

Executive Committee

Tuesday 15th October
2013
7.00 pm

Committee Room 2
Town Hall
Redditch



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Ivor Westmore
Democratic Services**

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

Welcome to today's meeting.

Guidance for the Public

Agenda Papers

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

Chair

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

Running Order

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

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

Decisions

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

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Executive

15th October 2013

7.00 pm

Committee

Committee Room 2 Town Hall

Agenda

Membership:

Cllrs: Bill Hartnett (Chair) John Fisher
Greg Chance (Vice-Chair) Phil Mould
Rebecca Blake Mark Shurmer
Juliet Brunner Debbie Taylor
Brandon Clayton

1. Apologies	To receive the apologies of any Member who is unable to attend this meeting.
2. Declarations of Interest	To invite Councillors to declare any interests they may have in items on the agenda.
3. Leader's Announcements	<ol style="list-style-type: none">To give notice of any items for future meetings or for the Executive Committee Work Programme, including any scheduled for this meeting, but now carried forward or deleted; andany other relevant announcements. <p>(Oral report)</p>
4. Minutes (Pages 1 - 4) Chief Executive	To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 17 th September 2013. (Minutes attached)
5. County Air Quality Action Plan (Pages 5 - 8)	To consider the adoption of an Air Quality Action Plan which will permit WRS to act on behalf of Redditch Borough Council in identification and implementation of the most effective measures to reduce nitrogen dioxide levels so that Air Quality Management Areas are not required in Worcestershire. (Report attached – Appendix available on the Council's website and for Members in their Group Rooms) (All Wards)

<p>6. Delivering New Affordable Housing (Pages 9 - 38)</p> <p>Deputy Chief Executive & Executive Director - Leisure, Environmental and Community Services</p>	<p>To consider a report outlining proposals for how the Council might build Council homes on land owned by the Council and declared surplus and other options to increase the numbers of affordable housing in the Borough.</p> <p>(Appendix 2 to this report contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended. For this reason it has been circulated to Members and relevant Officers only.)</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>(All Wards)</p>
<p>7. Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Programme 2014/15 (Pages 39 - 56)</p> <p>J Willis, Acting Head of Community Services</p>	<p>To consider a report proposing the funding split and themes for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) grants process for 2014/15.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>(All Wards)</p>
<p>8. Monitoring Report - Write Off of Debts - April - August 2013 (Pages 57 - 64)</p> <p>Head of Finance and Resources</p>	<p>To consider the action taken by Officers with respect to the write off of debts during the period April – August 2013 and to note the profile of outstanding debt.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>(All Wards)</p>
<p>9. Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 65 - 72)</p> <p>Chief Executive</p>	<p>To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 10th September 2013.</p> <p>There is a recommendation to consider.</p> <p>(Minutes attached)</p>
<p>10. Minutes / Referrals - Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Executive Panels etc. Chief Executive</p>	<p>To receive and consider any outstanding minutes or referrals from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Executive Panels etc. since the last meeting of the Executive Committee, other than as detailed in the items above.</p>

<p>11. Advisory Panels - update report (Pages 73 - 76) Chief Executive</p>	<p>To consider, for monitoring / management purposes, an update on the work of the Executive Committee's Advisory Panels and similar bodies, which report via the Executive Committee.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p>
<p>12. Action Monitoring (Pages 77 - 78) Chief Executive</p>	<p>To consider an update on the actions arising from previous meetings of the Committee.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p>
<p>13. Exclusion of the Public</p>	<p>Should it be necessary, in the opinion of the Chief Executive, to consider excluding the public from the meeting in relation to any items of business on the grounds that exempt information is likely to be divulged, it may be necessary to move the following resolution:</p> <p>“that, under S.100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following matter(s) on the grounds that it/they involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs (<i>to be specified</i>) of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act, as amended.”</p> <p>These paragraphs are as follows:</p> <p>Subject to the “public interest” test, information relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Para 1 – <u>any individual</u>;• Para 2 – the <u>identity of any individual</u>;• Para 3 – <u>financial or business affairs</u>;• Para 4 – <u>labour relations matters</u>;• Para 5 – <u>legal professional privilege</u>;• Para 6 – <u>a notice, order or direction</u>;• Para 7 – the <u>prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</u>; <p>may need to be considered as ‘exempt’.</p>

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**14. Confidential Minutes /
Referrals (if any)**

To consider confidential matters not dealt with earlier in the evening and not separately listed below (if any).



Executive Committee

17th September 2013

MINUTES

Present:

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

Officers:

C Flanagan, S Hanley, L Jones, T Kristunas and S Morgan

Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

47. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Debbie Taylor.

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

49. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements from the Leader.

50. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 2nd September 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

51. CONSOLIDATED REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN - FINANCIAL YEAR 2012/13

The report detailing the Council's budgetary position at the end of the 2012/13 financial year was received by the Committee.

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Chair

Officers reported that £74K had been used from balances leaving just over £1M remaining. Of the projected savings of £654K a considerable proportion had been made although the money received through the acquisition of the lease of Threadneedle House had contributed to the overall position.

A series of questions on specific points within the outturn report were raised by Members and Officers undertook to provide answers to these following the meeting.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

52. OPTIONS FOR 54 SOUTH STREET (PREVIOUS REDI CENTRE)

The Committee considered a report which detailed the options available to the Council for 54 South Street, the former REDI Centre building.

Officers reported that the Council had not received any significant levels of interest in the building to date and there had been no approaches to register the building as an Asset of Community Value. Disposal was considered the most appropriate course of action. The former Youth House was adjacent to the former REDI Centre building but there was considered to be little advantage to be gained from marketing the two properties jointly.

The length of time it had taken for the property to be declared surplus and disposed of was discussed. In part this was put down to the desire to see this and other properties considered as a wider review of the Council's property holdings. However, given that there was a cost associated with the building remaining empty Members were keen that disposal now be pursued. There was a desire to see the building taken on by a community group who might use the property as a community asset. The recent failure to achieve a similar outcome for the former Youth House was a source of disappointment to some Members. The Committee were also very much aware of the context within which this decision was being taken, with a significant strain on public finances.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the property be marketed for disposal; and**
- 2) the Head of Finance and Resources agree the final details of any sale, following the receipt of any bids/expressions of interest, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management.**

**53. FINANCE MONITORING REPORT 2013/14 - APRIL - JUNE
(QUARTER 1)**

Officers reported on the financial performance of the authority during the first quarter of the current financial year. The Committee was informed that of the £550K savings required for the year, £107K had been made thus far.

There was considerable discussion as to the implications of holding a number of vacant posts and the processes used by officers to determine whether the vacant posts were considered business critical. Members were reassured that there were measures in place by which such determinations could be made and that Trades Unions were amongst those involved in the dialogue over vacant posts. It was further explained that the authority had for some considerable time had incorporated into each year's budget revenue savings to be achieved through vacancy management.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the current financial position on Revenue be noted, as detailed in the report; and**

RECOMMENDED that

- 2) **£48K of currently available S106 funds be included in the 2013/4 capital programme to fund the improvements to the play area at Glover Street.**

54. MAKING EXPERIENCES COUNT - QUARTERLY CUSTOMER SERVICES REPORT - QUARTER 1, 2013/14

The Committee received the latest quarterly Customer Services monitoring report. It was noted that the trends represented with regard to complaints and compliments were broadly in line with what had been experienced the previous year.

Members were content that the numbers of compliments exceeded the numbers of complaints and suggested that diagrams in future reports be rendered in such a manner that they might be more easily understood when printed in black and white.

RESOLVED that

the contents of the report be noted.

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55. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13th August 2013.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13th August 2013 be received and noted.

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

There were no minutes or referrals under this item.

57. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

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

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

58. ACTION MONITORING

The latest version of the Committee's Action Monitoring report was received by the Committee.

RESOLVED that

the Action Monitoring report be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 7.54 pm

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Chair

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15th October 2013

WORCESTERSHIRE AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN 2013

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Debbie Taylor
Portfolio Holder Consulted	19 th September 2013
Relevant Head of Service	John Staniland
Ward(s) Affected	ALL
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	N/A
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision	Key Decision

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 Under the requirements of the Local Air Quality Management Process as set out in Part IV of the Environment Act 1995, the Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland 2007 and the relevant Policy and Technical Guidance documents, local authorities have a duty to prepare an Action Plan where an Air Quality Management Area has been declared.
- 1.2 Air Quality Management Areas are declared where the air quality objectives applicable to Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) have been exceeded. The objective of most importance to this Committee is the annual mean NO₂, which should not exceed 40 microgrammes per metre squared. Traffic is the main source of NO₂ in Redditch and Worcestershire generally.
- 1.3 Currently there are no AQMA's in the Redditch Borough. However, increasing traffic and large scale redevelopments have the potential to significantly affect air quality in the Borough. Whilst the development of Redditch as a new town with purposefully designed road infrastructure across much of the town has provided little opportunity for residents to be exposed to traffic related poor air quality, some of the original roads and housing suffer from poor layout which may become a problem in the future. For example, Nitrogen Dioxide diffusion tube monitoring at Other Road continues to be reviewed closely due to elevated measurements. It is possible that this area may require declaration as an AQMA in the future.
- 1.4 Poor air quality can affect peoples' health, causing problems such as heart disease and breathing problems. Up to 24,000 people per year die prematurely because of its effects (DETR 2000). Nitrogen Dioxide in particular is known to cause respiratory illnesses and possibly increase the risk of lung infections. Young children and asthma sufferers are most sensitive to this pollutant.
- 1.5 The adoption of the Air Quality Action Plan will permit WRS to act on behalf of Redditch Borough Council in identification and implementation of the most effective measures to reduce nitrogen dioxide levels so that Air Quality Management Areas are not required in Worcestershire.

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2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is asked to RESOLVE that

the Countywide Air Quality Action Plan be adopted and agreement be given to supporting and assisting progress of the measures identified in the Plan that will provide effective resolution to areas of poor air quality and assist in preventing the requirement to declare any Air Quality Management Areas in Redditch.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no financial implications with adoption of the Countywide Air Quality Action Plan. Work on progression of the measures contained in the Air Quality Action Plan is proposed to be facilitated by WRS staff within the current budget.

Legal Implications

- 3.2 There are no legal implications with the adoption of the Countywide Air Quality Action Plan. There similarly is no requirement for Redditch Borough Council to adopt the Plan.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.3 There are no service or operational implications envisaged. Some procedures or policies may be developed on the back of some of the Air Quality Action Plan measures to the betterment of air quality and a consistent approach across Worcestershire.
- 3.5 The progression of the Plan is a large piece of work currently proposed to be completed within existing budgets (subject to future funding alterations).

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.6 The Committee will ensure it has regard to the desirability of exercising its functions concerning the need to eliminate discrimination and to increase equality of opportunity. All LAQM work and procedures will be delivered in accordance with Redditch Borough Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.
- 3.7 The LAQM process focuses attention on areas of poor air quality which generally coincide with areas of poor socio-economic quality. The aim of the LAQM process is to target delivery of improvements in air quality where they are most needed which should have a positive impact on areas of poor socio-economic quality. It is the Action Planning process that targets how the improvements are to be delivered.

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4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) reports to Defra (on behalf of Redditch Borough Council) at least annually, on progress with Local Air Quality Management (LAQM). In the event that a Local Authority mismanages the Local Air Quality Management process, Defra may choose to pass on a portion of any fine given to the UK by the European Commission for non-compliance with the EU Directive which is translated into UK legislation by the LAQM process. There is no requirement for Redditch to produce an Action Plan currently but contributing towards a Countywide Action Plan would reduce financial risk and ensure a consistent approach to any improvements to air quality.

5. APPENDICES

- 5.1 Appendix 1 – Air Quality Action Plan

Available on the Worcestershire Regulatory Services website

<http://www.worcsregservices.gov.uk/pollution/air-quality/air-quality-action-plan.aspx>

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 2012 Updating & Screening Assessment for Bromsgrove District Council; available on the Worcestershire Regulatory Services website
<http://www.worcsregservices.gov.uk/pollution/air-quality.aspx> .

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Mark Cox [Senior Practitioner – Land, Air & Water Quality]
Worcestershire Regulatory Services
E Mail: mark.cox@worcsregservices.gov.uk
Tel: 01527 881392

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DELIVERING NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Mark Shurmer, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Sue Hanley, Deputy Chief Executive/Executive Director, Leisure, Environment & Community Services
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The Executive Committee resolved on the 21 February 2012 that Officers bring forward a report outlining proposals for how the Council might build Council homes on land owned by the Council and declared surplus.
- 1.2 The Council resolved on the 5 March 2012 that any proposal to build Council homes include included the following considerations.
- a cost-benefit analysis of the scheme;
 - an analysis of the number of sites suitable for housing;
 - timescales for the development to be delivered on each site;
 - the means by which the Council was proposing to deliver the housing;
 - details of the tendering process to engage the outside contractors;
 - a measure of the prudent level of reserves to be retained in the HRA budget; and
 - a financial appraisal and feasibility study for each site.
- 1.3 Officers have considered the proposal for the Council to develop homes and also other options to increase the numbers of affordable housing in the Borough (appendix 1) to meet affordable housing demand.
- 1.4 The other options to increase affordable housing in the Borough include:
- The Council purchases existing homes and adds them to its stock
 - The Council sells or gifts land to an RSL to build housing association properties
 - The Council enters into leasing arrangements with housing providers

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- The Council introduces a cash incentive scheme/ Home Ownership Grants for council tenants
- The Council introduces a shared equity scheme
- The Council becomes a syndicated partner for the Mortgage Rescue Scheme (MRS)

1.5 This report brings forward the recommendations from that report for Members to consider what options they would like to see worked up in more detail before Officers further report back to Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to **RESOLVE** that

- 1) **The Executive Committee notes the report and the current financial position of the HRA;**
- 2) **due to the various risks and unknowns in the HRA business plan the Council does not build new homes in the short term;**
- 3) **Members note the options within the report at 3.12 and task Officers to provide a further report on the options for further consideration of the Executive Committee;**
- 4) **authority be delegated to the Head of Housing Services and Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services to enter into a Service Level Agreement with WM Housing to become a syndicated partner for the Government Mortgage Rescue Scheme;**
- 5) **authority be delegated to the Head of Housing Services to agree each individual case for purchase through the Government Mortgage Rescue Scheme;**
- 6) **Officers undertake a review of the Government Mortgage Rescue Scheme to determine if further funding needs to be invested and report back to the Executive Committee before 31 March 2014; and**

RECOMMEND that

- 7) **authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Finance & Resources and Head of Housing Services to use up to £400,000 from Housing Revenue Account reserves for the Government Mortgage Rescue Scheme and support.**

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3. KEY ISSUES**Financial Implications**

- 3.1 The total HRA debt currently stands at £122,157,521 which is now capped at this amount. The Council has developed a viable 30 year business plan based on a number of assumptions and there are risks associated with deviations from these assumptions.
- 3.2 The HRA capital reserve is £9.4million which can be used to support capital of revenue expenditure, however currently the HRA has no further capacity to borrow should funding be required for the housing capital programme.

Legal Implications

- 3.3 The Council is able to undertake a new build programme by virtue of the Housing Act 1985.
- 3.4 Under the General Disposal Consent (England) 2003 it is permissible to make disposals at less than best consideration if those disposals contribute to the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area.
- 3.5 Under Right to Buy legislation the discount you receive must not reduce the price you pay below what has been spent on building, buying, repairing or maintaining it over a 15 year period. This is known as the cost floor. Therefore the discount will be reduced to ensure the property is not sold for less than the cost of building/purchasing it.
- 3.6 The Council will be required to enter into a service level agreement with WM Housing to be a syndicated partner of the Mortgage Rescue Scheme. WM Housing will undertake the necessary legal and conveyance matters for any successful mortgage rescue case.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.7 The number of new affordable homes developed through RSLs over the last 6 years is 340, an average of 57 units per year. The net affordable housing need for the Borough is over 200 units per year.
- 3.8 Officers have considered the option of the Council building new affordable housing. After discussion with Registered Provider officers have completed a desktop exercise to assess the costs of building new homes.
- 3.9 The cost of developing for the Council is an estimated average of £132,895 per property. The Head of Housing Services has advised that

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the Council has recently completed the purchase of ex Right to Buy properties at an average cost of £104,000

- 3.10 Having considered the risks associated with the current position of the HRA outlined in 3.1 and 3.2 and Appendix 1 pages 4 & 5 and the advice from the Head of Housing Services that ex Right to Buy properties are being purchased by the Council at less than the estimated build cost of developing new properties, officers do not consider it value for money for the Council to build in the short term.
- 3.11 To increase the affordable housing in the Borough Officers have considered a number of other options which the Council could implement which may be more cost effective.
- 3.12 The other options to increase affordable housing in the Borough include:
- 1) The Council purchases existing homes from the open market and adds them to its stock
 - 2) The Council sells or gifts land to an RSL to build housing association properties
 - 3) The Council enters into leasing arrangements with housing providers
 - 4) The Council introduces a cash incentive scheme/ Home Ownership Grants for council tenants
 - 5) The Council introduces a shared equity scheme
 - 6) The Council introduces its own Mortgage Rescue Scheme
- 3.13 In addition to the Council introducing its own Mortgage Rescue Scheme the Council has the opportunity of becoming a syndicated partner for the Governments Mortgage Rescue Scheme (MRS), which has had 27 successful cases since its inception in 2009.
- 3.14 This scheme will enable the Council to attract grant to cover a proportion of the cost of completing each Mortgage Rescue, through the Homes & Communities Agency, however referrals to this scheme will need to be received by the HCA before April 2014 to access the grant available.
- 3.15 The current level of grant is 47% of the purchase price under the Government Mortgage Rescue Scheme. There is a requirement that the property must be brought up to the decent homes standard capped at a max of £20,000. The Council will also receive a grant of 47% towards the cost of works to bring a property up to the decent homes standard.
- 3.16 WM Housing as the Syndicated Agent for the scheme will undertake all the administration, valuation, Homebuyers report and negotiating with

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lenders and their costs will be covered by the Homes & Communities Agency.

- 3.17 The Council will be required to undertake a survey of the property to provide details of the works and costs to bring the property up to the decent homes standards. This will need to include electrical and gas inspection and any issues relating to asbestos. This work will be at the Council's cost, but can be recovered through the decent homes work identified through the identified budget.
- 3.18 Officers will ensure the provision of support and training in appropriate fields, such as, financial management and budgeting skills for those applicants that are helped by the scheme to ensure that they are able to meet their financial responsibilities as a tenant of the authority.
- 3.19 Further details of the scheme and the associated benefits are record in the report at appendix 1 page 19 to 21.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.20 The need for affordable housing in the Borough is greater than the supply. Increasing affordable housing in the Borough will assist in meeting the need for housing of those who are unable to access housing in the open market.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

There are a number of risks facing the HRA over the 30 year period of the Business Plan. These include Welfare reform which has the potential for increasing rent arrears, interest rates if debt is to be replaced rather than repaid, the robustness of the data re stock/assets and future rent policy.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – 'Delivering New Affordable Housing' Report.
Appendix 2 – Possible affordable housing sites - CONFIDENTIAL

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Executive Committee Minutes 21February 2012
Council Minutes 5 March 2012

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Matthew Bough - Strategic Housing and Enabling Team Leader
E Mail: matthew.bough@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel: 01527 548465

DRAFT DELIVERING NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING REPORT



AFFORDABLE HOUSING PANEL
REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL
24 September 2013

Introduction

Currently, a number of stock-owning local authorities are exploring the potential to build council housing in their area, and in reaching any conclusion about whether this is the preferred approach to increasing housing stock, there are several key areas to be worked through.

The provision of affordable housing meets the Council's Strategic Purposes of 'Help me find somewhere to live in my locality' and 'Help me live my life independently'.

The Council's Housing Strategy vision of 'the right home, at the right time, in the right place sets out how the Council aspires to providing affordable, quality homes in places where people are proud to live.

The three main areas for the Council to consider are:

- **Finance** – as the main source of funding for building new council homes, what is the current and future likely financial position of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), and what risks and opportunities are there in using the HRA to fund further council housing development in the short to medium term?
- **Community need and emerging lessons from the transformation agenda** – what is the need in Redditch, and is building new council homes the best way to respond to this need?
- **The value for money of building council homes, and other options to increase stock** – what would building new homes cost, and what other options does the Council have to increase stock, besides building new homes itself?

This report sets out the historical context to recent housing delivery in Redditch, and outlines the key areas the council needs to work through prior to embarking upon any further programme of council house building in the Borough.

There are also various ways in which the Council might increase the amount of stock available in the area, apart from building homes itself. The report therefore outlines these alternative housing delivery options too, as a combination of initiatives may represent the best way forwards in Redditch, rather than focussing on a 'one size fits all' approach.

Finally, the report draws some initial recommendations, by pulling together the key financial, community need/transformation and alternative options themes.

Redditch – historical housing context

Historically, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) have been the principle provider of new affordable homes in the Borough, with approx. 1700 RSL dwellings in the Borough. These properties have been delivered through a

mixture of s.106 developments, RSL's funding their own developments and purchasing properties from the open market. Redditch Borough Council is the largest provider of affordable housing retaining its stock with 6,000 properties.

The Council has long established links with RSLs within the Borough to promote much needed Affordable Housing and has preferred partner arrangements with Accord/RCH, Rooftop, Festival, Sanctuary and West Mercia/bdht. The Council has supported development through capital funding and a supply of land at either nil cost or substantially discounted values in exchange for nomination rights at 100% of the initial letting and 75% thereafter.

The current population of Redditch Borough is more than 84,200 (2011 Census) and this is projected to rise to more than 88,000 by 2030. The population of Redditch has increased from 78,813 (2001 Census). There are just over 35,100 dwellings in the Borough.

To meet the housing needs of the Borough the Council's Local Plan No.4 provides for the provision of 6,400 dwellings. It is proposed that 3,000 dwellings can be accommodated in the Borough and 3,400 to be provided in sites adjacent to the boundary within Bromsgrove District.

The table 1 below shows the number of new affordable homes developed through RSLs over the last 6 years averaging 57 units per year. The net affordable housing need for the Borough is over 200 units per year.

The table 2 provides information on the number of units expected to be delivered over the next few years that officers have worked with Registered Providers and Developers to provide.

Table 1 - New Build Affordable Dwellings 2007 -2013

Year	Number
2007-2008	78
2008-2009	10
2009-2010	111
2010-2011	100
2011-2012	23
2012-2013	18
TOTAL	340

Table 2 - New Build Affordable Housing Pipeline

Site	Number
Marfield School	79
Church Hill Centre	51
Pointers Way, Brockhill	42
Claybrook School	36

Dorothy Terry House	42
Dingleside	64
Greenfields	2
Hewell Road	12
Ipsley 2	15
Ipsley 3	18
TOTAL	361

Information from the census shows that Redditch compared to Worcestershire has a higher proportion of overcrowding. It also shows that owner occupation had declined and the private rented sector doubling over a ten year period.

Overcrowding and Under-Occupation by District, 2001 and 2011

District	2001			2011		
	Total Households	Overcrowding	Under-Occupation	Total Households	Overcrowding	Under-Occupation
Redditch	31,652	6.2%	75.0%	34,722	7.4%	73.6%
Worcestershire	223,049	4.1%	81.3%	239,717	4.8%	80.3%

Source: 2011 Census, ONS

Tenure by District, Census 2001 and 2011

Tenure	Census	Redditch	Worcestershire
Owner Occupier	2001	70.6%	75.5%
	2011	65.7%	70.8%
Shared Ownership	2001	0.3%	0.5%
	2011	0.4%	0.7%
Social Rent	2001	22.7%	15.2%
	2011	21.2%	14.8%
Private Rent	2001	6.5%	8.7%
	2011	12.8%	13.7%

Source: 2011 Census, ONS

Key issues for the Council to consider before embarking on a programme of building homes

1. Finance and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

The current and likely future financial position of the HRA is critical to understanding the potential for the Council to build its own homes in Redditch. The analysis below shows there are various risks and unknowns associated with taking a decision to build council housing in the near future, and that the risks outweigh the benefits of building council properties at this moment in time.

The position regarding the HRA changed quite radically in April 2012 when the system of Housing Subsidy ceased. In March 2012 the Council took on £98.929 million of PWLB debt as part of the national reallocation of central government debt relating to housing. This together with the existing HRA prudential borrowing brings the total HRA debt to £122,157,521. The borrowing for the HRA is now capped at this amount.

HRA Borrowing

Borrowing	%	No Years	Repayment
£15,000,000	3.01	15	28/03/2027
£25,000,000	3.30	20	28/03/2032
£5,000,000	4.71	21	03/05/2032
£40,000,000	3.44	25	28/03/2037
£18,929,000	3.50	30	28/03/2042
£3,228,521	various	< 1 year	
£15,000,000	3.50	Internal borrowing*	
£122,157,521			

*the HRA pays the General Fund £525k in terms of interest of the £15 million borrowed internally.

In 2011/12, the last year of Housing Subsidy, the Council paid £6.8 million to the government in respect of negative subsidy. This sum is now retained within the HRA and used to service the HRA debt and fund the capital programme/depreciation. The annual interest payments on the borrowing are currently £4.1 million.

The Housing Subsidy regime included an element called the Major Repair Allowance (MRA) that was transferred to a reserve (MRR) and used to fund the capital programme. In 2012/13 this was replaced with the introduction of a requirement to provide for depreciation in the HRA. Councils have been granted a 5 year transition period (we are now in year 2) to develop a methodology for the basis of the depreciation calculation.

The Council has developed a viable 30 year Business Plan that provides for the repayment of debt over the lifetime of the Plan. Obviously with any long term Business Plan this is based on numerous assumptions and there are risks associated with deviations from these assumptions. The main risks are:

- No strategy for the repayment/profiling of debt
- Interest rates
- Welfare reform/Universal Credit
- RPI forecasts
- The robustness of data re the stock/asset base
- Increase in RTB sales
- Rent policy

The Council currently has a HRA capital reserve of £9.4 million that has been built up over several years. This reserve can be used to support either capital or revenue expenditure in respect of the HRA, including the repayment of

debt. It is recommended that part of this reserve is set aside to address any unforeseen pressures on the HRA as the Council no longer has the option to undertake prudential borrowing to fund the housing capital programme.

2. Community need and emerging lessons from the transformation agenda

The information below and the work currently being undertaken by Housing Services shows that many of the housing enquiries can be resolved without moving customers to new homes. As the transformation agenda continues to gather pace, our understanding of housing need in Redditch will inevitably change as a result. It is therefore very important for the Council to continue to focus on dealing with housing demand in context, rather than concentrating financial resources on building new properties, as these resources may need to be prioritised in the short to medium term to support and develop locality working.

Locality

We are learning through the locality trial that the environment that people live in also impacts on their lives and cannot be separated when Officers are working with customers to help resolve issues to enable them to live a good life.

We learnt that whilst working with the tenants in Winslow Close although we could help resolve some of the issues being raised around the housing management side, residents were also raising that the environment needed improving. Staff decided to look at Winslow Close as a whole and invited Capital Officers, Landscaping and Refuse to meet with residents. It is from this meeting that Officers decided to approach the improvements in a different way. Housing Capital set aside money from several budgets to carry out all the works, at the same time Refuse Services agreed to trial a different way for residents to dispose of their rubbish. Landscaping are also trialling a different way of cutting the grass and hedges. Officers have also drawn up plans to segregate blocks to prevent people from using the area as a walk through causing anti-social behaviour, this included a crime risk survey being carried out in the area.

This is the approach we would like to take to all areas of Redditch, however, the current capital budget agreed as part of the 30 Capital Programme does not include finances to cover this type of work to this extent.

Although the Locality Team in Batchley has only just been set up we have already identified areas through anti-social behaviour records and tenancy management records within Batchley where new projects have been created and work has commenced.

In particular Cedar View where we have experienced ASB which involved heavy involvement from the Police and officers of the Council, the problems

resulted in the properties not being let for a considerable time. Our different approach has enabled us to use data about people and the environment and work with residents to improve the area.

Four of the flats were completely refurbished, fencing and gates were installed around the block of flats. CCTV cameras will be installed, the flats have been let to people who want to be involved in the running of the flats and the up keep of the area. Officers are currently in discussions with Environmental Services to improve the landscaping area.

A further project relates to the communal areas in the 3 storey flats in Cardy and Lock Close. Based on levels of crime and anti-social behaviour a report was put together which highlighted the need for improvements to be made to the security of the flats. A specification has been compiled and costed and will be tendered for over the next few months.

Green/Eco Deal

As part of the Councils sign up to work with Carillon on the ECO/Green deal, Housing Capital Officers are working with the organisation to provide data on the Councils housing stock to produce contracts to improve the efficiency of the Council's housing stock. This work will require funding as the level of work was not originally in the Capital Programme for external insulation working. There is an opportunity under this scheme to look at the properties in Hewell Road and Salters Lane, this would not only make them more energy efficient but improve the area which has recently been increased with a new development with private sector housing. It is planned that the Batchley Locality team will be working with the community in this area to understand their needs.

Mutual Exchange Data

There are currently 689 households from Redditch registered on the national mutual exchange system Homeswapper. Of these 148 households physically logged on the system to look for a mutual exchange this week (16-22/09/13).

The number of under occupied households registered on the list is 107 and by comparison the number of overcrowded households is 100.

Under occupied households needing 1 room less = 14,
Under occupied households needing 2 rooms less = 71.

Overcrowded and in need of 1 extra room = 29 households
Overcrowded and in need of 2 extra rooms = 36 households

Total swaps in the last 12 months this year = 121 compared to just 19 last year.

ELF Data

Desktop Analysis of ELF Applicants

Data collected as part of the 2011 Census has been used to provide an indication of the number of households living within each housing tenure in Redditch (summarised in Table 1). That information has then been compared to data about what tenures households applying to the ELF scheme lived within (summarised in Table 2). Only 3 households that applied to the ELF stated that they owned their own property (despite there being approximately 22,796 households living within that tenure in the area). In contrast although approximately 5,703 households live in Council Housing (25% of the number in Owner Occupation) 144 households applied for assistance that were living in Council Housing (50% of all ELF Households that applied).

Table 1- Number of Households in Each Tenure within Redditch Borough

Tenure	Owner Occupiers	Council Tenants	Other Social Tenants	Private Rented	Other
Number of Households in Tenure	22796	5703	1648	4059	516

(ONS,2011)

Table 2 - Number of Households that applied for the ELF within each Tenure (between 1 April 2013 to 31 July 2013)

Tenure	Owner Occupiers	Council Tenants	Other Social Tenants	Private Rented	Other
Number of Households that Applied	3	144	24	76	41
% of Households that Applied from Tenure	1	50	8	27	14

Table 3 - Comparison between Social Fund and ELF

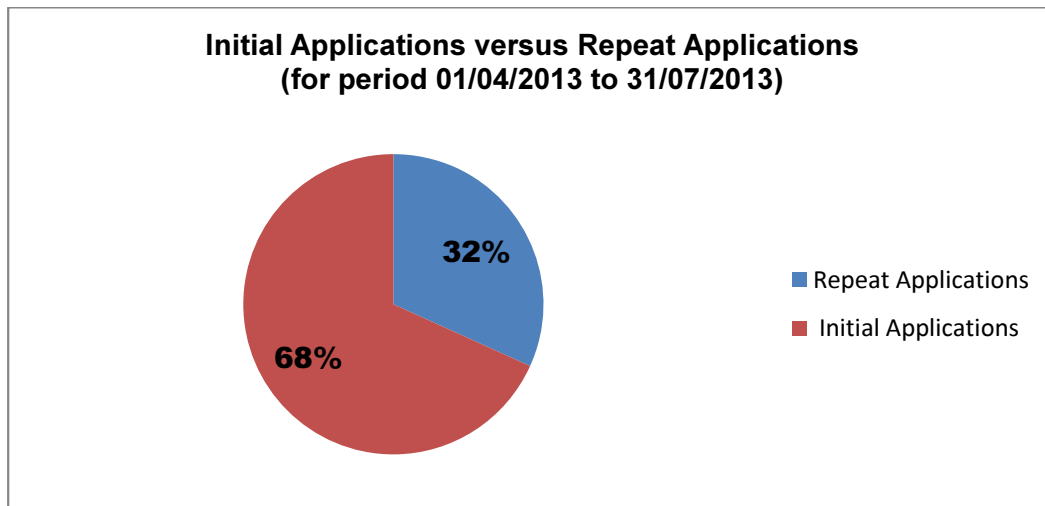
	DWP Social Fund (01/04/11 to 31/07/11)	ELF (01/04/13 to 31/07/13)
No. of Applications Received	920	422
No. of Applications Approved	633	332
% of Applications Approved	69	79
Total Expenditure in £	81,000	18,267

(DWP, 2012)

The DWP Social Fund data used to populate Table 3 includes applications and expenditure relating to Crisis Loan Items, Crisis Loan Living Expenses, and Community Care Grants. It does not include applications or expenditure in respect of Budgeting Loans or Crisis Loan Alignments (as they are not part

of Local Welfare Assistance or in this case the ELF). Unfortunately it was not possible to compare the ELF expenditure to Social Fund expenditure for 01/04/12 to 31/07/12 as the DWP advised they were unable to provide the localised information (Jacobsen, 2013). It appears from the information contained in Table 3 that Local Welfare Assistance expenditure on awards in 2013 was less than a quarter of the amount spent on the Social Fund in 2011. In addition the number of applications under ELF is less than half the amount seen under the Social Fund in 2011. The percentage of successful applications rose from 69% under Social Fund to 79% under ELF.

Figure 1



In the snapshot period 288 households made a total of 422 applications to ELF. According to these figures 32% of all applications were the result of households returning for further assistance following their first visit (Fig 1). Further analysis shows that although 49% of applicants visit just once, some households have returned numerous times within the snapshot period (Fig 2).

Figure 2

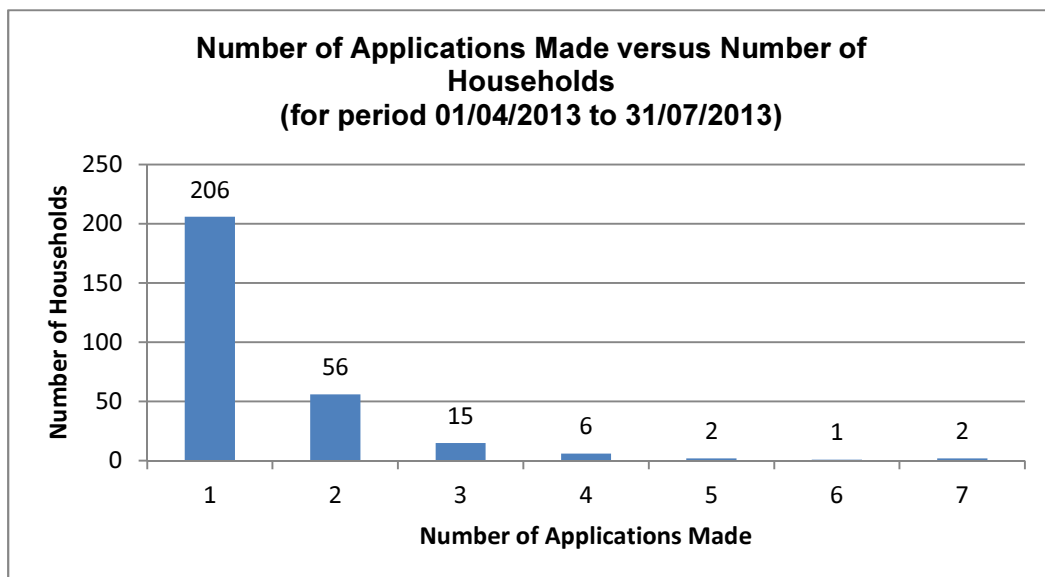
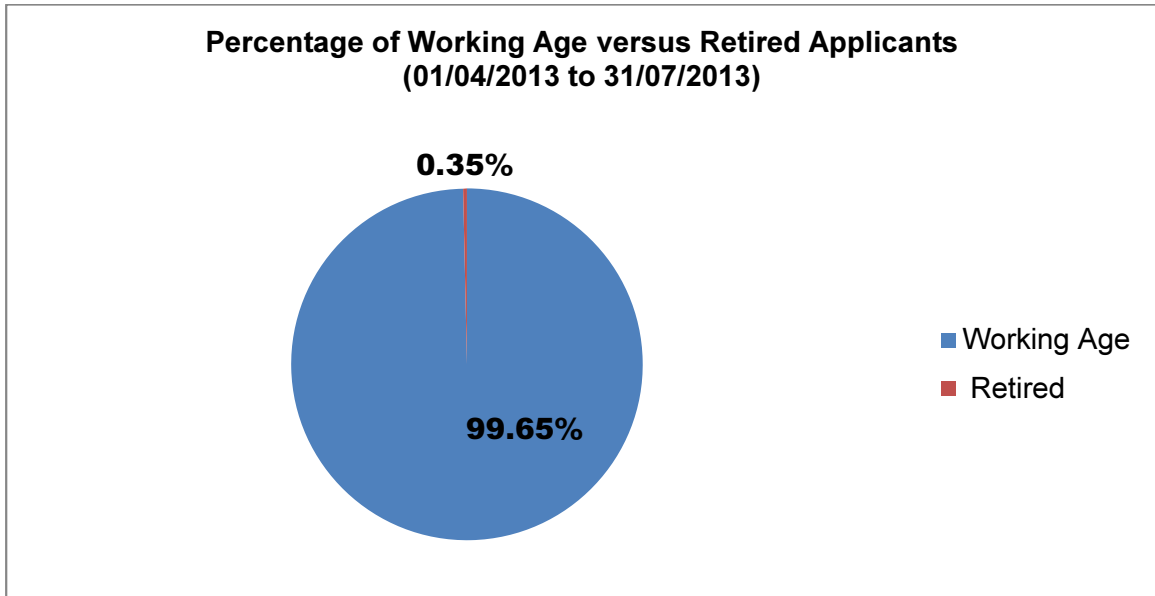
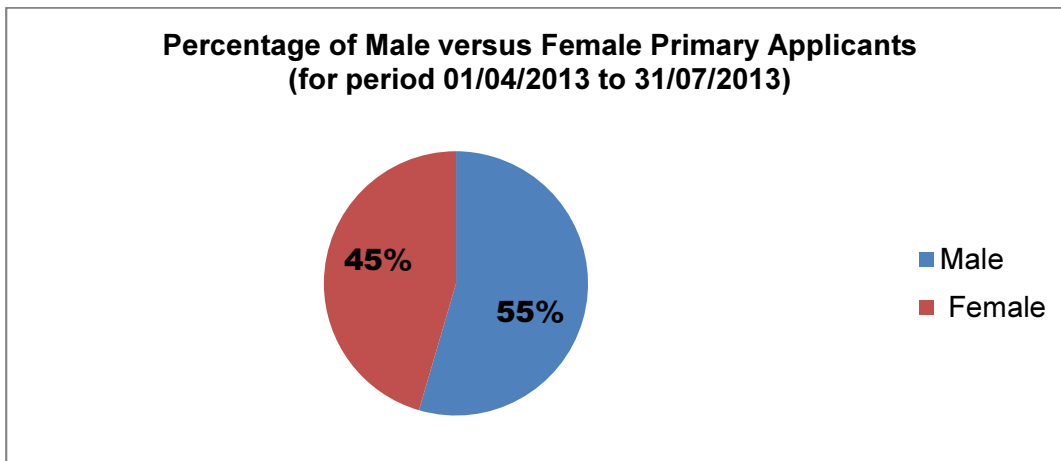


Figure 3



According to 2011 Census information there are approximately 6,110 households that contain only adults aged over 65 years of age (of retirement age) out of 34,722 households in Redditch. Given the proportion of older households in the population, one would expect at least 17% of primary applicants to the ELF to be from the retired age group (ONS, 2011). In fact, as summarised in Figure 3, retired people account for less than 0.5% of primary applicants, with over 99.5% originating from the working age category. Despite there being slightly more females in Redditch than males, 55% of the primary applicants to the ELF were male, and 45% were female (ONS, 2011) (please refer to Figure 4).

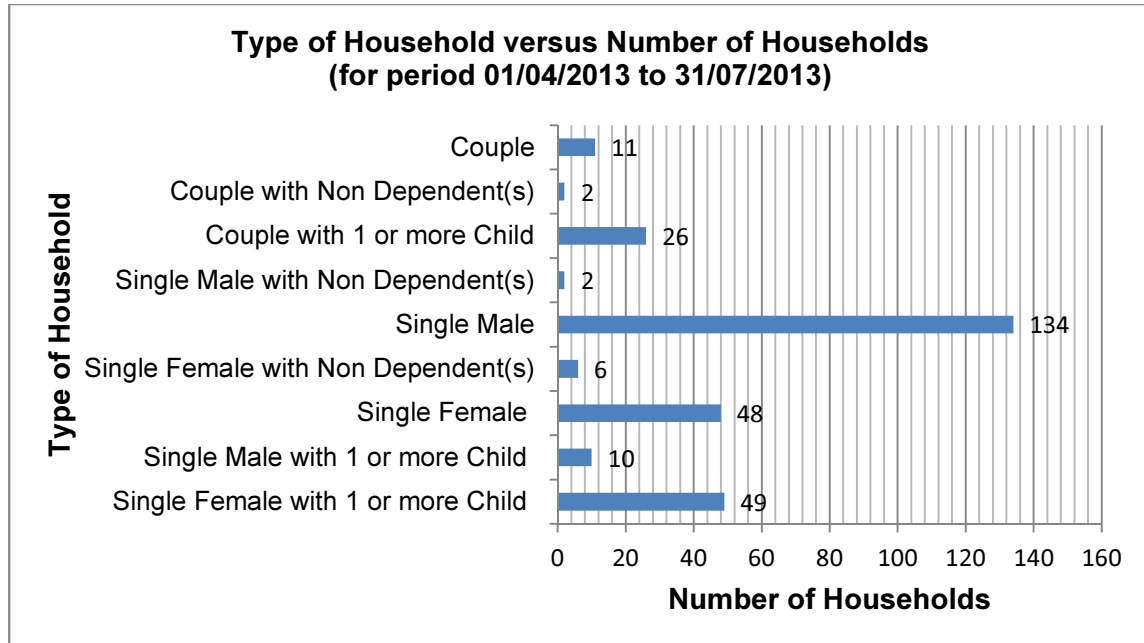
Figure 4



A breakdown of the type of household from which each primary applicant derived is contained in figure 5. From the 288 households, single males accounted for 47%, compared to just 17% who were single female. Single Parents with at least one child also accounted for 20% of the households requesting help, yet based on the 2011 Census figures, they represent only

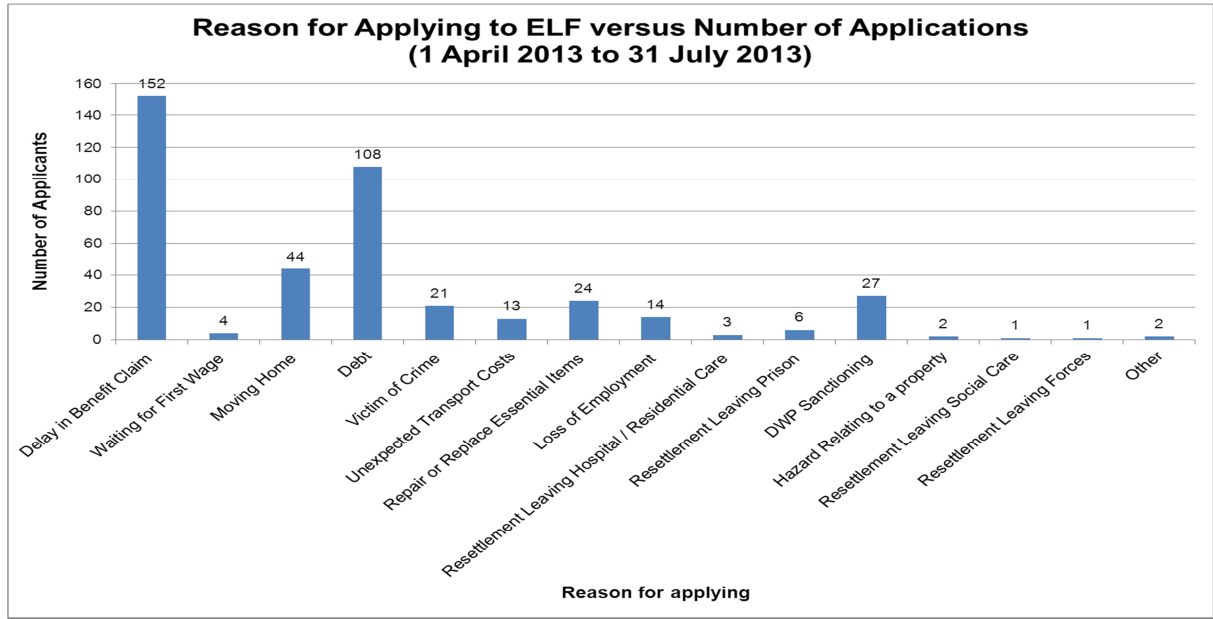
11% of the total households living in Redditch (ONS, 2011). As the number of applications made by both single males, and single parents, are disproportionate to population data, further investigation is required to find out why they appear to be more susceptible to a crisis resulting in an ELF application than other groups (ONS, 2011).

Figure 5



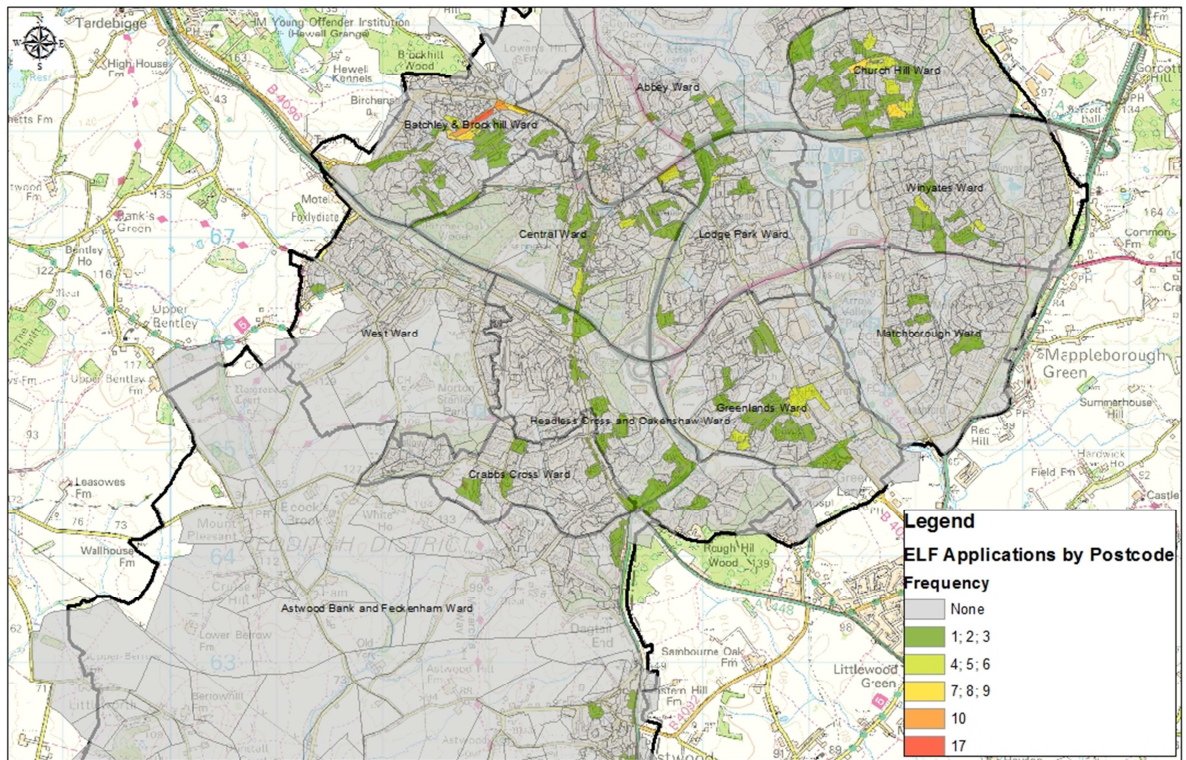
The top reason given for applying to the ELF was ‘delay in a benefit claim’ which represented 36% of applications. The next largest recurrent reason was ‘debt’ which accounted for 26%. The third most frequent explanation was ‘moving home’ which generated 10%. ‘Repairing or replacing essential items’ and ‘DWP sanctioning’ both represented 6% respectively, whilst the remaining categories collectively accounted for 16%. Fig 6 provides more detail about the reasons given for applying to the ELF, and the equivalent numbers of applications received. These figures show, 42% of customer demands for ELF, were because of delays in other types of benefits or DWP sanctioning.

Figure 6



Post-codes of applicants, minus those that were no fixed abode at the time of their application have been placed onto a map of Redditch (displayed as Figure 7); the map was colour coded to signify the frequency of ELF applications in each area, although most are grey (showing that there were no applications), the largest number of ELF claimants lived in the Batchley and Brockhill ward. A comparison been undertaken on two key areas, Batchley and Brockhill ward, and Winyates ward, through a specialist tool called ACORN. The findings have confirmed that the areas are demographically similar, and that typically ELF applicants living in the Winyates ward re-approached less than claimants from Batchley and Brockhill. Unfortunately due to the small number of applicants involved it was not possible to prove this conclusively (Thomas, 2013; Clark, 2013).

Figure 7



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0 0.3 0.6 0.9 1.2 Kilometers

ELF Applications by Postcode 1st April to 31st July 2013

Produced by Emma Clark on behalf of the R&I Unit, September 2013



Housing Options Demand Data

Table 1 – Top Presenting Demands Currently

Presenting Demand	Frequency	% Demand
I need to be re-housed as I need support	3	5%
I am homeless/ threatened with homelessness	12	19%
I have a problem within my community	12	19%
I need to be re-housed as my property is unsuitable	13	21%
I need to be re-housed as my property is too large	2	3%
I need to be re-housed as my property is unaffordable	6	10%
I need to be re-housed due to dis-repair	4	6%
I need to be re-housed due to overcrowding	3	5%
I need advice	2	3%
I need independent accommodation	5	8%

Demand in Context

The top demands in context are currently:

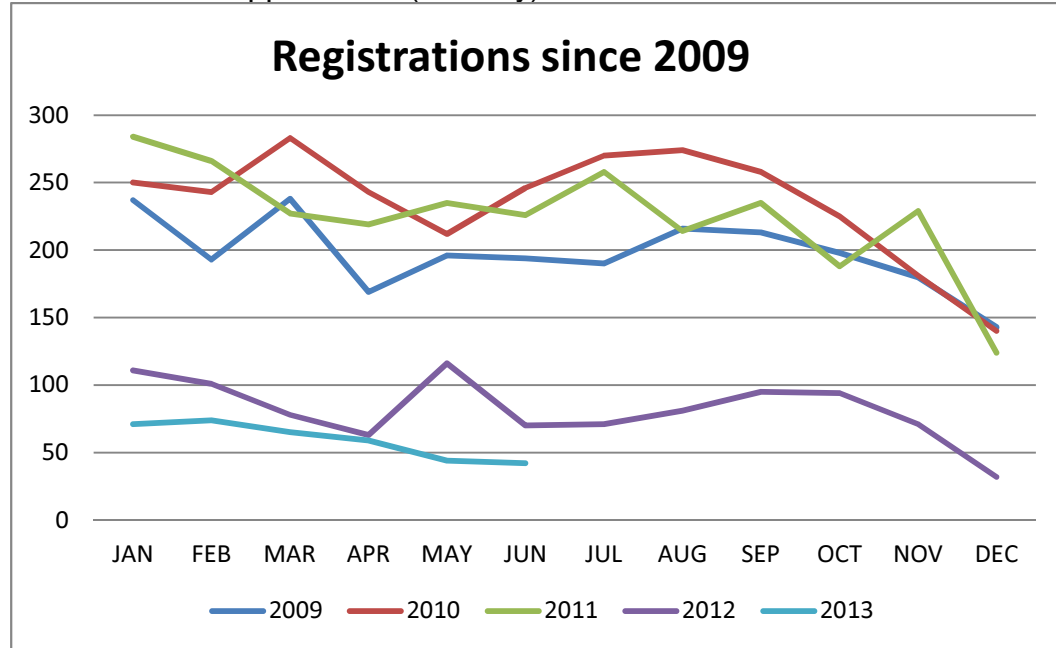
- 44% needed help with claiming what they were entitled to
- 35% needed to amend their claim for HB
- 29% needed support to live independently
- 27% needed more space in their existing property
- 26% needed help to find somewhere to live
- 24% needed help with relationships with their family
- 24% needed help to access employment, education or voluntary work
- 24% need help finding more 'accessible' accommodation
- 23% needed help with managing their finances
- 19 % had issues with antisocial behaviour in their area
- 19% needed help finding cheaper accommodation
- 18% needed help with disrepair in their current property

The results suggest that a lot of customers want to move because they have a problem within their community or their existing property is unsuitable. It might be possible therefore to avoid some of that demand if the Council could ensure that housing in the area was more 'suitable' or problems within the community were resolved.

Number on the Waiting List

Households on the waiting list: 2643 on register (of which 1423 are in reasonable preference).

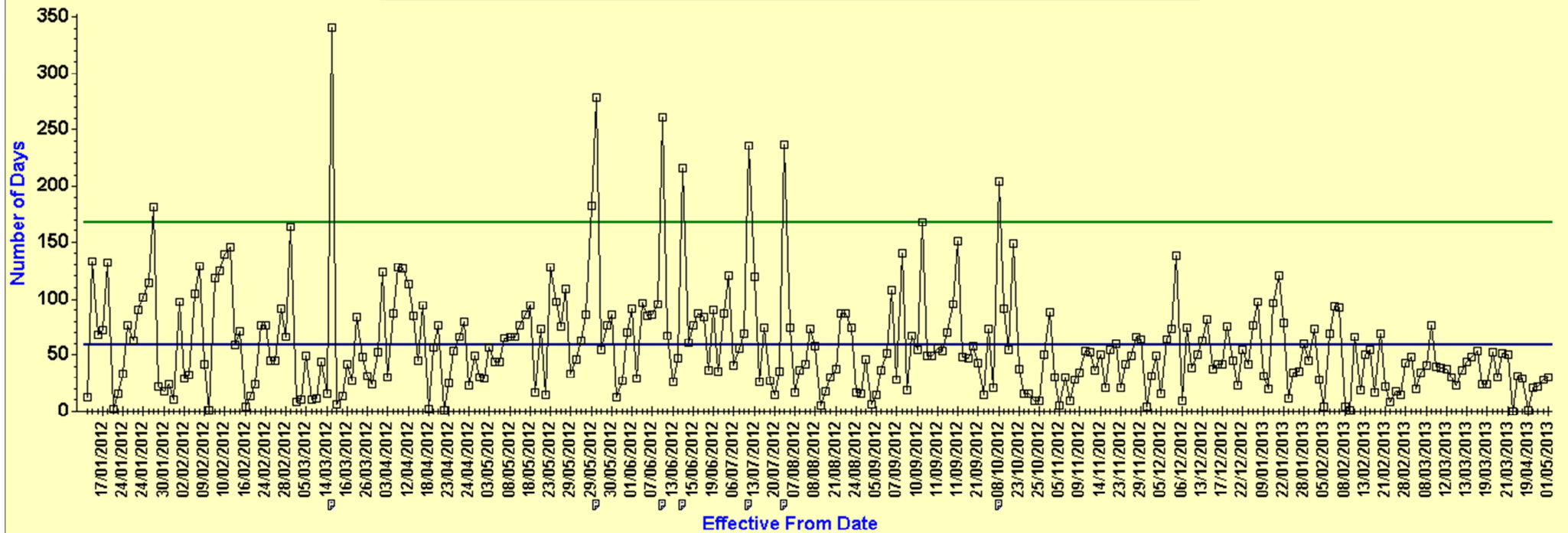
Table1 –No. of applications (monthly)



Homelessness Approaches

Year	Homelessness Acceptances	Homelessness Preventions
2008/09	78	240
2009/10	15	293
2010/11	27	217
2011/12	43	189
2012/13	71	216
TOTAL	234	1155

End to End Time, Priority Housing - RBC - Jan 12 to May 13



Start 03/01/2012
 U.C.L. =167.3
 Mean =59.0
 L.C.L. =n/a

The likely cost of building council housing and other options to increase stock

1. Council House Building

If the Council considered pursuing the option to deliver new council housing it is likely that a Development Agency Service would be required. The development agent would be responsible for the provision of all development and project management services and the provision of all professional building services, including, but not exclusively, architectural, employer's agency, quantity surveying, cost consulting, planning supervision, engineering and surveying, and procure contractors to construct the properties. In order to assist in the possibility of achieving future grant provision for the Council from the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) the Development Agent should also seek development partner status for the Council from the HCA

For estimated delivery costs officers have discussed expected development costs with RSL partners. Without completing a full development appraisal costs can only be estimated. Using cost information obtained on a previous developments currently being completed it is expected that costs would be in the region of £2,000m² or below.

The Council would look to provide dwellings to meet the identified need with minimum space standards as below, meet lifetime homes standards and provide dwellings that meet code level 5 or 6 of the code of sustainable homes. Achieving this level has an impact of the delivery costs but officers consider it important to provide properties that are sustainable in the long term.

Property Type	Unit Area (m ²)	Build cost (£2,000 x m ²)
2 bedroom, 4 person house	70 - 75m ²	£140,000 - £150,000
3 bedroom, 5 person house	82 - 85m ²	£164,000 - £170,000
4 bedroom, 7 person house	108 - 115m ²	£216,000 - £230,000
1 bedroom, 2 person bungalow	45 - 50m ²	£94,500 - £105,000 (£2,100 x m ²)
2 bedroom, 4 person bungalow	70 - 75m ²	£147,000 - £157,500 (£2,100 x m ²)
1 bedroom, 2 person flat	45 - 50m ²	£90,000 - £100,000
2 bedroom, 4 person flat	70 - 75m ²	£140,000 - £150,000

Having considered the land identified in the table on appendix 2 and possible provision the estimated build cost is £11m. This equates to £132,895 per property delivered.

Given the issues raised regarding the HRA finances and the associated risks and with work required to create a long term plan officers consider that currently the risks outweigh the benefits of the Council building new properties in the short term.

There are a number of options that can be taken up by the Council to increase the amount of stock available in Redditch, without impacting in a significant way on the HRA.

1. The Council purchases existing homes and adds them to its stock

In recent months the Council has seen an increase in approaches from owner occupiers who have purchased through the RTB and are now wishing to sell their property. As part of the RTB legislation they must approach the Council to see if they are interested in buying the property back if they decide to sell within 10 years of their purchase.

In the past 12 months 8 householders have approached the Council asking if the Council wishes to purchase their property. Working with Property Services, Legal Services and Housing Capital the Council has agreed the re-purchase of 3 properties at the cost of £312,000 (£104k average) in total, the further 5 properties are currently being inspected and valuations carried out. Members had agreed a budget to buy back properties, with the HRA financing changes the Council is now in a position to increase this budget.

The report on each of the properties show that these are all good assets and will increase the housing stock with minimum costs to the Council to bring them up to the Councils housing stock standard.

Currently the purchasing of existing suitable properties provides better value for money than the Council building new properties.

2. The Council sells or gifts land to an RSL to build housing association properties

Previously the Council has utilised its land assets by disposing of these at either discounted or nil value to RSL's to deliver new affordable housing. The Council in return receives nominations rights to the properties for applicants off the Council's waiting list.

This requires the Council to lose the assets at below market value and reduce the capital income to the Council. The Council is currently working with Redditch Co-op Homes to deliver an affordable housing scheme on Hewell Road Swimming Baths site.

The National Affordable Homes Programme 2015/18 has recently been announced by the Homes & Community Agency for the delivery of affordable homes from 2015. Registered Providers are required to submit

development programme bids by April 2014. Funding decisions will be made by July 2014 to enable work on site from April 2015.

Officers will be working with our partners to ensure the maximum Affordable Homes Programme funding can be achieved for the Borough.

3. The Council enters into leasing arrangements with housing providers

Working with the Private Sector the Council could enter into leasing arrangements with Landlords to enable the Council to manage and house people into private rented accommodation. This will require the Council to enter in leasing arrangements typically 5 years on a property, which guarantees the landlords income over that period.

Even though the private rented sector has increased, it is still lower than the Worcestershire average. Housing Options also utilise the private rented sector for the prevention of homelessness and this option could cause issues as landlords may rather go through leasing arrangements therefore reducing the number of stock available for homeless prevention and not increase affordable housing levels.

4. The Council introduces a cash incentive scheme/ Home Ownership Grants for council tenants

The Council has previously undertaken a cash incentive scheme. This requires that the Council offers Council Tenants an amount of funding to purchase a property on the open market and return their Council house back for re-letting. This will require a capital investment to provide any increase in the affordable housing. This will enable the Council to assist people into home ownership and assist people on the waiting list. In the current housing market there is limited availability of mortgages over 75% of the value of the house. Should the Council look at this option with a ceiling purchase limit of £150,000, would require a grant of a maximum of £37,500 to provide up to 25% of the purchase price.

To assist 10 tenants into home ownership would require £375,000 capital investment.

5. The Council introduces a shared equity scheme

Similar to the above scheme the Council could assist any customers who are eligible to purchase a property on the open market through a shared equity scheme. The Council could provide an assistance of up to 25% of a maximum purchase price. Through land registry the Council would hold a charge against the property for the percentage amount given and require this to be paid back on sale/transfer of the property at the same percentage value of the open market sale price obtained in the future.

For example if the Council provided assistance at 25% of a property purchased for £100,000 the assistance would be £25,000. Should this

property be sold later on for £120,000 the Council's would expect £30,000 to be paid back.

6. The Council becomes a syndicated partner for the Government Mortgage Rescue Scheme (MRS) and Introduces its own Mortgage Rescue Scheme

With the increase of customers approaching Housing Options with housing being repossessed due to their mortgage not being paid, Officers would like Members to urgently consider the Council becoming a syndicated partner for the Government Mortgage Rescue Scheme.

MRS is a key element to prevent repossessions and avoid homelessness. It is an option available to eligible households in financial difficulties when all other alternative avenues to avoid repossession have been explored. It is about enabling people to stay in their homes.

From November 2009 there has been 25 successful mortgage rescue cases completed in the Borough. The scheme helps homeowners facing repossession and homelessness to sell their home to a housing provider, who, in turn, rents the same property back to them. In recent weeks the syndication agent for our area WM Housing Group has advised the Council that three households facing homelessness in Redditch have been turned down for rescue on the basis that they did not fit in within their portfolio. The three properties are former Right to Buy properties.

WM Housing Group has already reached the threshold of their own financial limits and is no longer considering purchasing properties directly. WM Housing advised that with this in mind they had tried to find a registered provider working in Redditch that might agree to acquire the additional properties but they had not managed to find one.

It has been confirmed by the Homes & Communities Agency that the Council can become a syndicated partner and benefit from grant funding in undertaking MRS cases.

Principles of the Mortgage Rescue Scheme (MRS)

- The scheme is only available to families and people who are vulnerable, at risk, or elderly (or those households local authorities would have a duty to house under homelessness legislation)
- Access to Mortgage Rescue is via local authorities who undertake the initial assessment of eligibility of households for the scheme prior to referring them to participating housing providers.
- A case is considered as a 'referral' when an application has been made to the LA, assessed as eligible by the LA, has been formally referred to the provider and the provider has accepted the referral.
- Once a provider has received a case as a referral, they are able to refuse a referral if the LA has not supplied the necessary information for the provider to process the case.

- Following referral and initial assessment by the Provider, the final decision on whether or not a case proceeds rests with the Provider.
- There are two options: Shared Equity or Government Mortgage to Rent (GMtR), although the former has been used less frequently as households accessing the Mortgage Rescue Scheme do so once all other options are exhausted.
- 47% grant is provided to purchase the properties under the GMtR option; and 73% grant towards the cost of the equity Loan for the equity share option.
- There is an also grant towards the cost of repairs for GMtR properties to bring them up to Decent Homes Standards. The grant rate is 47% of the total cost of repairs, up to a maximum of £20,000 i.e. maximum grant paid would be 47% of £20,000.
- Grant rates are subject to review and participating Providers will be informed of any changes in the grant rate in due course.
- The Provider also receives a 10% “haircut” on GMtR properties and 3% on Shared Equity which is the applicant’s commitment to the scheme (in lieu of equity) net of the vendor’s solicitor’s fee.
- From May 09, the Scheme has been available to applicants who have up to 120% negative equity (and on a case by case basis more depending on what can be negotiated with lenders).
- There is an administration fee of £4,500 payable for completed cases to the RP undertaking the process and administration work prior to offer (usually the MRS Agent leading a Syndicate).

Benefits of MRS for the Council

- The Council purchase GMtR properties using its own resources or borrowing to cover 53% of 90% (100% minus the “haircut” of 10%) of the prevailing market value, established by a Home Buyers Survey undertaken by a Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) accredited surveyor.
- The property is brought up to Decent Homes Standard (DHS) as part of the process – this requires an investment by the owning RP of 53% of the actual repair costs (these are variable depending on the condition of the property at the point of GMtR, examples of completed cases can be found in the Orbit Group Financial Appraisal Model).
- Rent is set on an Affordable Rent basis – i.e. up to a maximum of 80% of the prevailing local market rent – using an Assured Shorthold Tenancy
- There is a tenant in situ and it is likely that some households will need additional support, such as on-going access to money advice, to sustain their tenancy.
- The tenant is guaranteed an initial 3 years in the property on the AST (however if the RP would prefer to issue an Assured Tenancy at this stage this is acceptable) but is able to stay in the property in perpetuity as long as they continue to pay their rent (usual rules apply regarding the management of rent arrears). At the end of the 3 years, the RP can decide whether to maintain the Assured

Shorthold Tenancy or switch to an Assured Tenancy, on which they would be able to continue to charge an affordable rent.

- If at some point in the future the household decides to move out of the property, the RP is able to sell the property on the open market if this fits their property portfolio management strategy, retaining the grant as RCGF for investment in other business activities (within the rules of the grant regime and the prevailing RCGF framework).

Under the terms of the current Mortgage Rescue Scheme syndicated partners can claim up to 47% grant towards the cost of purchasing properties at risk of repossession if the households occupying them meet the schemes criteria and the value of the property is not too high. The Council is eligible to be the syndicated partner and purchase the property back by working with WM Housing Group.

Unfortunately the Government Mortgage Rescue Scheme is due to finish on 31 March 2014. Beyond this date there will no longer be any Government grant available to support Mortgage Rescue. If no alternative option is found the Council is likely to be burdened with housing an additional 7 Homeless Households per year based on previous year's figures.

In order to become a syndicated partner and fund the MRS, officers propose that up to £400,000 of HRA reserves be approved for cases agreed for the scheme in 2013/14.

Officers will also bring a report to members on the possibility of providing a Mortgage Rescue Scheme for 2014 onwards.

Conclusions

1. That the Council notes whilst the current financial position around the HRA is a positive one, there are various risks and unknowns in the business plan which suggest now is not the right time to use the reserves to fund the building of Council housing. In the medium term, the Council may wish to review this position.
2. That the Council notes there are various other options available to increase housing stock in the short to medium term, which make use of the finances available through the HRA without having a significant impact upon it. Officers will examine these options in more detail and report further on them to enable the Council to determine which options it wishes to prioritise or develop locally.
3. The Council becomes a syndicated partner for the Government Mortgage Rescue Scheme, to enable it to prevent eligible households becoming homeless as a result of repossession, and reviews it's role in preventing repossessions in Redditch when the Mortgage Rescue Scheme ends in April 2014.

Document is Restricted

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY SECTOR GRANTS PROGRAMME 2013/14

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Bill Hartnett, Community Leadership & Partnership inc. Voluntary Sector
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Judith Willis, acting Head of Community Services
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

This report contains recommendations as to the funding split and themes for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) grants process for 2014/15.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee are requested to **RECOMMEND** that

the following themes and percentages of funding be allocated for the 2014/15 voluntary and community sector grants process: see below for details on themes: these themes link into the Strategic Purposes for Redditch Borough Council – See chart - Appendix 1

- Independent Communities** = £130,000 – see 3.3.1
- Community Development** = £ 55,000 – see 3.3.2
- Thriving Communities** = £ 20,000 – see 3.3.3
- Community Welfare** = £ 20,000 – see 3.3.4
- Stronger Communities Grant Programme** = £ 15,000 – see 3.3.5
- £1,000 be allocated from the Grants budget for the use by the Grants Team to deliver:**
 - a) **networking and promotional events;**
 - b) **advertising and communication support;**
 - c) **newsletters;**

(See Key Issues 3.0 for Background & full breakdown of theme splits and key project support areas)

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3. KEY ISSUES**Financial Implications**

- 3.1 The proposed splits are based on the Grants budget for 2014/15 being set at £241k (based on no increase on budget from 2013/14)
- 3.2.1 The total budget for grants to voluntary organisations for 2014 /2015 is £241,000.

Background:

- 3.3 The Stronger Communities Grant programme has had a major impact on the grants programme by ensuring a funding stream is available to the community organisations delivering at grass roots level.
- 3.4 The Grants programme has ensured that the building of a good working relationship with our local third sector & a greater understanding of the issues they face. Demand for support via our local VCS has increased, RBC, s continued support is vital to ensure that the sector can sustain its support in the Community. The Stronger Community's grants have allowed both the Council & Small Community groups greater engagement opportunities.
- 3.5 For 2014/15 the proposed splits reflect the needs within the local Voluntary & Community Sector, while adding value to groups already working closely with the Borough Council all sectors are having to cut their cloth accordingly, while many funding streams cuts are being initiated. Redditch Borough Councils Grants programme continues to support local organisations delivering much needed services to residents. The themes objectives aim to:
- Support & sustain services already being delivered within the town,
 - Support findings already being identified from the Councils Transformation process
 - Align with the Council's strategic purposes.

3.3.1**Independent Communities****Recommended funding = 130k for the Delivery of Projects under the "Independent Communities" Banner****80k – Investing Grant****To deliver:****Financial and Debt advice within the Town****Free, independent and confidential advice,**

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- ❑ Promoting and raising awareness of services; providing better access through, for example, outreach in local communities, faster appointments; and other measures targeting low-income and disadvantaged groups of people.
- ❑ Ensure clients are fully informed of their options so that they are best placed to make decisions about how to proceed in their situation.
- ❑ Providing advice that is 'consistent with a rights-based approach', i.e. by providing full information of all the options available.
- ❑ Face to Face appointments with home visits where applicable.
- ❑ Signposting & referring to other agencies where necessary.
- ❑ Working closely with department's within the local Council

30k - Investing grants - Maximum grant of 10k for each project submitted**For delivery of on-going support for local services to include outcomes that:**

- ❑ Provide services that support local disadvantaged residents
- ❑ Offering local volunteering opportunities
- ❑ Work closely with partner/counterpart organisations
- ❑ Delivering services that reflect the needs of residents
- ❑ Provide training/up skilling opportunities' for Staff & Volunteers

20k - Investing Grant**For delivery of a financial support project with outcomes that:**

- Support for those in financial difficulties including
- one to one support
- group workshops
- on-going financial independence support
- Outreach project/worker to support residents
- Signposting

3.3.2

Community Development**Recommended funding: £55k for the delivery of projects under the "Community Development" Banner.****40k Investing Grants – Maximum grant of 40k for a project to deliver: Childcare and Holiday schemes into the Town:**

- ❑ Discounted childcare for local children with specific criteria for discounted places to be allocated to ensure the full benefit is gained from those families who have the highest need.
- ❑ Discounted Holiday play schemes for local children that have outcomes linked into education and health and well-being priorities.

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15k Investing Grants – Maximum grant of 3k for each project submitted**For delivery of projects that support:**

- Learning & Personal Development projects for those on low incomes
- Intergenerational/Cross cultural projects
- Breakfast Clubs
- Local Community Clubs – i.e. Mother & Baby, Older People, Cultural, etc.
- Supporting local residents back into work
- Work Clubs
- Projects that support environmental issues

3.3.3

Thriving Communities**Recommended funding = 20k for the delivery of projects under Thriving Communities****20k Investing Grants-Maximum bids for each project submitted of 4k**

For delivery of projects that support the Council's priorities.

- Support for Community improvement projects
- Support for Families with additional needs – ie: ADHD, Autism, Learning difficulties etc.
- Projects to encourage Enterprise in young people
- Projects that increase youth participation
- Project that supports older people
- Projects that supports disadvantaged people in Redditch, ie homelessness,
- Projects that support Anti-social behaviour reduction
- Projects that support reduction in Crime

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3.3.4

Community Welfare**Recommended funding = 20k for the delivery of projects under
Community Welfare Banner – also links into the LSP priorities****20k Investing Grants - Maximum bids for each project submitted of
4k**

For delivery of projects that support the Council's Community welfare priorities.

- Projects that support Health & Fitness
- Focus on Mental Health and Support.
- Dementia /Alzheimer's support projects
- Domestic abuse projects
- Projects that support residents with low/medium level mental health issues
- Projects that tackle alcohol & drug issues in young people
- Projects that support young offenders
- Projects that support environmental issues

3.3.5

**Stronger Communities - Community Grant Fund – Total £15k -
For the delivery of local grassroots community projects/events**
**£15k Giving Grants Maximum bid of £500.00 per project submitted in
each round**

For delivery of projects: Hosted by local community groups - these groups will not need to be formally constituted but will be required to have a recognised role within the community they represent

- Community support & participation projects
- Three Rounds at £5000 per round for community grants in 2012/13
- Community groups invited to bid for up to £500 for delivery of local projects/events

3.4 The Grants programme in 2012/13 supported a 3 year training programme with a total budget of 15k. Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN) were successful in their bid to deliver the programme with 4 workshops beginning delivered this year – 2 more workshops are planned before 2014.

3.5 For 2013/14 the stronger communities grants will support over 30 small groups to deliver a wide variety of projects. Currently funded projects include:

- Garden/Environment projects,
- Social & Fun-days
- Bereavements project
- Local History (Needles) project

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Legal Implications

- 3.6 The Council needs to continue to ensure that it has a transparent and fair grants scheme.
- 3.7 To ensure that we continue to support the sector to move forward and deliver projects that provides value for money.
- 3.8 Under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to incur expenditure which in its opinion is in the interest of and will bring direct benefit to its area or any part of it or all or some of its inhabitants. The direct benefit accruing must also be commensurate with the expenditure to be incurred.
- 3.9 There is a further power to make grants to voluntary organisations providing recreational facilities under Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.10 Deadlines dates for both the main grants programme and the Stronger Communities grants programme have been set in order to ensure the smooth delivery of the programme. **See appendices 3 & 4 for timescales.**
- 3.11 To enable the Council to deliver its grants programme, Officers will need to continue to work closely with the Communications Team to ensure that a full and informative guide to the new procedure is implemented and that Officers are engaging with the full range of VCS organisations and groups within the local area.
- 3.13 By working closely with BARN & local VCS organisations on delivering our long term training & support, we can ensure that the sector will receive an agreed standard of training with the Council ensuring that we receive value for money. Outcomes initially identified are:
- What impact will developing these skills have on performance?
 - Which skills needs are the most important to long term success?
 - Which skills needs are the most urgent?
- 3.14.1 Local Authorities will be expected under the “Big Society” banner to support and help build capacity and up-skill those organisations operating within the third sector.
- 3.15 Redditch Borough Council has implemented a Concessionary rents programme. Four VCS organisations have been put through the process,

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with each gaining a concession on their rent. All other VCS organisation's currently occupying property owned by RBC will be taken through the process over the next three years.

- 3.16** The concessionary rent programme recognises the social value that VCS organisations bring to the borough through operating from council properties, and the council's commitment to fostering and demonstrating this value. **Appendices 2: Concessionary Rent Policy**

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.16 The 2013/14 grants programme has supported 23 projects from 18 organisations under the main grant fund with 20 projects/events being funded in the first two rounds via the Stronger Communities fund.
- 3.17 The 2013/14 Grants Programme received applications from 39 different organisations, with the programme seeing 8 new organisations applying to the programme who had not applied to this fund previously.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 Where needed the Grants officer identifies external funding streams and invites external organisations to host events to raise awareness of the funding streams they have available to the local VCS. Officers have also made themselves available for one to one sessions to support funding applications for both internal and external opportunities. Redditch borough Councils grant programme is widely advertised both locally and county wide.
- 4.3 All highlighted suggestion's for improvement from the recent audit of the grants programme have been implemented.

Purpose of Grant Funding

The Council provides grants to assist the development of a vibrant voluntary and community sector that delivers projects and activities of value to the local community.

Funding will only be provided where it can be demonstrated that a defined impact will be made. Organisations should demonstrate an outcomes focus in applications for funding.

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The Council will require that all grant awards support Council objectives. The specific objectives to be supported will be made clear in all publicity relating to each grant opportunity. Demonstrating support of Council objectives may include:

a) *Linking grant awards to an approved list of Council priorities, (please see Website for the current list of priorities). The Council also reserve the option of including LSP or other priorities as identified by Redditch Borough Council*

b) The Council choosing one or more specific outcomes in advance that will be achieved with the grant award. This will be particularly appropriate for individual departments wishing to make grants available to support the delivery of a particular service aim

7.7 – Payment schedules will balance the need for the Council to ensure proper accountability for use of public money with appropriate recognition of cash-flow issues that may be experienced by voluntary and community sector organisations. The general principle will be that payment is made in advance of project delivery, with instalment frequency and size commensurate with the overall size of the grant awarded. General guidelines for payment schedules are:

- a) Grants of a total of £1,000 or less will be paid in full in advance of the project being delivered, payment will be made to successful applicants within 1 month of the submission deadline date, with monitoring information required following the project; unless the projects delivery timescales dictate the funding be paid in full.
- b) Grants of between £1,000 and £10,000 will be paid in two instalments of 50% each. The first instalment will be paid in advance of the project being delivered. The second instalment will be paid after satisfactory monitoring information has been supplied on the progress of the project. For projects lasting one year, the second instalment will usually be due to be paid six months after the start of the project.
- c) Grants in excess of £10,000 will be paid by quarterly instalments in advance of project activity. Each instalment will only be released after satisfactory monitoring information has been supplied on progress of the project.
- d) Grant applications to the Voluntary & Community Grant Programme will not be part funded.

4.5 Monitoring will be signed off by Grants Officer before each quarter payment is due, with any concerns being discussed with Chair of Grants Panel or Head of Service.

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4.6 All applications to the Stronger Communities Grants will be assessed by the Grants Panel with the Head of Community Services having final approval of applications to the Stronger Communities Grants.

4.7 Approval timescales will be indicated year on year in conjunction with launch & deadline timescales for the current Grants programme. These will apply to projects commencing 1st April of the following year – allowing successful applicants to place the project into their delivery calendar and to apply for match funding grants and giving unsuccessful applicants feedback and enough time to secure funding from alternative channels.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Priorities

Appendix 2 – Concessionary Rent Policy

Appendix 3 - Timetable – Main Grants Programme

Appendix 4 – Timetable – Stronger Communities Grants

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Policy for Award of Grants by Redditch Borough Council to Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations.

Worcestershire Compact: Link to Web-pages:

<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/community-and-living/vcs-unit/worcestershire-compact.aspx>

7. KEY

- SIG – Shopping, Investing and Giving**
- BME – Black Minority Ethnic**
- LSP – Local Strategic Partnership**
- VCS – Voluntary and Community Sector**
- RBC – Redditch Borough Council**

‘Place-Shaping’ -- Local authorities are strategic leaders in place-shaping responding to residents' ambitions and aspirations and working with partners to deliver relevant services.

‘Third Sector’ –The voluntary sector or community sector (also non-profit sector) is the sphere of social activity undertaken by organisations that are for non-profit and non-governmental. This sector is also called the third sector.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

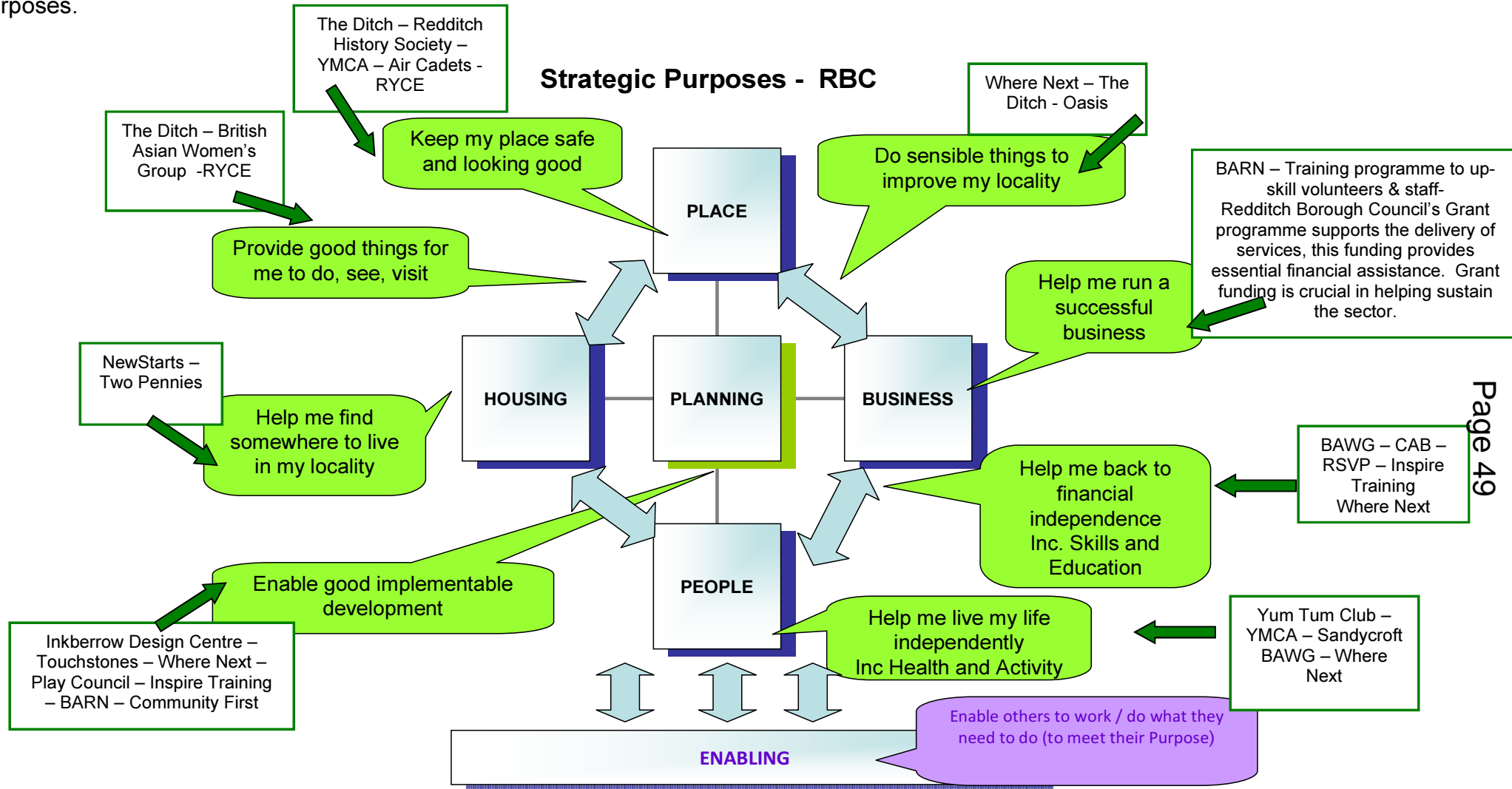
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Name: Donna Hancox
E Mail: donna.hancox@redditchbc.gov.uk
Tel: 01527 64252 Ext: 3015

1. The Grant Programme & Strategic Purposes

Please see the chart below to see how funded groups for 2013/14 are delivering services that support and add value to the Councils strategic purposes.



The chart highlights how all of funded groups for 2013/14 are delivering services that support and add value to the Councils strategic purposes

Voluntary & Community Sector Rent Relief Grant

All applications for Rent Relief Grant will be considered by the Grants Panel.

There are three tiers for determining the amount of rent relief grant to be awarded to Voluntary & Community Sector Groups (VSGs). The process includes a provision for VCS groups to appeal* for a further reduction via the Executive Committee.

First tier - 25% Reduction for all VCS groups – this will be determined by the following criteria:

1. Registered Charity
2. Community Interest Company
3. Social Enterprise
4. Locally recognised Community Organisation

Second Tier – Additional 20% Reduction – Above + following criteria

1. Is providing a service that is addressing the needs of the local community.
2. Employs Staff or has Volunteers or a mix of both to deliver services

Third Tier – Additional 25% Reduction – Above + following criteria

1. Supports Redditch Borough Councils local priorities
2. In receipt of grant funding to deliver services
3. Is capable of, or does maintain the building to the required standards
4. Has a long term plan (three year) for delivery of their service into the Borough***

Where more than one organisation is applying to occupy the same premises the Grants Panel's existing scoring criteria will be used to distinguish between the applicants. Property Services will at the same time assist with identifying suitable alternative premises.

The Grants Panel will recommend to the Head of Finance & Resources the level of Rent Relief Grant to be awarded up to the 70% ceiling.

All organisations will be offered a lease agreement with the approved Rent Relief Grant applied under the terms agreed with Property Services, to include a provision of a periodic** review of the rent relief. Rent Relief Grant will be paid/awarded on the signing of the lease agreement.

***Further appeal process:**

If the full 70% relief is applied and the organisation feels that the rental value applied is still too high we propose that the organisations put a business case to the Head of Finance & Resources for consideration by the Executive Committee. The organisation must fulfil all of the above criteria in order to initiate the appeal process

** A review of eligibility will be undertaken at three yearly intervals unless triggered by an earlier change in the VSC's circumstances.

Conditions:

1. All applications must be accompanied by an appropriately detailed business case***.
2. All external grant funding (i.e. any third party grant funding not awarded by Redditch Borough Council) received in respect of the rental of premises owned by Redditch Borough Council must be declared. The Council reserves the right to claw back all or part of the Rent Relief Grant in such circumstances.
3. All monies accrued from the sub-letting of space/room in any leased premises for which an application for Rent Relief Grant has been submitted should be:
 - a. Identified in the financial budget for any grant application (including for Rent Relief Grant);
 - b. Submitted as evidence to support the sustainability of the VCS organisation within the Borough.

The Council reserves the right to claw back all or part of the Rent Relief Grant where monies accrued from the sub-letting of premises are being used to build up financial reserves.



www.redditchbc.gov.uk

Diary Dates for Redditch Borough Councils Grants Programme	Timescale
Launch	Monday 28 th October
Application deadline	4pm Friday 6 th December
Initial application screening	December 2013
Grants Panel Scoring	January/ February 2014
Panel approved applicants informed	February 2014
Approved grants awarded	April 2014
Assessment of applications	Within 28 working days of deadline
Initial Successful and unsuccessful applicants informed	Within 28 working days of deadline



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Diary Dates for Stronger Community Grant programme	Timescale
Launch – 1 st Round	Monday 3 rd February 2014
1 st Round Application deadline	4pm Friday 7 th March 2014
Launch – 2 nd Round	Monday 5 th May 2014
2 nd Round Application deadline	4pm Friday 6 th June 2014
Launch – 3 rd Round	Monday 4 th August
3 rd Round Application deadline	4pm Friday 5 th September
Assessment of applications	Within 14 working days of deadline
Successful and unsuccessful applicants informed	Within 21 working days of deadline

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MONITORING OF WRITE OFFS – APRIL – AUGUST 2013

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor John Fisher
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Teresa Kristunas, Head of Finance & Resources
Wards Affected	All

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

Members are requested to consider the action taken by officers with respect to the write off of debts during the first four months of 2013/14 and to note the profile and/or level of outstanding debt.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive is requested to RESOLVE that:

Subject to any comments, the contents of the report be noted.

3. KEY ISSUES

3.1. In 2010/11 members approved a revised Write-Off Policy which changed the process for the reporting and approval process for the writing off of debts due to the Council. The revised Policy requires officers to report to members of the actual level of write offs and the profile of outstanding debt.

3.2. The current bad debts provisions are as follows:

	£000's
Council Tax	252
Housing Revenue Account	576
Sundry Debtors	100
Benefits	<u>206</u>
Total	<u>1,134</u>

Financial Implications

3.3 The current bad debt provisions are adequate in relation to level of write offs and the level of outstanding debt.

Legal Implications

3.4 There are no legal implications.

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Service / Operational Implications

3.5 No direct implications.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

3.6. No direct implications.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

There are no risks identified.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Write offs - April – August 2013

Appendix 2 - Aged Debt Profile for Sundry Debts and Former Tenant
Arrears

Council Tax Arrears and Business Rates Arrears as at 31st
Aug 2013.

Appendix 3 – Write off of Overpaid Housing Benefit - April – Aug 2013

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are no background papers with this report.

AUTHORS OF REPORT

Name: Teresa Kristunas, Head of Finance & Resources
E Mail: t.kristunas@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel: (01527) 64252 ext 3295

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**15th October 2013**Appendix 1****Write Offs of Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates
April – August 2013**

Council Tax	Reason	01/04/13 - 31/08/13 £
CT - 01	Gone away	16,111.15
CT - 02	Deceased no funds in estate	712.07
CT - 03	Bankruptcy	12,107.83
CT - 06	Uneconomical to pursue	207.13
CT - 09	Automatic w/o +1/-1p	0.02
CT - 10	Balance under £5.00	8.27
CT - 11	Other	7.05
CT - 12	Credits - unable to refund	-5280.93
	Total	23,872.59

NDR	Reason	01/04/13 - 31/08/13 £
NDR - 03	Liquidation/Winding up	5,811.43
NDR - 06	Uneconomical to pursue	-1601.11
	Total	4,210.32

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**15th October 2013**Write Offs of Sundry Debts and Former Tenant Arrears (HRA)**
April – August 2013

Sundry Debts	Reason	01/04/13 – 31/08/13 £
SDR – 01	Gone away	5,092
SDR – 02	Imprisonment	475
SDR – 03	Liquidation/Bankrupt	895
SDR – 04	Statute Barred	92
SDR – 06	Uneconomical to pursue	12,519
SDR – 10	Debtor deceased	487
	Total	19,560

Former Tenant Arrears	Reason	01/04/13 - 31/08/13 £
FTA – 01	Gone away	10,600
FTA – 03	Bankrupt	1,506
FTA – 04	Statute Barred	16,806
FTA – 06	Uneconomical to pursue	25,269
FTA – 10	Tenant deceased	5,087
	Total	59,268

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**15th October 2013**Appendix 2****Aged Debt profiles for Sundry Debts and Former Tenant
Arrears – as at 31st August 2013****Sundry Debts**

Age	Arrears as at 30/09/2012	Arrears as at 31/12/2012	Arrears as at 31/08/2013
	£		
0 - 3 months	1,528,852	958,640	786,257
3 - 6 months	170,764	106,739	191,632
6 - 12 months	149,707	184,868	134,740
12 - 24 months	304,977	256,879	232,022
24 months and over	619,788	580,517	640,277

Former Tenants

Age	Arrears as at 30/09/2012	Arrears as at 31/12/2012	Arrears as at 31/08/2013
	£		
0 - 3 months	33,083	25,536	37,741
3 - 6 months	18,222	31,982	37,060
6 - 12 months	41,807	30,247	51,521
12 - 24 months	66,512	79,426	58,740
24 months and over	184,058	172,949	156,027

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Year	Arrears Total as at 31/12/12	Arrears Total as at 31/03/2013	Arrears Total as at 31/08/2013
1993/94	0	0	-453
1994/95	0	0	-631
1995/96	0	0	-607
1996/97	923	583	-168
1997/98	1,052	1,052	520
1998/99	2,310	2,243	1,602
1999/00	6,868	4,972	4,073
2000/01	9,934	9,523	8,730
2001/02	17,174	16,311	13,405
2002/03	22,721	20,924	18,712
2003/04	35,137	33,471	31,312
2004/05	56,380	51,373	47,985
2005/06	75,137	71,654	65,117
2006/07	122,751	115,180	105,166
2007/08	155,946	146,041	136,542
2008/09	190,286	176,534	164,123
2009/10	226,275	206,990	187,775
2010/11	308,207	278,183	254,208
2011/12	451,966	380,751	325,632
2012/13		832,499	598,868
Total	1,683,069	2,348,285	1,963,912

Business Rates Arrears

Year	Arrears Total as at 31/12/12	Arrears Total as at 31/03/2013	Arrears Total as at 31/08/2013
2000/01	0	0	-5,080
2001/02	125	125	-3,353
2002/03	8,990	8,990	8,990
2003/04	11,924	12,449	12,449
2004/05	18,423	18,273	18,073
2005/06	23,710	19,934	19,234
2006/07	38,839	29,643	28,617
2007/08	93,254	75,459	73,068
2008/09	86,256	72,892	65,400
2009/10	32,418	38,599	49,552
2010/11	168,705	108,928	90,150
2011/12	147,147	174,919	169,534
2012/13		484,696	362,220
Total	629,787	1,044,907	888,851

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**15th October 2013**Appendix 3****Write off of Overpaid Housing Benefit – April to August 2013**

Housing Benefit Write-Offs as at 31/08/2013		
Reason	Amount £	No. of cases
Possible Write back	2,080	5
Deceased	1,961	2
Debt Relief Order	4,352	10
IVA	610	1
Bankruptcy	1,584	3
Not reasonable to recover	15,576	34
Uneconomic to recover	136	9
No prospect of recovery	20,156	14
Totals	46,456	78



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 10th September, 2013

MINUTES

Present:

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

Also Present:

Councillor Michael Braley

Officers:

J Staniland and C Walker

Committee Services Officer:

M Craggs and A Scarce

43. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Andrew Brazier. There was no named substitute.

44. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of any party whip. Councillor Andrew Fry declared an other disclosable interest in item 4 of the agenda, Land Ownership and Maintenance, in his role as a Worcestershire County Councillor.

45. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13th August 2013 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

.....
Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 10th September, 2013

46. LAND OWNERSHIP AND MAINTENANCE REPORT

The Chair reminded Members that this topic had been suggested following a discussion on suitable items for inclusion in the Committee's Work Programme for 2013/14. The Environmental Services Manager introduced the report, which he informed Members outlined the working relationship between the Council and Worcestershire County Council (WCC). It was confirmed that currently the Council manages the maintenance of WCC's assets across the Borough. Both authorities are conscious of the demand placed on limited resources and the need to find better and more effective ways of working. A service level agreement (SLA) was already in place based on this working arrangement, but required updating and formalising.

The working relationship has evolved over a number of years due to the WCC Highways Partnership Team being based at the Town Hall some years ago. This relationship has been built on and regular meetings between both councils have taken place over the last twelve months in order to establish how the councils can assist each other and make decisions at a more strategic service deliver level. The Environmental Services Manager provided details of what would be included within the revised SLA and this would include the Council's adverse weather policy and a Lengthsman Scheme which covered additional services. The SLA would ensure that the role of each authority was clearly set down in one place. Confirmation of WCC's acceptance of the SLA was currently awaited at which point the document would be passed to the Legal Team for comment. It was acknowledged that the Lengthsman Scheme had taken some considerable time to be put in place and the Environmental Services Manager explained that this due to the work within it being very specific and the Council wished to broaden this out further to create further income.

The following points were raised and discussed in detail:

- Land or buildings which were privately owned and in particular the buildings by the Redditch Railway Station. The Executive Director, Planning and Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services agreed to provide Members with an update on the current position of these buildings.
- The amount (and locality) of land which was not owned by either the Council or WCC but which the Council maintained and the cost of this to the Council.
- The New WCC Geographical Information System (GIS) which the Council would be able to access in order to have up to date information available immediately.

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- Responsibility for pathways (it was confirmed that a further report on this topic would be received at the November meeting).
- How Members could assist by reporting any issues within their own ward.
- The SLA being made available for the Committee to scrutinise (the Environmental Services Manager confirmed this would be available once accepted by WCC).

Although the report was informative, Members agreed that a further report or presentation would be helpful which provided details of land, its locality and size, which was not owned by either Council but which was maintained by this Council, together with details of the cost incurred by the Council. The Environmental Services Manager informed Members that it was likely this information would be more readily available when the new GIS system was in place.

RESOLVED that

- 1) a report detailing the new Service Level Agreement between Redditch Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council regarding the maintenance of all County Council land assets across the Borough be added onto the Committee's work programme to be considered when available; and**
- 2) the report be noted.**

47. TASK GROUP REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

The Committee had received the scoping document containing the draft terms of reference for the Landscaping Review, which was proposed and introduced by Councillor Gay Hopkins.

Councillor Hopkins explained why she had suggested the task group and the work she hoped that it would cover. Discussions had been held with Officers to ensure that the terms of reference took into account the transformation work which continued to be carried out and the work of the Place Team. Councillor Hopkins informed Members that there was a lot of work to get through and she hoped the task group would take the opportunity to see first-hand the good work that was being carried out by members of the Landscaping Team. It was anticipated that the task group would take approximately six months to investigate this topic.

Members discussed the following areas in more detail:

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- The opportunity for Members to see transformation work in progress and be involved in it.
- Conflicting views on the work of the landscaping team and the acceptance of some staff of the changes that they were going through.
- The possible inclusion of pathways within the terms of reference.

There was some concern that it could be difficult for the task group to meet all of the objectives within the set timescale. However, Councillor Hopkins was confident that the work would be completed within the timescale set.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the terms of reference for the proposed Task Group review of Landscaping be approved;**
- 2) Councillor Hopkins be appointed to Chair the Landscaping Task Group; and**
- 3) further nominations to the Landscaping Task Group be confirmed at the following meeting of the Committee.**

48. QUARTERLY RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER

Officers presented the Committee's new quarterly recommendations tracker. It was explained that Members had previously agreed a new approach to monitoring its approved recommendations. This was to be provided in two sections to cover any approved recommendations that had not been implemented but which were still within timescale; and recommendations which were not completed and outside of the original timescale given for completion. The details of all recommendations already acted upon would be published on the Committee's section of the Council's website. This was an opportunity for Members to discuss the new approach to monitoring its approved recommendations.

Members were broadly supportive of the new format, although it was agreed that it would be useful for Members to receive a list of any recommendations that had been implemented since the previous tracker was received.

Regarding the approved recommendations of the Promoting Sporting Participation Task Review, Members heard that the Chair had spoken to Officers in the Leisure and Culture Team in respect

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of the installation of table tennis tables in Morton Stanley Park and Arrow Valley Park. He had been informed that there had been a delay in the delivery of these tables. Members would receive a full update on this issue at their next meeting.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the quarterly recommendation tracker be broken down into three sections as detailed in the preamble above; and**
- 2) the report and quarterly recommendation tracker be noted.**

49. SCRUTINY TASK GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS MONITORING PROCESS

The Committee considered a brief report which outlined its process for receiving specific updates on the implementation of approved task review recommendations. In particular, the Council's Constitution stipulated that the Committee should not monitor approved task group's recommendations sooner than twelve months after the report's consideration by the Executive Committee.

Members felt that twelve months was far too long to receive updates on particular reviews and that the Committee needed to be proactive rather than re-active in the monitoring of its recommendations. It was thought that this would accelerate the process for implementing these recommendations in future.

It was also thought that it would be helpful for each task group to set their own timescales in terms of when it expected its recommendations to be acted upon. It was thought that the Committee's new approach to monitoring its recommendations on a quarterly basis would be more appropriate in helping to make Members better informed.

RECOMMENDED that

the reference that "the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will review implementation of recommendations made in any report not sooner than twelve months after consideration of its report by the Executive Committee" be removed from the Council's Constitution.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

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

Members considered Executive Committee's Work Programme and the Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 2nd September 2013 and noted the reference to the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel holding at least one scheduled meeting during the year to scrutinise the work of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

RESOLVED that

the latest edition of the Executive Committee's Work Programme be noted.

51. WORK PROGRAMME

Members were informed that, at the request of the Chair, Officers had given consideration to changing the date of the Committee's November meeting as this clashed with the Council's Fireworks Event. Members concurred that it would be appropriate to move the meeting date.

RESOLVED that

1) the November meeting of the Committee be moved to Monday 4th November 2013; and

2) the Committee's Work Programme be noted.

52. CONFIRMATION OF TASK GROUP MEMBERSHIP

The Committee was advised that Councillors Roger Hill, Andrew Brazier and Joe Baker had been nominated to sit on the Voluntary and Community Sector Task Group.

RESOLVED that

Councillors Roger Hill, Andrew Brazier and Joe Baker be appointed to the Voluntary and Community Sector Task Group.

53. TASK GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

The following updates on current Task Group reviews were provided:

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a) Joint Worcestershire Regulatory Services – Redditch Member, Councillor Alan Mason

Members were informed that the first meeting of the Joint WRS Task Group would take place on Thursday 26th September 2013 and would be attended by Councillor Alan Mason as the Committee's appointed representative.

b) Abbey Stadium – Councillor Gandy

Councillor Carol Gandy informed Members that the Abbey Stadium Task Group had recently held its first meeting which had been attended by the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services and the Abbey Stadium Operations Manager. The Task Group had discussed visiting other sports facilities run privately and also those operated by other local authorities. The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services had also been asked to provide data on the usage of the Abbey Stadium, including "bottle necks" and times when it was available with an opportunity for further promotion. However, it had been brought to the group's attention that currently a business case for the Abbey Stadium's further redevelopment was being put together and the group were concerned that its work may overlap or be duplicated. Councillor Gandy informed the Committee that she would be meeting with the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services in the coming days to clarify the situation and would report back to the Committee in due course.

RESOLVED that

the reports be noted.

54. HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Members were advised that there had been a meeting of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) on 4th September 2013, the main item on the agenda had been the Joint Service Review. Unfortunately, this item had been removed from the agenda prior to the commencement of the meeting, with no indication as to when the information would be made available. All Members of HOSC had expressed their disappointment and concern at the delays which had occurred.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

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The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.10 pm

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**15th October 2013**ADVISORY PANELS, WORKING GROUPS, ETC - UPDATE REPORT**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor John Fisher, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

To provide, for monitoring / management purposes, an update on the work of the Executive Committee's Advisory Panels, and similar bodies which report via the Executive Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to **RESOLVE** that

subject to Members' comments, the report be noted.

3. UPDATES**A. ADVISORY PANELS**

	<u>Meeting :</u>	<u>Lead Members / Officers :</u> (Executive Members shown <u>underlined</u>)	<u>Position :</u> (Oral updates to be provided at the meeting by Lead Members or Officers, if no written update is available.)
1.	Climate Change Advisory Panel	Chair: <u>Cllr Debbie Taylor</u> / Vice-Chair: Cllr Andy Fry Kevin Dicks	Last meeting – 15 th May 2013
2.	Economic Advisory Panel	Chair: <u>Cllr Greg Chance</u> / Vice-Chair: Cllr John Fisher John Staniland / Georgina Harris	Next meeting – To be arranged for October 2013

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**15th October 2013

3.	Housing Advisory Panel	Chair: <u>Cllr Mark Shurmer</u> / Vice-Chair: Cllr Pat Witherspoon Liz Tompkin	Next meeting – Date to be established
4.	Planning Advisory Panel	Chair: <u>Cllr Greg Chance</u> / Vice-Chair: <u>Cllr Rebecca Blake</u> John Staniland / Ruth Bamford	Next meetings – 15 th October and 12 th November 2013

B. OTHER MEETINGS

5.	Constitutional Review Working Party	Chair: <u>Cllr Bill Hartnett</u> / Vice-Chair: <u>Cllr Greg Chance</u> Sheena Jones	Next meeting – Date to be established.
6.	Member Support Steering Group	Chair: Cllr John Fisher / Vice-Chair: <u>Cllr Phil Mould</u> Sheena Jones	Next meeting – 25 th November 2013.
7.	Grants Panel	Chair: Cllr David Bush / Vice-Chair: <u>Cllr Greg Chance</u> Donna Hancox	Next meeting – 3 rd October 2013.
8.	Procurement Group	Chair: <u>Cllr Bill Hartnett</u> / Vice-Chair: <u>Cllr Greg Chance</u> Jayne Pickering / Teresa Kristunas	In abeyance pending Transformation.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

15th October 2013

9.	Independent Remuneration Panel	Chair: Mr R Key / Sheena Jones	Next meeting – 7 th October 2013
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AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Ivor Westmore
E Mail: ivor.westmore@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel: (01527) 64252 (Extn. 3269)

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**15th October 2013**ACTION MONITORING**

Portfolio Holder(s) / Responsible Officer	Action requested	Status
17 th September 2013		
Cllr Fisher/ J Pickering / S Morgan	<p>Consolidated Revenue And Capital Outturn - Financial Year 2012/13</p> <p>A series of questions on specific points within the Outturn report were raised by Members and Officers undertook to provide answers to these following the meeting.</p>	<p>Answers to these questions were provided to Executive members following the meeting.</p>
Note:	<p><i>No further debate should be held on the above matters or substantive decisions taken, without further report OR unless urgency requirements are met.</i></p>	<p>Report period: 17/9/13 to present</p>

