set including method of entry training and surveillance etc. In terms of the way the Tewkesbury team operated, the response team was mainly led by radio and covered the whole of the borough which was a wide policing area. Police Officers were currently single-crewed during the day and double crewed for night shifts and they would more than likely be the first point of contact for any incidents which came in. The response team worked a six day on, four day off pattern including two early shifts, two late shifts and two night shifts so someone was on duty every day at all hours of the day and night.

11.3 The new Chief Inspector for Tewkesbury explained that the neighbourhood team was split into east and west and generally worked early and late shifts except for Friday and Saturday nights when they worked until 0200 hours. Each Police Community Support Officer had responsibility for a geographical area and was

supported by a dedicated Police Constable who worked together to understand the community and build relationships with residents in order to get ahead of issues before they accelerated. The Tewkesbury team had a close relationship with the Operation Vanguard Team which had recently helped to take down a cannabis factory within the area. In terms of the key issues he had encountered so far, he advised that Operation Ardent had been set up following the tragic death of Matthew Boorman and focused on community work around that. He indicated that antisocial behaviour was a major issue – and one which was included in the Police and Crime Commissioner’s Police and Crime Plan – and this tended to increase over the summer months so it was something which he hoped to get ahead of as much as possible but this could only be achieved by working in partnership with other agencies so it was important to forge close relationships and take joint responsibility. Operation Solace was in place in Gloucestershire to address retail crime and this initiative involved shops being able to talk to one another over walkie-talkies. With regard to engagement, Officers attended Community Safety Partnership and Parish and Town Council meetings – the Police Constables and Police Community Support Officers had a range of contacts who they spoke to regularly and this was a huge benefit of co-location within the Public Service Centre.

- 11.4 A Member asked whether the Aston Project was being reinvigorated and the Chief Inspector for the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Policing Area advised that it was still active in Tewkesbury, although it had been difficult to engage due to COVID, and the Police Community Support Officer responsible was within the Tewkesbury team. With regard to Operation Solace, the Member indicated that it was his understanding that shops had been using walkie-talkies to communicate for many years. In response, the Chief Inspector for the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Policing Area felt it was great that shops were already speaking to one another in that way but she explained that Operation Solace was a more structured operation which allowed banning notices to be imposed. Another Member asked what had happened to the rural crime group and the Chief Inspector for the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Policing Area confirmed that it had been part of Operation Flex but was back up and running as of 28 May 2022.
- 11.5 A Member indicated that a Police Community Support Officer had previously always been in attendance at Parish Council meetings within his Ward and he asked whether it would be possible for them to start going along again, even if this was not to every meeting. The Chief Inspector for Tewkesbury advised that the Police Community Support Officers were trying to attend Parish meetings where possible and, if they could not, they should provide an update; unfortunately, during COVID this had fallen out of practice but it was something he was keen to try and push going forward. Another Member indicated that there was a growing drugs problem within their Ward and residents had commented that they had not seen a Police Officer in the area for several years so he would welcome attendance at Parish Council meetings.
- 11.6 A Member asked what the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could offer to support the Police and how it might be able to benefit from its links to various departments and activities within the authority such as environmental health and economic development. With regard to the Chief Executive’s suggestion that a further update be provided once the new Chief Inspector had chance to settle into his role, a Member asked whether this should be provided for all Members, as opposed to just the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Chief Executive explained that, whilst it was possible to hold an all-Member briefing, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been particularly interested in scrutinising the Police in the past and there was still potential work for the Committee in terms of exploring the relationship between the authority and community policing to identify where they could work better together. He undertook to consider the point about the wider membership outside of the meeting and suggested that it may be more appropriate to send out a Member Update to notify them of the appointment of the new Chief Inspector for

Tewkesbury. A Member suggested it would be interesting to also look at the relationship between the Police and Parish Councils and the Chief Executive advised that Parish Councils were a separate entity in many respects and it was important not to raise expectations. He reminded Members that there were 50 Parish Councils within the borough and the Police needed to establish how best to serve them. The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was to ensure that the Borough Council was doing all it could to work with the Police effectively. A Member felt it would be helpful to know how the authority linked with the Police currently as not all links would be obvious and the Chief Executive agreed this could be provided through that process. Another Member took on board the points raised in relation to Parish Councils but suggested that an email could be sent to each one advising of their designated Police Community Support Officer.

- 11.7 A Member queried what time was afforded to Police Community Support Officers to interact with their communities to gain a better understanding of the area for which they were responsible. The Chief Inspector for the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Policing Area explained that the role of Police Community Support Officers had recently been reviewed – it had previously been a command and control function but the primary function was now around dedicating time to forge relationships with communities at a grassroots level and this was something they were expected to do daily on every shift. In response to a query regarding the number of Police Community Support Officers in Tewkesbury, clarification was provided that there were currently 10 with another two having recently been recruited; whilst Police Community Support Officers were being encouraged to be visible within communities, whether members of the public saw them out and about was a matter of timing as, unfortunately, the Police did not have the resources they would like to ensure continuous visibility. It was noted that the Police and Crime Commissioner had bid for volunteer Police Community Support Officers and Specials with the intention to have a volunteer in every parish in every district – this would be a big task but one he was keen to undertake. The Chief Executive advised that the Police had been involved in the early stages of the integrated local health partnership and was working with the community on health aspects of community safety in terms of the interventions that might be possible. There had been quite a lot of early discussion and he was hopeful that the new Chief Inspector for Tewkesbury could take this forward with health partners. As this was a funded scheme, it was possible there would be an opportunity to introduce some new initiatives. The Chief Inspector for the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Policing Area advised that something similar had been done in Gloucester where a Police Community Support Officer had been seconded into a community project focused on reducing vulnerability and isolation and there was evidence that had worked well. The Member felt that getting community groups working with the Police would be an effective use of time – the Police continued to be under-staffed and he asked if this was due to a lack of funding or difficulties with recruitment. The Chief Inspector for the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Policing Area indicated that there was a commitment to increasing the number of Police Officers but recruitment, vetting and training all took time and it was estimated it would take five years for policing numbers to get back to pre-austerity levels. A Member asked if there was anything the Committee could do to assist and the Chief Inspector for the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Policing Area indicated that it would be helpful if they could push out information to Parish and Town Councils in relation to Police Community Support Officer recruitment, Community Speedwatch, Neighbourhood Watch etc. The Chief Executive undertook to ensure that information was passed on to Members. He indicated that the Borough Council's Parish Matters Newsletter could also be used to communicate with Parish Councils if the Police had any relevant information to include.

11.8 A Member raised concern that it was not always possible to get through when calling 101 – she worked at a youth club and had previously had to dial 999 for that reason when an incident had arisen with two young men being robbed at knifepoint so she asked whether that was the appropriate thing to do. The Chief Inspector for the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Policing Area confirmed that the advice in that situation would be to dial 999. She provided assurance there was an awareness of the delays experienced when dialling 101 - this was also frustrating for Police Officers as they were not aware of incidents but it was hoped things would improve going forward with additional resources and new equipment.

11.9 The Chair thanked the representatives from Gloucestershire Constabulary for their attendance and it was

- RESOLVED**
1. That the update on local policing arrangements be **NOTED**.
  2. That further scrutiny of the relationship between the Borough Council and community policing be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.

## **OS.12 COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE TRACKER AND COVID-19 RECOVERY TRACKER - QUARTER FOUR 2021/22**

12.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 45-121, attached the performance management and COVID-19 recovery information for quarter four of 2021/22. 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 informed that this was the final quarterly monitoring report for 2021/22 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 reported as soon as possible.

12.3 Key actions for the quarter were highlighted at Paragraph 2.3 of the report and included: receipt of the Inspector's final report on the Tewkesbury Borough Plan with adoption being recommended to the Council at an Extraordinary meeting the following night; approval of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy; income of £111,354 from the new bulky waste service during 2021/22 with 95% customer wait time being reduced from six weeks to less than one week; the new Carbon Reduction Programme Officer had taken up his post in February; and work was underway on the solar canopy in the Council Offices car park. Members were reminded that, due to the complex nature of the actions being delivered, it was inevitable that some would not progress as smoothly or as quickly as envisaged and the details of those actions were set out at Paragraph 2.4 of the report. It was noted that the Medium Term Financial Strategy had been taken to the Executive Committee last week where it had been recommended to Council for adoption so this was progressing. The Head of Corporate Services indicated that the third action on Page No. 49 in respect of delivering the approved trade waste business case contained a typographical error and should state that the target date had

been 'amended from March 2023 to July 2023'. In terms of KPIs, the status of each indicator was set out at Paragraph 3.2 of the report and KPIs where direction of travel was down and/or were not on target, were set out at Paragraph 3.3 of the report. The majority had been reported earlier in the year and it was noted that, with regard to planning indicators, whilst the local targets had not been achieved, these were all above national targets – as Members were aware, there was an improvement plan in place but it would take time before this began to take effect so Members needed to be patient. Notwithstanding this, the planning enforcement KPIs had improved compared to the previous year, as set out at Page No. 52 of the report.

12.4 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; there were only three actions that had not progressed as intended, as set out at Paragraph 4.3 of the report, and it was noted that the outstanding actions would now be incorporated into the Council Plan performance tracker so Members would receive one document going forward.

12.5 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**

P57 – Objective 2 – Action a) The Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that Tewkesbury Borough Council had been forced to increase its Council Tax by the maximum possible amount for the last six years, i.e. by £5 each time, whereas some other local authorities had increased by smaller amounts meaning Tewkesbury Borough Council had been overtaken.

Ensure our Council Tax remains in the lowest quartile nationally – A Member noted that Tewkesbury Borough Council now had the eighth lowest Council Tax in the country having previously had the fourth lowest and he asked what the reason was for this.

P57 – Objective 3 – Action a) The Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that extra resources had been put into the Council's carbon reduction plan with a lot of the work being undertaken by the Asset Manager until recently. Combined with the pandemic, this action had slipped down the asset management work plan as it was not critical to deliver in-year. Nevertheless, Officers were keen to have it in place as it was an important document and he was confident it could be delivered during the next financial year. He confirmed the delay would have no impact on the Property team, or the asset management aspect, as a sound plan was in place currently.

Update the Council's Asset Management Plan – A Member asked why an additional nine months was needed to deliver this action with the target date having been changed from June 2022 to March 2023.

P58 – Objective 3 – Action c)  
Ensure that voids within our commercial property portfolio are re-let at the earliest opportunity – A Member asked if there had been any movement in relation to the vacant unit.

The Head of Finance and Asset Management advised a tenancy agreement should be in place by the end of the month. Once occupied, this would bring in an income of approximately £170,000 to support the Council's budget deficit for next year.

P59 – Objective 4 – Action a)  
Deliver the approved trade waste business case to make the service commercially viable - A Member noted that the original target date was April 2017 but this had since changed several times so he asked whether the new target date of July 2023 was realistic.

The Waste Contracts Manager advised that, at this point, he was confident the new date could be achieved. Whilst he could not comment on what had happened prior to him joining the authority less than a year ago, he explained that the Principal Trade Waste Officer was leading on the project and the trial of food and recycling collections was due to start next month – this would shed a lot of light on customer expectations, any gaps in the service and how it could be rolled out across the borough.

### **Priority: Economic Growth**

P60 – Objective 1 – Action c)  
Work with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and other partners to deliver the Local Industrial Strategy – A Member noted that an update was awaited from the LEP on how Build Back Better would be rolled-out and he asked if there was any indication as to when that would be.

The Head of Development Services indicated that the update had been anticipated for some time and, unfortunately, there was still no indication as to when it could be expected. She explained that funding had been secured for the current financial year but there was uncertainty as to how things would move forward beyond that.

In response to a query as to whether this was something which could be challenged at the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee, the Chief Executive explained that it was within the Government's gift so there was currently no clarity for the LEP just as there was none for the Borough Council. He reiterated that funding for the LEP was secure for this financial year but it was difficult for the local authority to identify long-term funding for the LEP when it had no idea what the Government funding for the authority would be beyond 2023. There was a lack of information from the Government about the expected future role of the LEP; however, the Levelling-Up Bill, which was currently before Parliament, proposed it be integrated with the local authority i.e. the County Council, if a level two devolution deal was agreed. Discussions were taking place across the county at a Leader level in terms of the issues around devolution for Gloucestershire; however, regardless of what was decided, he did not think the

Government would be looking at a deal for Gloucestershire within the next year as it would be focusing on the nine bids it had already received which was proving to be more difficult than anticipated. On that basis, he would guess that devolution for the county was 18-24 months away, therefore, it could be predicted it would be business as usual for the LEP during that time, although this was by no means certain. In terms of other funding opportunities for the LEP, there was the Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF) which was provided by business rates and held collectively in the county. In addition, each district had been allocated £1M of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, some of which could potentially be provided to the LEP to retain services such as the Growth Hub and Invest in Gloucestershire – those projects currently received European funding which would stop at the end of the calendar year. Bids for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund had to be submitted by the end of July and a report on this was being taken to the Executive Committee meeting on 6 July 2022.

A Member asked what would happen in terms of future reporting on the LEP given that the Chief Executive was retiring at the end of the week. In response, the Chief Executive indicated that he trusted his successor would continue to provide information as requested as he was particularly interested in economic development and the success of the borough and the various partnerships which assisted with that. The Head of Corporate Services clarified that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund was a new action in the Council Plan refresh so Members would receive updates on that going forward.

### Key Performance Indicators for priority: Economic Growth

P67 – KPI 7 – Number of visitors entering the Growth Hub – A Member noted that there had been no visitors during 2020/21 and the first quarter of 2021//22 and the commentary suggested that guidance to work from home had continued to impact on visitor numbers during quarter three. Given that ways of working had changed since the pandemic and more people worked from home as standard, he asked if this KPI should be reconsidered to better measure the success of the Growth Hub. He also raised concern about the future of the Growth Hub and whether it could be subsidised by the Council in the event it could not be funded by the LEP.

The Chief Executive agreed this KPI may be worth looking at as there was certainly more contact with people online than in person.

In terms of the continued operation of the Growth Hub in the absence of LEP funding, he indicated that the LEP currently supported all six of the Growth Hubs in each district within the county; however, these had all been set up at different times with slightly different funding structures, so those issues were currently being worked through. From his discussions with other Chief Executives, it seemed there was support for the continuation of the Growth Hubs but more information was needed. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund would replace European funding, which would no longer be available, but if the Growth Hub did not get that support then the LEP could not run it and it would be a question for the Council as to whether it wished to continue to run a Growth Hub service – bearing in mind what it did to support the growth of businesses and the economy of the borough - and would need to look carefully at mechanisms for that.

### Priority: Housing and Communities

P68 – Objective 1 – Action a) Work with partners to undertake the required review of the Joint Strategic Plan – A Member asked for clarification on the end date for the review of the Joint Core Strategy/Joint Strategic Plan and whether one option arising from that review could be to abandon it as he personally felt it was undermining the Council's ability to achieve its minimum building requirements and was instead helping to meet the needs of other authorities.

The Head of Development Services explained that any housing within Tewkesbury Borough which was meeting the needs of Cheltenham Borough and Gloucester City Councils had already been allocated in the existing Joint Core Strategy which had been through due process and was an adopted plan covering the period to 2031. The review process would look at further housing allocations within the borough up to 2041 and it was proposed that the preferred options, due for consultation in spring 2023, would identify new locations for housing and employment going forward. Although plans were adopted to cover a particular period, they were kept under continual review.

The Member went on to query whether other authorities contributed to the ongoing costs associated with new housing development within the borough where it was to meet their needs and the Head of Development Services advised that the Joint Core Strategy/Joint Strategic Plan was a partnership between Cheltenham Borough, Gloucester City and Tewkesbury Borough

Councils - and, this year, Gloucestershire County Council – and each made an equal financial contribution towards its delivery. This was one of the most expensive strategies the Council had to take forward and a number of technical studies had to be undertaken to provide the evidence base. She clarified that the Tewkesbury Borough Plan was entirely funded by Tewkesbury Borough Council.

A Member questioned whether Tewkesbury Borough Council was responsible for the costs associated with administering planning applications for allocations that would provide housing to meet the needs of other local authority areas and confirmation was provided that was the case.

### **Key Performance Indicators for priority: Housing and Communities**

P79 – KPI 17 – Percentage of minor applications determined within eight weeks or alternative period agreed with the applicant – A Member noted that the outturn for quarter four was 48.57%, which was a reduction on previous quarters and significantly below the 80% target, and he raised concern that there should be an improvement because of the review process as opposed to a downturn. He pointed out that, for the average homeowner, applying for planning permission to extend or modify their home was likely to be one of the most significant events in their life and that needed to be taken seriously.

The Head of Development Services recognised this was disappointing and not what had been hoped for. She indicated that the improvement plan had been approved by the Executive Committee in November 2021 and great strides had been made since that time in terms of looking at the various processes and dealing with the backlog of applications against a backdrop of staffing issues due to a countywide shortage of Planning Officers. She gave assurance that Officers were doing all they could to improve upon the position going forward and, whilst the quarter four outturn was not ideal, it should be recognised that Planning Officers had been working extremely hard to clear the backlog in difficult circumstances and their workloads were being monitored on a fortnightly basis. It was likely that this period of inconsistency in terms of performance would continue for the next 4-5 months before levelling out.

The Member accepted this explanation and understood there was a backlog to work through; however, from his experience, there was a lack of communication with applicants who expected their applications to be determined within eight weeks and found it difficult to contact Planning Officers to establish the position. He felt that a lot of their frustrations could be resolved by improving communication and keeping them informed on progress. The Head of Development Services took this on board and undertook to update the website to give a clearer indication as to current timescales for

determining applications. Moving forward, the application tracker system which was being developed as a pilot scheme would be a useful tool for customers in terms of monitoring the progress of their applications.

P80 – KPI 20 – Investigate category B cases within five working days – A Member asked when improvement was likely to be seen in terms of planning enforcement.

The Head of Development Services clarified that only one case had not been investigated within the timeframe. The Enforcement team was now fully staffed and, based on the figures from the first few weeks of quarter one 2022/23, 100% of cases had been investigated on time, as such, she expected to see a continued improvement throughout the course of the year.

In response to a query as to whether enforcement cases were divided on a north/south basis, the Head of Development Services advised that it was currently done that way; however, if an Officer was unavailable to deal with a case in their area, for instance, due to annual leave or sickness absence, there was flexibility within the team so this could be picked up by another Officer, particularly in relation to Category A cases which required prompt action.

#### **Priority: Customer First**

P84 – Objective 1 – Action b) Continue to build on the early success of our new bulky waste service – A Member questioned how the success of the social media marketing campaign would be measured.

The Waste Contracts Manager advised that it would be difficult to measure this accurately, but it was hoped to see an overall increase in online booking numbers and a corresponding reduction in the burden on the Customer Services team.

#### **Key Performance Indicators for Priority: Customer First**

P91 – KPI 34 – Average number of sick days per full-time equivalent – A Member questioned how much sickness absence could be attributed to just one or two members of staff.

The Head of Corporate Services advised that, as a general rule of thumb, six or seven employees were absent due to long term sickness at any one time.

P92 – KPI 36 – Percentage of Freedom of Information requests answered on time – A Member noted that 93% of FOIs had been answered on time but indicated that he would like to know the number of requests that had been made.

The Head of Corporate Services confirmed that 572 requests had been made during the financial year as set out in the commentary for this KPI.

### **COVID-19 Recovery Tracker Priority: Economic Growth**

P107 – Refocus a) Develop a new Economic Development and Tourism Strategy that includes a focus on the economic recovery of the borough – A Member noted this action originally had a target date of June 2021, which had now changed to December 2022, and he asked how likely it was that would actually be achieved.

The Head of Development Services advised that the action had originally been delayed due to COVID-19. It had been intended to work with Gloucester City Council to commission a contractor to carry out the work to establish an economic baseline; however, Gloucester City had subsequently decided to do this alone so Tewkesbury Borough Council was now tendering for the economic assessment work and it was intended to have a strategy in place by the end of the year.

A Member indicated that he would have thought it would be quicker for the Council to commission its own assessment, so he expected the target date to be earlier now it was no longer a joint venture. In response, the Head of Development Services explained that the delay had been due to Gloucester City pulling out of the joint tender process and Tewkesbury Borough Council having to commission that work itself – things should move forward now the authority was in control of its own destiny.

### **COVID-19 Recovery Tracker Priority: Sustainable Environment**

P121 – Refocus a) Commence planning and scoping study for implications of, and opportunities for, borough wide decarbonisation – A Member noted this was due to commence in spring 2022 and he asked if work had started.

The Head of Development Services explained that it had not yet commenced. The work involved had been greater than anticipated and it had not been possible to take this forward during year two of the carbon reduction programme; however, this action had been rolled over into the year three action plan which was due to be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July.

The Member asked whether the rising cost of living was impacting on the Council services and projects. In response, the Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that the Council's utilities were a fixed price so those costs would not have an impact during this financial year. The biggest cost to the authority was employees and the pay award

in April had required a lot of negotiations with the Trade Unions. A very substantial request had been put in for this year and the outcome would have an impact on the Council's financial position. Supplies and services were increasing in general with the most substantial change being to the cost of the installation of the solar canopy – this project had been scoped at £300,000 but had risen to £650,000 on delivery due to the cost of steel and solar panels etc. It was something to be mindful of moving through the year and probably into the following year as well.

12.6 Having considered the information provided, it was

**RESOLVED** That the performance management information and COVID-19 recovery information for quarter four of 2021/22 be **NOTED**.

### **OS.13 CORPORATE POLICIES AND STRATEGIES**

13.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 122-130, provided a list of policies and strategies that were due for review in 2022/23. Members were asked to consider the list attached at Appendix 1 to the report and identify any to bring forward to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

13.2 The Head of Corporate Services advised this was an annual report which was brought at the request of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and set out the corporate policies and strategies that would be coming forward for review during the year. The list would inform the Executive Committee Forward Plan and Members were asked if it would be beneficial for any of the policies and strategies listed to be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration. Members were reminded that it was not effective to duplicate the work of other Committees, for example, the Audit and Governance Committee reviewed any governance-related policies, and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should not review policies which were the responsibility of quasi-judicial Committees such as Planning and Licensing. It was suggested that Members select no more than two policies or strategies to consider during the year.

13.3 A Member noted that Page No. 130 of the report made reference to the Parking Strategy which was already being reviewed by an Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Working Group. He indicated that he was a Member of that Group but it had not met for some time so he asked for an update on the current position. The Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that he needed to write the strategy and circulate to Members of the Working Group for approval prior to bringing it to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This was on his work plan and he would get to it as soon as possible.

13.4 A Member indicated that he would like to scrutinise the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Capital Strategy and the Chief Executive explained that, the function of the Transform Working Group was specifically to develop the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Council's budget going forward so this would be a duplication of work which was within the remit of the Executive Committee. The Head of Finance and Asset Management indicated that it would be a huge piece of work to scrutinise and would require a lot of additional resources. A Member seminar on the interim Medium Term Financial Strategy would be held prior to it going to Council and he encouraged Members to attend that session and ask as many questions as they wished. The Chief Executive also pointed out that any Member could attend Transform Working Group if they wished to know more. In

response to a query as to whether the Medium Term Financial Strategy was also scrutinised by the Audit and Governance Committee, the Head of Finance and Asset Management clarified that it was not within that Committee's remit.

- 13.5 A Member suggested that the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy was an area the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may wish to focus on and that was supported by other Members of the Committee. The Head of Development Services pointed out that work was being commissioned to identify what was happening with businesses in the borough and she suggested the findings could be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A Member felt that it might also be beneficial for the Committee to look at the Capability Procedure given that it was being completely re-written. The Chief Executive pointed out that this was one of a suite of other documents around disciplinary work which may also need to be covered as part of a review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- 13.6 It was

**RESOLVED** That the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy and the Capability Procedure be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that Terms of Reference for the reviews be brought to the Committee for approval at its meeting on 6 September 2022.

#### **OS.14 POTENTIAL PRESENTATIONS FROM EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

- 14.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 131-139, provided Members with a list of key external organisations which the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may wish to scrutinise during the year. Members were asked to consider the list and identify those which could potentially be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.
- 14.2 The Head of Corporate Services explained that, at the session held in November 2021 on ways to improve the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Members had indicated they would like to hear from external organisations and it had been agreed that Officers would compile a list for consideration. The list attached at Appendix 1 to the report was closely linked to the Council Plan refresh and was by no means exhaustive; however, if the Committee did wish to hear from an external body, it would be necessary to agree a formal scope for the presentation in order to ensure there were clear objectives and outcomes. Consideration should also be given to the wider Work Programme to ensure Agenda did not become overloaded and it was suggested that no more than two organisations be invited to attend future meetings of the Committee.
- 14.3 A Member agreed there should be clear reasons for inviting external organisations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as this was not the right place to have presentations for information. He was particularly interested to understand what was happening with the Community Safety Partnership, which did include Member representation but no reports were received back as far as he was aware, and the Aston Project which ran from the Public Services Centre and was something which the Council had an input into. The Chief Executive clarified that the Community Safety Partnership was not an outside body as it was operated by the Council and therefore did not form part of the list provided in the report; however, he felt it was probably time to look at this to see if it was delivering against its Terms of Reference and he suggested this could be done as part of the follow-up scrutiny session with the Police which would need to be worked up outside of the meeting. In terms of the list before Members, the Council had contractual arrangements with Places Leisure and there had recently been a change of Manager at the Leisure Centre so that would lend itself to a presentation about what it was offering and how things were working. Gloucestershire Rural Community Council was also a contractor with

the Council in a different arrangement and had recently appointed a new Chief Executive so, although it would need to be handled carefully, it may be beneficial to hear from that organisation.

14.4 It was subsequently

**RESOLVED**

That the following organisations be **AGREED** as those the Committee would like to scrutinise during the year:

- Community Safety Partnership/Aston Project – to evaluate whether it is delivering against its Terms of Reference;
- Places Leisure – to understand how it is recovering from the pandemic; and
- Gloucestershire Rural Community Council – remit to be agreed with the Community and Economic Development Manager.

**OS.15 CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN**

15.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 140-154, provided Members with an update on the implementation of the corporate peer challenge action plan. Members were asked to consider the report.

15.2 Members were reminded that the corporate peer challenge had taken place during March 2020 and, whilst the Local Government Association's report had been largely positive, some areas for improvement had been identified in the form of five key recommendations. The majority of areas were things which the Council had already been aware of such as financial sustainability, the Medium Term Financial Strategy, New Homes Bonus and the Garden Town and most of the actions were 'business as usual'. Although there were a small number of actions still in progress, such as the new corporate reporting template, these were nearing completion and it was envisaged that the action plan could be closed off when it was reported upon in six months' time.

15.3 The Chief Executive advised that it was now time to review the peer challenge – the full inspection had been carried out immediately prior to the lockdown and the intention was for the Local Government Association to offer a review meeting to establish what had been done in the intervening period; however, it would be for the new Chief Executive to decide the most appropriate way forward as he may prefer a more fundamental peer challenge given the huge amount of change experienced over the last two years.

15.4 A Member expressed the view that it would be worth waiting to see what the new Chief Executive wanted to do in terms of a complete peer challenge or a review before closing off the current action plan and he felt it was necessary to wait for an update from him before making that decision. The Chief Executive indicated that there was nothing fundamental within the actions and the Council had been regarded as a good authority in the feedback from the peer challenge so he did not have any concerns about closing off the action plan; however, that was up to Members and the new Chief Executive to decide.

15.5 It was

**RESOLVED**

That the progress made against implementation of the corporate peer challenge action plan be **NOTED**.

**OS.16 GLOUCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE**

16.1 Attention was drawn to the report from the Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, circulated at Pages No. 155-158, which gave an update on matters considered at the meeting held on 17 May 2022.

16.2 The Council's representative drew attention to Page No. 156 of the report and recommended that people read the consultation booklet in relation to Fit for the Future 2 in order to be better informed to ask questions at the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which representatives from the NHS would be attending. The booklet contained a survey which needed to be completed by the end of June.

16.3 It was

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

**OS.17 GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE**

17.1 Attention was drawn to the report from the Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee, circulated separately, which gave an update on matters considered at the meeting held on 31 May 2022.

17.2 Accordingly, it was

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

The meeting closed at 6:43 pm