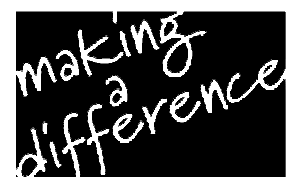


# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 5th March,  
2013  
7.00 pm

Committee Room Two  
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  
Jess Bayley and Michael Craggs  
Democratic Services Officers**

**Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch, B98 8AH  
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[michael.craggs@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:michael.craggs@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 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.

### **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 Committee Support Officer.

### **Special Arrangements**

If you have any particular needs, please contact the Committee Support 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 Committee Support 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.**





# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 5th March, 2013

7.00 pm

Committee Room 2 Town Hall

## Agenda

### Membership:

Cllrs:                      Juliet Brunner                      Andrew Fry  
    (Chair)                                      Pattie Hill  
    Simon Chalk (Vice-                      Gay Hopkins  
    Chair)                                      Pat Witherspoon  
    Andrew Brazier  
    David Bush  
    John Fisher

<p><b>1. Apologies and named substitutes</b></p>	<p>To receive apologies for absence and details of any Councillor (or co-optee substitute) nominated to attend this meeting in place of a member of this Committee.</p>
<p><b>2. Declarations of interest and of Party Whip</b></p>	<p>To invite Councillors to declare any interest they may have in items on the Agenda and any Party Whip.</p>
<p><b>3. Minutes</b> (Pages 1 - 10)</p>	<p>To confirm the minutes of the most recent meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a correct record.  (Minutes attached)</p>
<p><b>4. Transformation Briefing</b></p>	<p>To receive an update on the Council's Transformation process.  (Presentation to follow)</p>
<p><b>5. Redditch Borough Council Business Centres</b> (Pages 11 - 18)</p>	<p>To consider a report on occupancy levels in the Council's Business Centres.  (Report attached)</p>
<p><b>6. Draft Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2012/13</b> (Pages 19 - 40)</p>	<p>To consider the draft contents of the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2012/13 and to determine whether to make any amendments to the content.  (Report attached)</p>

# Overview and Scrutiny

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<p><b>7. Actions List</b> (Pages 41 - 42)</p>	<p>To note the contents of the Overview and Scrutiny Actions List.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p>
<p><b>8. Executive Committee Minutes and Scrutiny of the Executive Committee's Work Programme</b> (Pages 43 - 60)</p>	<p>To consider the minutes of the latest meeting(s) of the Executive Committee and also to consider whether any items on the Executive Committee's Work Programme are suitable for scrutiny.</p> <p>(Minutes and Work Programme attached).</p>
<p><b>9. Task &amp; Finish Reviews - Draft Scoping Documents</b></p>	<p>To consider any scoping documents provided for possible Overview and Scrutiny review.</p> <p><b>(No Specific Ward Relevance);</b></p>
<p><b>10. Task and Finish Groups - Progress Reports</b></p>	<p>To consider progress to date on the current reviews against the terms set by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The current reviews in progress are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Arts and Culture Centre – Chair, Councillor Gay Hopkins;</li><li>b) Housing Density Targets – Chair, Councillor David Bush</li></ul> <p>(Oral reports)</p>
<p><b>11. Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b> Councillor Pat Witherspoon</p>	<p>To receive a verbal update on the recent work of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>(Verbal report)</p>

# Overview and Scrutiny

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## 12. Referrals

To consider any referrals to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee direct, or arising from:

- The Executive Committee or full Council
- Other sources.

(No separate report).

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## 13. Work Programme

(Pages 61 - 64)

To consider the Committee's current Work Programme, and potential items for addition to the list arising from:

- The Forward Plan / Committee agendas
- External publications
- Other sources.

(Report attached)

## 14. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Should it be necessary, in the opinion of the Borough Director, during the course of the meeting to consider excluding the public from the meeting on the grounds that exempt information is likely to be divulged, it may be necessary to move the following resolution:

“That, under S.100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following matter(s) on the grounds that it/they involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs (to be specified) of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act”.

These paragraphs are as follows:

Subject to the “public interest” test, information relating to:

- Para 1 – any individual;
- Para 2 – the identity of any individual;
- Para 3 – financial or business affairs;
- Para 4 – labour relations matters;
- Para 5 – legal professional privilege;
- Para 6 – a notice, order or direction;
- Para 7 – the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime;

and may need to be considered as ‘exempt’.





# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 5th February, 2013

## MINUTES

### Present:

Councillor Juliet Brunner (Chair), Councillor Simon Chalk (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Andrew Brazier, David Bush, Andrew Fry, Pattie Hill and Pat Witherspoon

### Also Present:

Councillor Brenda Quinney

### Officers:

L Berry, R Cooke, C Felton, T Kristunas, J Pickering, S Singleton, J Staniland and D Wheeler

### Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and M Craggs

### 135. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors John Fisher and Gay Hopkins.

### 136. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of any party whip.

### 137. MINUTES

#### RESOLVED that

**the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 8th January be approved as a true and correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.**

### 138. FEES AND CHARGES 2013/14

The Committee received a report which outlined the proposed fees and charges for 2013/14 for the Council's chargeable services.

.....  
Chair

# **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

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Members returned a number of comments regarding the proposed charges within Leisure and Cultural Services. In particular, it was suggested that more could be done to encourage families to visit Council owned gymnasiums. To address this it was agreed that this suggestion should be referred to the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism.

Upon it being suggested that charges for swimming and badminton appeared excessive, Officers explained that the charges were comparable with fees levied by other local authorities, and that income generation was essential to sustain existing services, including free swimming for over 60 and under 16 year olds.

Officers clarified that each promotion and performance split at the Palace Theatre was agreed on an individual basis. This was common industry practice and was proving to be far more beneficial to the Council than the earlier practice of guaranteeing artists a set fee.

Regarding charges under Regulatory Services, Officers agreed to provide clarification on why the fees listed for gambling act permits and gaming machine permits had not changed since the previous year.

Finally, it was suggested that there should be three price brackets for potential dwellings in relation to pre-application advice to help encourage small housing developments in the town. Officers agreed to take this suggestion into account as part of the Planning transformation process.

## **RECOMMENDED that**

**that the fees and charges for 2013/14 as set out in Appendix A - H to the report be approved; other than in cases where:-**

- a) fees or charges are statutory,**
- b) fees and charges are set externally, or**
- c) other Council- approved circumstances apply.**

## **139. INITIAL ESTIMATES 2013/14 - 2015/16**

The Committee was informed that the Council's final settlement grant from Government had now been confirmed. Overall, this

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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amounted to a 43% reduction in government grant from 2012/13 to 2015/16 inclusive. Approximately £1.5m worth of savings was still to be found during 2014 – 2016. However, no revenue budget bids had yet to be received, and the Council was not facing any unavoidable financial pressures. Local authorities across the country were under severe pressure not to raise Council Tax, therefore the onus was on Councils to re-structure existing services in response to financial pressures.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked Officers for their hard work in mitigating the impact on front-line services.

## **RESOLVED that**

**the report be noted.**

### **140. REDDITCH MARKET TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT**

As Chair of the Review, Councillor Andrew Brazier presented the Committee with the findings and recommendations of the Redditch Market Task Group.

Members heard that the group and Chair in an individual capacity had visited a number of different markets in an attempt to learn what was working well elsewhere and what could feasibly be introduced in Redditch. The group had also consulted with traders and local residents. This prompted a number of very useful ideas, many of which it was recommended should be taken forward by a new permanent working group for the market that would comprise of key town centre stakeholders and the Chair of the Review Group, at least on an initial basis.

Central to their recommendations, the group proposed that a new strategy for the market should be developed to help plan how the market could be revitalised during the next few years. It was recommended that this should include a recruitment and retention plan for new traders, and incorporate a formal communications and marketing plan to help promote key events.

The group was also proposing that the number of general retail market days should be reduced to no more than three each week, and that more speciality markets should be facilitated on the non-retail market days. Members felt that the town centre could no longer sustain holding a retail market on five days a week. It was thought that these measures would help offer far more choice and selection to market customers, and attract those who did not currently visit the market.

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The Chair of the group asserted that, despite difficult economic times, markets could continue to be successful if they adapted to changes in customer shopping habits and expectations, and commented that the recommended actions contained in the report could help restore Redditch Market as a central attraction for the local community.

Councillor Brazier thanked the Committee for the opportunity to lead on the review and urged Members to approve the recommendations.

The Committee welcomed the report and congratulated the group on its work. Members felt that more should be done to help the market become more competitive, especially with low price convenience stores. However, caution was urged regarding the potential costs involved with arranging speciality markets.

Finally, Members were made aware that relevant Officers would need to liaise with North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration to determine whether any of the recommended actions would require the existing Service Level Agreement to operate the market to be renegotiated.

## **RECOMMENDED that**

- 1) a new strategy for the market be developed which clearly sets out how the market can be revitalised over the next five year period;**
- 2) a small core working group consisting of local stakeholders should be created to help develop and implement the new strategy;**
- 3) the number of general retail market operating days should be reduced to no more than three days a week. The working group to consult with existing regular traders about which particular days should be retained;**
- 4) consideration is given to holding more speciality markets to take place on non general retail market operating days on a regular basis to help create a niche for the Redditch market. The working group to consider how such markets would be managed within the available resources;**

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- 5) the market working group considers the feasibility of introducing an on-site Redditch Market information point;
- 6) the market working group considers the feasibility of market customers being provided with an opportunity to pay the traders for goods through their mobile phone and debit and credit card payment facilities;
- 7) each trader is required to possess a returns policy which should be clearly advertised;
- 8) the working group facilitates further opportunities for local people, especially students and the unemployed, to obtain business experience through operating stalls in the market place at no charge on a short-term basis, to include the introduction of a new mentoring scheme to offer help and assistance to new traders;
- 9) the working group facilitates further opportunities for local businesses to showcase their goods and services on market stalls;
- 10) the working group facilitates the allocation of free stalls on a rotating basis to local people to promote forthcoming community events and the work of local charities, subject to stall availability;
- 11) the market working group explores the possibility of realigning and extending the layout of the market past its current location;
- 12) the market working group explores the feasibility of introducing a covered food court area;
- 13) the market working group explores the suitability of the design of the current market stalls and to consider whether the introduction of alternative stalls would improve the overall visual appearance of the stalls;
- 14) the market working group ensures that any review of signage in the town centre includes adequate reference to the market;
- 15) the market working group works with local bus operators to help further promote the market;

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- 16) **the Council should engage with the Public Fundraising Regulatory Association with a view to reaching an agreement to regulate the working days and areas of charity street fundraisers in Redditch Town Centre; and**
- 17) **Redditch Borough Council should join the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) and participate in the *Love Your Local Market 2013* event to publicise the changes and new opportunities that would have been introduced at the market.**

## **141. LIVING WAGE - SUGGESTED SCRUTINY REVIEW**

At the request of Council, the Committee considered whether to investigate proposals for all Council employees to receive the living wage of £7.45 per hour as a minimum. The matter had been raised as a Motion on Notice at the Council meeting on 15th January 2013.

Members were agreed that more information should be presented at a future meeting before a final decision was made on whether to undertake further investigation on the issue. In particular, it was thought that the findings of the equal pay review would provide much greater clarity on the number of staff that would be affected.

### **RESOLVED that**

**additional information be requested from a relevant source before deciding whether or not further investigation is required.**

## **142. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TRAINING - FEEDBACK**

Officers referred to the main points that were taken from the scrutiny skills training session that was delivered on Thursday 17th January 2013. In particular, undertaking careful preparation ahead of meetings was essential to ensure that interviews with expert witnesses were carried out effectively. Members were also advised not to ask more questions of witnesses than was absolutely necessary.

The Chair felt that the session had been very useful and thanked all who had attended.

### **RESOLVED that**

**the report be noted.**

# **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

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**143. ACTIONS LIST**

**RESOLVED that**

**the Committee's Actions List be noted.**

**144. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES AND SCRUTINY OF THE  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME**

**RESOLVED that**

**the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on  
15th January 2013 and the latest edition of the Executive  
Committee Work Programme be noted.**

**145. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS**

Councillor David Bush presented a draft scoping document concerning housing density targets in Redditch. It was suggested to Members that now was an appropriate time to undertake a scrutiny review into this matter given that the Council's local planning framework document was out for public consultation and that this was an important issue that required greater scrutiny.

Officers expressed concern that much of the proposal appeared to duplicate the work of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. It was also explained that the Council's Planning Advisory Panel had already addressed the town's housing density issues while reviewing Council's local planning framework document. The Council possessed a number of policies that allowed for a wide range of housing density developments, therefore it was not understood how the existing flexibility for housing development would be affected. Furthermore, it was explained that the Council could not insist that certain land was specified for self-build purposes.

Members offered competing views into whether the proposed Task Group review was necessary. It was argued that the Committee could look at this issue in greater detail than the Planning Advisory Panel, especially the impact of housing density targets on multigenerational and larger families. Conversely, however, it was suggested that the Council already possessed adequate monitoring procedures for its housing development policies.

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**RESOLVED that**

- 1) the Housing Density Targets Task Group be launched; and
- 2) Councillor Bush be appointed as Chair of the review group.

**146. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS**

The Committee received the following reports in relation to current reviews:

a) Arts and Culture Centre – Chair, Councillor Gay Hopkins

Members were informed that a number of meetings had taken place since the previous meeting of the Committee. The Group had considered 359 responses from residents and was scheduled to consider feedback received from local arts groups on the potential development of an arts and culture centre in the town.

The review was remained on course to be completed in time for the final report to be considered by the Committee on 2nd April 2013.

b) Redditch Market – Chair, Councillor Andrew Brazier

There was no update as the final report had already been considered by the Committee.

**RESOLVED that**

**the update report be noted.**

**147. HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Councillor Witherspoon provided the Committee with a brief verbal summary of most recent Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) meeting on 24th January 2013.

Members were advised that members of the Joint Services Review (JSR) into the configuration of acute hospital services in the county had attended the meeting. The JSR team supported the centralisation of key services, including in-patient obstetrics and accident and emergency, at Worcestershire Royal Hospital.

It was initially thought that public consultation on the proposed changes would take place before the Purdah pre-election period,



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however it was now understood that this might not take place until after the county council elections.

HOSC Members had also been informed that the closure of Berkeley Ward, which provided South Worcestershire's specialist dementia beds, was expected to produce financial savings with minimum disruption to patient care.

**RESOLVED that**

**the report be noted.**

**148. CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY PANEL - CHAIR'S UPDATE**

The Chair of the Redditch Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Andrew Brazier, delivered an overview of his report from the most recent Panel meeting on 31st January 2013.

Members were informed that, in taking an in-depth look at the 2012/13 quarter three performance tables for the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership for Redditch, the Panel had been pleased to learn that there had been a decrease in reported incidents for most areas of crime. In some instances, the decrease was in excess of ten per cent compared to the previous year.

Having welcomed Chris Wainwright from the Hereford and Worcester Rescue Service to the meeting, he had informed the Panel of an interesting scheme that the service ran in partnership with West Mercia Probation Trust to provide recent young offenders with support in gaining education, training, and employment opportunities.

The following Panel meeting was scheduled to take place on Thursday 28th March 2013, at 6.30pm.

**RESOLVED that**

**the report be noted**

**149. REFERRALS**

There were no referrals.

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**150. WORK PROGRAMME**

**RESOLVED that**

**the Committee's Work Programme be noted.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm  
and closed at 8.37 pm

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**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL BUSINESS CENTRES**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Greg Chance, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration, Economic Development & Transport
Portfolio Holder Consulted	
Relevant Head of Service	John Staniland, Exec Director - Planning & Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services
Ward(s) Affected	No specific ward relevance.
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	
Non-Key Decision	

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 At its meeting on 11th December 2012, as part of the Quarter 2 Finance Monitoring Report, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were advised that the number of vacant units at the Council run Business Centres is likely to result in lower than expected income on this service. As a result, the service is expected to cost an additional £48,000.
- 1.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee therefore requested an update on the three Business Centres to advise what is being done to encourage occupancy. This report updates Members accordingly.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Overview Committee is asked to RESOLVE that**

**the update report on the Redditch Business Centres be noted.**

**3. KEY ISSUES**

**Background**

- 3.1 Redditch Borough Council (RBC) manage the following three Business Centres, all of which provide a mix of accommodation to meet the needs of a variety of small businesses.

- 1) The Greenlands Business Centre, Studley Road – Held on a 99 year ground lease from May 1989 by RBC

The Centre provides 35 unfurnished office units ranging in size from 108 sq ft to 600 sq ft (with some units interconnecting to create larger office space).

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Occupiers include: IT consultants, Mediators, Carers, CAD drawing companies.

- 2) The Rubicon Business Centre, Broad Ground Road, Lakeside Industrial Estate - Leased by RBC for a term of 10 years from 3rd November 2007.

The Centre provides 16 unfurnished office units (150 to 300 sq ft) and 23 workshops (280 to 590 sq ft) for commercial enterprises and for light industrial use. Occupiers include: locksmith, calibration services, construction, disability products supplier, design and printer and office equipment supplier.

- 3) The Heming Road Enterprise Centre – Freehold owned by RBC

The Centre provides 31 units of 290 sq ft or 428 sq ft for warehouse, industrial or engineering use. There is a shared roller door and side door access. There are no reception services but secretarial support is available from Greenlands or Rubicon. Occupiers include: audio equipment manufacturers, grinding and tool making businesses.

- 3.2 All three Centres have on-site parking, 24 hour access and a part-time caretaking/cleaning service.
- 3.3 The different size units allow occupiers to move between units within the centres, subject to availability, as their business expands or contracts.
- 3.4 A maximum of three units are permitted per company. This mitigates the risk of several units being simultaneously unoccupied and the associated break in income if that business were to leave the centre.
- 3.5 Businesses located at the Centres currently provide employment for over 200 people.

**LICENCE FEES AND TERMS**

- 3.6 Businesses occupy units on a license which can be terminated with 14 days notice by either party. The flexibility allowed by the 'easy in - easy out' terms is attractive, particularly to new and growing businesses that may be hesitant about committing to long leases while their business is at a vulnerable stage.
- 3.7 New businesses can move in quickly and inexpensively. Occupiers can also move to larger or smaller units, or leave, without penalties or legal costs. The majority of comparable business centres have 14 or 28 day notice periods.
- 3.8 The License fees, which are not subsidised or discounted, are charged at commercial property market rates. Whilst there has not been an increase in the

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licence fees since 2010/11 this has, in fact, helped many occupiers survive through the recent economic challenges.

3.9 The License fees, which are reviewed annually for all occupiers, include:

- Rent
- VAT
- Water rates
- Communal lighting and heating

3.10 Additional charges are made for:

- Postal services
- Postal address services
- Secretarial support
- Telephone switchboard
- Dedicated answering services
- Meeting room hire

3.11 The only additional costs for occupiers are:

- Business rates (though the majority qualify for small business rate relief)
- Telephone bills
- Electricity within their own unit
- Furnishing their unit
- Public liability insurance.

**MARKETING**

3.12 A full mail shot was sent out at the end of 2011 to all companies in Redditch and Bromsgrove giving information on the Centres and the facilities. A similar mail shot is currently being prepared.

3.13 The Centres are regularly advertised in:

- The Redditch Advertiser and Standard
- The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce Business Direction Magazine
- Yellow pages
- 'Local Bromsgrove & Redditch Pages' magazine
- Worcestershire Business Central

3.14 Whilst a specific and intensive advertising campaign from September 2012 had very little initial response, the beginning of 2013 has actually seen an increase in enquires. Five of these inquiries have resulted in five businesses taking space

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at the Centres and more are expected to take up licence over the next few months.

3.15 Despite the advertising that takes place, the bulk of enquiries actually result from the Council's website and 'by word of mouth' from people who already know about the Centres.

3.16 Other marketing and promotion includes:

- Regular 'Federation of Small Business' Events are held at Greenlands, which have been successful for networking.
- A new advertisement banner is soon to be put up outside Greenlands and Rubicon Centres. There is presently 'an apex' sign outside the Hemming Road Enterprise Centre advertising the units to let.
- An updated list of available units is sent each month to Worcestershire Business Central's Commercial Property Search Service, Blue Orchid (new business advisors) and Co-star (On-line letting agent).
- The Centres are promoted at the Chamber of Commerce Expos and other selected Business Expo events.
- The Business Centre Manager also attends breakfast meetings on an ad-hoc basis to promote the Centres.
- In April 2013, a representative from Coventry University Enterprise Ltd for the Innovation Networks will be attending the Business Centres to meet tenants who might qualify for grant funding etc.

**INCENTIVES**

3.17 A three month rent-free period can be offered to prospective new occupiers, at the discretion of the Business Centres Manager. If occupiers leave within this period, they forfeit their deposit having signed a previous agreement to this effect. The policy is intended to effectively reduce businesses initial costs to help them afford necessary furniture or equipment.

3.18 Rent free periods are useful negotiating tools when securing new business. Existing occupiers can apply for a three month rent free period when renting additional space or moving to a larger unit within the Centres as these reallocations are viewed as new lettings.

3.19 These incentives are monitored carefully to prevent abuse of the system, but can help growing businesses trial an expansion without over committing themselves.

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- 3.20 Proposals are being developed to allow start up businesses that obtain a new business start up grant, under the Enterprising Worcestershire programme, to take accommodation on an extended rent free period, but committing to the Centres by offering a deposit as security and forfeiting this deposit if they discontinue occupancy.

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

- 3.21 The table below sets out the percentage of occupied and vacant units between 2009/10 – 2012/13. Whilst during the past three years the number of vacant units has been relatively high it would appear that this current financial year is showing an improvement in occupancy.

		RUBICON %	GREENLANDS %	HEMING ROAD %
2009-10	Occupied	61.61	41.11	53.82
	Vacant	38.39	58.89	46.18
2010-11	Occupied	60.80	57.31	30.42
	Vacant	39.20	42.69	69.58
2011-12	Occupied	59.23	63.59	40.16
	Vacant	40.77	36.41	59.84
2012-13 to date	Occupied	73.43	80.51	74.08
	Vacant	26.57	19.49	25.92

- 3.22 The Centres last produced a surplus in 2007-08 and have since been in deficit. The reasons for this are not necessarily confined due to the number of vacant units, but also as a result of ever increasing utility charges plus increasing maintenance costs on ageing heating systems and buildings.

- 3.23 In addition Members are also reminded that from 1st April 2011, the threshold on which vacant commercial properties were exempt from paying business rates was lowered from £18,000 Rateable Value to £2,600 Rateable Value. Therefore any unit which is vacant and which is above the current threshold, results in the Centres budget incurring additional cost, which was not the case prior to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011. See table below :-

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Repairs & Maintenance	31,179	46,372	70,407	To be advised
Business Rates	9,794	7,425	40,960	47,978 (figure applies up to February 2013)

- 3.24 Members are also asked to note that Rubicon Business Centre is leased from a private landlord. The lease will be due for renewal in November 2017.

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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### RECENT LETTINGS AND ENQUIRIES

3.25 As referred to in paragraph 3.14, five new businesses have taken up occupancy at the Centres since the beginning of 2013. Whilst enquiries have been slow for the last few years, there are now believed to be signs for cautious optimism, as the start of 2013 saw increased interest from potential occupiers. For example, since 1st April 2012 there have been 41 enquiries in total, but during January and February alone the enquiries totalled 17.

### COMPETITION

3.26 There are two private business centres within Redditch and one in Bromsgrove which operate similar short notice licence terms and similar fees to the Council's centres. Available information indicates these centres have experienced similar void levels and similar low level of enquiries to the Council's Centres in recent years.

The centres are located as follows:-

- **The Edward Street Business Centre, Redditch**  
Serviced office suites from 125 sq. ft.  
Units can be combined to offer suites of up to 2200 sq. ft.  
Licence fees and terms are comparable with the Council centres.  
Units are offered fully furnished, with secretarial services.
- **Ashtenne/Imex Business Centre (Oxleasow Road, East Moons Moat), Redditch**  
Serviced office and industrial units for start up business and established ones on flexible terms.  
Reception facilities are only manned on a part-time basis and no additional secretarial services are offered.
- **Basepoint, Bromsgrove**  
Serviced offices 74 – 531 sq. ft. and industrial units 460 – 835 sq. ft. for start up businesses and established ones similar to the Council centres  
Flexible licence agreements, 24/7 access, reception facilities, free parking, meeting rooms.

3.27 The competing centres are believed to be prepared to allow units to be occupied at virtually nominal rents, to have them occupied, rather than the owners becoming liable for the full business rates on empty property. The Council is unable to compete on this basis.

### TENANT SATISFACTION

3.28 Surveys and meetings with occupiers show that there is a high level of satisfaction towards the Business Centres. The majority of occupiers rate the



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accommodation as 'very good value of money' and are pleased with the facilities offered. The provision of free parking is rated highly along with the easy in and out terms. The main complaint from surveys raised was lack of repairs and investment in the Centres.

**SUCCESS STORIES**

- 3.29 Over the years there have been several success stories at the Business Centres, with some outgrowing the Centres and moving out to buy or commit to long term leases and in turn creating more employment locally. For example, one company that started six years ago with one person now employs forty five staff in Redditch, Bromsgrove, Hollywood and Warwickshire. Another company started in 2010 with one person and now employ ten. There are several companies at the Centres that have grown in the last few years with similar success stories.

**CONCLUSION**

- 3.30 There are benefits from having a mix of new companies and established ones at the Centres. Established companies can act as anchor tenants as they tend to occupy larger units for long periods providing a steady and more reliable revenue stream. On the other hand young businesses benefit from the Centres accommodation and Reception/Secretarial services available and the interaction with other companies at the Centres.
- 3.31 Despite the continuing economic conditions, being able to offer accommodation at the three Business Centres for new and established businesses, maintains the Council's 'business friendly' reputation.
- 3.32 The Business Centres contribute to the Councils investment in the local economy and regeneration, creating jobs locally, helping business to set up and thrive.

**Financial Implications**

- 3.33 There are no additional financial implications arising out of this report.

**Legal Implications**

- 3.34 There are no legal implications directly relating to this report.

**Service / Operational Implications**

- 3.35 There are no additional service or operational implications arising out of this report.

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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### **Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

3.36 No direct customer or equality and diversity implications have been identified for this report.

### **4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

No risks have been identified.

### **5. APPENDICES**

There are no appendices.

### **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

There are no background papers relating to this report.

### **AUTHOR OF REPORT**

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# Overview & Scrutiny

# Annual Report

**REDDITCH** BOROUGH COUNCIL

*making  
a  
difference*

2012/13

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



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**FOREWORD BY THE CHAIR**

I am very pleased to present the annual report for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This report provides an account of the work that the Committee has undertaken during the last twelve months, highlights progress that has been made, and identifies potential areas for further development.

As Chair, the last year has been a busy yet ultimately rewarding period. The Committee has scrutinised a number of crucial Council service areas, and has continued to play an important role in the Council's budget setting process. It has also embarked on a number of Task Group reviews, and taken a fresh approach to pre-scrutinising new Council policies. Many of our recommendations have subsequently been endorsed by the Executive Committee which highlights the valuable contribution that scrutiny continues to make to the Council's performance.

The Committee has responded to the suggestion within the previous year's annual report that the Portfolio Holder's Annual Report process was overly time consuming by suspending it altogether. Instead, it is expected that the performance of Portfolio Holders and their responsible service areas will come under even closer scrutiny through the Committee's new focused approach on services that are undergoing transformation.

Looking ahead, I am confident that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can continue to play an integral role in ensuring that Council services are fit for purpose and enhance the wellbeing of its residents.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all my fellow Committee Members for their hard work, support, and dedication that they have shown during the previous few months. I am also very appreciative of the hard work of Officers to support the work of the Committee, especially during what is a difficult and uncertain period, and would like to thank our lead support officers, Jess Bayley and Michael Craggs, for the excellent work they have produced on a consistent basis throughout the year.



**Councillor Juliet Brunner  
Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Redditch Borough Council**

## **INTRODUCTION**

There is an annual requirement for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to produce a report outlining its work and achievements during the previous year. The report also contains information about the reviews that have been undertaken by Task Groups, Short Sharp Review Groups, and the work of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel.

The Annual Report provides an opportunity for Members to consider future work programmes and to determine how the Overview and Scrutiny process could be further strengthened in future years.

It also reviews how successfully areas of weakness in the scrutiny process identified the previous year have been addressed, including more appropriate consideration of petitions and more effective pre-scrutiny of reports prior to consideration by the Executive Committee, and looks at how scrutiny of the budget has been made more inclusive. The report also monitors the recommendations that have been made by the Committee during the course of the year.

This report has been produced by Democratic Services Officers with lead responsibility for Overview and Scrutiny in consultation with the Chair of the Committee and the remaining eight Members.

## **KEY PRINCIPLES OF SCRUTINY**

Members at Redditch Borough Council aim to ensure that the Overview and Scrutiny process complies with the four key principles of scrutiny identified by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), the organisation set up to promote effective scrutiny in local government. The four key principles of effective scrutiny are:

- to provide a critical friend challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers;
- to enable the voice and concerns of the public and its communities;
- for scrutiny to be carried out by independent minded governors who lead and own the scrutiny process; and
- to drive improvement in public services.

**COMMISSIONING BODY ROLE**

**Membership 2012/13**

**Councillor Brunner (Chair)**

**Councillor S Chalk (Vice-Chair)**

**Councillors Brazier, Bush, Fisher, Fry, Hill, Hopkins, and Witherspoon**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee at Redditch Borough Council is designed to act as a commissioning body. The Committee has the power to authorise policy reviews and to scrutinise issues of local interest in depth.

This year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has commissioned a number of strategic reviews that have been conducted by Task Groups.

There are nine members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee meets approximately every four weeks, convening a week before the meeting of the Executive Committee. This provides Members with an opportunity to pre-scrutinise the work of the Executive and to ensure that decision-making processes remain transparent and accountable.



The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 2012/13. Featured are (back row from left to right) Councillors S. Chalk (Vice Chair), Hopkins, Bush, Brazier and Fisher and (front row left to right) Councillors Witherspoon, Brunner (Chair) and P Hill.



### **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY**

During 2012/13, the Committee was very selective regarding the topics that it chose for pre-decision scrutiny, and looked at far fewer items compared to previous years.

Members considered a report on the proposed co-location of the One Stop Shop at Woodrow Library for pre-decision scrutiny, and made three recommendations to the Executive Committee, all of which were endorsed. It also considered a report on the Medium Term Financial Plan, and made two recommendations. However, both of these recommendations were eventually rejected.

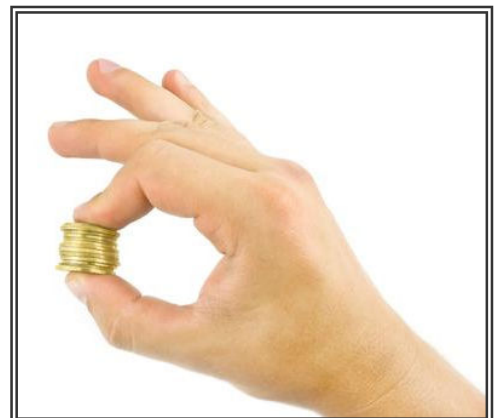
The Committee trialed a fresh approach this year to pre-scrutiny through undertaking short, sharp reviews on proposed new Council policies on staff sickness absence, and for offering concessionary rents to third sector organisations on Council owned commercial properties. The outcome of these reviews are detailed later in the report.

### **BUDGET SCRUTINY**

Scrutinising the Council's financial position is another important aspect of the Committee's work. During 2012/13, the Committee once again convened a special meeting that focused on the Council's budget setting process. However, unlike previous years, the Council was not in a position to submit any budget bids due to financial constraints.

The Committee did however continue to receive quarterly budget monitoring reports from each of the Council's six directorates for its consideration, and reviewed the position of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan 2013/14 to 2015/16. The the Council's proposed fees and charges for 2013/14 were scrutinised in detail. Information about the Council's initial financial estimates from 2013/14 to 2015/16 was also considered following confirmation of the Council's final settlement grant from Government.

It is fully expected that budget scrutiny will remain a very important aspect of the Committee's work programme, especially considering the financial pressures that face the Council during the coming years.



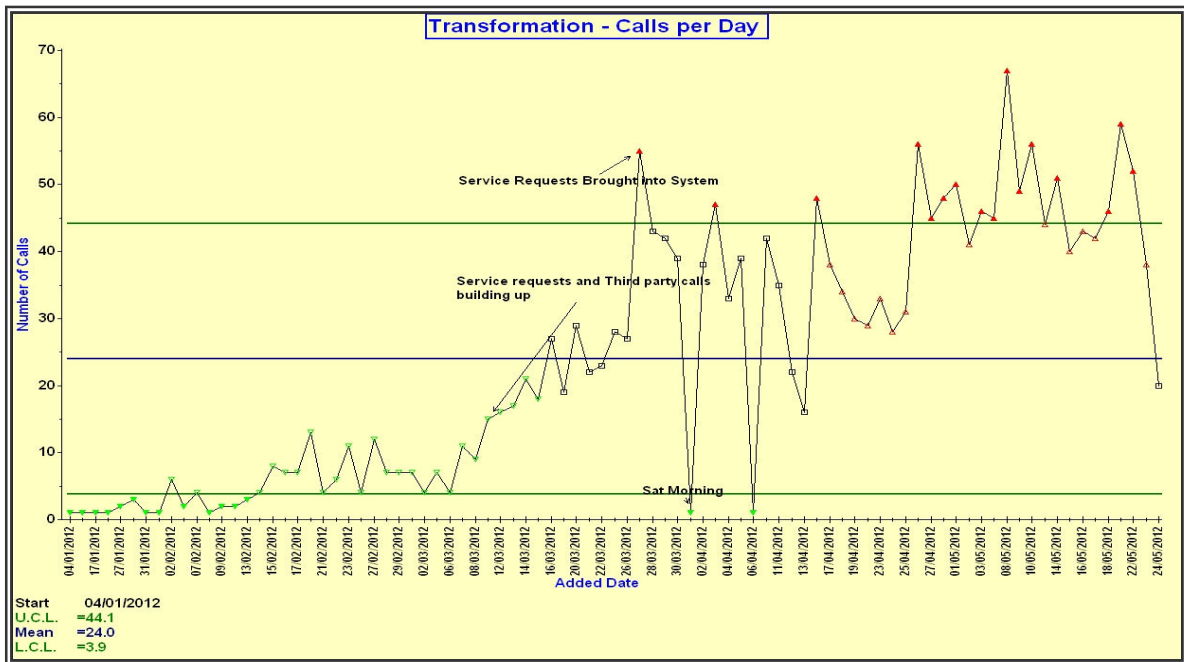
**PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY**

Overview and Scrutiny nationally has a key role to play in monitoring service performance at a local level. In previous years this has generally been achieved through scrutiny of quarterly performance reports, which focus on the performance of particular services and meeting specific targets.

In 2012/13 the Council reviewed corporate performance monitoring arrangements and the outcomes of this review were reported for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's consideration in November 2012.

Members were advised that in future the focus of performance monitoring work would be on the extent to which services were meeting strategic purposes, or customers' needs identified through consultation with local residents. Performance reporting would focus on measures relating to the purpose of the work, rather than on meeting performance targets.

The new performance management process is not due to be implemented until later in the spring in 2013. Information gathered through performance monitoring will be published on the Council's intranet and it is likely that this information will provide crucial evidence for Members' consideration during future scrutiny reviews.



When the Committee received a presentation on the future of performance reporting at the Council Members considered examples of graphs that will be used to report on service performance in future years.

## **DEVELOPMENTS IN SCRUTINY 2012/13**

In 2012/13 there have been a couple of developments in Overview and Scrutiny at Redditch Borough Council.

### **Referral from Council**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has started to receive referrals direct from Council this year.

In January 2013 the Council received a Motion on Notice regarding payment of the living wage to members of staff employed by Redditch Borough Council. Members agreed during the course of their deliberations to recognise the case for all employees to be paid the living wage of £7.45 per hour as a minimum. It was also agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be asked to investigate proposals with a view to reporting back to the Executive Committee at a later date on the full implications for staffing and financial costs.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered this request in detail in February 2013. Members reached the conclusion that additional information was required to enable the Committee to determine whether to launch a detailed review of the subject. A report, which will provide further information on this subject, is due to be received by the Committee in April 2013.

### **Portfolio Holder Annual Reports**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee decided this year to end the delivery of Portfolio Holder Annual Reports at meetings of the Committee. The process had originally been introduced in 2007/08 to provide the Committee with an opportunity to hold the Portfolio Holders to account. During subsequent years the Portfolio Holders had consistently presented reports and answered questions that had been proposed in advance.

Increasingly, however, members of the Committee had become concerned about the value added by the Portfolio Holder Annual Report process. The reports took significant time to prepare, particularly the written report stage of the process, and diverted the work of senior officers from managing day-to-day services. In addition, only six recommendations had been made since 2007 following consideration of an annual report.

Prior to a decision being made on this subject three Portfolio Holders attended meetings of the Committee to deliver their reports: the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration, Economic Development and Transport, Councillor Greg Chance; the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management, Councillor Phil Mould; and the Portfolio Holder for Local Environment and Health, Councillor Debbie Taylor. The Committee would like to thank these Portfolio Holders and the Officers who accompanied them for presenting these reports.

## **Scrutiny of Service Transformation**

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were keen to ensure that the time that had been taken by the Portfolio Holder Annual Report process should be redirected to constructive scrutiny activities. In particular the Committee is aiming to focus increasingly on scrutinising the Council's service transformation programme; whereby services are being redesigned in order to reduce 'waste' costs in service delivery whilst maintaining or even improving the service provided to the customer.

The Committee has already received some information about service transformation. In particular, when considering updates monitoring the implementation of scrutiny recommendations Members have considered information about the impact of transformation on the following services:

- Environmental Services.
- Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service.
- The Hub (Customer Services).

To enable Members to further scrutinise and hold the transformation process to account constructively the Committee received a briefing on the potential role of scrutiny in the service transformation process at a meeting in March 2013. The content of this briefing will help to influence the focus of the Committee's scrutiny of service transformation.

**DEPEDENDING ON THE OUTCOME OF THE BRIEFING ON 5TH MARCH  
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION COULD BE ADDED HERE REGARDING KEY  
AREAS OF SERVICE TRANSFORMATION THAT THE COMMITTEE HAVE  
AGREED TO FOCUS ON IN 2013/14.**

## **MONITORING RESPONSES – COMMITTEE RECOMENDATIONS**

### **Joint Worcestershire Hub Review (May 2012)**

A joint review of the Worcestershire Hub, led by Worcestershire County Council, was completed in November 2010. The Redditch Overview and Scrutiny Committee was asked to monitor the implementation of the 22 recommendations that had been made by the review group, some of which had implications for district Councils.

The Committee was delighted to learn that a number of improvements had been made to the Hub service in Redditch in recent months, largely as a consequence of service transformation. As part of the process the Council had adopted a Systems Thinking approach, which focused on how the needs of the customer could be met. Increasingly staff were being encouraged to provide a direct face-to-face contact for customers rather than the self-service approach that had been promoted in the Joint Worcestershire Hub report.

### **Recycling Review (November 2012)**

A review of recycling services was completed in March 2012. Due to the significance of the group's work to local recycling rates it was agreed that an update report on this subject should be received before the end of the year.

The Committee was advised that a lot of action was being, or was due to be taken to implement the Recycling Task Group's recommendations. Members were informed that promoting recycling was a key feature of the Environmental Services' three year publicity campaign. In addition, progress had also been made in extending recycling services to more residents in the Borough, as part of the 100 per cent project.

The Council's Environmental team were in the process of participating in service transformation. As part of the process action that could be taken to effectively promote green bin collections to the public was being considered. Service operatives were also involved in the transformation process to ensure that any problems in service delivery could be quickly identified and addressed.

Unfortunately, Members were advised that there had only been a small increase in recycling rates since the scrutiny review had been completed. However, Officers were anticipating that recycling rates would improve in the following 12 month period.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has requested that this review be submitted for consideration in the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) Good Scrutiny Awards process 2013. The CfPS will announce a short list of successful entries in spring 2013.

### External Refurbishment of Housing Stock (July 2012)

The External Refurbishment of Housing Stock Short, Sharp Review, focusing on improvements that could be made to the housing stock in parts of Woodrow, was completed in December 2010. The group had made a number of recommendations about improvements that could be made to the aesthetic appearance of houses in the area and to the local environment.

The Committee received an update on action taken to implement the group's recommendations in July 2012. Members were advised that Ombersley Close and Rushock Close, which had been visited as part of the scrutiny review, had been selected for inclusion in the External Wall and Insulation Project for Woodrow, a project that had previously been delivered successfully in Winyates.



Properties in Woodrow prior to completion of external wall insulation works.



Properties in Woodrow following completion of wall insulation works.

A total of 261 properties were eligible for inclusion in the project including 112 Council properties and 140 private properties. Works included surface insulation, loft insulation and replacing boilers. Members were advised that the works would cost £1.7 million which would be paid for using carbon funding received from the energy company E.ON.

The Committee also received an update on the impact of the transformation pilot process for repairs and maintenance services at the Council. A number of problems had been identified prior to transformation including: delays to works caused by reporting processes; delays caused by the need for operatives to return to Council stores for equipment; and a high rate of failure demand, or services which did not meet customers' expectations.

The Committee was advised that a number of actions had been taken during the trial transformation of the service to address these concerns. Four members of staff had been appointed to work on the trial. These four employees had been provided with vehicles that were fully stocked with all the equipment that might be required to make effective repairs at a property. The four operatives had responded to 215 demands. Only three of these cases had resulted in a dissatisfactory outcome for the customer. The timescales for completing repair and maintenance works had also improved, having been reduced from a maximum of 75 days to a maximum of 6.52 days.

**CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY**

**Membership: Councillors Brazier (Chair), Baker, Clayton, P Hill and R Hill.**

The Police and Justice Act 2006 required every local authority in England and Wales from April 2009 to have a designated Committee with the responsibility for scrutinising the work of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CRDP). The legislation was designed to provide local councillors with a More enhanced role in relation to the work of CDRPs, the Statutory bodies for crime and disorder matters, anti-social behaviour and community safety.



Councillor Brazier, Chair,  
Crime and Disorder  
Scrutiny Panel

The Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel was subsequently established in 2010 as a sub-committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to focus on the performance of the local CDRP, the Community Safety Partnership. It currently meets on a quarterly basis.

During 2012, the Redditch Community Safety Partnership merged with the other CRDPs in North Worcestershire to form the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership. In keeping with its main scrutiny function, the Panel continued to focus solely on performance information for Redditch, and how the reconfiguration of CRDPs in North Worcestershire would affect the Borough. This was achieved through their regular consideration of Community Safety Performance Framework figures throughout the year.

The Panel also considered how the election of a new Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia, and the establishment of Police and Crime Panels to monitor the Commissioner’s performance, would impact on Redditch.



## **HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

In May 2012 Councillor Witherspoon was appointed as the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC). District Councils are invited to appoint representatives to the HOSC to ensure that the interests of the district in relation to health are taken into account.

Since her appointment Councillor Witherspoon has delivered regular updates to the Committee about the work of HOSC. In particular Members have been informed about the following issues:

- The Joint Services Review (JSR) into the configuration of acute hospital services in the county. HOSC has been involved throughout the review, including the consultation process, the outcomes of which may have significant implications for the future of the Alexandra Hospital in Redditch.
- The application for Foundation Trust Status for Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust.
- The Strategic Modernisation Programme of the Adult Acute and Community Mental Health Services.
- Progress updates on changes to the West Midlands Ambulance service.



Councillor Witherspoon,  
Redditch Borough Council's  
representative on the  
Worcestershire Health  
Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee





**ACCESS FOR DISABLED PEOPLE TASK GROUP**

**Membership (May – August 2012): Councillor Andrew Fry (Chair) and Councillors M Chalk, Mason, Quinney and Smith Completed August 2012**

The review of access for people with disabilities to Redditch town centre was launched in 2011/12. The group focused on access for people with all types of disabilities using public transport, taxis or travelling by car.

A variety of expert witnesses were consulted during the review including: representatives of bus companies; representatives of local taxi firms; and Council Officers.

Local residents were also consulted by the group. A number of residents completed a questionnaire, though residents were also consulted at meetings of the Disability Action Redditch Group and the Redditch Older People's Forum.

The review was completed in August 2012. The majority of the group's proposals were endorsed by the Executive Committee.

An update on the action that has been taken to implement the group's recommendations is due to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April 2013.



Featured during a field trip to Shopmobility are (from left to right) Councillor Fry (Chair), Mr M Fowler, and Councillors Quinney and Mason.

### **CONCESSIONARY RENTS SHORT, SHARP REVIEW**

**Membership: Councillors Brunner and Brazier**  
**Completed: September 2012 (reported December 2012).**

The Concessionary Rents Pre-Scrutiny Short, Sharp review was launched in July 2012 to pre-scrutinise the proposed introduction of a Council policy for offering concessionary rents to third sector organisations on Council owned commercial properties. At the launch of the review it was anticipated that the Executive Committee would consider the draft policy in September 2012.

The group interviewed the relevant lead Council Officers to learn why the proposed changes were being introduced and how these would benefit the Council and third sector organisations. They also consulted with a representative of the voluntary sector, and reviewed how similar policies had fared at other local authorities. However, in line with constitutional requirements, the group was not permitted to consider the content of the proposed new Concessionary Rents Policy, as it remained in draft form throughout the course of the review.

The Councillors eventually proposed eight recommendations for the consideration of the Executive Committee. As the report's recommendations were not able to address a number of the points in the draft policy, it was agreed that the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management, Councillor Mould, should give these recommendations further consideration following the meeting.

### **SICKNESS POLICY PRE-SCRUTINY SHORT, SHARP REVIEW GROUP**

**Membership: Councillors Fisher and Witherspoon**  
**Completed: September 2012 (reported November 2012).**

The Sickness Policy Pre-Scrutiny Short, Sharp review was launched in July 2012 to pre-scrutinise proposed changes to the Council's Sickness Absence Policy for staff. At the launch of the review it was anticipated that the Executive Committee would consider the draft policy in September 2012.

The group interviewed a number of expert witnesses during the course of the review including: representatives of the Council's HR department; representatives of Unison and UCATT; and the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management, Councillor Mould. The Councillors also considered the content of the Council's previous Sickness Absence Policy, scrutinised comparable policies for other local authorities and received an overview of proposed changes to the policy. However, in line with constitutional requirements, the Councillors were not permitted to consider the content of the proposed new Sickness Absence Policy for staff, as it remained in draft form throughout the course of the review.

At the end of the review the Councillors proposed eight recommendations. These were all approved by the Executive Committee in November 2012.

**REDDITCH MARKET TASK AND FINISH REVIEW**

**Membership: Councillors Brazier (Chair), Baker, Mason, (Derek) Taylor, and Quinney.**

**Completed: February 2013**

Launched in June 2012, the Redditch Market Task Group Review was undertaken to identify ways in which the local market could be revitalised. There was a strong sense that the market had declined in recent years which was having a negative impact on the local economy and the town centre in general. With Redditch possessing a strong heritage as a traditional ‘market town’, it was felt that this was a very suitable topic for an in-depth scrutiny review.



Councillors Brazier, Mason and Quinney during their site visit to Bromsgrove Market, November 2012.

The Task Group made a number of site visits to other markets to learn what was working well elsewhere and what could potentially be implemented in Redditch. They conducted a public consultation in collaboration with the local media to garner the views from residents about what they would like to see introduced at the market to make it a more attractive place to visit, and also spoke to current traders to obtain their thoughts about how their business could be improved.

The Task Group eventually made a total of 17 recommendations that are due to be considered by the decision making Executive Committee in March 2013. If endorsed, it is expected that these recommendations will lead to improved facilities, attractions and choice at the market for residents to enjoy.

**ARTS AND CULTURE CENTRE TASK GROUP**

**Membership: Councillors Hopkins (Chair), Baker, Clayton and Witherspoon.**

**Co-opted Member: Mr M Hall.**

**Deadline: The review is due to be completed in April 2013.**

The Arts and Culture Centre Task Group review was launched in October 2012. Members were tasked with investigating the potential to introduce an arts and culture centre in the town.

During the course of the review the group has visited a number of arts venues located in the country including The Artrix in Bromsgrove, Avoncroft Arts Centre in Bromsgrove, Number 8 in Pershore, and The Public in Sandwell. The group has also visited Redditch Palace Theatre, interviewed Officers from the Council's Leisure Services team and representatives of the Campaign for a Redditch Arts Centre.

Public consultation has formed a key part of the review. A questionnaire was circulated amongst local residents by the group at the end of 2012 to find out what people thought about the arts in Redditch and whether there was support for the introduction of an arts centre. A total of 359 completed questionnaires were received. Local community arts groups have also been consulted, though the number of responses was more limited.

At the time of writing the Councillors had agreed a draft list of recommendations and remained on target to complete their review by April 2013.



Members of the group visited The Artrix in October 2012. Featured are (from left to right) Councillors Witherspoon, Baker, Hopkins (Chair) and Clayton.

## **MEMBER DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING**

Councillors and Officers have participated in the following scrutiny related training sessions in 2012/13:

- Introduction to Overview and Scrutiny, delivered by Officers (14th May 2012) attended by Councillors Bennett, Braley, Brazier, Brunner, Bush, Fisher, Fry, Hartnett, P Hill, R Hill, Hopkins, Mason, Mould, Quinney and Smith.
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee training, delivered by Officers (17th May 2012) attended by Councillor Witherspoon.
- Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Training, delivered by Officers (5th July 2012) attended by Councillors Baker, Brazier, P Hill and R Hill.
- Call-in Briefing, delivered by Officers (11th December 2012) attended by Councillors Baker, Bennett, Braley, Brazier, Brunner, S Chalk, Fisher, Fry, Gandy, P Hill, Hopkins, Smith and Witherspoon.
- Effective Questioning Skills for Members, delivered by Mr Kevin O'Keefe, Excelsa Interim Management and Consultancy Ltd, (17th January 2013) attended by Councillors Bennett, Brazier, Brunner, Bush, Clayton, Gandy, P Hill, R Hill, Hopkins, Smith and (Derek) Taylor.
- CfPS Parliamentary Seminar Series, Local Government House, London (6th February 2013) attended by Councillor Smith.



A number of Councillors attended the Introduction to Overview and Scrutiny Training that was delivered in May 2012.

### **OUTCOME OF RECOMMENDATIONS 2012/13**

Up to and including its meeting on 5th February 2013, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has made a total of sixty-two recommendations during 2012/13. Of these, thirty-four recommendations have been approved by the Executive Committee, and two were declined.

Twenty six recommendations remain pending a final decision. This includes seventeen recommendations as part of the Redditch Market Task Review which will be considered by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 12th March 2013.

The Arts and Culture Centre Review is due to be completed in April 2013. The Executive Committee's response to these recommendations will be included within the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's tracking report, which will be considered by the Committee in May 2013.

### **SCRUTINY IN THE FUTURE**

This year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has undertaken some thorough reviews and has made a significant number of recommendations, most of which have eventually been endorsed by the Executive Committee. However, it is acknowledged that there are areas that the Committee needs to focus on if it is to continue to be effective in its role:

During the coming year, Members and Officers have identified that the following areas should be addressed in the Overview and Scrutiny process during 2012/13

- There should be a clear focus on scrutinising Council services that are currently or about to undergo transformation. In particular, It is felt that the Committee can make a very valuable contribution by helping to identify existing 'waste' in service delivery that offers no benefit to local residents. Given the very difficult economic climate, it is felt that this can be a very important area on which the Committee can concentrate.
-

**MEMBERSHIP GALLERY**

The following Councillors have served as members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee this year.



Councillor Juliet Brunner  
Chair of the Committee



Councillor Simon Chalk  
Vice Chair



Councillor  
Andrew Brazier



Councillor  
David Bush



Councillor  
John Fisher



Councillor  
Andrew Fry



Councillor  
Pattie Hill



Councillor  
Gay Hopkins



Councillor  
Pat Witherspoon

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The Committee wishes to thank all those who took the time to provide information and advice during the course of the review, and to everyone who participated in the public consultation. The Committee would especially like to thank those listed below for taking the time to provide evidence and attend scrutiny meetings:

- Lyndsey Berry (Planning Officer)
- Jonathan Cochrane (Arts and Events Manager)
- Ray Cooke (Leisure Services Manager)
- John Godwin (Head of Leisure and Cultural Services)
- Ruth Griffin (Dial a Ride and Shopmobility Manager)
- Teresa Kristunas (Head of Finance and Resources)
- Sam Morgan (Financial Services Manager)
- Jayne Pickering (Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources)
- Steve Singleton (Economic Development Manager – North Worcestershire)
- John Staniland (Executive Director of Planning, Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services)
- Judith Willis (Acting Head of Community Services)
- Bev Houghton (Community Safety Manager)

Members would also like to thank the Redditch Standard, in particular Harriet Ernstsons, for their regular attendance at meetings of the Committee throughout the year and for helping to publicise its work to a wider audience.

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY CONTACT DETAILS**

For additional copies of this report, or to find out more about Overview and Scrutiny at Redditch Borough Council, please contact:

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**Address:**

Overview and Scrutiny,  
Democratic Services,  
Redditch Borough Council,  
Redditch Town Hall,  
Walter Stranz Square,  
Redditch, Worcestershire  
B98 8AH

Further information about the Overview and Scrutiny process at Redditch Borough Council can also be found on the Council's dedicated web pages. To access these web pages please use the web address attached here:

<http://redditch.whub.org.uk/cms/council-and-democracy/councillors-and-committees/overview-and-scrutiny.aspx>



**Actions requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

<b>Date Action Requested</b>	<b>Action to be Taken</b>	<b>Response</b>
11th December 2012  <b>1</b>	Members requested training on the subject of service transformation, as part of the Committee's new focus on scrutinising transformation and shared service.	Officers are due to deliver a briefing on the subject of transformation at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5th March 2013.  WILL BE COMPLETED AT THIS MEETING
5th February 2013  <b>2</b>	Officers to provide further information about the living wage and the current position for staff with regard to payment of the living wage at a forthcoming meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.	TO BE COMPLETED AT THE NEXT MEETING
5th February 2013  <b>3</b>	Officers were asked to provide an estimate of the financial costs involved in supporting a Task Group exercise.	TO BE COMPLETED





## Executive Committee

12<sup>th</sup> February 2013

### MINUTES

#### Present:

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

#### Officers:

E Baker, R Bamford, C Flanagan, J Godwin, S Jones, T Kristunas, S Morgan, J Pickering and M Bough

#### Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

#### 140. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Luke Stephens.

#### 141. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hartnett declared an interest in Item 10 (Disposal of Hewell Road Swimming Baths and Adjacent Play Area for Affordable Housing) as detailed separately at Minute 149 below.

#### 142. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements from the Leader.

#### 143. MINUTES

##### RESOLVED that

**the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.**

.....  
Chair

**144. REDDITCH GROWTH CONSULTATION**

Officers introduced a report that was seeking approval for consultation to be carried out between 25<sup>th</sup> February and 8<sup>th</sup> April 2013 on proposed Redditch Growth. The consultation was to be carried out jointly with Bromsgrove District Council as the potential housing growth was to be contained within Bromsgrove District.

The meeting was informed that the proposed growth was to meet the need which had been identified in a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). This work suggested that the housing requirement for Redditch to 2030 was 6,380 dwellings. A second assessment, a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) had demonstrated that there was the capacity to accommodate around 3,000 dwellings within Redditch Borough, leaving a balance of around 3,400 dwellings to be accommodated cross boundary. Local authorities were required to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, based on their housing requirement, and Redditch was unable to fulfil this requirement within its own boundaries.

Twenty potential sites around the borders of the Borough of Redditch were initially assessed and, of these, five were progressed to focussed site appraisal. The outcome of this second stage was the identification of sites at Foxlydiate and Brockhill East as the most suitable options for housing growth.

Some Members did not accept the need for an additional 6,000 houses. A site visit undertaken the previous Saturday had provided an insight into the impact of the proposed growth. It was suggested that there should be an opportunity for Members and other consultees, including residents, to consider further areas of land. It was noted that, during the consultation on Local Plan No. 3 the public had been presented with choices and the thought was expressed that consultation was not particularly meaningful in the absence of choice. It was further suggested that there were additional pieces of land which were not being considered for development because of the potential impact upon Bromsgrove District. Officers were asked how many houses had built since the Regional Spatial Strategy had been released in 2009 and whether these could be offset against the current housing need.

Officers explained that not having sufficient land available to meet the current housing need left the Borough vulnerable to losing at appeal over applications for development, all other things being equal. An undertaking was made to provide Members of the Committee with the numbers of the houses built each year within the Borough since 2009.

The contention that increased housing alongside existing housing developments made an improvement in public transport more likely was questioned. It was suggested that the proposed growth would impact significantly on Webheath and Headless Cross whilst failing to meet the current shortfall in housing need. In answer to specific questions, Officers clarified that there were currently around 3,000 people on the Council's Housing Waiting List and, of those, around 900 were in housing need.

Members of the Committee noted that there were a lot of outstanding questions about the sites being proposed for future growth and it was hoped that the forthcoming consultation period would begin to provide answers to some of those questions and gather the views of local residents on the proposals. It was made clear that the initial selection of possible areas for development had been undertaken by Officers and that Members' role in the process was now starting with the agreement of documentation to be put out for public consultation. Officers added that the proposed housing growth was in line with the annual pattern of housing growth within the Borough since the mid-1980s.

**RECOMMENDED that**

**the consultation document, Redditch Growth Consultation (Appendix 1) and the supporting background evidence report (Appendix 2) and the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal (Appendix 3) be approved for public consultation jointly between 25<sup>th</sup> February and 8<sup>th</sup> April 2013.**

**145. DRAFT BOROUGH OF REDDITCH LOCAL PLAN NO.4**

The Committee considered a report which was proposing the approval of a draft Local Plan No.4 for the purpose of public consultation. The Local Plan was required to establish the proposed levels of growth for the Borough, most particularly in relation to numbers of new dwellings and the amount of new land for employment purposes up until 2030. Members commented that the constituent parts of the Local Plan had received previous consideration at meetings of the Planning Advisory Panel and it was noted that the Infrastructure Delivery Plan had been received by the Panel earlier that same evening.

There were concerns expressed at the impact of further development at Webheath, particularly in relation to traffic congestion in Headless Cross centre. It was reported that traffic problems were currently a feature of that junction and that the problems would be compounded by further development in that vicinity. Officers explained that highways modelling had not been undertaken by the County Council at that location as the pinch-point

on that route had been identified some way from the junction. It was stated that, should Members want modelling carried out on that junction, the Council could ask the County Council to do that, but the Council would have to meet the cost. Officers added that detailed modelling had been carried out in connection with an ongoing planning application and Officers offered to check which junctions were concerned and report back to all Members.

It was suggested that the creation of a further 3,000 homes under this Local Plan would leave no further housing land in Redditch and Officers were asked what the options were at that point. It was noted that, as ever, the Council would be required to comply with nationally imposed requirements but, should a no further growth option be available, the Council could consider that at the time.

Officers accepted that the two most contentious issues in the Local Plan No. 4 were the Webheath ADR land and the Brockhill area and explained that they had given those most closely involved with campaigns to limit development in these areas prior notice that these matters would be coming before the Council as a consequence.

**RECOMMENDED that**

**the Draft Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 4 (Appendix 1) and the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal (Appendix 2) are approved for public consultation between 25<sup>th</sup> February 2013 and 8<sup>th</sup> April 2013.**

**146. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2013/14 - 2015/16**

The Committee received an update on the budget position in advance of the Council Tax Setting meeting the following week. It was reported that Heads of Service and Finance Officers had been working hard to achieve savings over recent months but could now come forward with a balanced budget, although, as ever, there were some risks involved. The Leader thanked the Finance Team for their efforts in achieving this outcome in difficult circumstances.

Officers highlighted a typographical error in paragraph 3.6 wherein it had incorrectly been stated that the cumulative grant reduction for 2014/15 was £2,289,000 (41%) rather than the £2,389,000 (43%) intended.

The proposed savings through transformation of £150,000 were based upon previous savings through this means but were difficult to allocate any more precisely. The expected VAT refunds were also not able to be finally quantified as yet. At the end of the year it was anticipated that the Council would hold just over £900,000 in

balances. What was clear was that the following two years would present further challenges to the authority.

It was accepted by Members that it was a further difficult year for the Council, not helped by the late announcement of the Grant Settlement, and the meeting was informed that the outcome of a letter of appeal to the Government over the Settlement had been a further small reduction in the Council's grant.

There was some discussion over the financial implications of the Local Plan No. 4 and the Cross Boundary Growth Consultation and whether money had previously been re-allocated for other purposes. Officers confirmed that the necessary funding was in place and undertook to provide further clarification on this matter prior to the forthcoming meeting of the Council.

**RESOLVED that**

**the current position for 2013/14 – 2015/16 be noted and Officers be requested that Officers review the savings that can be delivered to achieve a balanced budget.**

**147. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - 2013-14 - RENT SETTING**

Officers explained that 2013 was the first year out of the Housing Subsidy system. Because of the proportion of the national housing debt inherited by the Council, the Council was no longer in a position to borrow to fund the future capital programme.

A further major change was the requirement to calculate depreciation on the Council's housing stock, although there was a five-year transitional period before a final depreciation figure was required.

A Member noted that the total figure for Landlords, Costs, Insurance etc. seemed to be extremely modest and Officers were asked how much insurance was being paid per property as a proportion of this figure. Officers undertook to provide this information to Members of the Committee.

Members were keen that the Council continued to maintain a good quality housing stock.

**RECOMMENDED that**

- 1) the draft 2013/14 Estimates for the Housing Revenue Account attached to the report at Appendix A, be approved;**

- 2) **the actual average rent increase for 2013/14 be 3.8% (2.6% RPI plus 1.2% due to rent restructuring); and**
- 3) **£3.5m be transferred to a reserve as a Revenue Contribution to Capital to fund the future Capital Programme and repay borrowing.**

#### **148. FEES AND CHARGES 2013/14**

The Committee received the proposed Fees and Charges for the Council's chargeable services for the coming year. It was explained that Heads of Service had aimed to achieve a three percent increase in income over their range of services.

A Member questioned the cost of the hire of the Abbey Stadium Swimming Pool for local first schools, noting that they were aware of at least one school which used a pool further afield. This was set against the backdrop of the provision of free swimming for under 16s and over 60s. Officers undertook to investigate this matter, adding that there could be a range of factors other than costs which had led the school to this course of action. It was added that the free swimming had seen a very considerable uptake in the year to date with around 6,000 individuals taking advantage thus far.

A further question was asked about hire products on page 53 and the apparently high cost of having an alarm. Again, Officers undertook to establish the reasons for the present charging level and report this back to Members.

The Committee noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had reviewed the Fees and Charges the previous week and were content to endorse the comments made by that body.

#### **RECOMMENDED that**

**the fees and charges for 2013/14 as set out in Appendix A - H to the report be approved; other than in cases where:-**

- a) **fees or charges are statutory,**
- b) **fees and charges are set externally, or**
- c) **other Council- approved circumstances apply; and**

#### **RESOLVED that**

**the comments of the Overview of the Scrutiny Committee be noted.**



**149. DISPOSAL OF HEWELL ROAD SWIMMING BATHS AND ADJACENT PLAY AREA FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Members considered a report which proposed the disposal of the Hewell Road Pool site to a Registered Provider for the development of affordable housing.

There was some discussion around the criteria used for the assessing of the Registered Providers' bids and whether any one Group might be advantaged or disadvantaged by the proposed scoring system. Officers were of the opinion that all the potential providers would be in a position to apply on equal terms for the right to develop.

The value of the site was also a matter raised by a Member. The suggestion that the site be handed to a Registered Provider for as little as £1 was queried in light of the Council's obligation to dispose of land for the best consideration. Officers confirmed that disposals at less than best consideration were permissible under certain circumstances and explained that the disposal in this case would also involve the clearance of the site by the developer and insurance against restrictive covenants and similar risks.

There was widespread agreement that the proposed affordable housing on the site was to be welcomed

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) the option to dispose of the Hewell Road swimming baths site and the adjacent play area (plan at appendix 1) by sale or transfer for the development of affordable housing to a Registered Provider from the Council's Preferred Partner list be pursued;**
- 2) the selection criteria (appendix 2) be agreed;**
- 3) Officers invite development submissions for the site from the Council's Preferred Partner Registered Providers;**
- 4) a selection panel be formed of Members, and supported by Officers to assess and evaluate the submissions and nominate the proposed partner; and**
- 5) the selection panel brings a further report to the Executive Committee for the formal selection of the successful submission.**

(During consideration of this item, Councillor Bill Hartnett declared an other disclosable interest as a Member of the Board of Redditch Co-operative Homes, appointed by the Council, and vacated the Chair and the Chamber for the duration of this item. The Vice-Chair, Councillor Chance, assumed the Chair in Councillor Hartnett's absence.)

**150. NOMINATION OF AN ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE**

Officers introduced a report detailing a request that the Redditch Youth House be listed as an Asset of Community Value.

The Youth House was currently vacant and a local group had put together a bid to bring the building back into use. The approval of the request would provide a 6 month period to generate sufficient funds to purchase the building to provide community facilities.

Members welcomed this proposal and wished the group well in their venture.

**RESOLVED that**

**the listing of the Redditch Youth House as an Asset of Community Value be approved.**

**151. QUARTERLY MONITORING - WRITE OFF OF DEBTS - QUARTER 3 - OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2012**

Members considered the latest quarterly report of the action taken by Officers with respect to the write-off of debts during the previous quarter.

**RESOLVED that**

**the content of the report be noted.**

**152. REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL - RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES FOR 2013-14**

Members considered the annual report from the Independent Remuneration Panel for Worcestershire District Councils (IRP) setting out that body's recommendations for the level of allowances to be paid to members of the Council for the coming Municipal Year. The IRP had met with all Leaders of the Worcestershire Districts in preparation for this report.

Members reiterated the view expressed in previous years that this decision be taken out of their hands and levels of allowances be set nationally.

**RECOMMENDED that**

- 1) the Council has regard to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel;
- 2) the Council does not accept the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, set out in detail in Appendix 1 to its report, for the following allowances:

**Basic  
 Leader  
 Deputy Leader  
 Portfolio Holders  
 Executive Members without Portfolio  
 Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
 Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
 Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Task Groups  
 Chair of Audit and Governance Committee  
 Chair of Planning Committee  
 Chair of Licensing Committee  
 Chair of Standards Committee  
 Political Group Leaders;**

- 3) the Council accepts the Panel's recommendations for travel, subsistence and dependent carers allowances;
- 4) for 2013-14, the Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances continue at the level set for 2012-13, as set out in detail in the final column in appendix 1 to the Panel's report;
- 5) the Panel's recommendation relating to the Parish Council be noted.

**153. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Members 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 8<sup>th</sup> January 2013 be received and noted.**

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

There were no minutes or referrals to consider under this item.

**155. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT**

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

**RESOLVED that**

**the report be noted.**

**156. ACTION MONITORING**

The Committee received the latest Action Monitoring report.

**RESOLVED that**

**the report be noted.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm  
and closed at 9.27 pm

.....  
Chair



# Executive Committee

18<sup>th</sup> February 2013

## MINUTES

### Present:

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

### Also Present:

Councillors Rebecca Blake, Michael Braley, Carole Gandy, Phil Mould, Mark Shurmer, Luke Stephens and Debbie Taylor

### Officers:

E Baker, R Bamford, A Darroch, K Dicks, C Flanagan, S Hanley, S Morgan and J Pickering

### Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

### 157. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

### 158. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 159. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements from the Leader.

### 160. MINUTES

#### RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

.....  
Chair

**161. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2013/14 - 2015/16 AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2013/14**

Officers introduced a report which proposed a budget to be considered by the Council and a proposed level at which the coming year's Council Tax was to be set. The Council was once again reminded that the information in respect of formula funding from central Government had been received very late this year and adjustments had had to be made up until a short time before this meeting to take account of various factors of which the Council had been notified in recent days.

The overall level of funding from central Government was considerably lower than several years previously and the cumulative decrease in funding was expected to total 43% by 2015/16. Savings continued to be achieved through shared services and transformation and bids for revenue had been kept to a bare minimum this year; these were to be paid for from balances. In order to address the shortfall arising from the ending of Council Tax Benefit the Council had reviewed the levels of discount applied to certain prescribed levels of Council Tax Discounts and these were set out in full within amended recommendations tabled before the Committee.

The Leader thanked Finance Officers and Officers of the Council more generally for their response to the difficult circumstances in which they were working. The Committee was informed that the response to a letter of appeal to the Government over the level of formula funding had been a further small reduction in funding.

Members discussed the various means through which the Council had sought to save money in recent years, including the creation of a single management team, the closure of the REDI Centre and the passing of the Countryside Centre to outside management. It was noted that these changes had enabled the Council to retain a reasonable financial position. However, further incremental cuts were seen as inevitably leading to future threats to frontline services and staffing. The items over which there was most discussion were the provision of free swimming for under 16s and over 60s and pre-9.30am concessionary bus travel. It was suggested that it was imprudent to be pursuing such policies in times of financial hardship, however it was pointed out that these had been funded from savings to the budget agreed for the 2012/13 financial year and had placed no additional stress on the Council's finances.

**RECOMMENDED that**

**to enable Members to approve the budget for 2013/14, 2014/15 & 2015/16:**

- 1) the Council determines the level of Council Tax discount to be applied to the prescribed classes of dwellings as defined by the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended) for
  - a) Class A [“second homes with planning restriction”] be set at 0% - no discount
  - b) Class B [“second homes without planning restriction”] be set at 0% - no discount
  - c) Class C [vacant dwellings] be set at:
    - a. Where the dwelling appears in the Valuation List for the first time and it has been continuously unoccupied and substantially unfurnished since the effective date of entry into the list:
      - i. for the first 3 months from the date of entry into the list 100%
      - ii. for periods of more than 3 months and for less than 6 months 50%
      - iii. for periods of 6 months or more 0% - no discount
    - b. Where the dwelling has been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a continuous period of less than 6 months 50%
    - c. where the dwelling has been continuously unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for 6 months or more 0% - no discount
  - d) Class D [uninhabitable dwellings] be set at 100%

For the purposes of Class C when considering whether a dwelling falls within the class any period of occupation, not exceeding 6 weeks, during which it was not unoccupied and substantially unfurnished shall be disregarded.

- 2) the powers to reduce the Council Tax payable on a case by case basis , as provided by Section 13A 1(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, be delegated to the Executive Director of Finance and Resources and the Revenue Services Manager;
- 3) authority be delegated to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services to amend the Scheme of Delegation to Officers to implement 2) above;
- 4) the recommendations set out in Appendix 1 ‘Part C’ of the report be approved;

**Executive**  
Committee

18<sup>th</sup> February 2013

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- 5) a bid for Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment of £14K be approved and funded from general fund balances detailed in paragraph 3.30;
- 6) a bid for Green Deal up to £10K be approved and funded from general fund balances detailed in paragraph 3.32;
- 7) the use of balances totalling £24,000 be approved; and
- 8) the Pay Policy Statement at Appendix B to the report be approved.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm  
and closed at 7.40 pm

.....  
Chair



## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE LEADER'S

# WORK PROGRAMME

**12 March 2013 to 30 June 2013**

(published as at 12th February 2013)

This Plan gives details of items on which key decisions are likely to be taken in the coming four months by the Borough Council's Executive Committee.

(NB: There may be occasions when the Executive Committee may make recommendations to Council for a final decision. e.g. to approve a new policy or variation to the approved budget.)

Whilst the majority of the Executive Committee's business at the meetings listed in this Work Programme will be open to the public and media organisations to attend, there will inevitably be some business to be considered that contains confidential, commercially sensitive or personal information. This is called exempt information. Members of the public and media may be asked to leave the meeting when such information is discussed.

If an item is likely to contain exempt information we show this on the Work Programme. You can make representations to us if you consider an item or any of the documents listed should be open to the public.

This Work Programme gives details of items on which key decisions are likely to be taken by the Borough Council's Executive Committee, or full Council, in the coming four months.

**“Key Decisions” are ones which are likely to:**

- (i) result in the Council incurring expenditure, foregoing income or the making of savings in excess of £50,000 or which are otherwise significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
- (ii) be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in the area comprising two or more wards in the Borough;
- (iii) involve any proposal to cease to provide a Council service (other than a temporary cessation of service of not more than 6 months).

The Work Programme is available for inspection free of charge at the Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch, B98 8AH from 9am to 5pm Mondays to Fridays; or on the Council's website ([www.redditchbc.gov.uk](http://www.redditchbc.gov.uk)).

If you wish to make representations on the proposed decision you are encouraged to get in touch with the relevant report author as soon as possible before the proposed date of the decision. Contact details are provided. Alternatively you may write to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, The Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch, B98 8AH or e-mail: [democratic@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:democratic@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk)

The Executive Committee's meetings are normally held every four weeks at 7pm on Tuesday evenings at the Town Hall. They are open to the public, except when confidential information is being discussed. If you wish to attend for a particular matter, it is advisable to check with the Democratic Services Team on (01527) 64252, ext: 3269 to make sure it is going ahead as planned. If you have any other queries, Democratic Services Officers will be happy to advise you.

The full Council meets in accordance the Council's Calendar of Meetings. Meetings commence at 7.00pm.

### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

Councillor Bill Hartnett	Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Community Leadership & Partnership
Councillor G Chance	Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration, Economic Development, Public Transport
Councillor Phil Mould	Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management
Councillor Rebecca Blake	Portfolio Holder for Community Safety & Regulatory Services
Councillor Mark Shurner	Portfolio Holder for Housing
Councillor Debbie Taylor	Portfolio Holder for Local Environment & Health
Councillor Luke Stephens	Portfolio Holder for Leisure & Tourism
Councillor Michael Braley	
Councillor Carole Gandy	

Decision including Whether it is a key Decision	Decision Taker Date of Decision	Details of Exempt information (if any)	Documents submitted to Decision Maker / Background Papers List	Contact for Comments
Quarterly Customer Service Monitoring - Quarter 3 - October to December 2012 <b>Key:</b> No	Executive 12 Mar 2013		Report of the Head of Customer Services	A de Warr, Head of Customer Services Tel: 01527 64252
Quarterly Budget Monitoring - Quarter 3 - October to December 2012 <b>Key:</b> No	Executive 12 Mar 2013		None.	T Kristunas, Head of Finance and Resources Tel: 01527 64252 ext 3295
Grants Programme 2012-14 <b>Key:</b> Yes	Executive 12 Mar 2013		None.	D Hancox, Voluntary Sector Grants Co-ordinator Tel: 01527 64252 ext 3015
Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) <b>Key:</b> No	Executive 12 Mar 2013		Report of the Head of Environmental Services	C John, Climate Change Manager Tel: 01527 64252 ext 3700
Quarterly Sickness Monitoring - Quarter 3 - October to December 2012 <b>Key:</b> No	Executive 12 Mar 2013		None.	M Stanley

Decision including Whether it is a key Decision	Decision Taker Date of Decision	Details of Exempt information (if any)	Documents submitted to Decision Maker / Background Papers List	Contact for Comments
Plymouth Road Cemetery <b>Key:</b> No	Executive		Report of the Head of Environmental Services	S Horrobin, Waste Management Manager Tel: 01527 64252 ext 3706
Highway Impact and Accessibility Modelling Report - Worcestershire County Council (Halcrow) May 2011 <b>Key:</b> No	Executive		None.	
Housing Allocations Policy - Review <b>Key:</b> No	Executive Council		None.	L Tompkin, Head of Housing Tel: 01527 64252 ext 3304
Tenancy Policy <b>Key:</b> No	Executive		Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director (Leisure, Environmental & Community Services)	



# Overview and Scrutiny

No Direct Ward Relevance

## Committee

5th March 2013

### WORK PROGRAMME

(Report of the Chief Executive)

Date of Meeting	Subject Matter	Officer(s) Responsible for report
<b>ALL MEETINGS</b>	<b>REGULAR ITEMS</b>	<b>(CHIEF EXECUTIVE)</b>
	Minutes of previous meeting Consideration of the Forward Plan Consideration of Executive Committee key decisions Call-ins (if any) Pre-scrutiny (if any) Consideration of Overview and Scrutiny Actions List Referrals from Council or Executive Committee, etc. (if any) Task Groups / Short, Sharp Review Groups - feedback Committee Work Programme	Chief Executive Chief Executive Chief Executive Chief Executive Chief Executive Chief Executive Chief Executive Chief Executive
	<b>REGULAR ITEMS</b> Quarterly Performance Report Quarterly Budget Monitoring Report Annual Update on the Implementation of the Civil Parking Enforcement Scheme	Chief Executive Chief Executive Relevant Lead Heads of Service

# Overview and Scrutiny

Committee

5th March 2013

	<p><b>REGULAR ITEMS</b></p> <p>Update on fly tipping and progress with the Worth It campaign</p> <p>Update on the work of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel.</p> <p>Updates on the work of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>Bi-Annual Recommendation Tracker Reports – Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>Bi-Annual Monitoring Report – Redditch Sustainable Community Strategy</p>	<p>Relevant Lead Head(s) of Service</p> <p>Chair of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel</p> <p>Redditch Borough Council representative on the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>Relevant Lead Head(s) of Service</p> <p>Relevant Lead Head(s) of Service</p>
<b>OTHER ITEMS - DATE FIXED</b>		
<b>5th March 2013</b>	Draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report	Councillor Brunner
<b>5th March 2013</b>	Transformation Briefing	Relevant Lead Heads of Service
<b>5th March 2013</b>	Vacant Redditch Borough Council Business Units - Report	Relevant Lead Head of Service
<b>21st March 2013</b>	West Midlands Regional Scrutiny Network	Councillor Witherspoon

# Overview and Scrutiny

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<b>2nd April 2013</b>	Access for Disabled People Task Group – Monitoring Update Report	Relevant Lead Heads of Service
<b>2nd April 2013</b>	Arts and Culture Centre Task Group - Final Report	Councillor Hopkins
<b>2nd April 2013</b>	Disabled Access Group – Update Report on Support	Relevant Lead Heads of Service
<b>2nd April 2013</b>	Living Wage - Discussion	Relevant Lead Head of Service
<b>2nd April 2013</b>	Worcestershire Regulatory Services – Joint Scrutiny Review Scoping Document	Relevant Lead Head of Service
<b>4th June 2013</b>	Bi-Annual Recommendation Tracker Reports – Scrutiny Committee	Relevant Lead Head of Service
<b>4th June 2013</b>	Youth Services Provision Task Group – Monitoring Update Report	Relevant Lead Head of Service
<b>2nd July 2013</b>	Promoting Sporting Participation – Monitoring Update Report	Relevant Lead Head of Service
<b>2nd July 2013</b>	Anti-Social Behaviour Task and Finish Group - Monitoring Update Report	Relevant Lead Head of Service
<b>OTHER ITEMS – DATE NOT FIXED</b>		

# Overview and Scrutiny

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	Equalities and Diversity – Submission of a Scoping Document	Councillor Fry
	Housing Allocations Policy Review – Pre-Scrutiny	Relevant Lead Head of Service
	Regeneration in the Town - Submission of a Scoping Document	Councillor Bush
	Shopmobility Ramp Cover – Outcomes of the Review	Relevant Lead Head of Service
	Tree Maintenance – Submission of a Scoping Document	Councillor Fisher
	Vacant Redditch Borough Council Properties – Update Report	Relevant Lead Head of Service