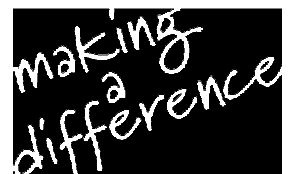




Executive Committee

Tuesday 10th December
2013
7.00 pm

Committee Room 2
Town Hall
Redditch



www.redditchbc.gov.uk

Access to Information - Your Rights

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

Your main rights are set out below:-

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

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

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

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.

Members of the Public

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

Special Arrangements

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

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

Further Information

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

Fire/ Emergency instructions

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

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

Do Not stop to collect personal belongings.

Do Not use lifts.

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

The emergency Assembly Area is on Walter Stranz Square.



Executive

10th December 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 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.
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 - 8) Chief Executive	To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 26 th November 2013. (Minutes attached)
5. Grant Thornton - Review of Financial Resilience (Pages 9 - 48) Head of Customer Access and Financial Support	To consider a Financial Resilience Report for the Council prepared by the Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton. (Report attached) All Wards

<p>6. Quarterly Budget Monitoring - 2nd Quarter 2013/14</p> <p>(Pages 49 - 56)</p> <p>Head of Customer Access and Financial Support</p>	<p>To consider the latest quarterly finance monitoring report for the Council.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>All Wards</p>
<p>7. Council Tax Discounts</p> <p>(Pages 57 - 66)</p> <p>Head of Customer Access and Financial Support</p>	<p>To consider the options for further technical amendments to Council Tax discounts.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>All Wards</p>
<p>8. Options for Threadneedle House</p> <p>(Pages 67 - 74)</p> <p>Head of Customer Access and Financial Support</p>	<p>To consider a proposal to declare Threadneedle House as a surplus asset, for the purpose of potentially marketing the building for sale.</p> <p>Appendix 1 to this report is exempt and has been circulated to Councillors and relevant officers only.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>(Abbey Ward)</p>
<p>9. Matchborough East Community Centre - Extension of Lease</p> <p>(Pages 75 - 78)</p> <p>Head of Customer Access and Financial Support</p>	<p>To consider an extension to the lease of Matchborough East Community Centre to 'Your Ideas'.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>(Matchborough Ward)</p>
<p>10. Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>(Pages 79 - 86)</p> <p>Chief Executive</p>	<p>To receive the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4th November and 3rd December 2013.</p> <p>There no recommendations to consider from the meeting on 4th November 2013.</p> <p>(Minutes attached (4th November 2013) / to follow (3rd December))</p>

Executive

Committee

10th December 2013

<p>11. Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee (Pages 87 - 96)</p>	<p>To receive the minutes of the meetings of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee held on 26th September..</p> <p>(Minutes attached)</p>
<p>12. Shared Services Board (Pages 97 - 100)</p>	<p>To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Shared Services Board held on 17th October 2013.</p> <p>There are no recommendations to consider.</p> <p>(Minutes attached)</p>
<p>13. 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>14. Advisory Panels - update report (Pages 101 - 104) 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>15. Action Monitoring (Pages 105 - 106) Chief Executive</p>	<p>To consider an update on the actions arising from previous meetings of the Committee.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p>
<p>16. 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 (to be specified) 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>
<p>17. Property A - Options for Disposal</p> <p>(Pages 107 - 110)</p> <p>Housing Policy and Performance Manager</p>	<p>To consider options as to the future of the property once the compulsory purchase has been completed.</p> <p>This report is exempt and has been circulated to Councillors and relevant officers only.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>(Headless Cross & Oakenshaw Ward)</p>
<p>18. Confidential Minutes / Referrals (if any)</p>	<p>To consider confidential matters not dealt with earlier in the evening and not separately listed below (if any).</p>



Executive Committee

26th November 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 Debbie Taylor

Also Present:

Councillors David Bush, Pattie Hill, Gay Hopkins, Yvonne Smith and Pat Witherspoon.

Officers:

K Dicks, C Felton, J Godwin, S Hanley, S Jones, J Pickering and P McLaughlin

Democratic Services Officer:

I Westmore

84. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Leader welcomed the many members of the public to the meeting and explained the arrangements and procedure for the meeting. It had been agreed with representatives of Redditch United Football Club that 15 minutes be allocated at the start of that item for the Club to present its petition and to ask questions and make a statement or presentation to members of the Executive Committee.

85. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Mark Shurmer.

86. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

.....
Chair

87. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 12th November 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

88. REDDITCH UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB - GROUND RELOCATION

The Leader of the Council accepted a petition containing over 2,000 signatures from representatives of Redditch United Football Club, Mr Pat Bray, Mr Tim Bray and Mr Jim Mutton, in the following terms:

“We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge Councillors to act now on the relocation of Redditch United Football Club.”

There followed a number of questions posed by representatives of the Football Club to Officers and the Committee and statements, as detailed below:

(Question from Mr Lee Daykin, Coach, Under 8s)

Mr Godwin, you have disclosed a letter from Ms Hanley to the Club on Council Letterhead and signed in her capacity as Deputy Chief Executive – it says that Members and Officers have considered the proposal for relocation, discussed it at great length and given ten main reasons why the Council will not be going ahead.

What Members have been involved in this decision?

Isn't tonight's meeting a sham as the proposals and decision not to proceed has already been taken by the Council?

Will the overwhelming support from this petition make the Council properly engage with the club with all its elected Members to provide a solution to the problems the club faces with its facilities not being fit for purpose for the community?

(Question from Mr Tim Le Roux, Coach, Girls)

I see Mr Godwin you major on club finances, I would like to suggest you have missed the main point. You have limited hiring options for a junior pitch anywhere in Redditch on a Sunday morning due to the adult football leagues. Surely this move is about providing adequate facilities for juniors of all abilities and gender who want to play football and be proud to wear the Redditch United shirt?

(Question from Mr Martin Bassett, Manager, Under 9s)

Mr Godwin, you talk about the District Valuation being seriously at odds with what a developer is prepared to pay for the Valley Stadium site. Basic common sense says that a price someone is prepared to pay is defined at a price which is set between a willing buyer and a willing seller.

Who are the three developers and have you met them to hear them explain their valuation?

(Question from Mr Mick Pearce, Coach, Under 14s Girls & Under 6s Boys)

Ms Hanley, in 3.14 of Mr Godwin's report you talk about expending considerable sums in a facility that would be of limited functionality.

What other sporting facilities would you like to see at the new stadium?

In the same paragraph you talk about the Council managing a facility that is underused, costly to maintain and potentially difficult to dispose of.

I would like to put to you there will be no risk as there will be at least 1,000 local youngsters using the facility and I ask you the question why would you consider disposing of a club with over one hundred years of history?

(Question from Miss Ella Rowberry, Junior Player)

I love playing for Redditch United. Why won't you help and support the club?

I want to join the big team when I am older.

(Statement from Miss Charlotte Smith, Junior Player)

With the growing interest in women's football we feel the changing facilities need to be updated if we are to attract more young ladies into sport.

We hope to keep children healthy, active and taking part in outdoor activities, but feel the lack of female changing facilities could prevent this from happening.

(Statement from Mr Darren Veness, Manager, Disabled Team, Coach, Under 13's, School Liaison Officer, Holiday Camp Co-ordinator)

After partnering with Redditch United to provide local children and adults with a disability the opportunity to play football, we have formed a seven-a-side football development programme that now has 28 affiliated adult players and over 100 participants attending coaching sessions each week within schools and the community. We play in the Birmingham Ability Counts League and are currently the Premiership and FA Cup Champions.

However, the players, due to the nature of their disabilities, need to have a facility that provides a safe and friendly environment where they do not constantly have to find another venue due to cost or safety. I strongly believe that the disabled people of Redditch deserve a venue where they can play, watch and socialise through football, which Chris Swan's vision will provide us – Let's get behind it!

The Chair undertook to answer these questions during the course of the meeting, where possible. Members of the Committee took the opportunity to ask several questions of clarification of representatives of the Club. The Committee was informed that the present clubhouse was not compliant with current disabilities legislation resulting in the Disabled Team training at Trinity High School and playing at a variety of locations. In response to a question as to why the Club had not made a presentation to the Committee it was noted that as much information had been made public as possible in view of the fact that the Club did not feel able to place their detailed business proposals in the public domain at the present time.

Mr Chris Swan, in response to a request from a Member, made a short submission to the Committee, highlighting that he had worked tirelessly to come up with a real solution to the problems faced by the Club. He wanted to create a sustainable club which served the needs of its junior members in particular. Mr Swan believed his proposal would provide the scope to serve 72 teams and concluded by contending that he was not after charity but wished to see an example of localism in action from the Council.

Following the comments and questions from the Club, an amended set of recommendations was circulated by the Leader.

Officers provided additional information on the course of events and the nature of the papers which were before Members at the meeting. Members were informed that a number of discussions had been held with the Football Club, culminating in a meeting of key

Members of the Controlling Group at which the Club's Business Case had been presented. It was noted that initial proposals for relocation had first been forthcoming from the Club in 2012 and subsequent meetings had sought to work up the proposals into a form that might be suitable for consideration by Members. Following consideration of the scheme, a response had been sent to the Club from Officers stating that the Members concerned could not support the proposal as it stood. The key issues identified by the Council were around the valuation of the Valley Stadium site, the legal and planning implications and the potential risk to the Council.

It was made clear that Officers would have liked to have been able to provide the full business case to Members for consideration at the present meeting but the Club had not consented to this. The Council's over-riding duties and responsibilities were highlighted and it was stressed that Members should operate within those guidelines. In response to some of the specific questions which had been asked earlier in the meeting by representatives of the Club, it was stated that the position set out in the written response from the Council was not a formal decision. As for the meeting being a sham, it was noted that the meeting had come about in order that the Council might formally consider and respond to the Club's business case. In respect of the weight of public support, the Council saw the benefits of relocation but also saw the risks and it was considered these outweighed the benefits at present.

It was contended by a Member that proceedings might not look open as much of the information available to Members was exempt and it seemed that a decision had already been reached. Given that Mr Swan had previously been invited to address the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to discuss the proposals it was suggested that the present meeting was a waste of Council resources. Councillor Brunner requested information on the cost of the present meeting. A motion to defer any decision on these proposals pending consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was lost.

The majority of Members did not consider it appropriate to delay a decision on the future of the Club any further. The Council wished to see the Football Club thrive and there was a role foreseen for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in exploring alternatives to the current proposals. The overall context for the Council with very significant cuts in grant funding from central Government was touched upon. The meeting was also reminded that Councillors needed to represent the views and interests of everyone across the Borough.

Certain specific points were raised. The restrictive covenants on the land within the Arrow Valley Park were considered in the light of various other developments taking place over the years, such as

the Countryside Centre and the Fitness Gym. Officers were not able to provide a definitive legal opinion on each development but restated the broader position that development ancillary to the public space use of the Park was permissible. The valuation of the Valley Stadium site was clearly a key point and Officers provided additional clarification on the conflicting figures presented by the Club and Council. The Club had initially furnished the Council with details of an offer for the land which had not accounted for affordable housing, Section 106 planning obligations and Highways issues which could limit the extent of house-building without significant improvements to access to the site. Officers considered the District Valuer's valuation as a more realistic assessment of the value of the land. It was also noted that Property Services Officers had not been made aware of the other two offers which the Club reported they had received. The scope for working around existing facilities was briefly discussed. Officers pointed out that the Arrow Valley Stadium was a land-locked site other than for areas of open space which were either in private hands or which had further restrictive covenants upon them.

The point was made that the recommendation before the Committee was for continuation of an on-going process to support the Club but that further work was needed to ensure that the right solution was reached.

The Leader thanked the speakers and petitioners for their questions and statements and confirmed with them that the questions they had asked had been answered insofar as Members and Officers had been able during the course of the meeting. The Leader also thanked the members of the public for attending the meeting and for listening so attentively to the debate.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Council's assets should not be deployed to support the implementation of the business plan of the Redditch United Football Club;**

and that

- 2) for the Executive Committee to properly assess the community needs in relation to footballing provision within the Borough and the extent to which the Council can continue to work with the Club and other providers to deliver this, that the Executive Committee requests that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee engage in an exercise with Officers that will seek to establish the demand for future provision within the Borough and that the Portfolio Holder and Officers hold a public**

**Executive
Committee**

26th November 2013

consultation event to engage with residents and clubs to help to inform this exercise;

and RECOMMENDED that

- 3) in the meantime, in order to ensure the continued community benefits currently being afforded to the Borough, that the Executive Committee acknowledges the justification for there to be no increase of rent applied in the current rent review of the Valley Stadium site and the rent of £2,000 per annum be maintained until the expiry of the Lease in 2017.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.09 pm
and closed at 9.08 pm

.....
Chair

EXECUTIVE

10th December 2013

GRANT THORNTON – REVIEW OF FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor John Fisher
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Jayne Pickering – Executive Director, Finance and Resources
Wards Affected	All

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The attached report is from the Councils External Auditors, Grant Thornton and presents their review of the financial resilience of the Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to consider the review of Financial Resilience and note the actions to be undertaken by the Council.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1. The work undertaken by Grant Thornton in their Value for Money (VfM) conclusion includes a review to determine if the Council has proper arrangements in place for securing financial resilience. The review is attached at Appendix 1 and considers the following aspects of financial resilience with a judgement made in relation to each element:

Area	Judgement
Key indicators of financial performance	Arrangements meet or exceed adequate standards
Approach to strategic financial planning	Arrangements meet or exceed adequate standards
Approach to financial governance	Potential risks and/or weaknesses.
Approach to financial control.	Arrangements meet or exceed adequate standards

- 3.2 The approach is to review each element of the financial framework and to assess the improvements that could be made to improve financial resilience. The main concerns highlighted within the report are the level of cuts being made to the Councils funding and the relatively low level of balances that are currently in place. The External Auditors do however appreciate that the Council has made considerable changes in recent years, with the aim to focus on delivering Council priorities whilst seeking to minimise underlying costs.

EXECUTIVE10th December 2013

3.3 The key issues identified in relation to the elements reviewed are:

Area	Issue
Key indicators of financial performance Amber Status	When considering Redditch's financial indicators they show a position relatively weaker than other authorities in the nearest neighbour group. However not all of the Council's in the group have housing and the associated debt and therefore this has had some impact on the position of Redditch compared with its neighbours.
Approach to strategic financial planning Amber Status	The Council has recently reviewed its Strategic Priorities and Grant Thornton would expect that there will be clearer links between that plan and the budgets to be set for 2014/15. The MTFP indicates a considerable gap for the 2014/15 financial year. Work on identifying achievable tangible savings should start as a matter of priority. General fund balances are insufficient should savings not be achieved.
Approach to financial governance Amber Status	Formal reporting to members should be more transparent and timely in view of the financial challenges ahead. In year financial reports do provide explanations of variance to expected, but provides limited description of action planning.
Approach to financial control. Green Status	Improvements can be made to both savings planning and budget and in-year reporting as outlined above. Financial controls within the council are relatively strong and there is a good finance department and effective internal audit arrangements.

3.4 Officers are working to identify the savings required to meet the current shortfall projected for 2014/15. In addition training is to be developed to ensure that Members are aware of the financial detail and the impact of variances in the financial reports. The financial reports to Members are to be refined to ensure that a greater level of information and action planning is included to mitigate financial pressures in the future.

3.5 The actions agreed to be undertaken by the management team as specified with the External Auditors include:

Area	Action
Key indicators of financial performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members should consider whether the current minimum level of general fund balances is adequate and whether this balance and earmarked reserves should be reviewed

EXECUTIVE10th December 2013

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council should have a clear plan for the appropriate level of HRA earmarked balances
Approach to strategic financial planning	<p>The Council should ensure that there is clear mapping between the new corporate priorities and the 2014/15 budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The level of savings to be made are considerable and work on identifying these should start imminently • The HRA business plan should be reviewed and early work undertaken on componentisation as this may have a large impact when depreciation rather than MRA is reflected in the revenue account
Approach to financial governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be better transparency in financial reports to provide the trail from budget to outturn analysis. • The Council should consider the appointment of a lay member to the Audit Committee to help broaden the experience of the Committee • Ensure that the Internal Audit plan is flexible to consider any new risks and the plan is completed to support production of the Annual Governance Statement
Approach to financial control.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council should clarify which savings schemes are incorporated into Budget cost reduction plans, develop detailed action plans for each scheme and strengthen the monitoring of savings delivery in-year.

Financial Implications

- 3.5 The Council has significant financial pressures to face in the future. By ensuring a sound and robust financial framework is in place these pressures can be managed and addressed in a considered and planned manner.

Legal Implications

- 3.6 The robust financial management of the organisation enables the Council to meet its legal responsibilities in relation to statutory compliance with accounting policies and procedures.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.7 The financial framework ensures that managers can deliver services with appropriate financial budgets and regular and accurate financial monitoring prevents any unknown variances to budget.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.8. No direct implications.

EXECUTIVE

10th December 2013

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

The financial framework and associated risks are included in the corporate risk register and are managed by the Executive Director of Finance and Resources on a regular basis.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Grant Thornton Review of Financial Resilience

AUTHORS OF REPORT

Name: Jayne Pickering Executive Director Finance & Resources
E Mail: j.pickering@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel: (01527) 881400



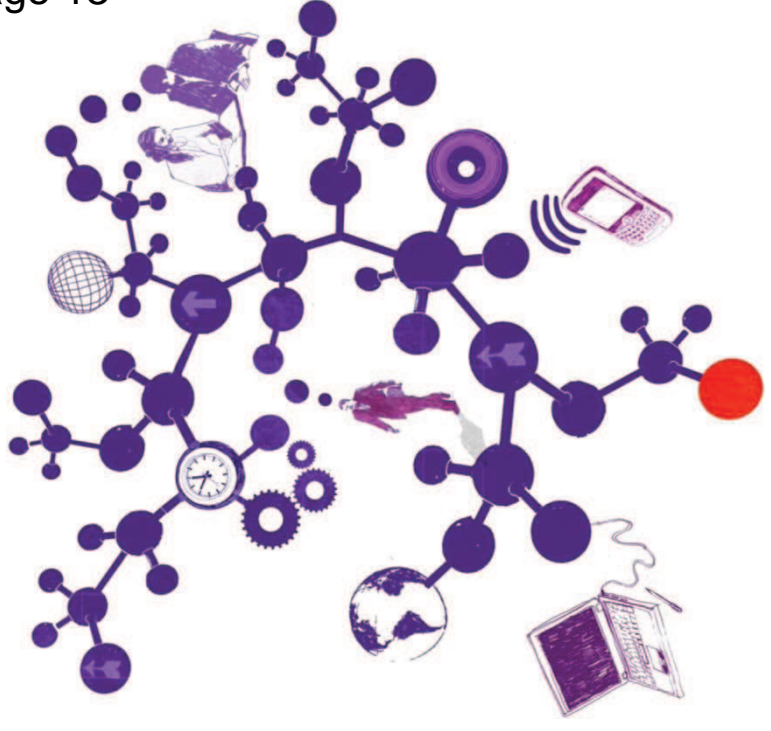
Review of the Council's Arrangements for Securing Financial Resilience for Redditch Borough Council

Year ended 31 March 2013

25 October 2013

Phil Jones
Engagement Lead
T 0121 232 5232
E phil.w.jones@uk.gt.com

Zoe Thomas
Manager
T 0121 232 5277
E zoe.thomas@uk.gt.com



The contents of this report relate only to the matters which have come to our attention, which we believe need to be reported to you as part of our audit process. It is not a comprehensive record of all the relevant matters, which may be subject to change, and in particular we cannot be held responsible to you for reporting all of the risks which may affect the Council or any weaknesses in your internal controls. This report has been prepared solely for your benefit and should not be quoted in whole or in part without our prior written consent. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

Contents

1 Executive Summary	Page 4
2 Key Indicators	Page 9
3 Strategic Financial Planning	Page 12
4 Financial Governance	Page 16
5 Financial Control	Page 21
Appendix - Key indicators of financial performance	Page 26

1 Executive Summary

2 Key Indicators

3 Strategic Financial Planning

4 Financial Governance

5 Financial Control

Appendix - Key indicators of financial performance

Executive Summary

Further detail on each of these areas is provided in the sections of the report that follow.

Through the Council's shared services agenda, the Council has removed a number of posts from the management structure with the aim to both improve efficiency and to reduce recurring costs. Through the Transformation agenda, the Council has sought to refocus its priorities and improve the way the council provides services.

In addition to these reviews, the Council has set out-turn savings targets and used vacancy management, one-off receipts and other methods to balance the budgets and manage the out-turn, with some use of earmarked and general fund balances. However the level of balances is comparatively low at £1m particularly in view of the current savings 'gaps' reflected in the medium-term financial plan. The minimum advised level of £750k would be very low. Based on the Audit Commission assessment criteria, the Council is financially resilient in the near future, however the scale of the financial challenge faced by the council over the next two years is considerable.

We have used a red/amber/green (RAG) rating with the following definitions.



Our approach

Value for Money Conclusion

Our work supporting our Value for Money (VfM) conclusion, as part of the statutory external audit, includes a review to determine if the Council has proper arrangements in place for securing financial resilience.

In so doing we have considered whether the Council has robust financial systems and processes in place to manage its financial risks and opportunities, and to secure a stable financial position that enables it to continue to operate for the foreseeable future. We have carried out our work in discussion and agreement with officers and completed it in such a way as to minimise disruption to them.

The definition of foreseeable future for the purposes of this financial resilience review is 12 months from the date of this report.

We have reviewed the financial resilience of the Council by looking at:

- Key indicators of financial performance;
- Its approach to strategic financial planning;
- Its approach to financial governance; and
- Its approach to financial control.

Executive Summary

National and Local Context

National Context

The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the current Spending Review (SR10) to Parliament on 20 October 2010. SR10 represented the largest reductions in public spending since the 1920s. Revenue funding to local government was to reduce by 19% by 2014-15 (excluding schools, fire and police). After allowing for inflation, this equates to a 28% reduction in real terms with local government facing some of the largest cuts in the public sector. In addition, local government funding reductions were frontloaded, with 8% cash reductions in 2011-12. This followed a period of sustained growth in local government spending, which increased by 45% during the period 1997 to 2007.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his Autumn Statement in November 2011, announced further public spending reductions of 0.9% in real terms in both 2015-16 and 2016-17. In his Autumn Statement on 5 December 2012, the Chancellor reinforced austerity measures announcing a further £6.6bn of savings during 2013-14 and 2014-15. Whilst health and schools will be continue to be protected in line with the Government's policy set out in SR10, local government will continue to face significant funding reductions. The Department for Communities and Local Government will contribute £470m of these additional savings, £445m of which will come from local authority funding during 2014-15, with local authorities being exempt from additional savings in 2013-14. In his March 2013 Budget the Chancellor announced further departmental 1% savings during each of 2013-14 and 2014-15. The NHS and schools remain protected, but police and local government will need to find an additional 0.5% over both years.

The next spending round period, 2015-16, was announced by the Chancellor on 26 June 2013. Local government will face a further 10% funding reduction for this period.

These funding reductions come at a time when demographic and recession based factors are increasing demand for some services, and there is a decreasing demand for some services, such as car parking, where customers pay a fee or charge.

Financial austerity is expected to continue until at least 2017.

Local Context





In Redditch between 2009 and 2015 the impact of the reduction in government grant reflects a 41% cut in funding cumulatively. Localising of business rates also transfers risk from central government to local government, leaving the council exposed to further risk should local businesses fold or rates re-valued. Pooling with the Greater Birmingham and Solihull pool seeks to mitigate this risk.

In addition cuts in central government grants, there has been a fall in income from fees and charges and other costs such as utility bills have increased. The Council has also had a freeze in council tax over the last two years.

This pressure on income clearly means that the Council has needed to make some fundamental changes to the way that it operates to reduce costs. The medium term financial plan highlights a need to make a further £1.8m of savings by 2014/15, which is equivalent to 20% of the base costs of services. The Council will have to make some further difficult decisions if underlying costs are to be reduced sufficiently and the financial position and delivery of these savings managed.

Executive Summary

Overview of Arrangements

Risk area	Summary observations	High level risk assessment
Key Indicators of Performance	Redditch's financial indicators show a position relatively weaker than other authorities in the nearest neighbour group. Not all of the Council's in the group have housing and the associated debt and therefore this has had some impact on the position of Redditch compared with its neighbours.	 Green
Strategic Financial Planning	The Council has recently reviewed its Strategic Priorities and we would expect that there will be clearer links between that plan and the budgets to be set for 2014/15. The MTFP indicates a considerable gap for the 2014/15 financial year. Work on identifying achievable tangible savings should start as a matter of priority. General fund balances are insufficient should savings not be achieved.	 Amber
Financial Governance	Formal reporting to members should be more transparent and timely in view of the financial challenges ahead. In year financial reports do provide explanations of variance to expected, but provides limited description of action planning.	 Amber
Financial Control	Improvements can be made to both savings planning and budget and in-year reporting as outlined above. Financial controls within the council are relatively strong and there is a good finance department and effective internal audit arrangements.	 Green

Executive Summary

Next Steps

Area of review	Key points for consideration	Responsibility	Timescale	Management response
Key Indicators of Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members should consider whether the current minimum level of general fund balances is adequate and whether this balance and earmarked reserves should be reviewed Rent arrears have been managed effectively in the last 2 years but are likely to be more difficult to manage with the impact of welfare reforms The Council should have a clear plan for the appropriate level of HRA earmarked balances 			
Strategic Financial Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council should ensure that there is clear mapping between the new corporate priorities and the 2014/15 budget The level of savings to be made are considerable and work on identifying these should start imminently The HRA business plan should be reviewed and early work undertaken on componentisation as this may have a large impact when depreciation rather than MRA is reflected in the revenue account 			
Financial Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There should be better transparency in financial reports to provide the trail from budget to outturn analysis. The Council should consider the appointment of a lay member to the Audit Committee to help broaden the experience of the Committee Ensure that the IA plan is flexible to consider any new risks and the plan is completed to support production of the AGS 			
Financial Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council should clarify which savings schemes are incorporated into Budget cost reduction plans, develop detailed action plans for each scheme and strengthen the monitoring of savings delivery in-year. 			

1 Executive Summary

2 Key Indicators

3 Strategic Financial Planning

4 Financial Governance

5 Financial Control

Appendix - Key indicators of financial performance

Key Indicators

Introduction

This section of the report includes analysis of key indicators of financial performance, benchmarked where this data is available. These indicators include:

- Working capital ratio
- Long term borrowing to tax revenue
- Long term borrowing to long term assets
- Sickness absence levels
- Out-turn against budget
- Useable Reserves: Gross Revenue Expenditure

We have used the Audit Commission's nearest neighbours benchmarking group comprising the following authorities:

Rossendale Borough Council
Tamworth Borough Council
Carlisle City Council
Worcester City Council
Cannock Chase District Council
Gravesham Borough Council
Chesterfield Borough Council
Burnley Borough Council
Stevenage Borough Council
Bassetlaw District Council
Gloucester City Council
Kettering Borough Council
Redditch Borough Council

Key Indicators

Overview of performance

Area of focus	Summary observations	Assessment
---------------	----------------------	------------

Liquidity

The working capital ratio provides an indication of whether the Council has enough current assets to cover its immediate liabilities. For the nearest neighbours group this ranged from 0.59 to 12.8. Redditch has the lowest working capital ratio in the family group.

The position on housing rent arrears is relatively positive. During the year 2012/13 gross rent arrears as a proportion of gross rent income has decreased from 5.0% to 4.4%, with gross arrears remaining fairly consistent over the 2 years. There will be increasing pressure on the council to manage its rent arrears as welfare reforms are likely to add increasing pressure on rent. As at the balance sheet date, the overall level of debts has fallen year on year. Around 60% of the Council's non housing related income comes from central government grants, of which over 80% is from housing benefits grants. The proportion of income raised from council tax and local fees and charges has risen slightly year on year.



Amber

Borrowing

There are 2 borrowing indicators:

- Long term debt to revenue ratio
- Long term debt to assets ratio

Redditch is relatively high for both these indicators which in part reflects the fact that not all the councils in the family group have a housing stock and the related borrowing. The trend graph shows that Redditch's indebtedness was not out of line with the others prior to the self-financing borrowing requirement.

The Council considers its prudential borrowing and indicators annually in line with the code.



Green



Workforce

Council sickness levels are not out of line with the industry norm and have fluctuated over the last 3 years. Performance varies by department. This is an indicator monitored by the Council.



Green

Overview of performance

Area of focus	Summary observations	Assessment
<p>Performance Against Budgets: revenue & capital</p>	<p>Revenue: The Council had a small overspend from budget overall, reducing general fund balances by £73k. The Council received income of over £400k from the curtailment of the lease arrangement with Barclays bank which supported that outturn. There was also an overspend in 2011/12.</p> <p>The HRA underspent by £1m this year because interest rates were lower than expected on the housing debt. There was some considerable slippage in the capital programme reflecting caution around the impact of the move to self financing</p>	<p> Amber</p>
<p>Reserve Balances</p>	<p>The Council has lower than the norm usable reserves to GRE ratio. There are no indicators on HRA balances but these are relatively healthy at £9m, £3m being added this financial year. The level of earmarked HRA balances should be considered in the light of the capital programme and any review of the HRA business case model.</p>	<p> Amber</p>

1 Executive Summary

2 Key Indicators

3 Strategic Financial Planning

4 Financial Governance

5 Financial Control

Appendix - Key indicators of financial performance

Strategic Financial Planning


Key characteristics of good strategic financial planning

In conducting our review of strategic financial planning we have assessed the Council's performance against the following indicators:

- Focus on achievement of corporate priorities is evident through the financial planning process. The MTFP focuses resources on priorities.
- The MTFP includes outcome measures, scenario planning, benchmarking, resource planning and details on partnership working. Targets have been set for future periods in respect of reserve balances, prudential indicators etc.
- Annual financial plans follow the longer term financial strategy.
- There is regular review of the MTFP and the assumptions made within it. The Council responds to changing circumstances and manages its financial risks.
- The Council has performed stress testing on its model using a range of economic assumptions including CSR.
- The MTFP is linked to and is consistent with other key strategies, including workforce.
- KPIs can be derived for future periods from the information included within the MTFP.

Strategic Financial Planning

Medium Term Financial Strategy

Area of focus	Summary observations	Assessment
<p>Focus of the MTFP</p> <p>The approach to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is similar at Bromsgrove and Redditch. Within the MTFP the Council has made assumptions about funding levels, both in relation to the main central government grants but also to other grants such as the council tax freeze grant. Assumptions are made as expected around inflation costs, utility bills and staff pay. Detail behind the budget includes assessment of unavoidable costs (including estimates for reduction in income) and areas where there are planned reductions in costs.</p> <p>The budget is 'balanced' as it is assumed that the target level of savings will be delivered in-year, although detailed savings plans for all areas were not identified at the start of the year. General fund balances are also relied upon to a limited extent to manage the out-turn.</p> <p>The high level assumptions are outlined in the budget setting report and the detailed assumptions are contained in the supporting MTFP spread sheet. The assumptions made in the 2013/14 plan, that impact on the 2014/15 and beyond are rolled forward to identify the funding gaps in future years. The MTFP is reviewed and updated annually as part of the budget setting process.</p>	<p> amber</p>	
<p>Adequacy of planning assumptions</p> <p>The planning assumptions are reasonable overall. National indicators supplemented by local knowledge and historic inform the major forecasting assumptions. benchmarking is not widely used as this has not been found to be helpful in the past. The Council has not recently published corporate strategic documents such as asset management, or workforce plans, although assumptions about its property and staff turnover are built into the annual budget. The Council has intended to review its strategic purposes for some time. A new corporate plan was issued in July 2013 but this is clearly not yet keyed into the budget setting process so there is a disconnection between budget and published Council plan.</p> <p>In 2012 the HRA became self-financing, which meant the Council took on £98m of new debt. There is an HRA business plan produced by consultants that profiles the HRA for the next 30 years. This will need to be kept under review as already factors such as the change in interest rates has impacted. Componentisation of the housing stock and the related changes to depreciation (rather than use of the MRA as a proxy) could have a significant impact and need to be planned for.</p> <p>As referred to earlier, the Council has yet to fully identify all the savings required in the MTFP, that is £1.8m to be found by 2014/15 and further savings in the years beyond. The Council has around £3m of earmarked reserves and £1m of general fund, with a minimum set at £750k. The Council will need to take some difficult decisions in order to cut costs and increase revenue in order to achieve savings of this level. Earmarked balances should be robustly reviewed and further consideration given to the minimum level of balances, in view of the financial risk the Council is facing.</p>	<p> red</p>	

Medium Term Financial Strategy

Scope of the MTFP and links to annual planning

Reference to this is also made above. The Council has new strategic purposes which have been informed by the experience gained from the transformation reviews. Existing current strategic purposes are of limited value in terms of clearly defining budget priorities. From a review of budget setting papers however it is clear that a process has been adopted to allocate additional resources and determine cuts in relation to the outcome of service reviews. Work on the performance framework to support the new purposes is also on-going. It is reasonable to expect that the 2014/15 budget round should have a clearer mapping between priorities and budget decisions.



Amber

Review processes

The medium term financial plan is reviewed annually as part of the budget setting process. It is reported to Members routinely throughout the year highlighting changes in budget assumptions and the forward impact of these.



Amber

Responsiveness of the Plan

The Council managed its outturn in 2012-13 with a small overspend. The original budget contains savings, some of which are allocated at the beginning of the year while other are included in corporate pot, some of which are allocated to services as savings are identified during the year, thus impacting on the 'revised budget' along with other revisions.

The plan is therefore responsive to new information as described. However the reporting of the performance is quite delayed – e.g. September reporting for Q1 and thus the information is relatively out of date when considered by members and is difficult to track due to the updating as described and the supporting narrative.



Amber

1 Executive Summary

2 Key Indicators

3 Strategic Financial Planning

4 Financial Governance

5 Financial Control

Appendix - Key indicators of financial performance

Financial Governance

Key characteristics of effective financial governance

In conducting our review of financial governance we have assessed the Council's performance against the following indicators:

Understanding

- There is a clear understanding of the financial environment the Council is operating within:
 - Regular reporting to Members. Reports include detail of action planning and variance analysis etc.
 - Actions have been taken to address key risk areas.
 - Officers and managers understand the financial implications of current and alternative policies, programmes and activities.

Engagement

- There is engagement with stakeholders including budget consultations.

Monitoring and review

- There are comprehensive policies and procedures in place for Members, Officers and budget holders which clearly outline responsibilities.
- Number of internal and external recommendations overdue for implementation.
- Committees and Cabinet regularly review performance and it is subject to appropriate levels of scrutiny.
- There are effective recovery plans in place (if required).

Financial Governance

Understanding and engagement

Area of focus

Understanding the Financial Environment

Summary observations

Assessment

Executive members are likely to be aware of the relevant financial matters both through budget reporting but also from their portfolio responsibilities. The Council is relatively small and key Members are engaged. Thus Executive members are likely to be aware of the key matters in the current and future years that will impact on council finances.

As referred to earlier in this report, reporting to Members is undertaken quarterly and is relatively delayed, although we understand informal reporting takes place to support this formal process. There is a risk that the wider Membership may not be fully aware of the financial risks if formal reporting to Members is not timely, accurate and clear about financial risks and action planning to mitigate those risks. The 2012/13 budget setting report refers to the need to make savings, however the budget report only details some of the savings to be identified. The 2013/14 budget setting report is clearer with more detail on the value of savings needed.

Formal financial reports should be timely and provide sufficient detail to enable Members to have a full understanding of the financial risks for there to be proper governance arrangements. There should be a clear trail in reports from budget setting, in year reporting through to outturn.

Some reporting is through the shared services board (joint with Redditch) but the matters from these meetings are reported back and the papers are available to all members and so this is relatively transparent. However there should be clarity around the governance arrangements where this is undertaken under delegated arrangements by another organisation. It is important that members of the Audit Committee understand where they are obtaining their assurance from when operational arrangements are more complicated.

The Chair and Vice Chair of the Audit Committee are keen for the committee to be effective. There has been some consideration of the appointment of a lay member and we have seen in other Councils that this can bring some considerable benefits in terms of expertise and experience and helps to improve the effectiveness of the committee. This possibility is currently being explored at Redditch.

Internal audit has experienced some slippage in the programme. Ideally the internal audit programme should be complete by the time the CIA issues his annual opinion, in order to inform the Annual Governance statement. There are not currently any major legal challenges to the Council. It has yet to implement job evaluation. Experience in other councils is that this could result in single status claims (Birmingham City Council's costs are well publicised). It is not possible to predict yet what the impact will be on the Council. The Council has some earmarked reserves to provide resilience around this.



Amber

Understanding and engagement

Area of Focus

Summary observations

Assessment

Executive and Member Engagement

Directors, including the S151, along with members of the Executive appear to all be important players in the Council's decision making arrangements. Officers appear to be relatively well informed both through non financial reporting and through up to date on-line financial information. Key members are appropriately supported by officers.

Both key members and the Chief Executive have appropriate status to provide effective challenge and to provide leadership. All are involved in discussions around the budget setting and around corporate priorities – and the wider membership clearly has a role in approving the overall budget. Minutes demonstrate that there is challenge by members in the budget setting process



Green

Budget holders are involved in the budget setting process and are responsible for delivering these along with delivering outturn savings.

The Audit Committee is an independent governance functions. There is limited information to enable us to for a view how much influence the Committee has with the Executive over governance matters and this is could be made more difficult due to the political split.

Overview for controls over key cost categories

The Council reports progress against budget quarterly. This is currently reported in service area and the costs of support services are omitted in order to assist interpretation. An overview is provided and then individual service areas are reported. Narrative is included highlighting where there are variances.



As much of the budget is delegated, accountants who prepare these reports provide forecast outturn estimates based on discussions with budget holders. Effective control over key cost categories should include the following:

- Budgets– review of base budgets to ensure outturn position is reflected in current year budget
- Effective savings monitoring and review– some savings are built into base budgets, some are incorporated as the year progresses (as they are identified) some are managed corporately and some arise by the expectation that budget holders will produce outturn savings. A lack of formal review of what savings were achieved against those planned can lead to poor assumptions as to which are recurring savings (assumptions have been built into the next year budget around these) or one-offs
- Good communication and challenge between budget holders.
- Reliable reported information or assessment of risks to enable effective challenge by members
- Effective management of budget holders expectations that any underspends will automatically be taken from the following year budget.



amber

Understanding and engagement

Area of Focus	Summary observations	Assessment
<p>Budget reporting: revenue and capital</p>	<p>The actual reports process is described above and is an adequate process - although could be more timely, sophisticated and transparent. For example Q1 reporting is undertaken in September, half way through the year, and does not provide a profiled forecast outturn position. September reporting includes some narrative on savings however it does not include an overall risk assessment of individual schemes, action planning or details of any substitution schemes. This type of reporting is good practice.</p> <p>With the change in corporate priorities in 2013/14, it is likely that the Council will want to review how it manages its finances, both in terms of allocating resources in priority areas but also monitoring and managing its spending. Changes arising from Transformation mean that services are increasingly operating and being managed horizontally rather than in the traditional manner. This too further complicates budgeting and monitoring and financial responsibility.</p>	<p> Amber</p>
<p>Adequacy of other Committee/Cabinet Reporting</p>	<p>See Comments above – there is scope to improve the adequacy of reporting – both in terms of the accuracy but also the timeliness, detail and sophistication around forecasting and analysis of risks. Action plans do not routinely accompany budget reports</p>	<p> Amber</p>

A vertical table of contents with five items, each represented by a light purple bar with a pointed top. The fifth item, '5 Financial Control', is highlighted with a dark purple bar. Below these items is an 'Appendix - Key indicators of financial performance' represented by a light purple bar with a pointed top.

- 1 Executive Summary
- 2 Key Indicators
- 3 Strategic Financial Planning
- 4 Financial Governance
- 5 Financial Control**

Appendix - Key indicators of financial performance

Financial Control

Key characteristics of effective financial control

In conducting our review of financial control we have assessed the Council's performance against the following indicators:

Budget setting and budget monitoring

- Budgets are robust and prepared in a timely fashion.
- Budgets are monitored at an officer, member and Cabinet level and officers are held accountable for budgetary performance.
- Financial forecasting is well-developed and forecasts are subject to regular review.

Savings Plans

- Processes for identifying, delivering and monitoring savings plan schemes are robust, well thought through and effective.

Financial Systems

- Key financial systems have received satisfactory reports from internal and external audit.
- Financial systems are adequate for future needs.

Finance Department




- The capacity and capability of the Finance Department is fit for purpose.

Internal Control

- There is an effective internal audit which has the proper profile within the organisation. Agreed Internal Audit recommendations are routinely implemented in a timely manner.
- There is an assurance framework in place which is used effectively by the Council and business risks are managed and controlled.

Financial Control

Internal arrangements

Area of focus	Summary observations	Assessment
Budget setting and monitoring - revenue and capital	<p>At Q1 the budget was stated as £20m, at Q2 it was £22.5m with a forecast outturn of £22.6 and at Q3 the budget was £22.2m and a forecast outturn of £21.6. There has been no reporting of the outturn on the same basis and thus it is difficult to assess outturn relative to what has been reported in the year, although the council planned to use £658 of balances and used £498 of balances.</p> <p>There was considerable slippage in the capital programme, in particular around the HRA but elsewhere also, this may have had revenue consequences.</p> <p>The Council has not been able to provide a robust analysis of savings achieved in the year or detail of savings achieved from shared services, transformation or other savings and much of the reporting in the public arena is around estimated savings or is incomplete; that is, it does not reflect redundancy costs or use of reserves. Part of the reason for the favourable outturn this year was because of a on-off receipt for the Barclays lease on Threadneedle house.</p> <p>It is important that there is a clear understanding of the outturn to both inform the next year budget setting process and to get a clear understanding of the effectiveness of policy decisions.</p> <p>Financial reports to Members are in our view reporting documents rather than documents that are used to manage the financial position. This is effectively done at a budget holder level and with the Executive through more informal reports.</p> <p>However while formal reporting to TCWG is not transparent, the Council has managed its out-turn this year with a relatively low underspend.</p>	 Amber
Performance against Savings Plans	<p>As described earlier the Council goes through a process to identify savings and there is some evidence that priorities and outcome of service reviews are reflected in these decisions. There is some reliance on vacancy management, general efficiency savings and one off sources of income.</p> <p>As outlined above there is no analysis of performance against savings plans although there is some narrative included in the 2013/14 Q1 reporting and an acknowledgement of a need to do this is stated in the 2012/13 AGR.</p> <p>This is not really regarded as important information for members as savings are embedded into budgets as they are identified and are thus managed through the bottom line of departments budgets.</p>	 Amber
Key Financial Accounting Systems	<p>Internal Audit programme covers all the key financial systems. The Chief Internal Auditor opinion reflects that all financial systems are operating as expected with no significant weakness in control. The Internal audit plan reflects 'critical friend' reviews of areas subject to Transformation.</p>	 Green

Financial Control

Internal and external assurances

Area of focus	Summary observations	Assessment
---------------	----------------------	------------

Finance Department Resourcing

The Council is moving towards a shared finance department. This is in part constrained by the operation of two financial ledgers and because staff are located in two different locations – there are plans to address these two issues over the next 2 years. It is evident that staff are increasingly sharing roles which has the benefits of building in resilience and pooling expertise.

The staff structure has been reviewed periodically over the last 2 years and a senior manager review is on-going. Clearly a further review would be appropriate when staff are on site together, with the objective of reducing unit costs over time. A combined team provides scope to provide some specialism but there should also be good succession planning – to ensure that current expertise in critical areas is not lost as there is turnover of staff. There is currently reliance on 1 or 2 key individuals, and there is further scope for some increased delegation and reallocation of responsibilities.



Green

Clearly the current financial pressures means that finance is a critical support function for the council, and the amount of work involved in changes such as implementing a ledger successfully and changing budgetary monitoring arrangements (e.g. to reflect new corporate priorities) should not be underestimated.

Internal audit arrangements

Internal audit is provided by a shared service based at Worcester City Council. The approach is risk based and officers operate within the remit of the CIPFA code of practice.



The team appears to have appropriate skills and experience and the quality and scope of reviews is appropriate.

The team has had insufficient staffing resources which has resulted in slippage in their annual plan, although these problems were not as marked in 2011/12. The team did not complete all of its work by the time the CIA opinion was issued although most of the substantive work was complete. As with all services, there is budgetary pressure associated with the service and thus the scope to increase internal audit coverage is limited. The plan has included some 'critical friend' review of transformation which is appropriate. The Audit committee needs to be assured that the plan is flexed appropriately to reflect increased risk associated with staff turnover at the Council and changes in controls.



Green

Financial control (cont)

Area of focus	Summary observations	Assessment
External audit arrangements	<p>In 2011/12 the opinion on the accounts was unqualified and the accounts, although material amendment was made to the accounts post audit. The 2012/13 accounts were also unqualified.</p> <p>The scope of external audit work also includes providing a VFM conclusion. This was again unqualified.</p> <p>The ISA 260 report made a number of observations and recommendations around the Council's budget setting arrangements and management of savings plans.</p> <p>The AGS does refer to the recommendations made by external audit and refers to progress being made in addressing these matters.</p>	 Green
Assurance framework/ risk management	<p>The Council manages the risks that the Council is facing through the work of the senior management team and the Executive and the reports provided to them.</p> <p>The Council does not yet have an embedded formal risk management culture, although there are some services where it is clearly taken very seriously – e.g. customer services. At a corporate level, a corporate risk register is not used as management tool but appears to be regarded more as a means of demonstrating governance to external agencies.</p> <p>The risk register, updated to reflect the review of consultants and to reflect the new corporate priorities is to be considered by members in September.</p>	 Amber

1 Executive Summary

2 Key Indicators

3 Strategic Financial Planning

4 Financial Governance

5 Financial Control

Appendix - Key indicators of financial performance

Key Indicators of Financial Performance

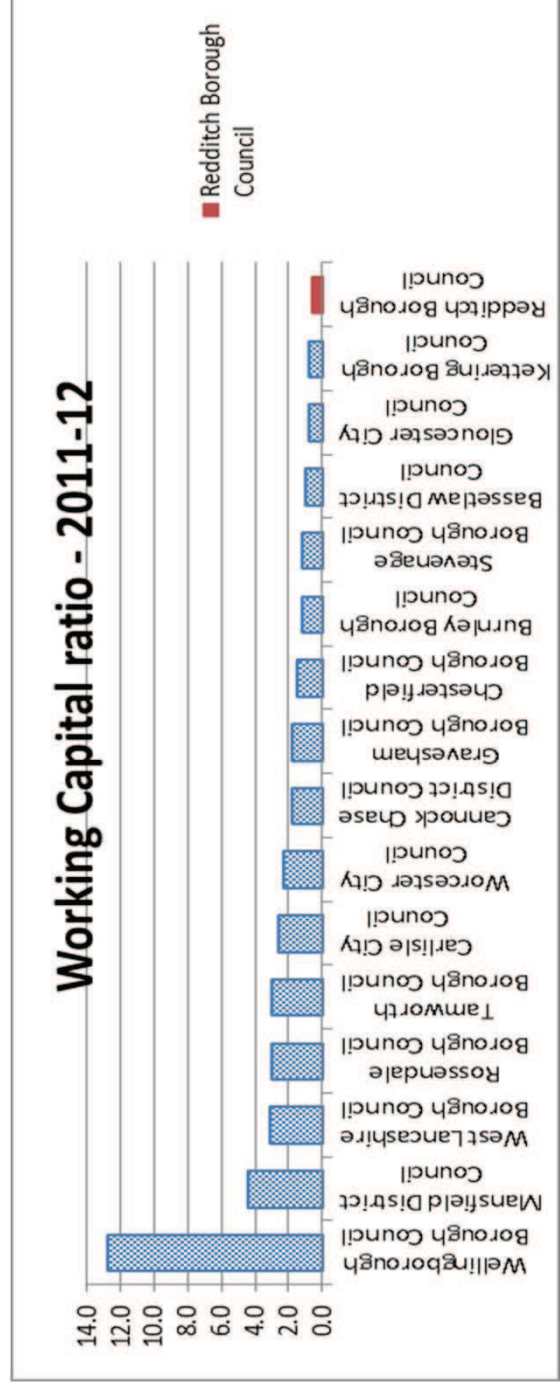
Working Capital - Benchmarked

Definition

The working capital ratio indicates if an authority has enough current assets, or resources, to cover its immediate liabilities - i.e. those liabilities to be met over the next twelve month period. A ratio of assets to liabilities of 2:1 is usually considered to be acceptable, whilst a ratio of less than one - i.e. current liabilities exceed current assets - indicates potential liquidity problems. It should be noted that a high working capital ratio isn't always a good thing; it could indicate that an authority is not effectively investing its excess cash.

Findings

Redditch's working capital ratio has reduced from 1.15 in 2007 to 0.59 in 2012. This indicates that the council's liquidity is decreasing to well below the preferred range.



Key Indicators of Financial Performance

Useable Reserves - Benchmarked

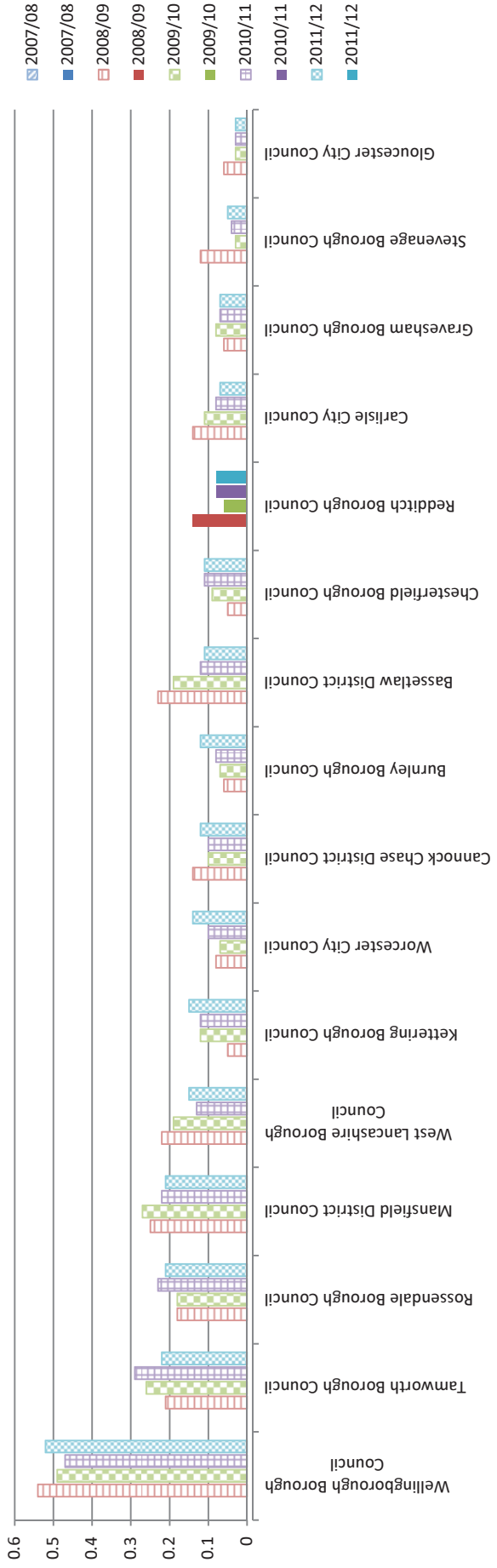
Definition

This shows useable capital and revenue reserves as a share of expenditure. A ratio of one means the total reserves matches the level of expenditure.

Findings

Between 2007 and 2012 RBC has reduced the value of its useable reserves, from 0.14 to 0.08. The majority of other councils have reduced their useable reserves over the period. Further analysis is set out on the following slides.

Useable Reserves to Gross Revenue Expenditure ratio - trend [in order of 2011-12]



Key Indicators of Financial Performance

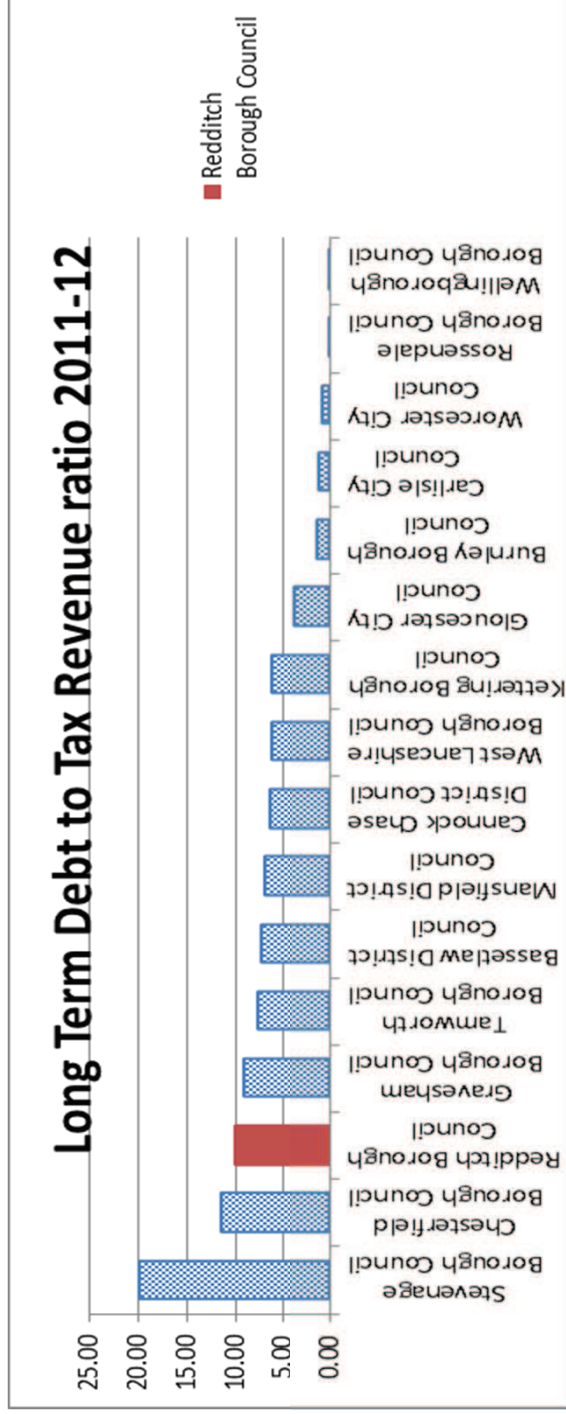
Long Term Borrowing to Tax Revenue - Benchmarked

Definition

Shows long term borrowing as a share of tax revenue. A ratio of more than one means that long term borrowing exceeds council tax revenue.

Findings

Redditch's ratio of 9.92 indicates that it has long term borrowing which exceeds tax revenue by almost ten times. Redditch is third in comparison to the benchmark group. Prior to 2011 the council had a ratio of 0.43 and the increase is due to the £98m of debt related to self financing of the housing stock. The majority of the borrowing is long term for this reason. Repayment of the debt is reflected in the HRA business case model.



Key Indicators of Financial Performance

Long-term borrowing to Long-term assets - Benchmarked

Definition

This ratio shows long term borrowing as a share of long term assets. A ratio of more than one means that long term borrowing exceeds the value of long term assets.

Findings

Redditch's most recent ratio of 0.41 shows that the Council's long term borrowing represents between one third and a half of its long term assets - i.e. long term borrowing does not exceed its long term assets. In comparison to other authorities in this benchmarked group, Redditch is broadly in line with the other council's with a housing stock.

Long Term Debt to Long Term Assets ratio 2011-12



Key Indicators of Financial Performance

Sickness Absence Levels

Background

The average sickness absence level for the public sector is 9.6 days per FTE, whilst the private sector average is 6.6. Many councils have taken a proactive approach to reducing the number of days lost to sickness each year. For example:

- London Borough of Croydon reduced absence from 12.5 days to 6.4 days over two years due to a new tougher sickness absence management.
- Cambridgeshire County Council reduced sickness absence levels to 5 days per employee using an approach built on a relationship of trust with staff and empowering managers to take control of absence management.

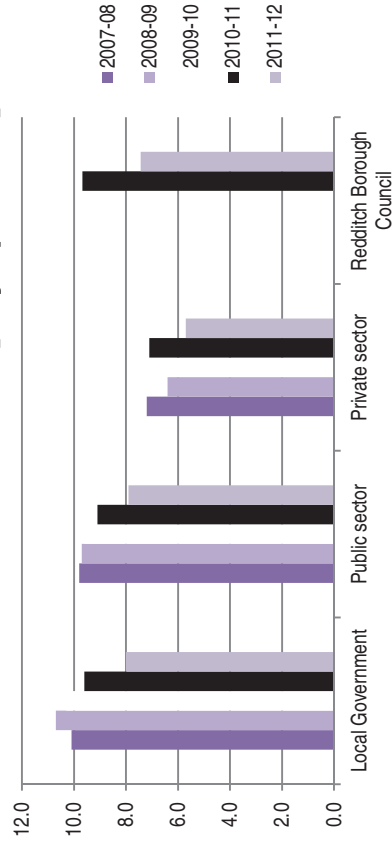
Costs that accrue from sickness absence relate to the hiring of agency staff to cover staff gaps, or from holding a larger workforce complement than is desirable. Absence also damages service levels either through staff shortage or lack of continuity. Reducing absenteeism saves money, improves productivity and can have a positive customer benefit. Absence management will be a particular challenge for all authorities during SR10, given the context of significant pressures on staff to deliver "more for less".

Findings

Sickness data is routinely collated by the Council and in monitored.

Redditch's sickness absence levels have increased to 8.4 in 2012/13 which is against the trend of generally decreasing levels of sickness seen in the public sector over the past 5 years, although performance is better than the local target of 8.75.

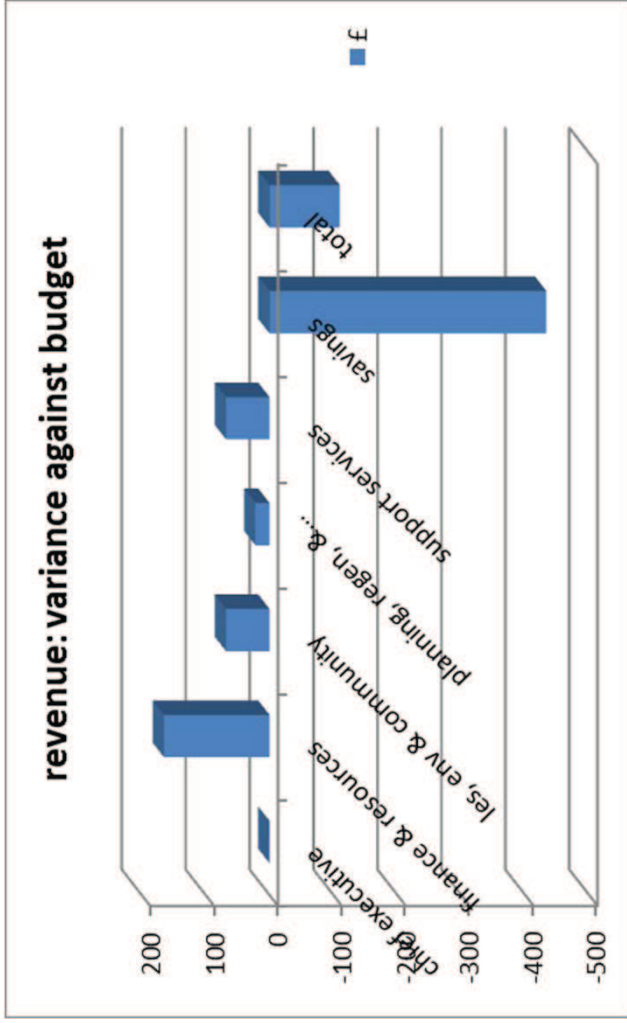
Sickness absence rates [days per FTE]



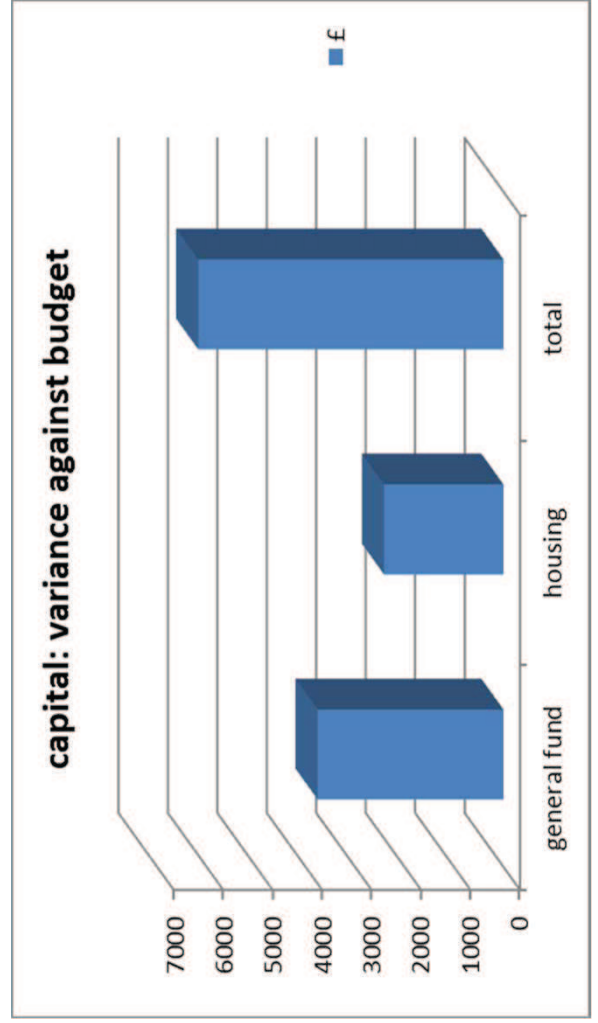
Source: Audit Commission and RBC data

Key Indicators of Financial Performance

Performance Against Budget: Major Variances from Working Budget



Source: RBC
foreword to the
accounts

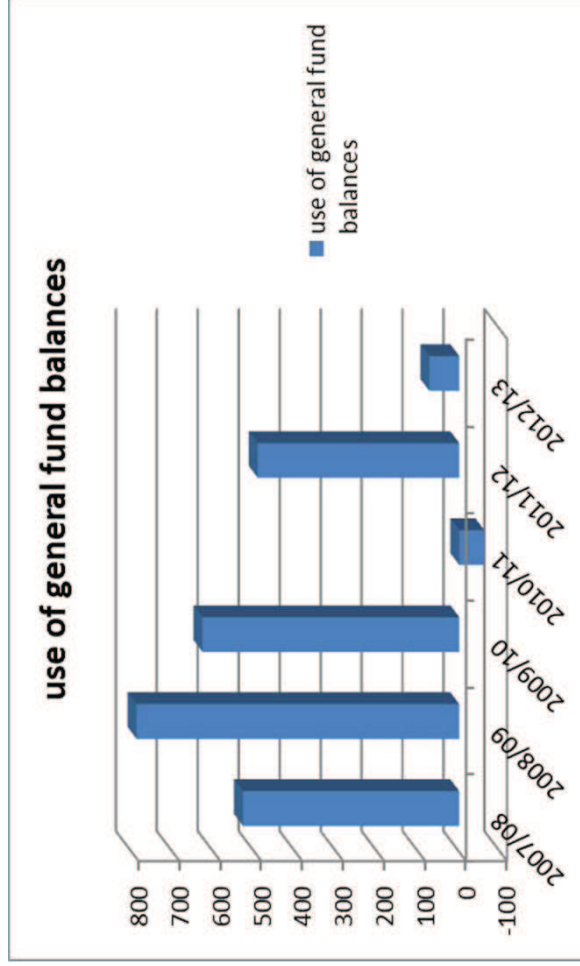


Revenue budget: At the time of setting the budget the council had over £400k of unidentified savings. Other savings are embedded within budgets. Part of the unidentified savings were achieved through a one of receipt and thus the council had small outturn overspend of £74k against budget, that was funded by general fund balances. In the previous 2 years

capital programme: there was significant slippage in both the housing and general fund capital budgets. general fund was due to the deferral of the purchase of waste collection vehicles due to a service review and housing was due to general slippage, partly due to caution around the new operating environment arising from self financing

Key Indicators of Financial Performance

use of balances to support spending



Use of general fund balances: over the last 6 years the council has used general fund balances to support spending in all but 1 year, although the reliance has decreased from its peak in 2008/09. General fund balances are currently at the lowest level they have been at £1m, although the level of earmarked reserves has increased steadily over this period.



© 2013 Grant Thornton UK LLP. All rights reserved.

'Grant Thornton' means Grant Thornton UK LLP, a limited liability partnership.

Grant Thornton is a member firm of Grant Thornton International Ltd (Grant Thornton International). References to 'Grant Thornton' are to the brand under which the Grant Thornton member firms operate and refer to one or more member firms, as the context requires. Grant Thornton International and the member firms are not a worldwide partnership. Services are delivered independently by member firms, which are not responsible for the services or activities of one another. Grant Thornton International does not provide services to clients.

grant-thornton.co.uk

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

10th December 2013

**FINANCE MONITORING REPORT 2013/14 - APRIL – SEPTEMBER
(QUARTER 2)**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor John Fisher, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management.
Portfolio Holder Consulted	
Relevant Head of Service	Jayne Pickering
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Non Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

This report details the Council's financial position for the period April to September 2013 (Quarter 2 – 2013/14).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is asked **RESOLVE** that

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

RECOMMEND

- 3) **that the 2013/14 Capital Programme is increased by £55K to include Section 106 funded Town Centre Enhancements.**

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 This report provides details of the financial information across the Council. The aim is to ensure Officers and Members can make informed and considered judgement of the overall position of the Council.

Financial Implications

- 3.2 The Council set a balanced budget in February 2013 for the financial year 2013/14. Within the budget were included savings of £550K which were not fully identified. These included savings relating to Shared Services, Transformation, and general vacancies with the Council.

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

10th December 2013

**Revenue Budget summary Quarter 2 (April – September) 2013/14 –
Overall Council**

3.3 The current financial position for services delivered within the Borough is detailed in the table below.

3.4 Internal recharges have not been included in these figures to allow comparison for each service area.

3.5

Service Head	Budget 2013/14 £'000 (a)	Budget April - Sept £'000 (b)	Actual Spend April – Sept £'000 (c)	Variance to date April - Sept £'000 (c-b=d)	Projected Outturn 2013-14 £'000 (e)	Variance 2013-14 £'000 (e-a=f)	Ref to financial comment ary
Environmental Services	3,238	1,987	1,900	-87	3,034	-204	3.14
Community Services	2,274	843	858	15	2,295	21	3.17
Regulatory Services	568	281	276	-5	560	-8	
Leisure & Cultural Services	3,348	1,649	1,655	6	3,321	-27	3.8
Planning & Regeneration	1,810	769	779	10	1,827	17	3.9
Customer Services	576	291	235	-56	465	-111	3.11
Finance & Resources	5,097	-4,139	-4,187	-48	5,002	-95	3.12
Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	892	437	464	27	882	-10	3.13
Business Transformation	1,139	655	634	-21	1,113	-26	3.10
Head of Housing Services (GF)	975	490	488	-2	970	-5	3.7

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

10th December 2013

Corporate Services	903	469	445	-24	843	-60	3.16
SERVICE TOTAL	20,820	3,732	3,547	-185	20,312	-508	3.6
Savings to be found	-550	-275	-	275		550	3.15
Total for Quarter & Projected	20,270	3,457	3,547	90	20,312	42	

Financial Commentary

- 3.6 Savings of £508K had been projected towards the unidentified savings of £550K.
- 3.7 The Housing (general fund) savings are due to savings with the dispersed units.
- 3.8 Leisure Services Officers have identified net savings of £27k. This has been met by vacant posts across the service and reduction in dual use fees at Arrow Vale. Savings have also been found from re-designing processes within the Community Centres.
- 3.9 There is a shortfall in Building Control income for this financial year; this is due to this element of the business being in competition with the private sector for works.
- 3.10 The savings within Business Transformation are in relation to vacancies within the department. The majority of the projected outturn saving has been achieved by Quarter 2.
- 3.11 There are a number of staff vacancies in Customer services and also 2 members of staff are now being funded by the Housing Revenue Account following a Transformation trial. However the savings from this have partly been offset by an increase in debit/credit card charges and a reduction in funding from the Worcestershire Hub.
- 3.12 The variances with Finance & Resources are as follows:
- Human Resources – A reduction of £100K from the Training budget and savings of £20K on 2 vacant posts.
- Benefits – The variance to date is based on income received to date for Housing Benefit Subsidy payments.

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE****10th December 2013**

Revenues – The saving is due to a reduction in staff hours.

- 3.13 The variances within Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services are predominantly due to the service review which has now taken place; the new structure came in to effect from 01/07/13. This quarter therefore includes redundancy costs; however a further small saving is expected for outturn. There are also small savings to date within the Members services from the Members training and expenses budgets.
- 3.14 The savings on Environmental Services are mainly due to vacant posts, and a reduction in contract prices. There is also an increase of income on Bereavement services.
- 3.15 A number of savings were identified at the budget setting process by Heads of Service; these have not affected the service delivered. Heads of Service have been able to apply these savings using a Transformation Methodology. The progress of these savings is being monitored by Finance and the Heads of Service, the total is £755k across the whole authority. There is an additional risk that if these savings are not achieved then this will increase the amount of unidentified savings.
- 3.16 Savings have been made within the PA and Directorate support section following the restructure £19k. Print room redundancy costs were not as high as anticipated due to redeployment £5K.
- 3.17 The overspend relates to an officer covering some of the duties of a Head of Service who is on long term sick

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

10th December 2013

**Capital Budget summary Quarter 2 (April - September) 2013 /14 – Overall
Council**

Department	Revised Budget 2013 /14 £'000	Budget April – September £'000	Actual spend April – September £'000	Variance to date April – September £'000	Projected Outturn 2013/14 £'000	Projected Variance 2013/14 £'000
Environmental Services	4,192	1,826	1,807	-19	4,192	0
Community Services	886	886	162	-724	886	0
Regulatory Services	121	4	4	0	84	-37
Leisure & Cultural Services	429	5	5	0	79	-350
Planning and Regeneration	55	55	0	-55	55	0
Financial Services	584	292	0	-292	584	0
Property Services	370	185	23	-162	370	0
Housing	9,957	4,979	3,797	-1,182	8,415	-1,542
TOTAL	16,594	8,232	5,798	-2,434	14,665	-1,929

Capital Financial Commentary

- 3.18 The £55,000 capital budget for Planning & Regeneration is for a Section 106 funded project for Town Centre Enhancements.
- 3.19 The solar panel scheme is now complete with a capital saving of £4,450. Potential savings on other schemes will be reported at the third quarter.
- 3.20 Housing capital schemes are projecting underspend; changes to contracts for the solid wall insulation, a supplier has been appointed but works are unlikely to commence until after the winter. Likewise installation of cladding, and masonry works will not commence until after the winter. Final selection of the Environmental Enhancement schemes has begun, the chosen schemes will commence shortly, it is unlikely that the total budget will be spent within this financial year.

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

10th December 2013

Treasury Management

- 3.21 The Council's Treasury Management Strategy has been developed in accordance with the Prudential Code for Capital Finance prudential indicators and is used to manage risks arising from financial instruments. Additionally treasury management practices are followed on a day to day basis.

Credit Risk

- 3.22 Credit risk arises from deposits with banks and financial institutions, as well as credit exposures to the Council's customers. Credit risk is minimised by use of a specified list of investment counterparty criteria and by limiting the amount invested with each institution. The Council receives credit rating details from its Treasury Management Advisers on a daily basis and any counterparty falling below the criteria is removed from the list.
- 3.23 At 30st September 2013, short-term investments comprise:

	30 th September 2013 £000
Deposits with Banks/Building Societies	1,400

Income from investments

- 3.24 An investment income target of £25k has been set for 2013/14 using a projected rate of return of 0.75% - 1.50%. During the past financial year, bank base rates have remained at 0.50% and current indications are projecting minimal upward movement for the short-term.
- 3.25 In the 6 months to 30 September, the Council earned income from investments of £7k. The Council is not likely to achieve the budgeted income due to a reduction in the rate now provided by the call account. It is probable that the £10k shortfall will be negated by the fall in borrowing costs.

General Fund Balances

- 3.26 The General Fund Balance as at the 31st March 2013 is £1m; a balanced budget was set in February 2013, should the unidentified

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

10th December 2013

savings not be achieved during the year or any unexpected expenditure occur this would be funded from Balances.

Legal Implications

3.27 No Legal implications have been identified.

Service/Operational Implications

3.28 Sound performance management and data quality are keys to achieving improved scores in the use of resources judgement. This performance report supports that aim.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

3.29 Performance Improvement is a Council objective.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk considerations are covered within the report.

5. APPENDICES

None

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Sam Morgan

E Mail: sam.morgan@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Tel: (01527) 64252 ext 3790

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

10th December 2013

COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr John Fisher
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Amanda De Warr
Ward(s) Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	None Specific
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

The report summarises options for further technical amendments to Council Tax discounts, for Members consideration.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is asked to RESOLVE

to reduce the period of 50% empty homes discount to three months.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 From April 2013 the national scheme of Council Tax Benefits was replaced by locally agreed Council Tax Support Schemes. Pensionable age claimants are protected but local billing authorities can determine the extent of support for working age claimants. Furthermore, as a discount rather than a benefit, the impact of the change to Council Tax Support was to reduce the taxbase for the Council by the amount of any support given. This therefore affected all organisations that raise a precept, including ourselves, major preceptors and the parish council. Compensation for the loss of council tax was to be paid for by the Government as Council Tax Support Grant to billing authorities and major preceptors. The Grant is equivalent to around 90% of previous council tax benefit costs.
- 3.2 The cost of council tax benefits in Redditch was around £6.5m per year. The 10% shortfall of around £650k is split between the Borough Council (including the parish council) and our major preceptors broadly in line with the proportion of council tax levied. The County Council takes the largest share of the shortfall. The cost to the Borough of these changes was in the region of £91k.
- 3.3 When introducing the proposals for amendments to Council Tax Benefit the Government also removed Council Tax Exemptions for empty homes (Class C Exemption) and homes and requiring major repair works (Class A Exemption) and replaced them with locally determined discounts. These reforms allowed a

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**10th December 2013

greater discretion on the level of Council Tax Discount for Second and Empty Homes; and provided a mechanism for the imposition of a Council Tax premium for certain long term empty properties.

- 3.4 During the implementation of the Council Tax Benefit replacement scheme the Government indicated that they expect local authorities to exercise their full range of powers to help manage the reduction in Council Tax support.
- 3.5 The consultation paper "Technical Reforms of Council Tax – Consultation" published in October 2011 outlined that the proposed changes to exemptions and discounts should be considered in the context of tight local government finance settlements and proposals to replace Council Tax Benefit with Council Tax support.
- 3.6 In April 2013 the Borough Council introduced three changes to the discounts for empty and second homes and these changes:
- reduced discounts on second homes from 50% to nil;
 - replaced the short term empty property (empty for less than 6 months) exemption with a discount of 50%;
 - reduced the discount for long term empty properties (empty for more than 6 months)

These changes are estimated to have raised an additional £257,000 in Council Tax which leaves a total remaining gap of £393,000 between the level of Council Tax Support and the Council Tax support grant, and a £65k gap for Redditch Borough Council.

- 3.7 Changes to the Council Tax Support scheme, namely that entitlement to Council Tax support should be capped at 80% of Council Tax liability so that all working age claimants will pay a minimum of 20% towards their Council Tax Liability, are currently being consulted on. It is estimated that this change will realise £63k for Redditch Borough Council which would result in the current shortfall being met in full.
- 3.8 In addition to changes to the support scheme there are options for further technical changes to Council Tax discounts and these options, as well as the potential total additional Council Tax levied, and the additional Council Tax this would generate for Redditch Borough are detailed in the attached Appendix 1.
- 3.9 Reducing the period of empty homes discount from 6 months to 3 months would ensure that home owners and developers still benefit from a period of discount, would be easy to administer and increase the total amount of Council Tax levied by in the region of £74k. It could also help to further reduce the number of empty properties.

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE****10th December 2013**

- 3.10 Although not a requirement to consult on further technical changes to Council Tax discounts a recent consultation on changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme sought views by asking whether the 50% discount for properties that have been empty for less than 6 months should be removed.

50% of the respondents were in favour of the removal of discounts for short term empty properties.

- 3.11 It is important to remember that any changes to the period for empty homes discount will impact on landlords in both the private and social housing sectors.
- 3.12 The West Midlands Regional Representative of the National Landlord's Association provided a detailed response relating to discounts for empty homes as part of the Council Tax Scheme consultation and a copy is attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.13 The costs to the HRA of changes to the empty homes discount are estimated to be:

Removal of the 50% discount	£40,000
Reduction to 1 month @ 50%	£15,000
Reduction to 2 month @ 50%	£5,500
Reduction to 3 months @ 50%	£3,000

- 3.14 Options for removing the discount for uninhabitable properties, introducing a 14 day 100% discount period for empty homes, and implementing a Long Term Empty Homes Premium, were considered by officers but not considered to be feasible, due to the impact they could have on individuals, and the potential damage to the Council's reputation.

Legal Implications

- 3.15 The Local Government Finance Act 2012 (LGFA 2012) amended Section 11A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (LGFA '92) to provide local authorities with the power to amend the level of Council Tax discount for certain prescribed properties.
- 3.16 The amendment extended the powers to reduce discounts for second and empty homes in England which were introduced by the Local Government Act 2003 which inserted Section 11A into the LGFA '92.
- 3.17 Statutory Instrument 2012/2964 prescribed two classes of dwelling (Class A and Class B – second homes) for which a local authority may alter the level of Council Tax discount. The discount may be removed or it may be reduced from 50% to any lesser percentage.

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE****10th December 2013**

- 3.18 SI 2012/2964 also provided two classes of dwelling (Class C unoccupied and substantially unfurnished dwellings; and Class D dwellings requiring major repair works to make habitable) for which the discount may be removed or may be set at any such percentage between 1% and 100%.
- 3.19 The LGFA 2012 also inserted Section 11B into the LGFA '92. Section 11B provides local authorities with the power to introduce a Council Tax premium for long term empty dwellings which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a continuous period of at least 2 years.
- 3.20 SI 2012/2964 defines two classes of dwelling (Class E dwellings left empty by members of the armed forces; and Class F Annexes) for which the Council Tax premium may not be charged.
- 3.21 If a billing authority makes a determination to vary the level of discount then they must publish a notice of the determination in at least one newspaper circulating in the billing authority's area within 21 days of the determination.
- 3.22 A billing authority may make a determination varying or revoking the decision to alter the level of discount for a financial year, but only before the beginning of the year in which the determination may take effect. If further technical changes to discount are made, or a long term empty premium is levied then the altered level of discounts will be in place for at least one Council Tax year.
- 3.23 There could be cases where a Long Term Empty Premium or a revised lower level of Council Tax discount maybe felt to be inappropriate. The LGFA '92 at Section 13A (1)(c) provides a power to reduce the Council Tax payable on a case by case basis to such an extent as the authority thinks fit. This would include the power to reduce the amount to nil.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.24 The new powers to reduce discounts took effect from 1st April 2013 and for the Council Tax year 2013/14 changes have been made to empty and second home discounts. Any revision to the levels of discount could be implemented without the need for further investment in software.
- 3.25 Steps were taken in 2013/14 to minimise the impact of the changes by advising Council Tax payers affected in advance of the annual billing cycle. These steps would be repeated should any further amendments be made.
- 3.26 Consideration will need to be given as to how any discretionary assistance under Section 13A 1(c) will be administered and at which level decisions will be made.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.27 The changes will not disproportionately impact on those with special protected characteristics under the equality duty, the section 13A (1)(c) power will be available to minimise any adverse impact.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 Any changes to council tax support whilst increasing council tax income to the Council and our major preceptors will potentially have wide implications for our residents and therefore officers will ensure that support on managing finances and advice on other potential benefits is made available. In addition the income recovery team will continue to measure the arrears position to ensure that members are aware of the impact on income collected.

- 4.2 Changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme and Council Tax discounts are likely to have an impact on some of our Strategic Purposes, specifically:

- Help me to find somewhere to live in my locality:

Additional costs to landlords may be passed on through increased rental charges to tenants; although the impact should be minor as the majority of rental properties have a quick turnaround between tenants.

The removal of discounts for empty homes and the introduction of a long term empty premium may lead to an increase in the supply of homes. The number of properties empty for more than 6 months has reduced from 228 in October 2012 to 175 in October 2013.

The reduction has been seen at a time when the exemption provided for the first six months has been replaced by a 50% discount and a full Council Tax liability has been levied on properties empty for more than 6 months.

The data suggests that there is a correlation between increased Council Tax charges and the number of empty homes.

- Help me to be financially independent

The removal of all discounts for empty homes will mean that Council Tax payers will have a 100% Council Tax liability for all periods during which the property is unoccupied.

Council Tax support is only payable when the Council Tax payer is resident in the property and therefore for any period from start date of the tenancy to occupation by the Council Payer there will be no entitlement to Council Tax support and full Council Tax will be payable.

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

10th December 2013

This is unlikely to affect a large number of Council Tax payers and support will be available through the Hardship Scheme for those in most need.

The Hardship scheme will help to support those with the greatest need but changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme is likely to impact on some residents ability to be financial independent.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Options for Technical Changes to Council Tax Discounts
Appendix 2 - Response from West Midlands Regional Representative of the National Landlord's Association

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Held in Revenues Services

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: David Riley, Revenues Manager
email: d.riley@redditchandbromsgrove.gov.uk
Tel.: 01527 64252 Ext 3382

Option	Total additional Council Tax levied	Additional CT for Redditch	Comments on administration of revised discount
Reduce period of 50% empty homes discount from 6 months to 3 month	£74,000	£10,000	
Reduce period of 50% empty homes discount from 6 months to 2 months	£100,000	£14,000	
Reduce period of 50% empty homes discount from 6 months to 1 months	£138,000	£19,000	
Removal of empty homes discount.	£212,000	£29,000	
Removal of discount for uninhabitable properties.	£14,000	£2,000	
Introduction of 14 day 100% discount period for empty homes	-£82,000	-£11,500	14 day 100% discount would result in cost as shown
Implementation of Long Term Empty Homes Premium	£49,000	£6,860	Long Term Empty Premiums are easily avoided by furnishing the property. The additional income may not be achieved.

Appendix 2

Subject: RE: Council Tax Support Scheme Consultation ORG-1222

Hi Jenny, I have posted the link on Social media and Tweeted it to my followers. It has already been re-tweeted and has reached over 17,000 people so far.

I have a concern about what happens when a local authority withdraws the short term empty property relief and I would be grateful if you would pass my concerns onto the relevant person.

NLA support good landlords and we encourage landlords to invest in their properties to keep them up to a good standard, that means that there are often short periods of time where our properties are empty - landlords do not want empty properties and we keep this time to a minimum.

NLA also support good landlords who thoroughly check their prospective tenants to protect neighbourhoods from anti social behaviour and to protect themselves from damage to their properties and rent arrears - this can mean that there are short periods of time where a property is empty while the landlord carries out the necessary due diligence.

You will also be aware that some tenants cause damages to properties and it takes time for those repairs/replacements to be carried out, again landlords keep these to a minimum but they often cannot be done while there is a tenant in place which can cause short periods where the property is empty

We are fully aware of the need for local authorities to balance their books but my concern is that if the council tax relief for short void periods is withdrawn from landlords it may have an impact on the standards of rented properties in Redditch and also the quality of tenants. None of us want this.

I would like to propose that your authority consider offering Council Tax relief to landlords for a maximum of 21 days if those landlords are accredited. Apart from the fact that this will reduced the potential issues I have already mentioned it will send a clear message to good landlords, who have taken the time and trouble to become accredited through an education based scheme, that your authority supports them and wants to encourage them to invest in good quality homes in Redditch.

If this is coupled with the use of the HMO licensing structure which is being used in Birmingham you will find that more landlords will become accredited and both property and management standards will improve in Redditch - which is what we all want.

I would be more that happy to meet the appropriate people to explore this further if necessary.

I will be very interested in the response to these proposals.

Mary

Mary Latham | West Midlands Regional Representative
National Landlords Association
M: 07812 125395 | W: landlords.org.uk
22-26 Albert Embankment London SE1 7TJ

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

10th December 2013

THREADNEEDLE HOUSE

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr John Fisher
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Amanda de Warr
Ward(s) Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	None Specific
Non -Key Decision	
The Appendix 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.	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 To enable members to consider the proposal to declare Threadneedle House as a surplus asset, for the purpose of marketing the building for sale.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is asked to RESOLVE that:

- 1) Threadneedle House be declared as a surplus asset; and**
- 2) Officers be instructed to market the property in order to secure a capital receipt.**

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The property was constructed by Redditch Borough Council in 1983 alongside the Town Hall for investment purposes. The building is predominantly spread over three floors with an additional basement area in the former Barclays unit.
- 3.2 The floor areas of the building comprise the approximate net internal area as detailed below:

	Sq Ft
Post Office Unit	3,067
Former HRMC Unit (vacant)	19,610
Former Barclays Unit (vacant)	11,359
Total Area	34,036

There is also the provision of parking for 20 vehicles.

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**10th December 2013

- 3.3 The building is configured in such a way as to provide three distinct units. The northern unit of the building complex is currently occupied by the Post Office on a 50 year lease dating from 1982. We are advised that this unit is in a good state of repair.
- 3.4 Both the central and southern units are currently vacant and in need of extensive refurbishment to bring them up to modern office standards, the cost of which has been estimated to be in excess of £850k.
- 3.5 It had previously been thought that the vacant space would be needed as office accommodation for the relocation of Bromsgrove District Council shared service staff. However, officers have realigned the space in the Town Hall in order to accommodate the additional staff. The Borough Council will then benefit from the additional income.
- 3.6 As we move towards a locality approach of delivering our services it is apparent that Threadneedle House has no operational value to the authority.
- 3.7 Feasibility work has been carried out in order to establish costs for re-instating the building for office use, as well as refurbishment design & cost feasibility for conversion to mixed use (residential / retail).
- 3.8 Independent valuation has been sought to inform the options appraisal.
- 3.9 Threadneedle House is located in the town centre, and the Planning Office advise that any town centre use would be acceptable in principle. The adopted Local Plan, the emerging Plan and the town centre strategy would welcome uses including residential, retail, leisure, health related, day nursery, residential care and office. Therefore, if the building was declared surplus and subsequently brought back into a town centre use it would contribute to achieving the aims of local planning policy and the town centre strategy.
- 3.10 It should be recognised that Threadneedle House sits immediately adjacent the former covered market area. At officer level the potential redevelopment of this site is currently being considered and may be reported to Executive Committee in the future with a possible recommendation to declare surplus to requirements and suggest a marketing strategy.
- 3.11 Without prejudice to future recommendations by officers or decisions by members about the covered market area, it is suggested at this stage that the marketing of Threadneedle House highlights that other land in the immediate vicinity is owned by the Borough Council and that potential purchasers are welcome, without prejudice to discuss the wider area.
- 3.12 A Planning Brief would be made available to any potential buyers of Threadneedle House and, agents would be likely to take excerpts of this to include in the sale details. This would not preclude applications for other

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**10th December 2013

potential uses but would guide the interested parties as to the types of development considered suitable.

Financial Implications

- 3.9. The majority of Threadneedle House has now been empty for some time, and negotiations with the leaseholders to relinquish leases were concluded earlier this year.
- 3.10 Valuations advice has been sought and details are attached at Appendix 1. This information is confidential due to its financial sensitivity.
- 3.11 As the building is now no longer required for the relocation of Bromsgrove District Council staff and has not been identified for other operational uses Property Services recommend that the building is marketed for sale through a regional or national agent to maximise the potential exposure of the building to the property market.
- 3.12 Disposal of the property would generate a capital receipt that could be used to support the Council's capital Programme.
- 3.13 Retention of the property by the Council for alternative uses may involve incurring significant expenditure on the building in addition to the interim cost of on-going void costs including business rates, utilities, security and repairs and maintenance, currently amounting to approximately £72,000 per annum.

Legal Implications

- 3.14 The Borough Council is legally required to declare the building surplus to enable the potential future sale of the site.
- 3.15 This will also allow the necessary reviews to be undertaken to include options for selling the building, which cannot be carried out unless the building is declared surplus.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.16 Alternative uses of the building have been considered and investigated by Property Services with emphasis on potential conversion for retail and residential uses. Permitted development rights introduced in May 2013 allow the change of use of buildings from B1(a) (offices) to C3 (dwelling houses), subject to a prior approval process by the local planning authority (LPA).

The Planning Department has indicated that residential conversion on the upper floors would be acceptable and that retail, particularly cafes and restaurants would be encouraged on the ground floor.

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**10th December 2013

3.18 Residential & Retail Conversion

This work has included the preparation of design drawings to ascertain the feasibility of converting the central unit into residential accommodation (flats and student accommodation) on the upper floors and retail accommodation on the ground floor.

Discussions on a one to one basis with agents and developers indicate an appetite for such schemes.

3.19 Business Start - Up Occupancy

An independent property report also outlined redevelopment considerations and recommendations for retaining the building for multi occupancy use as space for business start-ups and small ventures has been put forward as a potential option. However to facilitate this use presents significant issues as noted below:

1. Significant refurbishment of the building and services, albeit to a lower standard than modern equivalent offices.
2. Sub division and partitioning of floors.
3. Separation of utilities and services.
4. Management of tenant's occupation and administration of rents and service charges.
5. Limited parking.
6. Uncertainty over interest from users, particularly as there is significant office space already available at discounted rents within the local area.
7. Financial viability is questionable with proposal highly unlikely to recoup refurbishment costs over long term.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.20 There are no specific implications arising from this report, although bringing vacant buildings back into use has a positive impact on customer perception of the authority.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

The declaration of a surplus asset will enable officers to identify all opportunities available for the future use of the building, to include potential sale of the property and therefore reduce the risks associated with the costs of managing the empty property.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Valuation Advice – Exempt from publication

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Held by Property Services

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Amanda de Warr, Head of Customer Access and Financial Support
email: a.dewarr@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel: 01527 881241

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

Document is Restricted

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

10th December 2013

EXTENSION OF LEASE – MATCHBOROUGH EAST COMMUNITY CENTRE

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr John Fisher
Portfolio Holder Consulted	✓
Relevant Head of Service	Jayne Pickering – Executive Director Finance and Resource
Wards Affected	Matchborough
Key Decision – Yes	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

To consider a request to extend the lease from 7 to 12 years for the Community Enterprise Organisation “Your Ideas” who currently occupy the Matchborough East Community Centre. This is to enable Your Ideas to apply for additional grant funding from external organisations to undertake centre improvements.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is requested to RESOLVE that

Property Services be instructed to request Legal Services to accept a surrender of the existing 7 year lease from Your Ideas and simultaneously enter into a Full Repairing Lease for 12 years with Your Ideas.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 As Members are aware Your Ideas entered into a lease commencing in July 2013 as approved by Executive Committee, for the occupancy of Matchborough East Community Centre. The current lease is on a full repairing and Insuring basis for a term of 7 years at a concessionary rent of £5k per annum exclusive. The market rental value of the lease is £16k however with the 70% rent relief that has been awarded to Your Ideas the reduced rental is payable of £5k.
- 3.2 Your Ideas Ltd has approached Redditch Borough Council with a request that their lease is extended from the existing term of 7 years to 12 years. The lease extension is required by Your Ideas Ltd to access £60k of capital funding from the SITA trust for centre improvements.
- 3.3 SITA Trust is an ethical funding organisation dedicated to making lasting improvements to the natural environment and community life. The Trust is a not-for-profit company, a registered and accredited environmental body that operates under the Landfill Communities Fund distributing funds contributed by the recycling and resource management company SITA UK. The funding criteria states applicants must have a minimum term of 10 years lease arrangement in place to

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

10th December 2013

be considered. Your Ideas have assessed the following as improvements that would meet the requirements of the grant:

- Refitting soft play into a computer / gaming / chilling / home working area.
- Replacing flooring throughout the ground floor.
- Refurbishing the lift or putting in disabled access to 1st floor.
- Kitchen area on first floor to improve flexibility of that space for lettings.
- Refitting existing kitchen.
- Resurfacing car park
- Replacing exterior wood doors and windows with steel (for fire doors) and UPVC

3.4 Officers would support the request and the improvements as proposed by Your Ideas.

Financial Implications

3.5 The Full Repairing Lease is at a rent of £16k pa which has been reduced to £5k based on the 70% relief awarded to Your Ideas. The concessionary rent review is due for renew every 3 years and therefore will be reviewed in 2016. Members should be aware that the extension of the lease is not dependent on the concessionary rent relief being awarded.

3.6 The existing lease provides for an upward rent review in years 3 and 6 of the lease. It is proposed the extended lease includes additional rent review at years 9.

Legal Implications

3.7 The lease term will be extended by way of a surrender of the existing lease and a re-grant of a new lease back to Your Ideas Ltd. The following principal terms have been agreed with Your Ideas following their request.

- New Term: 12 years (increased from 7)
- Break Option: Tenant break option in years 3rd and 7th year subject to 6 month notice.
- Sinking Fund: Roof contribution of £1,500pa will increase in line with RPI from yr 8 onwards (based upon RPI increase over year 7) to account for the increase in repair and maintenance costs.
- Legal & Surveyors Fees: £96.30 plus VAT each (discounted by 70% as per rent relief concession)
- All other terms to be as per existing lease.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

10th December 2013

- 3.8 As noted above, additional rent reviews will be included in the extended term.
- 3.9 Leases of more than 7 years have to be registered at the Land Registry. The existing lease is not registered at the Land Registry but the new one will have to be. Registration (and the associated costs thereof) will be the responsibility of Your Ideas as tenant.

Service/Operational Implications

- 3.10 The extension of the lease to 12 years will enable the Community Enterprise Organisation to sustain its service within Matchborough.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.11 The extension of the lease will enable Your Ideas to provide services to all members of the community.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 The recommendations will be managed in line with the policies and procedures of the Borough Council and the Risk Management Register.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Jayne Pickering
E Mail: j.pickering@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel: (01527) 881400



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4th November 2013

MINUTES

Present:

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

Officers:

R Cooke, C Felton, D Hancox, G Harris and S Singleton

Committee Services Officer:

J Bayley and I Westmore

66. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Alan Mason. Councillor Wanda King attended the meeting in place of Councillor Mason.

67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

68. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8th October 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

69. REDDITCH UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB - DISCUSSION

The Chair informed the Committee that he had asked that this item be placed on the agenda in the light of recent press articles concerning the Football Club. The Chair had subsequently been made aware that the Chairman of the Football Club would not be available to attend the present meeting and proposed that the matter be deferred until the December meeting of the Committee.

.....
Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4th November 2013

RESOLVED that

consideration of this matter be deferred to the meeting of the Committee on 3rd December 2013.

70. POSITIVE ACTIVITIES - UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered an update on the Redditch Consortia Positive Activities Programme. Officers reported that they were now in possession of detailed attendance statistics for the first two quarters of 2013/14. It was considered that the programme was enjoying relative success with numbers of attendees remaining quite consistent, although there was considerable variation in numbers of attendees at different sessions.

Officers reminded the Committee that the Third Sector had been given the scope to determine the nature of the sessions as they saw fit. One session in particular, the boxing session, had been particularly popular and around a dozen young people had become involved in the Boxing Club itself as a result. A number of young people had also become actively involved in a voluntary capacity with Leisure Services and were helping out at events such as the forthcoming Charity Santa Dash.

One aspect which had not worked so well to date was the audit of the various groups by local County Councillors and the Younger People's Forum. This had been delayed in part by the significant changes in Council membership at the elections. Officers understood that local County Councillors had now been apprised of the situation and were to commence visits to groups shortly.

Concern was expressed about several of the groups, but primarily that at Oakenshaw, that the activities on offer were essentially those which had previously been provided and which had in the past failed to attract young people. The use of a fixed base and the choice of a Friday night were thought to militate against the success of the venture. It was suggested that outreach work might be more successful at locations such as Morton Stanley Park or The Pleck and Officers were asked whether discussions could be held with the County Council over delivering youth provision in a different way. A further specific concern was around the gender imbalance at Astwood Bank and the measures which were being taken to address this.

Officers explained that the specification of the projects was very prescriptive which reduced the ability for the Borough Council to effect change directly. It was suggested that the County Council would take account of evidence from interested parties and the

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4th November 2013

young people themselves should it be directed at improving the service. Officers also stressed that an aim of the programme was to prevent young people from becoming NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and getting involved in anti-social behaviour. To that extent, the focus was as much about reaching the right children as about reaching a particular number of children. The County Council was to provide data during the next quarter and beyond which would give a much clearer picture as to whether this aim was being achieved. It was suggested that the Committee be provided with this data early in the next financial year.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the report be noted;**
- 2) Paul Finnemore from Worcestershire County Council be invited to the meeting of the Committee in June 2014 at which point the final two quarters of detailed attendance data for 2013/14 might be considered;**
- 3) Officers raise a number of issues with Paul Finnemore in the coming weeks including youth provision in Headless Cross, Oakenshaw and Webheath, the possibility of outreach work rather than work from a fixed base and measures to improve the gender balance at Youth Clubs; and**
- 4) Officers provide further details of the Primrose Hospice Santa Dash and Santa Cycle to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor following the meeting.**

71. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANIES - PRESENTATION

Members received two presentations, the first on Business Development and the second on Community Interest Companies.

The first of the presentations outlined the support that was available to new, young and growing businesses in Redditch, primarily through the Enterprising Worcestershire vehicle which utilised European Regional Development Funding to provide business advice and grant funding for businesses in eligible sectors. Officers considered that the business advice was the most significant benefit on offer to those looking to start or develop a business. For businesses in non-ERDF eligible sectors there was also some grant funding available through Enterprising Worcestershire.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4th November 2013

It was now proposed to extend the Programme until 2016 and a number of targets had been set locally. To date the programme was looking to deliver near to target in most areas although grant applications were low at present. Officers highlighted that the programme had not been running that long and it was expected that the majority of grant applications would come about later within the process of a business's interaction with Enterprising Worcestershire. Finally, Officers highlighted the additional sources of support available to local businesses such as the Business Development Programme, the Growth Accelerator and the Green Bridge Supply Chain.

The Council advertised the business support available and maintained links with Job Centre Plus but was dependent on potential businesses approaching the Council to utilise the support on offer. It was suggested that a competition for new Redditch businesses might encourage and reward local entrepreneurial spirit. Officers were supportive of the principle but were aware that the critical mass of new businesses supported through the Enterprising Worcestershire Programme might not yet exist in Redditch.

The second presentation focussed on the support provided to the voluntary sector by the Council and its partners. The Council had a process for the provision of grant funding on an annual basis but there was also a great deal of training, support and mentoring carried out by the Council to assist this sector. This support included help in filling out application forms, identifying additional sources of funding and signposting groups to organisations and support opportunities such as the Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN) and the Changing Futures Fund. These organisations were particularly useful in addressing questions as to the most appropriate form of voluntary sector organisation any particular group might choose to become.

Officers explained that the primary encouragement for the set up of new Community Interest Companies was through the provision of Stronger Community Grants of up to £500. Members were concerned that groups should be made more aware that the provision of these grants should be seen as the start of a process rather than an end in itself. Officers confirmed that a number of organisations did use this grant funding as a stepping stone whereas others simply sought support for one-off events. It was noted that even such one-off events could have a legacy in a particular locality, however. Members raised the possibility of an award for enterprising voluntary and community sector organisations within Redditch. Officers highlighted the supportive and collaborative nature of those working in this sector which generally ran counter to a spirit of competition.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4th November 2013

RESOLVED that

the presentations be noted.

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

The Committee received the minutes of the most recent meeting of the Executive Committee and the current Executive Committee Work Programme.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 15th October 2013 and the Executive Committee Work Programme be noted.

73. WORK PROGRAMME

Officers reported a number of updates to the Committee's Work Programme. Aside from the discussion on Redditch United Football Club agreed earlier in the meeting, it was noted that there were two further items for the next meeting in December, these being the Quarterly Recommendation Tracker and a presentation on the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Members were also made aware that the County Council had made Officers available to attend an informal briefing on the transport implications of Local Plan No.4 at very short notice and it was proposed that this be held on the evening of Wednesday, 6th November. Given that the majority of Members were unavailable on that date it was agreed that the Committee's disappointment at the failure of County Council Officers to come forward with a date sooner be communicated to the County Council. The Committee also agreed that a date for this briefing be sought early in the new year.

Concern was expressed that levels of support for Overview and Scrutiny should be maintained following the departure of one of the Officers whose focus was on this area of work. It was recognised that there were budgetary pressures but it was contended that Overview and Scrutiny was as good as the investment in the process.

Officers acknowledged these concerns, noting that Overview and Scrutiny at Redditch had long enjoyed cross-party support. The Committee was informed that Officers would be meeting with

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4th November 2013

Leading Members and Senior Management within the next two weeks to discuss the options available. The creation of a shared team had provided resilience and, given that Democratic Services Officer posts were generic, cover could be provided from elsewhere within the team in the short term.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **subject to the amendments included within the preamble, above, the Committee's Work Programme be noted; and**
- 2) **the Committee's disappointment at the failure of County Council Officers to come forward with a date for a briefing on the transport implications of Local Plan No.4 in a timely manner be communicated to the County Council by the Executive Director for Planning, Regulatory and Housing Services.**

74. TASK GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

The following updates on current Task Group reviews were provided:

- a) Abbey Stadium Task Group – Chair, Councillor Carole Gandy

Councillor Gandy informed the Committee that the group was planning on visiting a Leisure Centre in Evesham in December. It was proposed that, in order to do the review justice and provide a satisfactory outcome, the deadline for the finalisation of the report be extended to June 2014.

- b) Landscaping Task Group – Chair, Councillor Gay Hopkins

Councillor Hopkins provided a brief update on the work her group had undertaken, including attendance at a Shared Services Board meeting at which a lengthy presentation on the transformation work within this service was given. It was reported that the group would be going out on site with Tree Surgeons on Wednesday of that week.

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

In Councillor Mason's absence, Members' attention was drawn to the summaries of the first two meetings provided within the agenda. It was noted that the group would observe

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4th November 2013

the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee meeting on 21st November and subsequently interview the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee.

d) Voluntary Sector Task Group – Chair, Councillor Pat Witherspoon

Councillor Witherspoon stated that the group had a heavy workload. Members had recently reviewed the content of the final report produced by the Third Sector Task and Finish Group in 2008 in order to avoid duplicating that group's work. It was reported that senior Officers involved in the Council's involvement with the Voluntary Sector would be interviewed within two weeks of this meeting.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the deadline for submission of the Abbey Stadium Task Group final report be extended to June 2014; and**
- 2) **the update reports be noted.**

75. HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Pat Witherspoon provided a brief oral summary in her capacity as Redditch Borough Council's representative on the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC).

The HOSC was meeting later that week but Councillor Witherspoon expressed grave concerns over statements made by the Chairman of the Trust Board in local media around closing services at the Alexandra Hospital should issues of safety arise. Councillor Witherspoon had raised the matter with the Chair of the HOSC and had suggested that the Chairman of the Trust Board be summoned before that Committee. Other Members echoed the fear that the longer the matter was left unresolved the greater the difficulty in attracting and retaining staff at the hospital.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

76. CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY PANEL - UPDATE REPORT

Councillor Andrew Brazier, Chair of the Panel, introduced an update on the recent meeting of this Panel.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4th November 2013

It was reported that Supt. Kevin Purcell, Divisional Superintendent for West Mercia (North Worcestershire), had provided the Panel with a brief overview of the policing arrangements for Redditch in the future. Councillor Brazier advised that the Police were in the process of recruiting further Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and Special Constables to assist with work in schools and the local community. Recruitment of Police Cadets was a further means of breaking down barriers with young people and under-represented communities. Police Officers were generally spending more time out of the Police Station and within local communities under a separate initiative.

Members were informed that West Mercia Police were considering the future use of Redditch Police Station as the current building was difficult and costly to maintain and car parking was inadequate. It was possible that an alternative base might be identified and utilised within the next five years.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.58 pm

.....
Chair

WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS AND COUNTY COUNCIL**WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES****MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE****THURSDAY, 26TH SEPTEMBER 2013 AT 4.30 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs. B. Behan, R. Berry, A. N. Blagg, M. A. Bullivant (Vice-Chairman), B. Clayton, R. Davis, Mrs. L. Denham, J. Fisher, P. Harrison, M. Hart, Mrs. L. Hodgson (Chairman), D. Hughes (during Minute No's 15/13 to 21/13), K. Jennings and C. B. Taylor

Invitees: Mr. I. Pumfrey, Head of Community Services, Malvern Hills District Council

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Mr. S. Jorden, Ms. C. Flanagan, Mr. M. Kay, Mr. S. Wilkes and Ms. A. Scarce

11/13 **APOLOGIES**

No apologies for absence were received.

12/13 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

13/13 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee held on 27th June 2013 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

14/13 **WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES ANNUAL RETURN 2012 / 2013**

The Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources informed Members that the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Annual Report, which was discussed at the June meeting, had now been audited by Grant Thornton, but unfortunately had only been received today. It was confirmed that this had been agreed and no issues had been raised by Grant Thornton. However, the Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources intended to raise her concerns with Grant Thornton in respect of the delay which had occurred in receiving the WRS Annual Report. The Committee also wished its concerns to be noted to ensure that such a delay did not occur in the future.

15/13 **1ST QUARTER PERFORMANCE AND ACTIVITY REPORT**

The Committee considered a report which detailed the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Activity Data for Quarter 1. It was noted that, due to data transfer issues the report only covered April and May 2013 of Quarter 1. Members were informed that June was the month during which all data was transferred to the new database and the team developing the IT system were still working on the reports needed to extract data from the system. June's activity would be included within the Quarter 2 activity report, which was due to be received at the Committee's November meeting.

Mr. S. Wilkes, Business Manager, WRS drew Members attention to consumer complaints relating to the Trading Standards function, which had remained at the same level as the previous year. With the common top areas continuing to be second hand cars, home improvements and furniture. In respect of nuisance complaints the report highlighted that there continued to be a strong seasonality to this type of demand.

Members raised and discussed the following areas in more detail:

- The responsibility for organising public burials.
- Comparative data being provided within future reports.
- Clarity on data in respect of the number of hits. Members were informed that "one hit" referred to one incident, which in theory could have a number of complaints against it.

The Head of WRS informed Members that as the new IT system developed over the coming months further detail would be available in respect of outcome measures which would be cascaded down into future reports.

RESOLVED that the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Activity Data Quarter 1 report be noted.

16/13 **REPORT ON ACTIVITY IN RELATION TO FOOD CONTAMINATION FOLLOWING THE HORSE MEAT SCANDAL**

Members considered a report in respect of the activity in relation to food contamination following the horse meat fraud which also provided information on the sampling of products, including food. It was acknowledged that sampling was generally the only means of determining what was in a product and/or whether that product was safe.

The Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) provided Members with details of the work that had been carried out during the recent "horse meat" scandal and informed Members that WRS had been involved in providing evidence to the Government Select Committee which had subsequently been set up. The Head of WRS advised that the majority of products concerned were frozen beef products, 99% of which were unaffected with 1% containing traces of horse DNA (which was in fact a fraud issue, rather than a food safety concern).

Members were provided with detailed information on the following areas:

- WRS working in partnership with Defra and the Food Standards Agency.
- Intelligence led investigations.
- Food labelling.
- The sampling process and minimum requirements (including the number carried out by WRS).
- The food chain (including cutting, preparation and distribution of meat) and preventative work carried out.
- WRS' strategic aims.
- Regulations in respect of game.

Following further discussions it was

RESOLVED that the role of Worcestershire Regulatory Services in preventing and/or detecting food fraud and that the support for minimum levels of market testing through sampling by the service as detailed in the report be noted.

17/13 **WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

Members considered the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Budget Monitoring Report for April to June 2013.

The Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources highlighted the projected underspend for the year of £27,000 and provided details of the projected underspend within salaries which was offset by an anticipated overspend on agency staffing. The additional agency costs would impact on 2013/2014 as there had been an increase for the service together with supporting the implementation of the new ICT System. The following areas were discussed by Members in detail:

- The likelihood of any staff redundancies following a restructure of the service.
- The use of agency staff.
- The cost of the ICT Project, together with the length of time taken to put in place.

Members were reminded that WRS had had to deal with more than 20 legacy systems and that data transfer to the new system had been difficult and complex, together with combing this with a more mobile and flexible working system for staff had proven challenging, but the aim had been to build a system which would have long term efficiency benefits.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the financial position for the period April to June 2013 as detailed in the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Budget Monitoring Report be noted; and

(b) that the drawdown of £21,000 severance costs from partner councils, as detailed in Appendix 3 to the report, be approved.

18/13 **CORE SERVICE MATRIX FOR WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES**

The Committee considered a report on the Core Service Matrix for Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS).

The Head of WRS informed Members that the Matrix was designed to assist decision making in relation to balancing the need for financial restraint against the risk involved and had arisen out of a “zero based budget” style exercise carried out at the request of the Management Board. The Matrix represented the minimum resources and budget required to meet current levels of demand and to provide a legal and compliant service in all current functional areas.

Members discussed the following areas in more detail:

- The net cost per service.
- The calculation of the scores.
- The various licensing functions.
- The relationship between WRS and the Worcestershire Hub.
- The percentage of service in respect of Food Safety Sampling and Health and Safety Inspections.
- The new legislation in respect of scrap metal dealers.

Mr. M. Kay, Business Manager, WRS informed Members that following a recent pilot scheme being carried out at Worcester City, time recording had begun to take place and would be rolled out to all areas in October.

RESOLVED that the Core Service Matrix for Worcestershire Regulatory Services be adopted as the reference point for all future discussions on service delivery and financial planning for 2014/2015 onwards.

19/13 **WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES FUTURE FINANCIAL PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS**

The Committee considered a report in respect of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Future Financial Planning Assumptions. These assumptions had been made in order to assist with the development of the 3 year financial plan. These needed to be agreed in order for a consistent approach to be taken across all partners. The Head of WRS detailed the assumptions to be used for future discussions:

- a) The cost of licensing was excluded from any calculations towards savings because it was full cost recovery only (as previously agreed by Joint Committee Members).
- b) Other functions which were full cost recovery only also be excluded, other than for the purposes of efficiency saving (e.g. IPPC).

- c) All fees/charges must be on a full economic cost recovery basis as a minimum, to generate maximum legitimate surpluses (unless otherwise stated and where there was good reason for this).
- d) Any income from new sources to be used for the benefit of all partners and any surpluses apportioned in accordance with the prevailing cost sharing arrangement to incentivise income generation across the partnership.
- e) Any required savings requested following the adoption of the risk matrix and the new financial allocations model should be provided by partners on a year by year basis and citing cash amounts per annum NOT percentages.
- f) The model for financial allocations will be reviewed every two years, with a fresh demand assessment being undertaken to establish the veracity of the model going forward.
- g) Where growth in demand/activity appears to be a financial threat to the service, it should be raised with the Management Board so partners can assess the impact and work with WRS Managers to address the situation.
- h) Where costs are fixed by virtue of contract or similar reason, these will only be included in the savings process at a point in time where they can reasonably be realised.
- i) All potential service reductions are risk assessed on an individual basis.
- j) Where a proposed level of service provision is considered 'such a high risk that it is unsafe' in the professional opinion of senior managers, the Head of WRS will be obliged to write to the relevant Management Board representative and the Chair of the Joint Committee to inform them of this.
- k) It must be accepted that there is likely to be a need for up-front investment to realise savings and the lead-in time for the realisation of cost recovery will increase.

The following points were clarified:

- It was confirmed that in respect of (e) and (f) as detailed above cash was to be used as this was more easily calculated.
- In respect of (d) this referred to any income generated in respect of such things as food hygiene training courses which were provided by WRS.
- Severance costs may be included within (k) in order to make savings in the future.
- Financial models considered by the Management Board in order to ensure a reference point was reached for partners to receive different levels of service if required.
- The changes which have taken place since the inception of the service and the differing financial demands on each authority and the service level provided.

The Head of WRS confirmed that it continued to look at every opportunity to reduce fixed costs, but an assumption could not be made that this would happen as in some cases, for example, the contract with the office building had some considerable time to run before it expired.

RESOLVED that the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Financial Planning Assumptions be adopted as a key supporting mechanism for the development of future financial plans.

20/13 **REVIEW OF APPORTIONMENT OF WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES PARTNER COSTS 2013 / 2014**

The Committee considered a report on the Review of Apportionment of Costs.

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources reminded the Committee that officers had been working on a revised cost allocation methodology for the past 12 months which had included the consideration of a number of different approaches. The aim of the review was to reallocate the costs associated with the delivery of regulatory services functions using a demand led rationale of resources deployed to each partner. The legal agreement as approved by all participating Councils stated the requirement for this revised approach to be in place for April 2013. At the Joint Committee meeting in June 2013, officers had requested a delay in the final presentation of the review to ensure that an appropriate method of allocation was identified.

The budget would be more “activity based” and per capita per establishment using the matrix and in conjunction with the acknowledgement that significant savings needed to be made. To ensure that no authority had an increase in contribution due to the revised resource allocation an adjustment had been made across all Districts to offset any additional cost allocation, which was shown as “dampening costs”. Members discussed the following areas in more detail:

- The methodology used, including the “dampening costs” and any future savings (including a per capita approach).
- The percentage of savings made and the need to reach a fair and equitable solution for all 7 authorities.
- The need by each authority to make savings and the acceptance that it was not possible to have a service where “one size” fitted the needs of all partners.

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources provided detailed information in respect of the £157,000 identified as “Health and Well Being”. Officers had discussed this at Management Board and it had been evident that much of the work undertaken was already covered across the County by both District and County funded officers. It had therefore been proposed that this service was no longer provided by Worcestershire Regulatory Services and that each partner should receive an equal share of the saving this produced. The Committee discussed in detail the work that was covered by Health and Well Being in order to ensure that it was satisfied that the work would continue to be covered by each partner. The Head of WRS confirmed that where separate funding was provided, WRS would continue to support specific projects.

RESOLVED:

- a) that the new basis of cost allocation as presented in Appendix 1 & 2 to the report be approved;

- b) that within the Statement of Partner Requirements the functional activity of “Health and Well Being” no longer be provided by Worcestershire Regulatory Services with effect from 1st April 2014 be approved. This will mean that the functions, as detailed in Appendix 3 to the report, will no longer be undertaken by Worcestershire Regulatory Services. These will have to be presented to the participating partners;
- c) that the net savings of £157, 000 made from the removal of the above activity be refunded back equally to the 7 partner Councils (£22,000 per Council) with effect from 1st April 2014 be approved;
- d) that the base level of 2014/2015 budget, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, of £4,979,689 to include the reduction in budget of £646,000 in order for partner Councils to identify any additional savings that are required over the period 2014/2015 – 2016/2017 be approved;
- e) that the outcome of the cost allocation and the revised cash allocation for 2014/2015 to the partner authorities as detailed below, be approved:

Bromsgrove	£492,193
Malvern	£415,639
Redditch	£581,474
Worcester City	£600,755
Wychavon	£754,516
Wyre Forest	£574,347
Worcestershire County	£1,560,766
	£4,979,689

- f) that the revised basis of allocation be effective from 1st April 2014;
- g) that the percentage share to be used for allocation of savings, severance, transformation and any other ad hoc costs to be shared on the following percentage basis be approved and be effective from 1st April 2014. This reflects the demand and data allocation:

Bromsgrove	10.01%
Malvern	8.53%
Redditch	11.76%
Worcester City	12.13%
Wychavon	15.13%
Wyre Forest	11.62%
Worcestershire County	30.82%

- h) that Bromsgrove District Council legal department, as host, make the relevant amendments to the legal agreement on behalf on the participating partners.

21/13 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman announced that a matter had been brought to her attention which she considered to be of so urgent a nature that it could not wait until the next meeting.

The Committee were informed that a letter had been received, immediately prior to the meeting, from Councillor P. Swinburn, Chairman, Worcestershire Hub Shared Service (WHSS) Management Board in respect of funding for work WHSS undertook on behalf of Worcestershire Regulatory Services and the withdrawal of these services at the end of October 2013, due to the number of customer service advisors that was now required to provide these services.

The Head of WRS provided the Committee with background information and assured Members that WRS was committed to finding a way forward in order to resolve this matter. Discussions had been on-going in recent months and delays had occurred in demand data being received by WRS from Worcestershire Hub in order to clarify the request for financial support to provide further staff. The Head of WRS confirmed to Members that he was disappointed with the letter received from the Worcestershire Hub Shared Service Board as he understood that negotiations were still on-going in order to resolve this matter.

Mr. I. Pumfrey, Head of Community Services, Malvern Hills District Council, informed Members that as a Member of both Management Boards he had been aware of the situation and understood that the letter was a reflection on the Board's frustrations as the matter was now causing some disruptions to the Hub partners and putting staff under significant pressure. By highlighting this to the Committee it hoped that a swift conclusion could be reached.

Councillor L. Denham informed Members that she was a Member of the Worcestershire Hub Shared Service Board and had been present at the meeting when the letter had been discussed. The Principal Solicitor, Bromsgrove District and Redditch Boroughs Councils advised Councillor L. Denham that she may have a conflict of interest and that it was not appropriate for her to comment further on the matter.

Members were disappointed that this matter had not been brought to their attention at an earlier stage of the negotiations and that the timescale given did not give them sufficient time to investigate the situation and provide a suitable response. The Committee also discussed the options for alternative delivery and the Head of WRS confirmed that a number of options were being considered in light of the on-going negotiations.

After further discussion it was

RESOLVED that the Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services would respond to the letter on behalf of the Chairman and the Committee would receive an update report at the next meeting of the Joint Committee to be held on 21st November 2013.

The meeting closed at 6.28 p.m.

Chairman

This page is intentionally left blank

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL AND
BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

SHARED SERVICES BOARD

17th October 2013 at 5.30pm

COUNCIL CHAMBER, THE TOWN HALL, REDDITCH

Present: Councillors Bill Hartnett (Chair) and Debbie Taylor (Redditch Borough Council)

Councillors Roger Hollingworth and Mark Bullivant (Bromsgrove District Council)

In attendance: Councillors Mike Chalk, John Fisher, Andy Fry, Gay Hopkins, Phil Mould and Pat Witherspoon (Redditch BC)

Councillors Rita Dent and Helen Jones (Bromsgrove DC)

Officers: Emma Alldrick, Gavin Boyes, Kevin Dicks, Chris Franklin, Sue Hanley, Sue Horrobin, Dave Kesterton, Helen Mole, Neil Partridge and Jason Simon

Notes: Michael Craggs

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Juliet Brunner, Greg Chance (both Redditch BC), Margaret Sherrey and Mike Webb (both Bromsgrove DC).

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Board held on 4th July 2013 were approved as a correct record.

CONFIDENTIALITY

These notes are an open public record of proceedings of the Board.

[Meetings of the Board are not subject to statutory Access to Information requirements; but information relating to individual post holders and/or employee relations matters would nonetheless not be revealed to the press or public.]

3. PRESENTATION – TREES INTERVENTION

Members received a presentation (attached as appendix 1) on the Tree Transformation work. This provided a background to the new system's introduction and explained the progress that had been made so far.

Members asked number of questions during the presentation which elicited the following information:

- A shift from a reactive to the implementation of a proactive trees work programme has gradually been taking place since the trial began. Significant progress is expected to be made over the next 12-18 months as the backlog of outstanding work reduces.
- The trial will need to take place over a period of at least twelve months in order to gather fair and representative data due to trees maintenance being a seasonal issue. However, changes can still be introduced during this period to ensure that there is ongoing improvement.
- A distinct Trees Team consisting of four Officers has recently been established as part of the trial. This will enable customers to speak directly to the tree experts themselves. It is thought that this has contributed to a saving for BDC, although the exact figures cannot yet be provided.
- A dedicated email address and contact telephone number for the trees team has been introduced. However, most enquiries are still received via the Hub.
- Two thirds of enquiries had been processed as 'no further action' as Officers were unable to take action on various matters under the old system, such as TV signalling and leaf fall. Under the new system, it is hoped that the tree surgeons will help to reduce future demand by proactively clearing up other work while they are on a particular job.
- The trees are not routinely inspected on a proactive basis, although Officers do occasionally need to undertake work in response to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) whenever they arise. There may be greater scope to conduct a proactive review during the winter period when demand for tree maintenance typically decreases.
- Ash dieback has not yet emerged as a significant issue affecting the trees in both towns. It could take approximately fifteen years before this becomes a real issue of concern.
- Officers were receptive to the suggestion of working more closely with schools on the issue of trees. They have already worked with some local school and scout groups around woodland management.
- Around 15-20 hectares of trees are coppiced each year.
- Residents have the right to cut back overhanging branches. However, this right is removed if there is a TPO involved. Residents would then require written consent from the relevant council to undertake any maintenance work.

Officers explained that they were intending to develop a complete shared service across both Councils on trees maintenance. They are currently required to report any enquiries in Bromsgrove to Worcestershire County

Council (WCC) to resolve. However, Members across both councils felt that the current system in Redditch was working far better. Officers were therefore looking to enter into discussions with WCC to explain that it would be far more cost effective for a complete shared service regarding tree maintenance to be rolled out across both towns rather than continue with their current approach of sub-contracting work in Bromsgrove out to private operators.

PRESENTATION – PLACE INTERVENTION

Members also received a presentation (attached as appendix 2) which provided an update on the Place Intervention currently operating in Winyates.

The following information was provided in response to questions posed by Members:

- The team had not yet considered taking on local residents as volunteers, although this could be looked at as the team developed stronger links with the local community. It is thought that this could provide local residents with new skills which they could utilise in future to maintain their area. However, this would not compromise the employment of relevant Council staff.
- The team have been working very effectively with the *Winning Winyates* team in terms of building these links with the local community. This has led to the team receiving very positive feedback from Winyates residents to the work that has already been completed.
- It is hoped that Place Intervention will lead to more residents taking pride in the appearance of their area. Many long term benefits are envisaged. The emphasis is on helping local people to be self-sufficient in improving their area themselves.
- Schemes such as Community Payback have already been successfully utilised to improve the visual appearance of Winyates and other areas within Redditch.
- The team could look to introduce more recycling facilities in the area as part of the Place Intervention, such as dual bins for general waste and recycling, however there would be practical issues around ensuring that residents deposited their waste into the correct bin. However, residents were already being encouraged to recycle properly, notably through the recent introduction of a new bin system.
- New bins with an ashtray top have been very effective in reducing the number of cigarette ends in the near vicinity. This has significantly improved the visual appearance of the area.
- Refuse collectors are expected to leave all areas from which they are collecting tidy, regardless of whether waste had been correctly deposited.

- Dog fouling remains a real area of concern. A recent two month trial clearly indicated that signage was ineffective in tackling the issue. Alternative methods will therefore need to be explored.
- The Place Intervention methods that have been used in Winyates will eventually be rolled out across other areas within the Borough.

Members expressed their satisfaction with the team's excellent work to date in Winyates. They heard that members within the Trees and Place Intervention teams were enjoying far greater job satisfaction through transformation as they were given the autonomy to swiftly resolve issues as they deemed appropriate.

(Both presentations would be circulated to all Members for information)

4. PROGRESS REPORT

The Board noted a progress report which provided an update on all elements of the Shared Services / Transformation work taking place across both Councils.

5. NEXT MEETING

It was noted the next meeting would take place on Thursday 16th January 2014 at Bromsgrove. It was felt that more Members needed to be encouraged to attend future meetings to become better informed about the excellent work that was being achieved through transformation.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm
and closed at 7.45pm

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**10th December 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: <u>Cllr John Fisher</u> John Staniland / Georgina Harris	Last meeting – 4th December 2013

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**10th December 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 meeting – 10 th December 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: <u>Cllr John Fisher</u> / Vice-Chair: <u>Cllr Phil Mould</u> Sheena Jones	Last meeting – 25 th November 2013.
7.	Grants Panel	Chair: Cllr David Bush / Vice-Chair: <u>Cllr Greg Chance</u> Donna Hancox	Next meeting – January 2014.
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

10th December 2013

9.	Independent Remuneration Panel	Chair: Mr R Key / Sheena Jones	Last meeting – 29 th November 2013
----	--------------------------------	-----------------------------------	--

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**10th December 2013**ACTION MONITORING**

Portfolio Holder(s) / Responsible Officer	Action requested	Status
12th November 2013		
Cllr Hartnett/ J Pickering / R Bamford	<p>Nomination of an Asset of Community Value</p> <p>It was suggested that Officers explore opportunities for use of the building in the meantime of any potential asset sale moratorium as a result of the nomination.</p>	Officers have looked into this possibility and have identified practical difficulties in the first instance.
26th November 2013		
Cllr Mould / Cllr Fisher S Jones / C Felton	<p>Redditch United Football Club – Ground Relocation</p> <p>Councillor Brunner requested information on the cost of holding the meeting to consider the proposal for ground relocation by Redditch United Football Club.</p>	
<u>Note:</u>	<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>	Report period: 12/11/13 to present

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

Document is Restricted

