

# additional papers 1



## Executive Committee

Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> February  
2014  
7.00 pm

Committee Room 2  
Town Hall  
Redditch



[www.redditchbc.gov.uk](http://www.redditchbc.gov.uk)

# Access to Information - Your Rights

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The Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 widened the rights of press and public to attend Local Authority meetings and to see certain documents. Recently the Freedom of Information Act 2000, has further broadened these rights, and limited exemptions under the 1985 Act.

Your main rights are set out below:-

- Automatic right to attend all Council and Committee meetings unless the business would disclose confidential or “exempt” information.
- Automatic right to inspect agenda and public reports at least five days before the date of the meeting.
- Automatic right to inspect minutes of the Council and its Committees (or summaries of business undertaken in private) for up to six years following a meeting.
- Automatic right to inspect lists of background papers used in the preparation of public reports.
- Access, upon request, to the background papers on which reports are based for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting.
- Access to a public register stating the names and addresses and electoral areas of all Councillors with details of the membership of all Committees etc.
- A reasonable number of copies of agenda and reports relating to items to be considered in public must be made available to the public attending meetings of the Council and its Committees etc.
- Access to a list specifying those powers which the Council has delegated to its Officers indicating also the titles of the Officers concerned.
- Access to a summary of the rights of the public to attend meetings of the Council and its Committees etc. and to inspect and copy documents.
- In addition, the public now has a right to be present when the Council determines “Key Decisions” unless the business would disclose confidential or “exempt” information.
- Unless otherwise stated, all items of business before the Executive Committee are Key Decisions.
- (Copies of Agenda Lists are published in advance of the meetings on the Council's Website:  
[www.redditchbc.gov.uk](http://www.redditchbc.gov.uk)

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**If you have any queries on this Agenda or any of the decisions taken or wish to exercise any of the above rights of access to information, please contact  
Ivor Westmore  
Democratic Services**

**Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch, B98 8AH  
Tel: 01527 64252 (Extn. 3269) Fax: (01527) 65216  
e.mail: [ivor.westmore@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:ivor.westmore@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk)**

# Welcome to today's meeting.

## Guidance for the Public

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### **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 Democratic Services 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.

### **Members of the Public**

Members of the public may, by prior arrangement, speak at meetings of the Council or its Committees. Specific procedures exist for Appeals Hearings or for meetings involving Licence or Planning Applications. For further information on this point, please speak to the Democratic Services Officer.

### **Special Arrangements**

If you have any particular needs, please contact the Democratic Services Officer.

Infra-red devices for the hearing impaired are available on request at the meeting. Other facilities may require prior arrangement.

### **Further Information**

If you require any further information, please contact the Democratic Services Officer (see foot of page opposite).

### **Fire/ Emergency instructions**

**If the alarm is sounded, please leave the building by the nearest available exit – these are clearly indicated within all the Committee Rooms.**

**If you discover a fire, inform a member of staff or operate the nearest alarm call point (wall mounted red rectangular box). In the event of the fire alarm sounding, leave the building immediately following the fire exit signs. Officers have been appointed with responsibility to ensure that all visitors are escorted from the building.**

**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.**





# Executive

## Committee

11<sup>th</sup> February 2014

7.00 pm

Committee Room 2 Town Hall

**5. Medium Term Financial Plan; and**

**6. Housing Revenue Account Initial Estimates / Rent Setting 2014/15**

(Pages 124 - 127)

J Pickering - Exec Director  
(Finance and Corporate Resources)

Overview and Scrutiny Committee comments and recommendations on Items 5 and 6 attached.

(Minute extract attached)

**All Wards**





# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 4th February, 2014

## MINUTES

### Present:

Councillor David Bush (Chair), Councillor Gay Hopkins (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Andrew Brazier, Simon Chalk, Andrew Fry, Roger Hill (substituting for Councillor Carole Gandy), Alan Mason, Yvonne Smith and Pat Witherspoon

### Also Present:

Councillor Michael Braley

### Officers:

S Horrobin, J Pickering, D Wheeler and J Willis

### Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and A Scarce

## EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES – MINUTES 100 AND 102.

### MINUTE 100: MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

Officers presented the Medium Term Financial Plan 2014/15 – 2016/17 and explained that the report would be considered by the Executive Committee at its meeting to be held on 11th February 2014 with further consideration being given, together with the setting of the Council Tax at the Executive and full Council meetings on 24th February 2014. The following areas were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- Officers confirmed that there was currently a shortfall of £97,000 in the Council's budget.
- There were additional cost pressures as a result of various reductions in and changes to Government grants, for example, a reduction in the Grant Settlement and Business Rates and the introduction of Universal Credit.
- The New Homes Bonus grant would be used to offset the pressures facing the Council.

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Chair

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- There was the option of the Council Tax Freeze Grant available to the local authority, though the Council would be asked to consider an increase in Council Tax of 1.9%. Members were advised that there was the possibility of a Government cap on any increase.
- Unavoidable budget pressures included funding from other agencies for the delivery of Council services, including Worcestershire County Council (WCC) and cuts in grant funding from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) associated with the administration of Housing Benefit.
- There had been an increase in Business Rates following revaluation of the Abbey Stadium. Officers confirmed that an appeal had been lodged in respect of this.
- The cost of borrowing, funding from reserves, bad debt provision and unidentified savings were also discussed in detail.

Members were informed that it was anticipated that the maintenance work at Threadneedle House would not now be carried out and that the building would be put up for sale within the following two weeks and would include the Post Office as a sitting tenant. Officers confirmed that there would be a reserve price on the property. Members questioned whether the loss of income from the Post Office rental charges had been taken into account within that reserve and Officers were asked to address this and the process for the sale of the building in a short report for the consideration of the Committee at a future meeting.

Officers highlighted the work which was being carried out in respect of service transformation and the need to reduce the costs associated with delivering enabling services due to focus on maintaining frontline services at an appropriate level. The suggested savings from the Democratic Services team and the affect these would have on the Committee were discussed in detail. It was confirmed that the current Task Groups would continue until their scheduled deadlines. However in future there could only be two Task Groups taking place at any one time. Whilst the Committee raised concerns about the reduction in support, the need for Members to make changes was acknowledged. It was also agreed that it was important that Members did not lose sight of the role of Overview and Scrutiny in holding the Council to account.

Members also raised concerns in respect of the reduction in Executive Committee and Council meetings as it was felt that this could lead to much lengthier meetings with much larger agendas. Officers confirmed that the Democratic Services Team were



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working towards reducing the number of reports which were presented at Committee meetings for noting with a view to provide such information to Members in other ways. It was therefore not anticipated that the workload of the meetings would increase.

Members were informed that whilst the report detailed budget proposals for the following 12 months the budget process for 2015/16 would commence in six months' time, when the Council's financial position would be more clear particularly in respect of the unidentified savings. This six monthly report would be considered by Overview and Scrutiny, the Executive and full Council.

Officers explained that there was one budget bid for consideration. This was in respect of the economic development of the Eastern Gateway. A contribution of £25,000 had been requested in order to support a feasibility study. The Economic Development team hoped to complete as much of this work as possible, but consultants may be engaged for more specialist elements of the work needed. Members agreed that it was important that the Council had input and the opportunity to influence any development of this area.

## **RECOMMENDED that**

**the current position for 2014/15-2016/17 be noted and Officers be requested to review the savings that can be delivered to achieve a balanced budget.**

## **MINUTE 102: HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT INITIAL ESTIMATES / RENT SETTING 2014/15**

Officers presented the report on Housing Revenue Account Initial Estimates and rent setting for 2014/15 and in doing so highlighted the following areas:

- This was the final year of rent restructuring to bring the process in line with the Registered Social Landlords (RSL).
- The rent increase for 2014/15 would be 5.13% with an average rent of £78.59 per week (this was for a three bedroomed property).
- The Major Repairs Reserve was briefly discussed and Members were advised that there had been budgetary transfers from the Housing Revenue Account into this account in 2011/12.
- It was confirmed that the provision for bad debts had increased due to concerns around the Universal Credit system

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when housing benefit would be paid directly to the householder rather than to the Council.

Members discussed concerns around some residents being unable to cope with the responsibility which would arise following the introduction of the Universal Credit system and what steps, if any, could be taken to support those residents. Officers confirmed that there were particular circumstances where the money could be paid directly to the Council and that all Benefits and Housing staff were being provided with appropriate financial training to support residents. The Citizens Advice Bureau and Two Pennies also provided support with financial issues and received funding from the Council.

#### **RECOMMENDED that**

- 1) the draft 2014/2015 Estimates for the Housing Revenue account attached to the report at Appendix A, be approved;**
- 2) the actual average rent increase for 2014/015 be 5.13% (3.2% RPI plus 1.93% due to rent restructuring); and**
- 3) the £3.5m be transferred to a reserve as a Revenue Contribution to Capital to fund the future Capital programme and repay borrowing.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm  
and closed at 8.47 pm