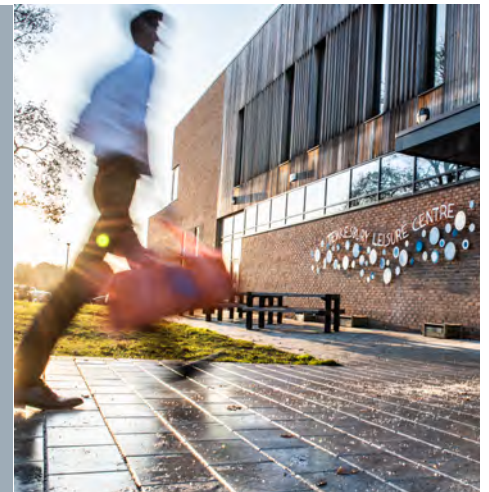


Overview and Scrutiny Committee annual report

2023-24



March 2024

Message from the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee,

**Councillor
Matt Dimond- Brown**



I am pleased to present the 2023-24 annual report of Tewkesbury Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This is the first report of the new committee and my first report as the new Chair. The May elections brought a wholesale change to the political administration of the council, and this is reflected by the number of new Members on the committee.

What is pleasing is Members have worked collaboratively on the issues brought before them regardless of which political groups they belong to. I would like to show my appreciation to my vice-chair, Councillor Craig Carter who has ably supported me during the year and to the committee as a whole for their positive contribution.

The learning from the past year on reports brought before the committee will act in good stead moving forward. As new Members, getting a sufficient grasp of all the functions and services that the council provide, and the supporting governance frameworks, is a challenge but we have stuck to our task diligently aided by our excellent Officers.

One of our main responsibilities has been to scrutinise the performance in delivering the current Council Plan (2020-2024) actions. On a quarterly basis, a wealth of performance information is presented to the committee which, if designed appropriately, provide a good overview of the council's key activities and the impact they make on our community.

Feedback is presented to Executive Committee of any key issues that have arisen. The relationships with the Executive Committee, Lead Members and Lead Officers will need more development. Moving forward a constructive and critical friend approach will only further help support the ambitions and outcomes the council wishes to deliver.

In addition to performance reporting, our work programme has been varied. We received a variety of excellent presentations, from key partners:

- The annual performance report from Ubico, the council's waste and recycling, grounds maintenance and street cleansing contractor.
- A report from Places Leisure on how the leisure facility has recovered post-pandemic.
- An annual report from Active Gloucestershire on their health and well-being work within the Borough
- A report from the Police on how the Aston Project is inspiring young lives

The committee has scrutinised the delivery of key council strategies such as the Housing and Homelessness Strategy, Communications strategy and the Workforce Development Strategy. The council's complaints performance has continued to be monitored as well as the continued oversight of the annual complaint's report.

Looking ahead, there is even more opportunity for the committee to add further value to supporting the council's overall performance. The new Council Plan (2024-2028) and the development of a suite of supporting strategies will require the involvement of this committee to help shape, evolve and monitor delivery of those strategies. This will truly put the committee at the heart of the council's decision-making process. I am really excited at the committee's emerging work plan for 2024/25.

Again, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the committee members and also relevant council officers for their support and work facilitating the scrutiny process. I am sure that the same dedication will be shown to scrutinise the work of the council and external partners during the year ahead.

**Best wishes,
Councillor Matt Dimond- Brown**

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The role of overview and scrutiny

The role of overview and scrutiny is an important one in the council's governance structure - it provides challenge and drives improvement and is often referred to as the "critical friend" of the council. The committee has the ability to hold a magnifying glass over any areas of concern and hold responsible officers and Lead Members to account.

Formal work programme

Tewkesbury Borough Council has a single overarching Overview and Scrutiny Committee that examines all areas of the council's business.

The committee has several roles and these include:

- Holding the Executive Committee to account by thoroughly scrutinising their decisions to ensure that the council continues to provide the best services possible for our residents. The committee has the power to 'call-in' decisions made by the Executive Committee and request they review that decision again.
- Supporting the Executive Committee by reviewing and/or shaping council policies and strategies prior to consideration by the Executive Committee.
- Supporting both the Executive Committee and full Council through the ongoing scrutiny of key strategies to ensure they are delivering relevant outcomes.
- Receiving feedback from external committees that may inform the Council's own work, for example, the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee, the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel and the Gloucestershire County Council Health Overview Scrutiny Committee.
- Monitoring the Council Plan and finances, to ensure the council services are sustainable, meeting milestones and delivered to the highest possible standard.
- Setting up task and finish groups to focus on specific reviews and recommend ways to improve existing practices within the council. A flow chart on how to consider potential scrutiny reviews can be found at Appendix A



Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2023-2024



Councillor Nigel Adcock



Councillor Cheryl Agg



Councillor Hilarie Bowman



Councillor Thomas Budge



Councillor Craig Carter
(Vice- chair)



Councillor Matt Dimond-Brown
(Chair)



Councillor Pauline Godwin



Councillor Gemma Madle



Councillor Heather McLain



Councillor Charlotte Mills



Councillor George Porter



Councillor Liz Skelt



Councillor Mark Williams



Councillor Philip Workman



Councillor Ian Yates

Overview and scrutiny activity during 2023-24

Presentations made to overview and scrutiny committee

Active Gloucestershire- 'We Can Move' 16 January 2024

In March 2021, Executive Committee approved funding of £10,000 per year, over a five-year period to support the Active Gloucestershire 'We Can Move' project. Executive Committee also approved an annual progress report on the project be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

In January 2024, the Chief Executive for Active Gloucestershire provided information to the committee on the ambitions of the 'we can move' project and the highlights from across the county in 2023 and the next steps for Tewkesbury Borough in 2024.

The movement was created to inspire, connect and enable individuals, communities, and organisations, across Gloucestershire to help the least active to move more. A number of examples of initiatives were discussed where the movement had made a significant contribution. This included taking a leading role in the Integrated Locality Partnership (ILP) working with NHS and Voluntary Community Sector Enterprises (VCSE) partners to support health prevention measures including physical activity across the county.

The meeting was informative and the committee were generally satisfied that the funding provided by the council is in proportion with the outcomes achieved. The committee has requested a better framework of benefit measurement, in particular the presentation of data, specific to the Borough rather than generic countywide data.

Gloucestershire Constabulary - Aston project

16 January 2024

The Aston project was created in 2011 as part of an anti-social behaviour initiative, based on prevention and early intervention. The project, ran by Gloucestershire Constabulary, work with young people aged between 9 to 17 years old by identifying their interests and engaging them in constructive activity through which they build credits towards a reward activity.

The committee invited Gloucestershire Constabulary to provide an update on what the project's relationship was between the Community Safety Partnership, council and members' role. As well as provide an update on the work they achieved to date.

The presentation covered background information to the Aston Project, process of referrals, partnership working on activities such as working with Gloucestershire Youth support team to deliver various activities in the local area and provide training, highlighted successes achieved and more.

Members were supportive of the project's ambition and outcomes around changing young person's lives. Members are very keen to explore how this project supports the wider community safety ambitions of the Council and the opportunity to rekindle the council's relationship through the Community Safety Partnership was welcomed.

Places for People Leisure

24 October 2023

Following a Places for People Leisure (PPL) presentation on the management of Tewkesbury Leisure Centre in October 2022, the committee invited PPL back to give an update on how the initiatives discussed on coping with the cost-of living and energy pressures had affected the centre.

Members were provided information on the financial position and the proposed changes to the business model of the centre to increase income and reduce costs. This included the introduction of a soft play facility, outreach programmes across the borough, introduction of new technology and more. Members noted from both officers of the council and PPL the excellent working relationship between both parties that has proved pivotal in the centre regaining its financial footing.

The committee welcomed the presentation from PPL and raised various questions on the changes made and queried the community engagement for the outreach programmes and how members could help get involved supporting this initiative. It was agreed an engagement plan of events would be circulated to all members, Parish and Town Councils as well as community groups to promote the work of the centre.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee working groups

The committee can establish working groups - also known as 'Task and Finish Groups'. The groups are established with an agreed terms of reference to undertake a piece of scrutiny work. This enables the group to get 'under the skin' of the subject matter and report back to the committee with their findings and recommendations. These are small groups comprising members of the committee, other invited members, council officers and where relevant, officers from external organisations who are invited because of their knowledge and skills relating to the topics being discussed.

A long standing working group is the Depot Services Working Group which is a legacy group to put a lens against all things Ubico related. The group summarises their scrutiny activity through an annual report to the main committee. The next report is due shortly and will include the oversight of key projects such as the new vehicle fleet procurement, the successful rollout of phase one in-cab technology and general finance and operational aspects in delivering the main Ubico contract.

A key working group that has just been stood up is the Flood Risk Management Working Group. This was necessary as the group will have a key role to play in considering the lessons learnt from the recent flooding events in January 2024. The flooding had a massive impact on the lives of our communities with over 120 households directly impacted by flood waters. The council's emergency plan was instigated twice in quick succession to respond to and recover from the recent winter floods. Recovery actions are still in progress such as the extension to the flood grant payments. A report to the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee is scheduled for July 2024.

Other areas of review

Performance management - quarterly reporting and monitoring

The committee has a key role in scrutinising the delivery of actions within the Council Plan. To achieve this, it receives detailed information through a performance tracker document including key performance indicator data and a variety of financial reports.

The tracker provides a range of qualitative and quantitative information so the committee can determine the progression of actions, review missed target dates, monitor financial performance and, where appropriate, refer for a response or action from the Executive Committee. The document aims to provide a good overview of what is going on across all aspects of the council's business and the impact the Council is having on the community it serves.

Given the breadth of the document, this generates a multitude of questions with further scrutiny where required, for example: how the committee can maximise its effectiveness in relation to service improvements such as the Development Management Continuous Improvement programme. Subsequently an all-member seminar was delivered in January 2024 providing an update on the progress of the programme. There has also been additional scrutiny of the cessation of the commercial waste project.

A key criticism, as raised verbally during the year, was that too much of the previous plan lacked clear targets and meaningful measures. The committee will be involved in the new council plan to ensure that actions are truly measurable and outcome focussed.

Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2022-26- action plan report

12 September 2023.

The Housing and Homelessness Strategy recognises how important it is for residents to access good quality housing and housing related services. Not only is housing important for the health and well-being of individuals and families, but it is an important part of building and maintaining strong communities and supporting the overall economic prosperity of the borough.

As part of their key role in monitoring the strategy, the committee were presented the progress made on the delivery of the strategy's action plan since it was approved in April 2022.

The committee discussed the impact of the cost of living and how this would have affected the strategy's actions. Nevertheless, they felt it wasn't possible to ascertain from the information provided what had been achieved and the difference it was making to communities. It was agreed that given the discussions and the fact that the landscape had changed significantly since the strategy had been written, that a recommendation be made to the Lead Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing to review the ambitions and delivery of the strategy, ensuring focussed outcomes were reported at the next update.

Ubico annual performance report 2022/23 11 July 2023

The committee plays a key role in monitoring Ubico's performance. Ubico has been delivering our high-profile waste, recycling, grounds maintenance and street cleaning services since April 2015. These services have a direct impact on our communities and so it is important to ensure it is delivered effectively and efficiently.

In July a detailed outturn report for 2022/23 was brought to the committee giving an update on performance of its finance and services, including health and safety throughout the year.

Following a range of questions from members on the information provided, one of the discussions that took place was around performance comparisons- year-by-year trends and comparing against other authorities. Ubico's Managing Director confirmed this would be incorporated into the next report, to help the committee identify if the services being delivered are effective and efficient.

The committee appreciated the range of information provided, with Members pleased to hear Tewkesbury Borough had a low number of missed bins in context to the total number of bins collected throughout the year. Members were also updated on the successful implementation of the first phase of in-cab technology, helping Ubico to increase efficiency in managing collection rounds, which ultimately will provide a better service for our residents. Phase two of this exciting project will look at rolling this technology out to the grounds maintenance service.

Workforce Development Strategy- annual review

11 July 2023

As a council we value our employees and will support, praise, and invest in our workforce to develop our organisation. The five-year strategy endorses this by identifying how we will meet the current and future needs of our staff to ensure it has skilled people to deliver high quality services.

The Workforce Development Strategy was approved at Executive Committee on 3 April 2019, and it was agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would monitor it on an annual basis.

At its meeting in July 2023 the committee received a progress report on the 2022/23 action plan. The report highlighted achievements around workforce resilience seeing an increased number of candidates per advertised role, developed new systems to capture equalities data, and continue our health and wellbeing commitment

The committee had discussions around the voluntary staff turnover which had seen an increase when compared to the previous year. The Senior HR and Organisational Development Adviser confirmed Covid-19 pandemic had an impact following reflection on peoples' personal circumstances but also measures had been addressed, this involved developing a recruitment management and retention strategy. The voluntary turnover rate is now regularly monitored through the quarterly performance report as a key performance indicator.

The committee congratulated the fantastic achievement on the formal accreditation from Gloucestershire Healthy Workplaces, which highlights the dedication to the health and wellbeing of our staff.

Have your say (4 C's) annual report

24 October 2023

Understanding and responding to customer feedback forms an essential element of the council's customer care and helps indicate how well the council is performing. On an annual basis the committee receive a complaints report detailing the level of complaints received by the council and the services areas they relate to. The complaints process forms part of our 'Have your say' approach which was introduced in May 2021. The 4 C's include- Compliments, Comments, Concerns and Complaints.

The report looks in detail at which service areas are receiving the feedback and more specifically for complaints, how they are managed, and any lessons learned.

For 2022/23, the committee was informed the council responded to 110 formal complaints relating to council services. With 34 found to be justified and 36 partially justified. 19 complaints were escalated to stage two (of those 3 were found to be justified) and one complaint was investigated by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. The committee noted the low level of complaints and when benchmarked against others, the council was performing well.

Communications Strategy annual report 5 December 2023

Communications has a vital role to play in helping the council deliver its vision, priorities and objectives to local people across the borough. To communicate effectively means to listen as well as broadcast and it only works when what we are saying is clear and easy to understand. Given that the council delivers a wide range of complex services to more than 90,000 residents, it needs a clear communications strategy to help face the challenges of communicating effectively.

As part of an annual review on the Communications Strategy action plan, the committee was informed about the range of work being carried out by the communications team and was pleased to see most of the action plan being achieved. The committee understood that the team delivers this action plan alongside its day-to-day work, as well as being instrumental in communicating council's response to flooding events etc.

Discussions took place around the council 'broadcasting' well but felt more could be done on 'listening' well and mentioned communication between the council and Town and Parish Councils had fallen short since the pandemic. The committee were informed a new Communications Strategy for 2024 will be developed which will align with the emerging new Council Plan and the council's ambition to become a high performing organisation and improve engagement. The committee requested that a Communications Strategy workshop be held in order to be more informed on the proposals of the new strategy.

Police and Crime Panel Update, Gloucestershire Health Overview Scrutiny Committee and Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee

The committee would like to extend a big thank you to councillors George Porter, Gemma Madle and Matt Dimond-Brown who represent the council on these outside bodies.

The committee receives regular updates around crime, health and economic matters and the impact these issues have on Gloucestershire and the borough. Being representatives of the council, our members can influence and act as an advocate for the council at a county-wide level.

Our representatives have done a fantastic job over the past 12 months. They have taken a wide range of questions from Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, where necessary, reported back to the respective county groups any comments or areas of concern.

Looking forward

Overview and Scrutiny committee's work programme for the year ahead is now being reviewed in line with the new council plan and, as always, the programme will be flexible so any new areas for review can be added when required.

The committee will be at the forefront of ensuring our key strategies, policies and services are delivered effectively. This will include the finalisation of the council's Economic and Development and Tourism Strategy and the continued monitoring of other key strategies. Alongside this, the committee will receive the first performance report of the new Council Plan (2024- 2028), which will include a new vision, values, priorities and focus areas.

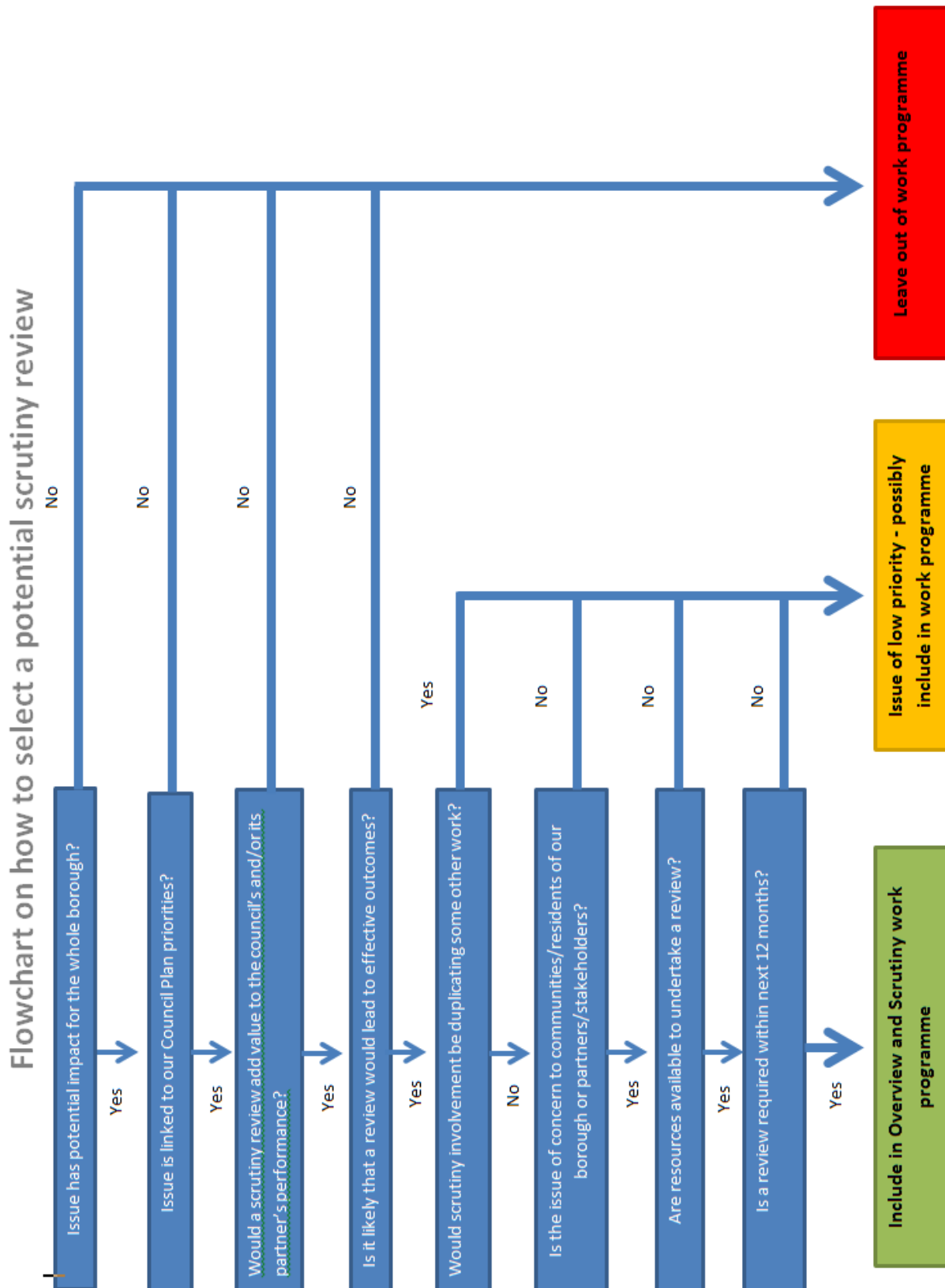
As a committee we are keen to promote both internally and externally, the reinforcement of transparency and accountability within the democratic process and implement new changes to become a real critical friend to the Executive Committee, Lead Members and Lead Officers. We are really keen to play a pivotal part in the strategy framework that will support delivery of the new Council Plan.

Positive discussion has also taken place with the Executive Director: Resources and S151 Officer on how the committee can become involved more effectively in the scrutiny of the council's financial management framework. This will be essential given the financial challenges currently facing Local Government generally.

Overall, looking forward this is an exciting year for scrutiny as we make the committee the best it can be and support the delivery of fantastic outcomes for our communities.



How to select a potential scrutiny review



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