

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

annual report

2024-25



March 2025

Message from the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Matt Dimond- Brown



I am pleased to present the 2024-25 annual report of Tewkesbury Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, reflecting on the achievements and activities of our committee over the past year.

I have chaired the committee for two years, supported by Councillor Craig Carter as vice-chair, and a very able and committed group of councillors.

One of our main responsibilities has been to scrutinise the performance in delivering the council's new Council Plan (2024-2030). On a quarterly basis, a wealth of performance information is presented to the committee which provides a good overview of the council's key priorities and their positive impact on our community. The committee has been assiduous in ensuring the council improves its performance information; over the past two years there has been a noticeable difference in the quality of information coming forward.

I personally attend Executive Committee to report on any key issues that have arisen and engage with Lead Members in informal settings, to ensure the committee's voice is heard. The relationships with the Executive Committee, Lead Members and Lead Officers will continue to develop as we move into the new financial year. The committee has a genuine opportunity to adopt a supportive and critical friend approach to help deliver the council's ambitions and outcomes. This will become increasingly important given the national landscape of local government reorganisation and ongoing financial challenges. We must ensure the council strikes the best balance between delivering its statutory services to the required standard, implementing important aspects of its plan, and investing adequately to ensure that Tewkesbury benefits maximally from whichever unitary arrangements are decided upon.

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

- The annual performance report from Ubico, the council's waste and recycling, grounds maintenance and street cleansing contractor.
- Scrutiny of the delivery of key council strategies such as the Housing and Homelessness Strategy, Communications Strategy etc
- A report on the lessons learnt from the winter flooding response and recovery.
- A review of new and refreshed strategies and policies including: the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, Household Waste and Recycling Collection Service policy, and the Community Safety Partnership Strategy.

I am also passionate about making the committee the best it can be and one that adds genuine value to supporting the ambitions of the council. Recently, I reached out to evaluate the committee's effectiveness by sending a survey to both myself and my fellow councillors and senior officers. This survey aimed to gather their perspectives on how the committee could better support them in their roles and the service they provide. The feedback indicated that the committee is generally effective but needs to enhance meaningful engagement with Portfolio Lead Members and the Executive Committee. Additionally, we should invest in thorough examinations of specific aspects of the council's work that consistently cause us concern

Looking back over the year, it is important to note that some committee meetings were cancelled this year due to unforeseen circumstances such as the UK parliamentary elections that took place in July and the cyber incident which the council experienced in September. These events heavily impacted staff resources resulting in a detrimental impact to the democratic calendar.

Nearing the end of the year, we were excited to support the council's initiative to webcast our committee meetings live. Meeting our Council Plan values of 'open and honest' and 'inclusive', ensuring that our discussions are transparent and accessible to all.

Looking ahead, there is still lots to do. The announcement from central government on the English Devolution White Paper brings a real opportunity for the committee to add further value to support the council's transition to a unitary council. With a refreshed Council Plan (2025-2028) and the development of supporting strategies, this will require the involvement of this committee to help shape, evolve and monitor the delivery of those strategies. This will truly put the committee at the heart of the council's decision-making process. I am really excited about the committee's emerging work plan for 2025/26.

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 a positive challenge to both officers and councillors and drives improvement and offers assurance. It is often referred to as the "critical friend" of the council. The committee should not be afraid to hold a magnifying glass over any areas of concern.

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 can have several roles and these include:

- Holding the Executive Committee to account by scrutinising their decisions. Through strict criteria as set out in the council's constitution, Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the power to 'call-in' decisions made by the Executive Committee and request they review that decision again. For the purposes of this council, the necessity for this is very rare as the Executive Committee is politically balanced.
- Supporting the Executive Committee and individual Lead Members by reviewing and shaping policies and strategies prior to consideration by the Executive Committee.
- 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, to ensure the council services are sustainable, meeting milestones and delivered to the highest possible standard.
- Commissioning reviews of services or processes that impact on the council or on our residents.
- Setting up task and finish groups to focus on specific reviews and recommend ways to improve existing practices within

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2024 - 2025



Councillor Nigel Adcock



Councillor Cheryl Agg



Councillor Hilarie Bowman



Councillor Craig Carter
(Vice-Chair)



Councillor Christopher
Coleman



Councillor Matt Dimond-Brown
(Chair of the committee)



Councillor Pauline Godwin



Councillor Heather McLain



Councillor Charlotte Mills



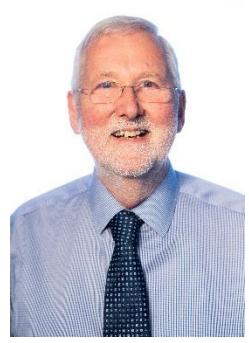
Councillor George Porter



Councillor Liz Skelt



Councillor Mark Williams



Councillor Philip Workman



Councillor Ian Yates

Overview and Scrutiny Activity during 2024-25

Scrutiny reviews of policy and strategy

Household waste and recycling collection service policy and procedures.

23 July 2024

Over 4 million bin collections are carried out in our borough each year, a service that impacts all households within Tewkesbury Borough. It is important to have clear and concise policy and guidance setting out the expectations for domestic collections for our residents. The previous Waste and Recycling Collections Policy was approved in 2022.

A review of the policy was carried out to meet the aims of the Gloucestershire Resources and Waste Partnership Interim Strategy. The main change proposed is the reduction in the size of the household refuse bin from 180 litre to 140 litre bins. This is targeted at new developments within the borough.

It was noted at the meeting that one of the services for Waste Electrical and Electronical Equipment (WEEE) was missing from the policy. A scheme that allows kerbside collections for householders to recycle small electrical equipment. Members requested this be added to the policy to ensure it captures all service collections available.

The policy was endorsed by the committee and subsequently approved by Executive Committee on 4 September 2024.

Review of Economic Development and Tourism Strategy

22 October 2024

'Economy' and 'Managing Growth' are two key focus areas within the new Council Plan and the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy is an essential document to provide focus on supporting businesses across the borough.

A local economic assessment was carried out by consultants, Shared Intelligence, to help inform the revised strategy and the future direction of the strategy. This included; assessment of key growth sectors, local economic and sector assessment, analysis of key statistical data, surveys etc. In addition, the revised strategy was aligned with the approved Gloucestershire County Council Economic Strategy (2024-2034). A workshop was held for members in September 2024, to be presented with the assessment and revised strategy.

The strategy was accompanied by an action plan demonstrating the council's ambition to meet the aims of the three priorities of the strategy - enabling business voice and key sector growth, people and skills and creating a sustainable growth environment. There was challenge to aspects of the strategy. Succinctly this was around resourcing, ambition, affordability and achievability. Following discussion, the committee did recommend it for approval by Executive Committee who approved it on 27 November 2024.

It is proposed the action plan will be monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a biannual basis to ensure the objectives are embedded in the work carried out to support our economy within the borough.

Communications Strategy

22 October 2024

To communicate effectively means listening as well as broadcasting. It only works when what we are saying is clear and easy to understand. Given we are a council delivering a wide range of complex services to more than 90,000 residents, there are inherent challenges in communicating information in a clear and accessible manner.

The Communications Strategy outlines our commitment to transparent, accessible, and proactive communication across all levels of the organisation while always aiming for cost-effectiveness.

The Committee played a pivotal role in helping shape the new Communications Strategy to replace the existing strategy. A workshop to gather early thoughts was held on 17 July 2024. This generated lots of questions and input from members of the committee who were focusing on measuring the impact of the approach of the new strategy. This saw an increased focus on youth engagement added and the action plan that accompanied the strategy was amended to include more measurable targets that better reflected the Communications team's desired outcomes. The 'engagement' section was new and welcomed by the committee as was the action around social media training for members.

The Communications Strategy was approved by the Executive Committee on 27 November 2024.

Community Safety Strategy

11 February 2025

Community Safety is important in helping everyone feel safe and secure. A safe community helps prevent crime and reduces fear, allowing communities to enjoy their surroundings and benefit from a better quality of life and builds a stronger community.

Our Tewkesbury Borough Community Safety Partnership (CSP) brings together statutory agencies and organisations concerned with tackling and reducing crime and anti-social behaviour within Tewkesbury Borough. The Community Safety Strategy aims to ensure a robust action plan is followed by all the partners and sets out key priorities to reduce crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour across the borough.

The CSP officers held a workshop in January 2025, providing members with information on the work the CSP carries out and this was enthusiastically received. Following this session, the strategy was presented to the committee. Members scrutinised the actions within the action plan and requested the measures in place be refined to include target dates, outcomes and a set of metrics to enable effective scrutiny. This should also be supported with a formal risk analysis so all members are aware of the underlying risks that may impact delivery of the strategy. This request will be subject to a further report for consideration by the committee.

The committee unanimously endorsed the strategy to go to the Executive Committee with the caveat of the future report as requested.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee working groups

Depot Services Working Group

This is a long-standing working group which reports on an annual basis to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In essence the group was set up to consider 'all things' Ubico, the council's local authority owned company who deliver waste and recycling, grounds maintenance and street cleansing services. For 2024/25, the group has only met once as Ubico service delivery is very much seen as business as usual. A report on the activity of the group and the future need for it will be considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1 April 2025.

Other areas of review

Performance management Quarterly reports

The committee has an important 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. The tracker is also usually presented with quarterly financial budget information.

The tracker provides a range of qualitative and quantitative information, so the committee can clearly see 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 provides an excellent 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.

To co-incide with the new council plan (2024-2030), the committee helped shape the layout of the new performance tracker, key performance indicators as well as corporate health indicators (those that are not a Council Plan indicator), emphasising the importance of reporting the outcomes being delivered for the Council Plan actions being monitored.

Given the extensiveness of the document, this generates a multitude of questions where further scrutiny may be required. This is starting to inform potential scrutiny items for 2025/26 including the Integrated Locality Partnership (supports the health and wellbeing focus area within the council plan), Development Management improvement programme close out report (committee have noted the upturn in the service's KPIs) and review of the exciting and emerging refreshed Digital Strategy. The committee's scrutiny of council performance has also led to further monitoring of actions raised at the committees and these are reported back to the committee on a quarterly basis to ensure they have been actioned.

Housing and Homelessness Strategy (2022-26) - action plan report

3 December 2024

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 receive six monthly updates on the progress made on the delivery of the strategy's action plan since it was approved in April 2022. The merits of the report were acknowledged by the committee including the ambition to deliver more social rent units,

use of commuted sums to deliver affordable housing and the team's efforts to tackle rough sleepers and homelessness. Moving forward, the committee are keen for the report to illustrate more clearly what outcomes are being achieved. The verbal update was positive but overall the success stories may not be as evident as they could be. With the 2022-2026 strategy coming to an end, the committee has the potential to support officers when shaping the new strategy and ensuring the outcomes are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely to reach the objectives set out in the strategy.

Ubico annual performance report 2023/24

23 July 2024

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 they are delivered effectively and efficiently.

In July, a detailed outturn report for 2023/24 was brought to the committee giving an update on the performance of its finance and services, including health and safety, throughout the year. The committee appreciated the range of information provided, and thanked Ubico for including the performance comparison-year-by-year and against other local authorities as requested by the committee last year.

Winter flooding response and recovery- lessons learnt.

3 December 2024

Tewkesbury Borough has a long history of flooding events due to its geographical location at the confluence of the Rivers Severn and Avon. At the beginning of the year 2024, the borough experienced high levels of flooding and our emergency response plan was initiated. In our new Council Plan, 'Flooding' is a key focus area. We want to continue to improve our emergency preparedness and response, so we can respond to flood events

quickly and efficiently, as well as supporting our communities to recover.

The report presented to the committee set out how the council and partners responded and identified a number of lessons learnt and improvements that can be introduced. The committee welcomed the report and raised various questions around the creation of a Sandbag Policy, the responsibility of providing pumps, the creation of local resilience plans for areas repeatedly affected by flooding and the accuracy of the data supplied by the Environment Agency on river levels.

Members were pleased to hear about the positive work being carried out with the council collecting data and mapping for flooding, using our Geographic Information Systems (GIS). This will help the council to be less reliant on Environment Agency information and would be key to involving our flood wardens.

Following review by the committee, the report was considered by Executive Committee on 8 January 2025. They have asked for further information to be included such as a RAG status of actions, clarification of partner responsibilities, overall costings and member engagement. The review by both committees, demonstrates the council's commitment to this area of focus.

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, Ian Yates and Nigel Adcock 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

The Overview and Scrutiny committee's work programme for the year ahead is now being reviewed. 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 review of new strategies such as the emerging Digital Strategy and Procurement Strategy and the continued monitoring of current strategies in the work programme. The committee will also receive the first performance report of the new Council Plan (2025-2028).

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 strategic framework that will support delivery of the new Council Plan, implementing ideas following the effectiveness of the committee survey and embracing the journey of the Local Government Reorganisation.

To ensure the committee maximises its value, we look forward to working with officers and implementing task and finish working groups, as well as focussed presentations from outside bodies. This will ensure the committee continues to play an important role in helping deliver successful outcomes for both the council and its communities.

Overall, looking forward to this being an exciting year for scrutiny as we make the committee the best it can be.