

additional papers 1

Council

Monday 3rd September
2012
7.00 pm

Council Chamber
Town Hall
Redditch



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- Unless otherwise stated, all items of business before the Executive Committee are Key Decisions.
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Committee Support Services

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Welcome to today's meeting.

Guidance for the Public

Agenda Papers

The **Agenda List** at the front of the Agenda summarises the issues to be discussed and is followed by the Officers' full supporting **Reports**.

Chair

The Chair is responsible for the proper conduct of the meeting. Generally to one side of the Chair is the Committee Support Officer who gives advice on the proper conduct of the meeting and ensures that the debate and the decisions are properly recorded. On the Chair's other side are the relevant Council Officers. The Councillors ("Members") of the Committee occupy the remaining seats around the table.

Running Order

Items will normally be taken in the order printed but, in particular circumstances, the Chair may agree to vary the order.

Refreshments : tea, coffee and water are normally available at meetings - please serve yourself.

Decisions

Decisions at the meeting will be taken by the **Councillors** who are the democratically elected representatives. They are advised by **Officers** who are paid professionals and do not have a vote.

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Do Not stop to collect personal belongings.

Do Not use lifts.

Do Not re-enter the building until told to do so.

The emergency Assembly Area is on Walter Stranz Square.

8. Executive Committee	<p>To receive the minutes and consider the recommendations and/or referrals from the following meetings of the Executive Committee:</p> <p><u>21st August 2012</u></p> <p>Matters requiring the Council's consideration include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shared Services Board – approval of business case for a shared Revenues Service;• Post Room – Transformation and Service Redesign Review (Report attached). <p>(Minutes of the meeting on 21st August attached)</p>
10. Pooling of Business Rates	<p>To consider the report of the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) setting out options for pooling Business Rates.</p> <p>The report sets out the background to this item and further details will be sent to the Council as soon as they are available.</p>



Executive Committee

Tuesday, 21 August 2012

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), Councillor Greg Chance (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Rebecca Blake, Michael Braley, Carole Gandy, Mark Shurmer and Debbie Taylor

Also Present:

Councillors Andrew Fry and Alan Mason

Officers:

C Flanagan, S Hanley, S Jones, T Kristunas, J Pickering, J Staniland, A de Warr and M Wright

Democratic Services Officer:

J Bayley

44. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors Mould and Stephens.

45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

During consideration of Item 17, Unit 7, Woodrow Centre – Concessionary Rent, Councillor Rebecca Blake declared an other disclosable interest, as detailed in minute 60 below, and left the room.

46. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised that the following items of business, scheduled on the Forward Plan to be dealt with at this meeting, had been rescheduled to a later meeting of the Committee:

- Budget Preparation Guidelines; and
- Quarterly Sickness Monitoring – Quarter 1 – April to June 2012.

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Chair

He also advised that he had received the following items as Urgent Business:

- Access for Disabled People Task Group;

(Not meeting the publication deadline)

- Item 6 – Community Right to Challenge;
- Item 17 – Unit 7, Woodrow Centre – Concessionary Rent; and
- Item 18 – Shared Services Board – Post Room – Transformation and Service Redesign Review.

47. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 24th July 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

48. ACCESS FOR DISABLED PEOPLE TASK GROUP

Councillors Andrew Fry and Alan Mason, joint Chairs of the Access for Disabled People Task Group, presented the final report prepared on behalf of the Group to the Executive Committee.

The Committee was advised that the review had been launched by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee because Members believed it was important to ensure that people with all types of disabilities could access Redditch town centre. The review had focused specifically on access arrangements for people travelling by bus or taxi and had also considered provision of disabled parking spaces in the town centre.

The review had been completed in two stages. The majority of evidence had been gathered during the first stage of the review, which was completed in April 2012. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had agreed that further work was required and this had formed the basis of the second stage of the review from May – August 2012.

Members were advised that Councillor Fry had replaced Councillor Mason as the Chair of the review in May 2012. This change had occurred because there was a constitutional requirement for the Chairs of Task Groups to also be members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. However, Members expressed concerns that changes to the chairing arrangements for a Task Group in the middle of a review had implications for the consistency of the exercise. For this reason Members commented that this

requirement should be considered in further detail by the Constitutional Review Working Party.

The map displaying the location of disabled parking spaces in the town centre, which had been produced at the request of the Task Group, was discussed by the Committee. Members suggested that the map would need to be produced in a simplified format in order to be a useful tool for residents and visitors. Furthermore, The Committee agreed that a small number of paper copies of the map should be made available to the public on demand.

The Committee noted that one of the group's proposals was for a disability awareness training session to be delivered to Members. The subject was considered to be particularly useful for new Members and it was suggested that this session could be incorporated into the Member induction process.

Arrangements in place to enable Members to report dropped kerbs were also considered. The Committee acknowledged that many experienced Members would be familiar with the process. However, newly elected Members would appreciate further information about the process for requesting dropped kerbs to Worcestershire County Council.

RESOLVED that

- 1) a user friendly version of the map (detailed in Appendix E of the main report) demonstrating the location of disabled parking spaces and Shopmobility in Redditch town centre should be produced and promoted on the Council's website, on the Redditch Matters e-magazine and on the Palace Theatre's website and should be promoted to local businesses to use;**
 - a) the contents of this map should be reviewed every twelve months to ensure that the information remains accurate;**
- 2) Redditch Borough Council should work with the Redditch Town Centre Partnership, Worcestershire County Council's Highways Department and the Kingfisher Shopping Centre to introduce collection and delivery points in the town centre that could be used by vehicles transporting people with disabilities;**
- 3) a disability awareness session should be delivered as part of the Member Development Programme at Redditch Borough Council;**

- 4) **ward Members should be made aware that they can use their knowledge of the local community to assess the condition of the pavements and dropped kerbs located in their wards and report their findings for the consideration of Worcestershire County Council's Highways Department and Redditch Borough Council's Environmental Services;**
- 5) **the Council's Planning Department should consider arranging for funding from Section 106 agreements to be allocated to the installation of tactile signage in the town centre for the use of people with sensory impairments;**
- 6) **Officers undertake further work into the following areas that should be reported for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and subsequently by the Executive Committee at a later date:**
 - a) **a review of the potential to install a canopy over the ramp access to Shopmobility; and**
 - b) **a joint review in partnership with Apollo 2000 of the potential for the Council to undertake landscaping work in the company's car park in return for using the car park as a collection and delivery point for Dial a Ride vehicles;**
 - c) **a joint review with the Kingfisher Shopping Centre, concerning the potential activation of the RNIB React system in the centre;**
 - d) **a review of the implications of introducing disabled parking spaces and a Dial a Ride collection and delivery point in the former covered market area, as detailed in Appendix E;**
- 7) **to note the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's decision in relation to the group's following eleventh recommendation, which was determined on 14th August 2012:**

the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should receive the following update reports in six months time:

- a) **an update concerning the support provided by Officers to the Redditch Disabled Access Group in relation to disability issues;**
- b) **a report monitoring the implementation of the group's recommendations;**

RECOMMENDED to the Licensing Committee that

- 8) **taxi companies should be offered licences to operate adapted vehicles for a longer period of time than standard vehicles to incentivise taxi firms to increase the number of adapted vehicles in their fleets. The vehicles should be permitted to operate for these lengthier periods of time subject to passing the three inspection tests and the MOT that the Council's licensing regime requires for each vehicle;**
- 9) **taxi drivers should be offered disability awareness training, which would include information about manually assisting people with disabilities, by Redditch Borough Council;**

RECOMMEND that

- 10) **Worcestershire County Council's Transport Department should work with local bus operators to apply for any future Better Buses Area Funding from the Department for Transport to finance the installation of audio-visual equipment on buses operating in Redditch Borough; and**
- 11) **Redditch Town Centre Partnership work with the Kingfisher Shopping Centre to introduce additional seating in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre, involving an investigation of the ergonomics of the seating provided.**

49. COMMUNITY RIGHT TO CHALLENGE

The Committee received a report which detailed local arrangements for the new Community Right to Challenge, which had been introduced in the Localism Act 2011.

The Community Right to Challenge enables relevant bodies (defined by the Act) to submit expressions of interest to deliver services on behalf of the Council, and applies to all public services except services that were protected by secondary legislation. In this context, all of the services delivered by Redditch Borough Council were open to challenge.

The provisions relating to the Community Right to Challenge had come into force on 27th June 2012. All of the Councils in Worcestershire were attempting to adopt a consistent approach to managing expressions of interest by complying with the statutory guidance and Regulations.

It was proposed that the local arrangements for managing expressions of interests would be:

- The Council would accept expressions of interest at any time;
- Expressions of interest should be sent to the Council's Monitoring Officer (or Section 151 Officer);
- That information required to be included in an expression of interest would be as set out in Paragraph 4.2 of the Statutory Guidance. Following receipt of an expression of interest the Council may ask that the relevant body demonstrated that it met the definition of a relevant body;
- The Council would notify the relevant body of its decision within 12 weeks of receiving the expression of interest;
- The period between an expression of interest being accepted (and notified to the relevant body in writing) and any procurement exercise starting would be no less than 3 months and no longer than 6 months.

Given the Community Right to Challenge had been expected to be in force from 27th June, these arrangements had been published on the Council's website explaining that they were subject to endorsement by the Committee at this meeting.

RESOLVED that

the local arrangements for managing the Community Right to Challenge, as set out in the report, be approved.

50. QUARTERLY BUDGET MONITORING - QUARTER 1 - APRIL TO JUNE 2012

The Committee received a monitoring report detailing the Council's financial position at the end of the first quarter of 2012/13.

Officers reported that the Council was on course to achieve the savings included within the budget agreed in February 2012. The majority of savings had been achieved due to staff vacancies and savings in contracts.

A table containing a summary of Capital Budget expenditure for the Council in the first quarter had been provided for Members' consideration. The figures provided in this table appeared to suggest that there had been limited expenditure during the first quarter of the year. However, Officers reported that whilst many of the capital works that had been planned for the first quarter of the year had been delivered the Council had not yet received requests for payment for all of these works.

The appropriate content of the quarterly financial monitoring reports was discussed by the Committee. Members suggested that additional comments needed to be provided in future editions of the report to enable Members to assess the figures provided in context.

RESOLVED that

the current financial position on Revenue and Capital be noted, as detailed in the report.

51. QUARTERLY CUSTOMER SERVICE MONITORING - QUARTER 1 - APRIL TO JUNE 2012

A report was received which set out the key information in respect of customer service for the first quarter of 2012/13.

Officers reported that 81 compliments had been received during the first quarter of the year. This represented a significant increase in the number of compliments that had been reported when compared to the same time the previous year.

The Council had also received 56 complaints during the period, including one complaint referred to the Council by the Local Government Ombudsman. 17 complaints had taken longer than 15 working days to resolve. The majority of complaints that had required an extended period of time to resolve had been complex cases.

In the first quarter of the year 71 per cent of complaints had been upheld or partially upheld. The remaining complaints had not been upheld, though Officers recognised that the issues had been an area of concern to the individuals who had proposed the complaints.

The Customer Service team was in the process of delivering training that was designed to improve customer service skills for staff working in different teams. Bespoke training had been developed for particular teams to enable staff to address any issues that might lead to a complaint within their service area. Staff briefings had also been held to provide employees across the organisation with an opportunity to learn about appropriate forms of behaviour when working with customers.

The Committee was advised that in the long-term details about customer feedback data would be incorporated into the Council's new Performance Management Reports.

RESOLVED that

the update for the period 1st April 2012 – 30th June 2012 be noted.

52. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17th July 2012.

Members noted that there were no outstanding recommendations to consider.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17th July 2012 be received and noted.

53. SHARED SERVICE BOARD

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting of the Shared Services Board held on 12th July 2012.

RECOMMENDED that

the business case for a shared Revenues Service be approved for implementation.

54. WORCESTERSHIRE SHARED SERVICE JOINT COMMITTEE - MINUTES

The Committee received the minutes of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee held on Wednesday 11th July 2012.

RESOLVED that

the minutes be noted.

55. MINUTES / REFERRALS - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, EXECUTIVE PANELS ETC.

There were no minutes to consider under this item.

56. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

The most recent report on the activity of the Council's Advisory Panels and similar bodies was received by the Committee.

57. ACTION MONITORING

The latest Action Monitoring Report for the Committee was received and noted.

58. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED that

under S.100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following matters on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act, as amended.

Item 16 – Quarterly Monitoring – Write off of Debts – Quarter 1 – April to June 2012

Item 17 – Unit 7, Woodrow Centre – Concessionary Rent

Item 18 – Shared Services Board – Post Room – Transformation and Service Redesign Review

59. QUARTERLY MONITORING - WRITE OFF OF DEBTS - QUARTER 1 - APRIL TO JUNE 2012

Members considered a report which detailed the action taken by Officers with respect to the write-off of debts during the first quarter of 2012/13 and the profile and level of the outstanding debt. The Committee was advised that the Council's current level of bad debt provisions were adequate in relation to the level of write offs as well as the level of outstanding debt.

Figures had been provided for the level of Council Tax Rent Arrears that had accrued since 1996/97. Concerns were expressed that these arrears appeared to be increasing at a level of 2.5 per cent per year. However, Members were assured that money continued to be collected and the debts were decreasing over time.

A summary had also been provided of the total business rate arrears due to the Council by June 2012. This table contained a comparison of the arrears due between 2000/01 and 2012/13, which clearly demonstrated that there was no standard pattern in the total due to the Council. Officers explained that the figures for business rent arrears varied significantly because business rates varied according to the size of the property.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the debts detailed in the confidential appendices be written off; and**
- 2) **the contents of the report be noted.**

[During consideration of this item Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed relating to any individual, information would be revealed which was likely to reveal the identity of any individual and information would be revealed relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information).]

60. UNIT 7, WOODROW CENTRE - CONCESSIONARY RENT

Members received a report concerning concessionary rent arrangements for Unit 7, in the Woodrow Centre. It was agreed to defer consideration of this item to the next meeting of the Committee so that further detailed information could be obtained.

During consideration of the item Councillor Rebecca Blake declared an other disclosable interest, as detailed in the confidential minute below, and left the room and did not take part in the decision.

[During consideration of this item Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed relating the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information).]

61. SHARED SERVICES BOARD - POST ROOM - TRANSFORMATION AND SERVICE REDESIGN REVIEW

The Committee received a report which detailed the outcomes of the Post Room Transformation Service Redesign Review.

Members noted that usually reports relating to shared services and transformation would be referred to the Executive committee following consideration by the Shared Services Board. However, this report had been accepted to ensure that the matter could be addressed in appropriate timescales.

The proposed revised structure of the service would deliver combined savings of £31,000. The level of savings for Redditch Borough Council would be £18,000.

RECOMMENDED that

the Post Room Transformation Service Redesign Review, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved, subject to the consideration and recommendation of the Shared Service Board.

[During consideration of this item Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed relating the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information) and information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connections with any labour relations matters arising between the authority and employees of the authority.]

The Meeting commenced at 7.04 pm
and closed at 9.03 pm

By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 2, 3, 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

COUNCIL

3rd September 2012

LOCAL RETENTION OF BUSINESS RATES GROWTH

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Phil Mould
Portfolio Holder Consulted	
Relevant Head of Service	Teresa Kristunas, Head of Finance & Resources
Wards Affected	All

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The report advises members of the proposals for the local retention of Business Rates growth from April 2013 and the options for pooling or remaining independent.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Council is asked to RESOLVE to participate in either,

- 1) the Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP pool, or**
- 2) the Worcestershire Business Rates Pool from the 1st April 2013.**

Or alternatively, remain independent of either pool for the purpose of the local retention of Business Rates from 1st April 2013.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1. From April 2013 the Government is proposing that local authorities will be able to retain a far larger proportion of the revenue raised locally and be able to retain a share of growth in business rates. Local authorities are being offered the opportunity to group together voluntarily to “pool” their business rates, giving them the scope to smooth the impact of volatility in rating income and generate growth through collaboration. It is also felt that groupings based around Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) could reinforce the LEP-wide economic strategy.
- 3.2. Under the proposals for the local retention of growth in business rates, the Government has assessed that some local authorities need more resources than their locally raised business rates whilst others need less. Local authorities that are assessed to need less will be charged a tariff to reduce their overall income. The sum of these tariffs will be distributed to those individual authorities assessed as needing additional funding in the form of a ‘top up’.
- 3.3. The Government intends to place a levy on authorities to ensure that a 1% growth in business rates does not result in more than a 1% increase in spending power. For Redditch, this might result in 85% of any

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business rates growth being lost from the local area through the levy mechanism. By pooling with other councils the amount of levy paid could be reduced or eliminated meaning more of our growth is retained locally.

- 3.4 As an example of the impact of the levy saving, recent estimates indicate that £100,000 business rates growth in each of the 6 districts in Worcestershire (£600,000 in total) would result in only £112,000 of this being retained within Worcestershire. The central Government share under this scenario would be £300,000 or 50% and a further £188,000 would be lost under current levy proposals. For Redditch, only 6% or £6,000 of each £100,000 growth in business rates would come to the Borough Council. Therefore a mechanism whereby the levy payment can be avoided would be beneficial.
- 3.5. The starting position for each District Council will be different. This will be dependent on the current income from Business rates compared to the five year average and therefore the above example remains indicative due to the methodology that will be used to assess each organisational Business Rate Baseline.
- 3.6 The Government propose to put in place a mechanism to support authorities when a significant reduction in business rates revenue arises. A safety net payment is made to support Councils who have lost a significant amount of Business Rates. However, as pooling effectively treats all councils within the pool as one authority for business rates purposes, then the ability of any one council to qualify for safety net payments is reduced if that council is a member of a pool. An assessment has been made on the impact of this and your officers opinion that these risks are more than offset by the benefits of being in a pool.
- 3.7 Any group of local authorities can enter into a pooling arrangement as long as they meet the criteria laid down by the Government. The criteria are as follows:
- any entry into a pool must be voluntary;
 - assurance around governance and workability must be provided and these must have been signed off by all relevant Chief Executives and Section 151 Officer;
 - if the pool dissolves then each local authority reverts to their individual tariff and top up positions; and
 - lower tier authorities do not have to join in the same pool as their associated upper tier authority.
- 3.8 No additional incentives will be provided to pools of authorities (other than those self-generated by the pool) so that those who choose not to pool are not disadvantaged.

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- 3.9 The methodology by which funding is distributed across a pool will be agreed via the governance arrangements. There are a range of potential methods by which resources could be distributed across a pool. These could range from “full pooling” with a local resource distribution system that helps to drive economic growth and appropriately funds local services to a smaller scale approach that pools less resources.
- 3.10 The approach adopted to distribute resources could be reviewed by agreement periodically to ensure it fits within the pool priorities.
- 3.11 All authorities were required to express an interest in participating in a Business Rates Pool by the 27th July 2012. In the absence of a financial appraisal to reflect the comparison between the Birmingham Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) pool and the Worcestershire pool Redditch Borough Council has expressed an interest in both. However, the Council have now been advised that a final decision needs to be made by the 10th September 2012. The initial date for decisions was the 19th October. The revised timetable has significantly reduced the time available for technical analysis and the preparation of advice and guidance for members.
- 3.12 Officers are in the process of preparing options appraisals for members based on the proposals for the GBSLEP pool and the Worcestershire Business Rates pool. The option appraisal for each LEP will be presented to Members at this meeting.

Financial Implications

- 3.14 The advantage of pooling is to share risk of business rates volatility with other councils in the pool, provide economic advantages of working together and to reduce the levy payable on business rates growth.

Legal Implications

- 3.15 The reforms regarding Business Rate retention are set out in the Local Government Finance Bill. In a pooling situation the Government requires authorities to nominate one member to act as lead authority which would be the channel for payments from, or to, the pool under the rates retention scheme. The lead authority would be responsible for supplying any information on behalf of the pool in connection with the operation of the business rates retention scheme. Each member of the pool would be jointly and severally liable for any payments required to the DCLG.

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Service / Operational Implications

- 3.16 No significant changes identified. Most of the administrative burden will fall on the accountable authority for the chosen pool.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.17 No direct implications.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

In deciding whether or not to join a “pool” the Council will have to balance the smoothing of any volatility that a pool could offer against the potential rewards or otherwise that could be experienced from remaining independent. There is a greater risk to the authority of remaining outside a pooling arrangement due the levy.

5. APPENDICES

None.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Various consultation documents issued by the DCLG available from the DCLG website.

AUTHORS OF REPORT

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