

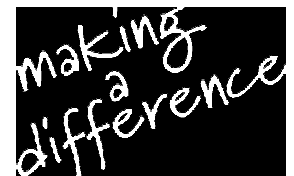
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Council

Monday 31st March
2014
7.00 pm

Council Chamber
Town Hall
Redditch



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Executive Committee

24th February 2014

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), Councillor Greg Chance (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Rebecca Blake, Juliet Brunner, John Fisher, Phil Mould, Mark Shurmer and Debbie Taylor

Also Present:

Councillors Joe Baker, Roger Bennett, Michael Braley, Andrew Brazier, David Bush, Michael Chalk, Andrew Fry, Carole Gandy, Adam Griffin, Pattie Hill, Gay Hopkins, Wanda King, Alan Mason, Brenda Quinney, Yvonne Smith and Pat Witherspoon

Officers:

A-M Darroch, K Dicks, C Flanagan, C Felton, S Jones, S Morgan, J Pickering

Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

140. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Brandon Clayton.

141. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

142. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised the Committee that the formal Council Tax resolutions had been circulated as additional papers at the end of the preceding week following receipt of precept levels from other precepting authorities.

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Chair

143. MINUTES**RESOLVED that**

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 11th February 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

144. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2014/15 - 2016/17

The Committee considered a report which represented the culmination of the budget setting process for the 2014/15 financial year. As was clarified by Officers, the present report focussed on the initial one year period, following which a further report would be forthcoming that detailed the financial plan for the period to the end of 2016/17.

The background to the budget was explained in some detail, with a demonstration provided showing the very significant fall in central Government Formula Grant funding over recent years. This was at a time when service demand was expected to increase, in part because of the withdrawal of service provision or funding by other public sector partners. Other financial pressures were arising through factors such as the Public Sector Compliance work which the Council was having to undertake, the revaluation of the Abbey Stadium and the costs associated with the Council's Pension Fund.

Given the Council's financial circumstances, only one bid was being recommended and this was in respect of an economic development project being promoted by a number of local authorities but which would have a disproportionately positive impact on Redditch. A significant amount of money was being taken from reserves, savings were to be realised through vacancy management and further savings realised through a six month plan to drive forward transformation. The inclusion £1/2M of unidentified savings was not considered ideal and Officers echoed the concern expressed by the Council's External Auditors around the authority's financial resilience.

It was noted that 2014/15 was going to be a difficult year for public sector finance generally and the Financial Services Team was thanked by the Leader of the Council for the work it had undertaken in preparing a budget. The Committee was also advised that a Council Tax rise of 1.9% was being recommended, a level which would generate an increase in income of over £100K over the previous four years during which Council Tax had remained static. The Leader also noted that the Council would continue to provide free concessionary bus travel before 9.30am, free swimming for the under-16s and over-60s and free car-parking in Council car parks.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the bid for £25K for the Eastern Gateway be approved;**
- 2) **the budget for 2014/15 of £11.331M be approved;**
- 3) **the use of earmarked reserves of £1,196K be approved;**
- 4) **the unavoidable pressures detailed in appendix 2 of £335K be approved;**
- 5) **the savings detailed in appendix 3 of £786K be approved;**
- 6) **the Council Tax be increased by 1.9% for 2014/15;**
- 7) **it be noted that at its Executive Committee meeting on the 14th of January 2014 Council calculated the following amounts for the year 2014/15 in accordance with regulations made under Section 33 (5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:**

a) **24,656.96**

being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, as its Council Tax Base for the year (item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended (the 'Act'));

b) **Feckenham Parish – 364.78**

being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 6 of the regulations, as the amount of its Council Tax Base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate (item TP in the formula in Section 34(3) of the Act);

- 8) **the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2014/15 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:**

a) **£88,769,043**

being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account the precept issued by Feckenham Parish Council.

(2014/15 Gross General Fund Expenditure)b) **£83,504,930**

being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.

(2014/15 Gross General Fund Income)c) **£5,264,113**

being the amount by which the aggregate at 2(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 2(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year (item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).

(2014/15 Council Tax Requirement)d) **£213.49**

being the amount at 2 (c) above (item R) divided by the amount at 1 (a) above (item T), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B (1) of the Act, as the basic amount of Council Tax for the year (including parish precept).

(The average amount Band D properties pay for Redditch Borough Council services)e) **£8,300**

being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34 (1) of the Act;

(Feckenham Parish Precept)f) **£213.16**

being the amount at 2(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 2(e) above by the amount at 1(a) (item T) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34 (2) of the Act, as the basic amount of Council Tax for dwellings in those parts of the area to which no special item relates.

(The amount Band D properties pay (except within the Parish of Feckenham) for Borough Council Services)g) **£235.91**

being the amount given by adding to the amount at 2(f) above, the amount of the special item relating to the Parish of Feckenham, divided by the amount in 1(b) above (item TP), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34

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24th February 2014

(3) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in the Parish of Feckenham;

(The amount Band D properties pay within the Parish of Feckenham for Borough Council Services including the Parish Precept)

h)

Valuation Band	Proportion of Band D tax paid	Part of Council's area	
		Parish of Feckenham £	All other parts of the Councils area £
A	6/9	157.27	142.10
B	7/9	183.49	165.79
C	8/9	209.70	189.47
D	1	235.91	213.16
E	11/9	288.34	260.53
F	13/9	340.76	307.89
G	15/9	393.18	355.26
H	18/9	471.82	426.31

being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 2(f) and 2(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band, divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in Valuation Band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwelling listed in different valuation bands;

- 9) **it be noted that, for the year 2014/15, Worcestershire County Council, the Police & Crime Commissioner for West Mercia and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:**

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24th February 2014

Valuation Band	Proportion of Band D tax paid	Precepting Authority		
		Worcestershire County Council £	Police & Crime Commissioner for West Mercia £	H & W Fire & Rescue Authority £
A	6/9	706.15	121.52	50.04
B	7/9	823.84	141.77	58.38
C	8/9	941.53	162.02	66.72
D	1	1,059.22	182.28	75.06
E	11/9	1,294.60	222.78	91.74
F	13/9	1,529.99	263.29	108.43
G	15/9	1,765.37	303.80	125.10
H	18/9	2,118.44	364.55	150.11

- 10) having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 2(h) and 3 above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30 (2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2014/15 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Valuation Band	Proportion of Band D tax paid	Part of Council's area	
		Parish of Feckenham £	All other parts of the Council's area £
A	6/9	1,034.98	1,019.81
B	7/9	1,207.48	1,189.78
C	8/9	1,379.97	1,359.74
D	1	1,552.47	1,529.72
E	11/9	1,897.46	1,869.65
F	13/9	2,242.47	2,209.60
G	15/9	2,587.45	2,549.53
H	18/9	3,104.92	3,059.41

- 11) the level of General Fund balances to be utilised in 2014/15 be zero;
- 12) the Council's relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2014/15 is not excessive in accordance with the principles determined for the year by the Secretary of State under Section 52ZB Local Government Act 1992; and

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- 13) as the billing authority, the Council has not been notified by a major precepting authority that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2014/15 is excessive and the billing authority is not required to hold a referendum in accordance with Section 52ZK Local Government Act 1992.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 7.34 pm

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Chair



Executive Committee

11th March 2014

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), Councillor Greg Chance (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Juliet Brunner, Brandon Clayton, John Fisher, Phil Mould, Mark Shurmer and Debbie Taylor

Also Present:

Councillor Andy Fry

Jim Stobie, Head of Estates Services, Warwickshire and West Mercia Police

Officers:

C Flanagan, S Hanley, J Pickering and A de Warr

Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

145. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Rebecca Blake.

146. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

147. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised that there were two matters which had appeared on the Executive Work Programme but which were not included on the agenda for consideration at this meeting as it had subsequently become apparent that Officers had the necessary authority to act in each case.

These were the approval of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel Budget, where authority had been previously delegated to Officers by Council, and the Nomination of an Asset of Community

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Chair

Value, where Officers had applied statutory tests to the nomination, in accordance with the Council's agreed policy, which demonstrated that the application could not proceed.

148. MINUTES**RESOLVED that**

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 24th February 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

149. JOINT PROPERTY VEHICLE

Jim Stobie, Head of Estates Services for Warwickshire and West Mercia Police, attended the meeting to provide Members with a brief explanation of the proposed Joint Property Vehicle (JPV) which was being put forward as a property management solution for public sector organisations in Worcestershire and the surrounding area. At the outset it was reported that the County Council had recently agreed to move towards a Full Business Case. Should the Borough Council decide to progress the initiative, the Full Business Case would be presented for approval in approximately 12 months time.

Jim Stobie explained that the JPV represented a unique proposition, an arms-length company limited by shares, wholly owned and governed by the participating public sector partners. Those partners who were in at the outset would have control of the function of the JPV and each partner would possess an equal vote and voice on the shareholder group. There would be scope for other public sector organisations to come on board over time but this would be with the agreement of the existing partners.

The most obvious benefit of this approach would be efficiency savings together with those realised from the rationalisation of management structures. Property portfolio costs could be reduced in all areas other than for Non-Domestic Rates. The JPV would contribute to the local environment and economy through the contracting of services from local suppliers, would lead to revenue savings and would also contribute towards regeneration through the Worcestershire LEP. The one town approach was a further benefit of the proposal.

Members were generally supportive of the proposal and sought assurances and clarification on a number of areas. It was made clear that only public sector partners would be able to collaborate as part of the JPV in order to be Teckal compliant. It was also explained that it was up to each authority who was appointed to the

Shareholder group but that the current proposal was for this to be a Director of the public body in question.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the Worcestershire Capital and Asset Partnership Outline Business Case for a Joint Property Initiative for the development of a joint Estates function across public sector organisations across the Worcestershire region, attached at Appendix 1, be noted;**
- 2) **the development of a Full Business Case, to be brought back to Members in due course, be agreed; and**
- 3) **the Executive Director for Finance and Resources and Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management be delegated to work with partners to support the development of the Full Business Case for a Joint Property Vehicle, to include exploring hosting and proposed governance arrangements.**

150. GRANTS PROGRAMME 2014/15

The Committee considered a report setting out the recommendations of the Grants Assessment Panel in awarding grants to voluntary sector organisations for 2014/15. An update report was considered which provided the outcomes of a meeting of the Grants Assessment Panel following dispatch of the original agenda.

In view of the fact that two applications had not even reached what was considered an acceptable standard, it was recommended that all future applications meet a minimum level before they might go forward for consideration by the Panel.

Members expressed their admiration for the work carried out by the voluntary sector in the Borough and thanked those involved for enhancing the lives of those within Redditch.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **grants be awarded to voluntary sector organisations as detailed in Section 4.6 of the report submitted; and**
- 2) **a minimum score of 50% of the available points be approved for all applications submitted to Redditch**

Borough Council's Voluntary and Community Grants Programme.**151. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY, PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY**

Members received a report which enabled them to scrutinise the Treasury Management Strategy, Prudential Indicators and the Minimum Revenue Provision and consider a number of Capital Bids.

The Committee was informed that there was a statutory obligation upon Officers to produce this report on an annual basis. There was little change in the information contained within the report year on year but it did provide Members with reassurance that the Council was managing its borrowing, investment and cash-flow effectively. Members' attention was drawn to the Council's investment strategy which demonstrated that an appropriate balance was being struck between risk and return.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Treasury Management Strategy, Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy for 2014/15 be approved; and**
- 2) the Capital Bids detailed in Appendix A to the report be approved.**

152. PAY POLICY 2014/15

Members considered the Council's Pay Policy for 2014/15. This report was a requirement of the Localism Act 2011.

It was noted that around 100 staff were receiving below the Living Wage at present, but this situation would be remedied once Job Evaluation had been concluded and implemented and Officers hoped to achieve this within the next few months.

RECOMMENDED that

the Pay Policy as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

153. FINANCE MONITORING REPORT 2013/14 - APRIL - DECEMBER (QUARTER 3)

Officers presented what was a new-style Finance Monitoring Report which provided considerably more detail around departmental spending than had been the case previously.

The Leader commented that Members were taking a greater role in actively monitoring their relevant budgets of late and this was increasingly being evidenced.

Staff were thanked for achieving the savings to date which had resulted in a projected outturn for 2013/14 in line with the budget for the current year.

It was noted that there was still a small amount of ongoing expenditure in respect of Hewell Road Pool Works. Officers reported that they had raised this with the Housing Strategy Team and a position statement was expected within the current week. This position statement would be forwarded on to all Executive Committee members.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the current financial position on Revenue and Capital, as detailed in the report, be noted; and**
- 2) identified savings be used to offset the savings requirement that has not been fully identified, where available in discussion with Heads of Service.**

154. QUARTERLY MONITORING OF WRITE-OFFS - THIRD QUARTER 2013/14

The Committee considered a report which detailed the action taken by Officers with respect to the write off of debts during the first nine months of 2013/14 and which set out the profile and levels of outstanding debt.

Officers advised that much of the information contained within the report could only usefully be reported on an annual basis as in-year reporting only served to provide a misleading impression of the levels of outstanding debt. To this end it was proposed that the Executive Committee move to annual rather than quarterly reporting of this information henceforward.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the contents of the report be noted; and**

- 2) **an amendment be made to the Write Off Policy to allow for annual reporting of the write offs rather than quarterly.**

155. CUSTOMER SERVICES - 3RD QUARTER MONITORING REPORT

Members considered details of customer feedback data for the third quarter of 2013/14, along with transactional data relating to the Customer Service Centre.

One of the headline figures for the third quarter was a reduction in complaints which was linked to the bedding in of new waste collection arrangements and a reduction in the complaints about that particular service change. Only one complaint that quarter had been escalated to the Head of Service and no complaints had been forwarded to the Local Government Ombudsman. There had, however, been a considerable number of compliments.

Customer Services staff were complimented on the report, which demonstrated the benefits flowing through from transformation, and also on the changes to the arrangement in the Town Hall Reception area which had resulted in much reduced queuing in that space.

RESOLVED that

the contents of the report be noted.

156. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of a recent meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4th February 2014 be received and noted.

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

There were no minutes or referrals under this item.

158. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

The regular update on the activity of the Council's Advisory panels and similar bodies was considered by the Committee.

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RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

159. ACTION MONITORING

The Committee's Action Monitoring report was considered by Members.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.35 pm

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Chair



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Audit & Governance

Committee

16th January 2014

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Roger Hill (Vice-Chair in the Chair) and Councillors Roger Bennett, John Fisher (during Minute No's 30 to 40), Yvonne Smith and Pat Witherspoon (during Minute No's 24 to 30 and 37 to 39)

Dave Jones – Independent Member (non-voting co-opted)

Also Present:

Phil Jones and Zoe Thomas (Grant Thornton – External Auditors)

Officers:

A Bromage, C Felton, S Morgan, G Revans, A de Warr and J Willis

Committee Officer:

D Parker-Jones

24. WELCOME - NEW INDEPENDENT MEMBER ON AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Chair welcomed Dave Jones, the Audit & Governance Committee's first Independent Member, to the meeting.

It was noted that Mr Jones had been appointed to the role of Independent Member in December 2013. This was a non-voting co-opted role for a 12-month trial period.

The Chair highlighted the importance of the Committee's work for the Borough, and advised Mr Jones that he should feel free to join in the Committee discussions, raise any questions and put forward any suggestions at meetings.

25. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Derek Taylor.

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Chair

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It was also noted that Councillor Fisher would be arriving a little late owing to traffic problems.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

27. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Committee held on 26th September 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

28. AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - ACTION LIST AND WORK PROGRAMME

Action List

(i) Ref 1 – Lead Fraud & Risk Member training

It was reported that Councillors Hill and Fisher had received individual training with Officers for their Lead Fraud Member roles on the Committee.

Councillor Smith, in her capacity as Lead Risk Member, confirmed that she had received one-to-one training with the Head of Customer Access and Financial Support and had been looking into current customer service issues. She had also received separate training from the former Head of Finance and Resources on the operation of the 4Risk (risk reporting) system, and was hoping to attend a further risk session with Officers in due course.

Councillor Bennett confirmed that he would contact Officers to make the necessary arrangements for his risk training.

Action: item to be removed from Action List.

(ii) Refs 2, 3, 4 & 6

Officers advised that these matters would be reported on at the 24th April 2014 meeting.

Action: items to remain on Action List for reporting at next meeting.

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- (iii) Ref 5 – External sale of previously used car parking machines

Officers confirmed that the car parking machines in question had now been removed and sold on to Wychavon District Council.

Action: item to be removed from Action List.

- (iv) Ref 7 – Future monitoring of use of balances to support expenditure

It was noted that this remained an ongoing item for periodic updating and that Councillor Fisher, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management, would also now be providing financial monitoring update reports at each Committee meeting.

Action: to remain on Action List for future monitoring and reporting.

Work Programme

Officers advised on the following Work Programme updates:

- (v) 24th April 2014 meeting
The Treasury Management Strategy, Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Policy Provision 2014/15 report was to be removed from the Work Programme and would instead form part of the general Budget report to full Council.

Grant Thornton, the Council's External Auditors, would also be presenting a Grant Claims Certification Work 2012/13 report to the April meeting.

- (vi) Meeting date to be determined

Members agreed to the removal of the External Audit – 'Councillors on the frontline' report. This would be replaced with External Audit training prior to the first meeting of the Committee of the new Municipal Year (provisional meeting date 3rd July 2014). The training, which would be combined with the Internal Audit training which currently took place annually for the Committee, would cover the latest best practice elements for good Audit & Governance Committees.

Audit & Governance

Committee

16th January 2014

RESOLVED that

subject to the comments detailed in the preamble above, the Committee Action List and Work Programme be noted and the amendments and updates highlighted be agreed.

29. RISK MONITORING & REPORTING

The Committee received three separate presentations from Heads of Service on the operational risks identified within the following service areas:

- Community Services;
- Environmental Services; and
- Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services.

Community Services

The Community Services presentation detailed the operational risks within CCTV and Lifeline, Dial-a-Ride and Shopmobility, Areas of Highest Need (including the Winyates Project), Ant-Social Behaviour, Community Safety and Early Help (formerly Sure Start and Children's Centres).

The impact of the proposed Worcestershire County Council budgets cuts was highlighted as a key risk to the service, together with possible cuts/changes in funding from other sources.

This would see changes in the current format and amount of Supporting People funding, loss of the Community Safety Grant in its current format and a reduction in the funding for the Early Help contract from Year 2 onwards. The Borough Council had submitted a bid to run the Bromsgrove Early Help contract and were currently waiting to hear whether this had been successful. The authority had previously been successful with external funding and a new bid-writing post had been included within the service. The Kingfisher Shopping Centre had confirmed that they would continue with their funding for Dial-a-Ride and Shopmobility for 3 years, and the Areas of Highest Need had 18 months of funding remaining.

The Supporting People Grant from County Council was due to cease on 31st March 2014, which could see a loss in funding of £202,000 to the Borough Council for users of the Lifeline service. Over 1,000 service users were assisted through Supporting People funding. Those users who were graded as either a significant or critical risk would continue to receive funding. However it was not known at this stage how many people would be eligible for funding under the new system as full details of the funding proposals were not yet available from the County Council.

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The Executive Committee had earlier that week agreed that Officers should consult Lifeline Service users to determine the future of the service should there be such a reduction in County Council funding, including ascertaining whether users would be willing to pay for the service should they not be eligible for funding.

Environmental Services

The Head of Environmental Services detailed the operational risks within his areas, which covered refuse collection, street cleansing, landscape and grounds maintenance, crematorium and cemeteries, fleet management, supplies unit and car parking (including on street car parking), land drainage and climate change.

It was noted that some of the operational risks remained long-term, with others being linked to specific projects such as reduced waste collection services and the crematorium project, and some being health and safety related. Risk management was a continually developing process within Environmental Services, with all identified operational risks having been adjudged as either low or medium risks.

He added that a number of services were currently working their way through the transformation process, with the management of identified risks being key in the future given the budgetary situation. Officers were currently in negotiation with Worcestershire County Council on highway maintenance contracts, with the Borough Council also seeking to take on highways maintenance for the Bromsgrove area.

The service was struggling with the Government's new Green Deal initiative as the planned external provider for this was no longer proceeding with the partnership owing to current market-driven issues.

Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services

The Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services explained the different elements which formed part of the Leal Services, Democratic Services and Elections teams.

The main risks which had been identified were:

- failure to effectively manage neighbourhood referendums;
- lack of capacity and capability to manage legislative change;
- lack of capacity to manage high profile legal cases;
- failure of Member conduct;
- failure to provide independent advise to two Councils;
- failure to respond to changes in political control; and
- the impact of budgetary restraints on service delivery.

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Members were advised that the elections process contained significant risks, which were subject to a separate Cabinet Office risk register.

It was noted that whilst the Localism Act 2011 provided for referendums, the risk of a referendum actually taking place was relatively slim in view of the process which had to be gone through to reach that stage.

RESOLVED that

the presentations be noted.

30. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

The Financial Services Manager gave a presentation on the Council's Corporate Risk Register.

She informed Members that the risks identified in the Corporate Risk Register could, if realised, fundamentally affect the way in which the Council existed or provided services over the next 5 years. These risks would have a detrimental effect on the Council's achievement of its Strategic Purposes, and would lead to material failure, reputational damage, loss or lost opportunity.

The following were confirmed as corporate risks:

- partners being unable (or unwilling) to change how they do things (transformation);
- Council's failure to respond to financial constraints effectively;
- failure to manage financial and service-based impacts of the County Council's commissioning on the Council;
- political change/influence (from a national, regional or local perspective);
- failure of Local Enterprise Partnerships' (and interactions with them) to operate effectively;
- Council's failure to effectively deliver transformed services; and
- failure of Shared Services to deliver/satisfy the needs of the Council.

The following controls were in place to mitigate against corporate risks:

- 3 year budget planning;
- regular finance reports to Members;

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- Shared Services Board;
- regular Trade Union liaison;
- regular Group Leaders' meetings;
- Council's Strategic Purposes based on wider strategic aims;
- senior Officer input into Local Enterprise Partnerships and County Council discussions; and
- plans to deliver transformational services.

RESOLVED that

the presentation be noted.

31. FRAUD MONITORING & REPORTING

The Committee received a report which advised on the performance of the Benefits Services Fraud Investigation Service from 1st September 2013 to 30th November 2013.

The issues highlighted in the report in relation to the limited amount of information received by the Council on changes to Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) benefits and Tax Credits, which provided for a risk of fraud and error entering the system, were noted. Officers advised that the Chief Executive was due to write to central government to explain the extra work which was required on the part of authorities in obtaining the required information. Whilst both the DWP and the authority shared legally required information on claimants, there was no statutory requirement for the DWP to provide particular information which the Council would find helpful when dealing with its claimants.

As both Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support were means tested there was potential for claimants to under-declare. Data-matching was a key tool to identifying fraud and approximately 26% of fraud referrals received during the period came from members of the public.

Members queried whether the £32m in Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit paid in the financial year 2012/13 was a rising figure. Officers confirmed that this was not the case, with projected claims for 2013/14 being £32.2m. It was further noted that recent changes to the benefits system would make it difficult to make any similar comparisons in the future.

Members also queried whether information was available showing how well the service was performing in comparison with neighbouring authorities' services. Officers responded that whilst certain information was shared between authorities it was difficult to benchmark such data given the varying circumstances involved.

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The forthcoming Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS) which was to be introduced as part of the government's welfare reform plans also impacted on how the authority evaluated its performance against other authorities. Officers agreed to look into whether it was possible to obtain any relevant comparison data for future reporting to Members.

In response to a Member request, Officers went on to explain the background to Administrative Penalties and how and when these were applied.

Members queried how likely it was that the £36k overpaid in Housing Benefit would be recovered. Officers responded that there was a reasonable likelihood of this being recovered, although this would be over a significant period of time as the authority did not want to put families in crisis when clawing back overpayments as this would only serve to make matters worse.

The update provided in the report in relation to the SFIS was noted, with current implementation due to take place on a phased basis between October 2014 and March 2016. Alongside the roll out of the SFIS, the Department for Communities and Local Government and DWP were also investigating local government's capacity to tackle non-welfare fraud, which would include extra funding for local authorities for 2014/15 and 2015/16.

The Independent Member queried whether the 225 fraud referrals received during the period of the report was an increasing figure, and whether there had been a year-on-year increase in referral numbers. Officers were unsure on this and agreed the report back to the Committee at the next meeting under the Action List item on past referral numbers. Future benefits investigations reports would also include relevant comparison figures.

RESOLVED that

subject to the required follow-up actions by Officers, as detailed in the preamble above, the report be noted.

32. DEBT RECOVERY UPDATE - QUARTERS 1 AND 2 2013/14

The Committee received a report advising Members on the collection and recovery processes of the Council's income team, and on outstanding debt levels.

Officers highlighted the key elements of the report, which was the first such report to the Committee.

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It was noted that former tenancy arrears, whilst relatively low in number, were labour intensive and created the most work for the Income Team of any individual debt type. Former tenancy arrears were reducing year-on-year owing to how the Income Team operated, transformation work and early intervention with cases. Current arrears for 2013/14 at the end of the second quarter stood at £336,723, which related to 395 individual cases. As part of transformation work the team were also assisting customers who were getting into debt with budget planning.

Other debt owed to the Council (excluding former tenancy arrears) totalled £918,000. This related to 11,335 outstanding invoices or instalments which had been issued, many of which would be paid before the end of the financial year. Collection rates over the last 3 years had improved, with there being a demonstrable improvement in the Council's debt collection.

The Independent Member queried what appeared to be a disproportionate number of live accounts compared with the number of invoices raised. Officers stated that this was due to changes in some of the processes involved, which reflected in the figures.

Officers advised that cases were dealt with by the authority as far as possible, with only a small number being referred to court in the reporting period. Officers worked with customers and were careful not to pursue debts where it was uneconomical to do so, for example, where court costs would be higher than the original debt.

Officers responded to Member questions on debt issues, including the invoicing of and methods of payment for council-owned garages, and commission rates on debt balances collected by external debt collection agents.

A Member queried whether the debt recovery figures would be incorporated into the corporate dashboard for performance monitoring. Officers responded that this was not currently in the strategic measures but could be reported on generally. Members agreed that a regular 6-monthly debt recovery update report be referred to the Committee.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the contents of the report be noted; and**
- 2) a regular 6-monthly debt recovery update report be referred to the Committee.**

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33. INTERNAL AUDIT - MONITORING REPORT

Members considered the Internal Audit Monitoring Report as at 30th November 2013.

Officers highlighted the Final Report for the Palace Theatre issued on 25th October 2013, which had resulted in a Limited Assurance level. The audit had identified a number of expected controls which were not in place at the time of the audit taking place, together with some which were not working properly. The proposed Internal Audit recommendations detailed in the report were noted, together with management's responses and action plans to address the recommendations. Internal Audit would report back to Members on the Palace Theatre as part of their follow-up monitoring work.

Officers also highlighted the Allotments audit which, whilst resulting in a Moderate Assurance level, had given rise to some concerns with some expected controls either not being in place and/or operating effectively. In particular, there was no formal agreement in place to govern the operation of the Allotment Associations which were run under the Council's Leisure and Cultural Services Team.

Officers went on to explain the Internal Audit Plan delivery 2013/14 and key performance indicators 2013/14. Steady progress had been made against the plan with Officers being on target to deliver the full plan as expected.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

34. INTERNAL AUDIT - PROVISIONAL AUDIT PLAN 2014/15

The Committee received a report on the Provisional Internal Audit Operational Plan for 2014/15 and the key performance indicators for the Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service for the same period.

Officers advised that owing to new Internal Audit regulations, Internal Audit would in future be looking to link audits with the Council's corporate (strategic) priorities.

The number of audit days in the draft plan for 2013/14 and 2014/15 remained the same. In light of progress which was being made as a result of the Council's transformation programme, the Committee felt that there was some value in the Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service Manager and the authority's Section 151 Officer reviewing the number of future audit days and coverage to be

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provided. It was noted that a number of other local authorities were looking to reduce their audit days.

Members highlighted the importance of ensuring that the Council's financial systems were sufficiently robust, particularly in view of the issues highlighted earlier in the evening by the External Auditors in relation to the ongoing financial pressures faced by the Council.

Officers responded that from an Internal Audit perspective, financial system weaknesses would not be expected as the current systems in place, based on current staff numbers, were felt to be reasonable and fit for purpose. If, for example, staffing numbers reduced significantly then the associated risk would increase and the position would need to be reviewed.

RESOLVED that

- 3) **the report be noted; and**
- 4) **the Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service Manager and Section 151 Officer review the number of planned audit days and coverage to ascertain whether there was any value in reducing these over future years.**

35. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2013/14 - PROGRESS UPDATE

Officers advised that there was no update to be provided on current progress with the drafting of the Annual Governance Statement for 2013/14, and that an update on this would be forthcoming at the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED that

the position be noted.

36. PORTFOLIO HOLDER UPDATE - QUARTERLY BUDGET MONITORING

Councillor Fisher, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management, provided his first oral Quarterly Budget Monitoring update report to the Committee.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the most recent Finance Monitoring Report, for Quarter 2 of 2013/14 (covering the period April to September 2013), had been referred to the Executive Committee on 10th December 2013.

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The Portfolio Holder spoke on elements of the 2013/14 budget, including the unidentified savings element of this which the External Auditors had stated they would like to see details of proposed savings for moving forward. He stated that it was important to look at services and to understand service needs from the customer's perspective. As part of that process services would be reviewed and transformed and the consequences of any service changes known.

The Council was on target to make £508k of savings by the end of the year. Officers were reviewing every area of expenditure, with the current shortfall for 2013/14 standing at £42k.

Over the course of the current financial year the Portfolio Holder had met regularly with Finance Officers and Heads of Service on budget monitoring and reporting, and in recent months had held weekly meetings with the Director of Finance and Resources.

There was a current freeze on jobs unless posts were deemed to be business critical and the staff training budget had been significantly reduced. As the Council's transformation programme progressed work processes were being reviewed and restructures had taken place in some service areas. Additional income had been forthcoming from the Crematorium and Palace Theatre.

Major challenges with the 2014/15 budget lay ahead for the Council over the coming months. More detail on how the budget shortfall would be addressed would emerge over the months ahead.

Officers advised that they were currently working on the Finance Monitoring Report for Quarter 3 of 2013/14, and that whilst savings had been identified unanticipated issues could still arise which might affect the position.

RESOLVED that

the Portfolio Holder's update report be noted.

37. GRANT THORNTON - ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2012/13

Members were presented with the Annual Audit Letter for 2012/13 from Grant Thornton, the Council's External Auditors.

Phil Jones, Engagement Lead from Grant Thornton, spoke briefly on the report and referred to the report's Executive summary which detailed the key areas for the Council's attention.

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Work undertaken by the External Auditors was in line with the plan issued to Members in March 2013, with the fees charged being consistent with those set out in the fee letter issued in April 2013. Fees for the work carried out by the External Auditors on the certification of grant claims and returns would be confirmed in a separate report once complete.

Mr Jones highlighted the financial pressures which the Council was facing given the significant reductions in central government grants. He advised that he had recently met with Councillor Fisher, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management, to discuss how the Council would be tackling this issue. Other key messages from the External Auditors included business rate pooling, the Council's transformation programme and possible consequences to the Council of the government's welfare reform.

Unqualified opinions had been received on the 2012/13 accounts and in relation to value for money. Assurance of the Whole of Government Accounts Statement had been made to the National Audit Office and 2 grant claims had been audited without amendment.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

38. GRANT THORNTON - GRANT CLAIMS CERTIFICATION WORK 2012/13

The External Auditors confirmed that this report would now be referred to the next meeting of the Committee as confirmation was awaited from the Audit Commission on the fees for this work.

RESOLVED that

the position be noted.

39. GRANT THORNTON - UPDATE REPORT 2013/14

Members were presented with a progress report for the financial year 2013/14 from Grant Thornton, the Council's External Auditors. The report also included a summary of emerging national issues and developments of relevance to the Council.

A report of the Executive Director, Finance and Resources, setting out an action plan to address the issues raised in the External Auditors progress report would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

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Members noted that, in line with the process followed for the 2012/13 financial year, Officers would forward a copy of the 2013/14 draft accounts to the members of the Committee at the end of June; the point at which they were submitted to Grant Thornton for auditing. The final accounts, including any changes made to the draft version post-audit, would then be signed off by the Committee at the end of September.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

40. GRANT THORNTON - REVIEW OF FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

Members received a report from the Council's External Auditors, Grant Thornton, which presented their views on the financial resilience of the Council for the year ended 31st March 2013.

Phil Jones, Engagement Lead at Grant Thornton, highlighted the Local Context detailed in the report. This confirmed that in Redditch between 2009 and 2015 the impact of the reduction in government grant reflected a 41% cut in funding cumulatively, with further cuts also due. The External Auditors had met with the Leader of the Council and the Executive Director, Finance and Resources, with future budget plans beginning to emerge.

One area of concern highlighted in the report related to the adequacy of certain planning assumptions under the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The corporate plan issued in 2013 was not keyed into the budget setting process, meaning there was a disconnection between the two. Issues linked with the Housing Revenue Account since this had become self-financing in 2012 would also need to be kept under review and duly planned for.

The Council had yet to fully identify all of the required savings in the MTFS, that being £1.8m by 2014/15 and further savings beyond. The Council would need to take some difficult decisions in order to cut costs and increase revenue in order to achieve required savings. Earmarked balances should be robustly reviewed and further considerations given to the minimum level of balances in view of the financial risk the Council was facing.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

Audit & Governance

Committee

16th January 2014

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 9.05 pm



Planning Committee

15th January 2014

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Andrew Fry (Chair), Councillor Alan Mason (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Joe Baker, Roger Bennett, Michael Chalk, Roger Hill, Brenda Quinney, Yvonne Smith and Pat Witherspoon (substituting for Councillor Wanda King)

Officers:

S Edden, A Hussain and A Rutt

Committee Services Officer:

J Smyth

69. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Wanda King.

70. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Roger Bennett declared an other disclosable interest in Agenda Item 8 (Enforcement Report – Condition of Residential Property in Headless Cross) in that he had assisted local residents in moving the matter forward for resolution.

71. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 18th December 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

72. UPDATE REPORTS

Officers explained that this agenda item was to enable formal receipt of Update reports (if any) provided for Committee Members and the public gallery.

.....
Chair

Planning Committee

15th January 2014

The Update reports for the two Planning Applications to be considered by the Committee were received and noted.

73. PLANNING APPLICATION 2013/228/OUT - THE PADDOCKS, ASTWOOD LANE, FECKENHAM, REDDITCH, WORCESTERSHIRE B96 6HG

Outline Application with some matters reserved for 8 no. dwellings providing mix of 4 x 2 bed, 2 x 3 bed and 2 x 4 bed, one of which to be a replacement dwelling.

Applicant: Mrs Pat Dormer

The following people addressed the Committee under the Council's public speaking rules:

Parish Councillor R Williams (for Feckenham Parish Council) - supporter

Mr R Eost – (local resident) – supporter

Mr J Russell (local resident) - supporter

Mrs T Russell (local resident) - supporter

Mrs E Mitchell – Agent for the Applicant.

RESOLVED that

having regard to the Development Plan and to all other material considerations, Planning Permission be REFUSED for the reasons detailed in the main report and the following additional reason:

- “3. The close proximity and relationship of any such development to the line of the existing evergreen hedge forming the southern boundary to the site is unacceptable given that future occupiers of these properties would receive insufficient levels of natural sunlight for much of the day, significantly and detrimentally impacting upon residential amenity. The proposals are therefore contrary to Policy B(BE).13 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 3 and the Council’s adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on ‘Encourag1ing Good Design’. In addition, the development would not accord with one of the core planning principles of the National Planning Policy Framework, which seeks high quality design and good standards of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.”**

(The Committee noted an Update Report provided for Members and the public gallery prior to the commencement of the meeting, which

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15th January 2014

detailed additional consultation responses received in support of the application. Additional Officer comments were also noted in regard to various matters, including concerns in relation to the height of a boundary evergreen hedge that Officers considered would be detrimental to the residential amenity of future occupiers, and on which matter they considered it reasonable to recommend a third reason for refusal and as detailed in the resolution above.)

74. PLANNING APPLICATION 2013/297/FUL - 25 BROAD GROUND ROAD, LAKESIDE, REDDITCH, WORCESTERSHIRE B98 8YP

Change of Use to Haulage Depot
and Storage and erection of fencing

Applicant: Fly By Nite Conferences Ltd

RESOLVED that

having regard to the Development Plan and to all other material considerations, Planning Permission be GRANTED, subject to the conditions set out in the report.

(The Committee noted an Update Report, which provided details on a typographical error in regard to the address of the Application Site, which had been discovered subsequent to the Agenda being printed and published.)

75. ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY - 12 MONTH UPDATE

The Committee received an information report relating to enforcement activity from 1st January 2013 to 31st December 2013.

Officers provided an oral update in regard to a specific current enforcement matter, namely Pikes Field, The Saltway, Astwood Bank, as detailed on page 22 of the report. Members were informed that, further to the appellant withdrawing their appeal against the Council's refusal of a Planning Application submitted to change the use of the land in question, Officers had recommenced Enforcement action that had been held in abeyance pending the outcome of the appeal.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

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15th January 2014

**76. ENFORCEMENT REPORT - CONDITION OF PROPERTY -
RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY IN HEADLESS CROSS, REDDITCH**

The Committee considered a report relating to the condition of a private residential property in Headless Cross that is adversely affecting the amenity of the area. Officers provided clarification on timescales for progressing the matter.

RESOLVED that

in relation to a breach of Planning Control, namely the overgrown condition of the front and rear of the property, authority be delegated to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Head of Planning and Regeneration Services, to take the following action:

- a) **appoint Contractors to carry out the works specified in the Section 215 Notice to clear the site; and**
- b) **Instruct Legal Officers to take all necessary steps to secure the recovery of all costs incurred, by the placing of a charge on the property.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.03 pm

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CHAIR



Planning Committee

12th February 2014

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Andrew Fry (Chair), Councillor Alan Mason (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Joe Baker, Roger Bennett, Michael Chalk, Bill Hartnett (substituting for Councillor Wanda King), Roger Hill and Yvonne Smith

Officers:

N Chana, A Hussain and A Rutt

Committee Services Officer:

J Smyth

77. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors Wanda King and Brenda Quinney.

78. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

79. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 15th January 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

80. CHANGE OF MEETING DATE

The Committee formally noted that the Planning Committee meeting originally scheduled for the 7th May 2014 had been re-scheduled to take place on Wednesday 14th May 2014.

81. UPDATE REPORTS

The Update Reports relating to the Application to be considered were received and noted.

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Chair

82. **PLANNING APPLICATION 2013/291/COU - UNIT 27
KINGFISHER WALK, TOWN CENTRE, REDDITCH,
WORCESTERSHIRE B97 4EY**

Change of Use of ground, basement and
sub-basement to Class 3A (Café / Restaurant)
and A5 (hot Food Take-away) use.

Applicant: Mr Matthew Rhodes

RESOLVED that

having regard to the Development Plan and to all other material considerations, Planning Permission be GRANTED, subject to the Conditions set out in the report.

83. **PLANNING APPLICATION 2013/316/COU - TOOKEYS FARM
HOUSE, TOOKEYS DRIVE, ASTWOOD BANK, REDDITCH,
WORCESTERSHIRE B96 6BB**

Change of Use to private recreational use,
including golf practice facility comprising
construction of one golf green, two golf tees,
water pump housing (retrospective) and
tractor shed

Applicant: Mr Mark Rolph

The following people addressed the Committee under the Council's public speaking rules:

Mrs B Morris – objector
Mr J Walker – objector
Mr S Vick – Applicant's Agent

RESOLVED that

Having regard to the Development Plan and to all other material considerations, Planning Permission be GRANTED, subject to the Conditions and Informative set out in the main report, subject to:

- 1) **Condition 2 being amended to read as follows:**

“2. The use of the private golf practice facility hereby permitted shall be limited to occupiers and guests thereof of Tookeys Farm House, and the occupiers shall always be in residence when the facility is in

use. The facility shall not be used by more than 6 adults and 4 children under 16 at any time and shall not be used for any commercial purposes or financial gain at any time.

Reason: In the interests of surrounding residential amenity and to prevent the over-intensification of the use of the site, in accordance with Policies B(RA)1 and B(BE)13 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3. “; and

2) The following additional informatives:

“2) In considering this application, members of the Planning Committee were keen to stress that ONLY private use and NOT commercial use of the recreational facility would be acceptable on this site as commercial uses would bring more considerations into play that was not covered in the application submission.

3) In considering this application, members of the Planning Committee were keen to point out that the Council planning Enforcement Officers would work with the applicant to ensure that the conditions set out above are adhered to.

(Officers reported on data the Applicant had received from the County Biological Records Data Centre that had confirmed there were no records of significant species or habitats on or in close proximity to the application site. The Committee was advised that, further to this data being provided, the Wildlife Trust had confirmed that they had no objections to the proposal. Comments from the County Archaeologist, were also reported. A number of additional points raised by objectors were also noted. Members also noted and agreed an amendment proposed to Condition 2 in the report in regard to restricting the use of the site to prevent any commercial use, as detailed in Resolution 1 above. The Committee further considered a Member’s request for additional informatives to be included in relation to specified use and enforcement of Conditions, as detailed in Resolution 2 above.

The two Update reports relating to this applicant were provided for Committee Members and the public gallery prior to commencement of the meeting.

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Officers clarified that the proposed development accorded with relevant Policies and that all relevant Consultees had been consulted in relation to the application.)

84. PLANNING APPLICATION 2013/327/FUL - OAK HOUSE, HERBERT STREET, TOWN CENTRE, REDDITCH, WORCESTERSHIRE B98 8BL

Conversion of office building to 9 no. apartments.

Applicants: Mr Paul Mason and Mr Martyn Harfield

The Applicant, Mr Martyn Harfield, addressed the Committee under the Council's public speaking rules.

RESOLVE that

having regard to the Development Plan and to all other material considerations, authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Regeneration to GRANT Planning Permission, subject to:

- 1) **The satisfactory completion of a Section 106 Planning Obligation to ensure that:**
 - a) **Contributions be paid to the Borough Council in respect of off-site open space and playing pitches in accordance with the Council's adopted SPD;**
 - b) **A financial contribution be paid to the Borough Council towards the provision of wheelie bins for the new development; and**
- 2) **the Conditions set out in the main report.**

85. PLANNING APPLICATION 2014/006/COU - REDUNDANT TOILET BLOCK ADJACENT TO UNIT 1 MATCHBOROUGH CENTRE, MATCHBOROUGH WAY, MATCHBOROUGH, REDDITCH, WORCESTERSHIRE B98 0EP

Change of use of redundant former toilet block to form extension to Units 1 and 2 for use as a reception area and community hub to existing boxing club

Applicant: Ms Sarah Lee, Redditch Community Amateur Boxing Club

**Planning
Committee**

12th February 2014

RESOLVED that

having regard to the Development Plan and to all other material considerations, Planning Permission be GRANTED, subject to the Conditions and Informative set out in the report.

86. ENFORCEMENT REPORT - NON-COMPLIANCE WITH AN ENFORCEMENT NOTICE - LAND AT THE SALTWAY, FECKENHAM

The Committee considered a report relating to non-compliance of an Enforcement Notice in regard to an unauthorised use of land in Feckenham.

RESOLVED that

in relation to a breach of Planning Control, namely the failure to comply with the requirements of an Enforcement Notice, authority be delegated to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Head of Planning and Regeneration Services, to instigate legal proceedings in the Magistrates Courts, if necessary.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.17 pm

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CHAIR

