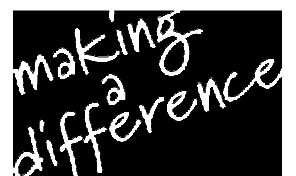


Executive Committee

Tuesday, 14th January
2014
7.00 pm

Committee Room 2
Town Hall
Redditch



www.redditchbc.gov.uk

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

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

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

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Do Not stop to collect personal belongings.

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

The emergency Assembly Area is on Walter Stranz Square.



Executive

14th January 2014

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"> 1. 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; and 2. any 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 10 th December 2013. (Minutes attached)
5. Medium Term Financial Plan Exec Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)	To consider a report on the medium Term Financial Plan for 2014/14 – 2016/17. (Oral presentation) All Wards
6. Council Tax Base (Pages 9 - 14) Exec Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)	To consider the information that will enable Members to set the Council Tax Base for 2013/14. (Report attached) All Wards

<p>7. Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2014/15 (Pages 15 - 28) Head of Customer Access and Financial Support</p>	<p>To consider the results of the statutory public consultation on Redditch Borough Council's draft Council Tax Support Scheme and proposals to implement the Scheme along with proposals for the implementation of a Hardship Fund to help support those most badly affected by the changes to support.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>All Wards</p>
<p>8. Public Services Network Compliance at Redditch Borough Council (Pages 29 - 36) Head of Business Transformation and Organisational Development</p>	<p>To update the Executive Committee on the requirement to achieve compliance with the Public Services Network (formerly known as the Government Secure eXtranet) and to seek approval for the release of funds for year 2013/14 to start achieving compliance in the current financial year.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>(No Direct Ward Relevance)</p>
<p>9. Polling Districts and Polling Places - 2013/14 Review (Pages 37 - 58) Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services</p>	<p>To consider the findings of the formal review of Polling Districts and Polling Places, as required under the Representation of the People Act 1983 and Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, and as based on Electoral Commission Guidance.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>All Wards</p>
<p>10. Impact of Worcestershire County Council budget proposals (Pages 59 - 66) Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services</p>	<p>To consider schedules detailing impact of Worcestershire County Council funding cuts to develop a consultation response from the Borough Council.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>All Wards</p>
<p>11. Worcestershire Shared Services - removal of Health and Wellbeing from functional activity of the service (Pages 67 - 76) Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services</p>	<p>To consider a report requesting delegated authority for Redditch Borough representatives on the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee to approve changes to the Agreement for the Shared Service to reflect the removal of Health and Wellbeing from the functionality of the service and to approve the attendant budgetary changes.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>All Wards</p>

Executive

Committee

14th January 2014

<p>12. REDI Centre - Meanwhile Lease</p> <p>Exec Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)</p>	<p>To consider a report on the future use of the former REDI Centre under a Meanwhile Lease.</p> <p>(Oral report / report to follow)</p> <p>(Central Ward)</p>
<p>13. Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>(Pages 77 - 90)</p> <p>Chief Executive</p>	<p>To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3rd December 2013.</p> <p>There are no recommendations to consider.</p> <p>(Minutes attached)</p>
<p>14. Minutes / Referrals - Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Executive Panels etc.</p> <p>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>15. Advisory Panels - update report</p> <p>(Pages 91 - 94)</p> <p>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>16. Action Monitoring</p> <p>(Pages 95 - 96)</p> <p>Chief Executive</p>	<p>To consider an update on the actions arising from previous meetings of the Committee.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p>
<p>17. 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)</p>

	<p>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>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

Tuesday, 10 December
2013

MINUTES

Present:

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

Also Present:

Councillors Joe Baker, Michael Braley, David Bush and Carole Gandy
Ms Zoe Thomas, Grant Thornton

Officers:

E Baker, R Bamford, M Bough, S Hanley, C Flanagan, S Morgan, J Pickering, A de Warr

Committee Services Officer:

S Jones

89. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rebecca Blake and Juliet Brunner.

90. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

91. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Webheath Planning Appeal

The Leader invited Clare Flanagan, Principal Solicitor, to brief all present about proposals for dealing with the forthcoming planning appeal concerning development at Pumphouse Lane, Redditch. He had agreed that the briefing could be given as there was public interest in the appeal and to enable members' views to be taken into account when a decision was made about the issue. The Ward members had been invited to attend to hear the briefing.

The main elements of the briefing were:

.....
Chair

- In May 2013 the Planning Committee had refused an application for outline planning permission at Pumphouse Lane as it was considered to be unsustainable due to:
 - the resultant additional traffic on the local road network,
 - the lack of suitable infrastructure to support the development and
 - the lack of contribution towards the wider highway network infrastructure.

As such, it would cause harm to the safety and amenity of the residents of the Webheath area and the town of Redditch as a whole, contrary to Policies CS6 and CS7 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3.

- The applicants had appealed against this decision and the inquiry had been arranged for 6 days in January.
- The decision had been made contrary to officer recommendation so a Planning Consultant had been engaged to defend the Appeal on behalf of the Council. Counsel for the Borough Council (QC) had also been appointed.
- The Council's QC met relevant officers to discuss the statement explaining the Council's case and how it would be defended at the Inquiry. During this discussion, the Planning consultant had made it clear that, in her opinion, of the three strands of the refusal reason, two had no technical evidence from any source to support them and they were indefensible. She had also been explicit in her unwillingness to defend these reasons at the Inquiry.
- In the light of this, the QC's advice was that the Borough Council should withdraw the "local" elements of the refusal reason or risk being exposed to substantial costs.
- If the Council took this action, its case would rest entirely on the County highway reason. The County Council had advocated refusal if the wider highway network contribution was not agreed. It was possible that the County Council would reach agreement with the appellant. If this happened, the County Council would not be involved with the Appeal.

If the Council continued to pursue the Appeal in spite of the advice of the Planning Consultant and QC, it could be exposed to costs in the region of £100,000. The Chief Executive and Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services were of the view that the Council should no longer seek to defend the "local" elements of the refusal reason at Appeal. By withdrawing from these elements now, the Council could reduce its costs liability. This view was endorsed by the Council's Section 151 Officer.

The deadline for preparing documents for the Appeal required them to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 20th December. As there would not be a Council meeting before this date, officers

would seek an urgent decision on the matter to minimise the Council's liability.

The Leader first called on the two local ward members to comment or ask questions on the report. One of the ward members said that he supported the recommendation outlined in the paper and endorsed the action of the officers.

In response to questions, Officers explained that the QC would continue to represent the Council and would attend the opening of the Inquiry. The Council would continue to accrue the costs of employing the Barrister to represent it as the Local Planning Authority. The Officers' advice addressed the risk of being liable for substantial costs incurred by the Appellant when no evidence could be offered to support two elements of the Council's case.

The majority of the Executive Committee supported the officer's proposal not to defend the element of the refusal reason relating to additional traffic on the local road network and the lack of suitable infrastructure to support the development. It was noted that the decision required was a Council one because of the potential impact on its budget. However, because of the timescale this would be made under its procedure for making an urgent decision between meetings.

92. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

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

93. GRANT THORNTON - REVIEW OF FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

The Leader welcomed Zoe Thomas from Grant Thornton to the meeting. She presented the external auditors' report and highlighted that the auditors had presented an unqualified Value for Money conclusion.

The main issues highlighted by the Auditors were:

- the relatively low level of balances held by the Council. This was now at a critical point;
- linking the strategic objectives to the Medium Term Financial Plan;
- increasing the transparency of formal reporting to members.

The Committee noted the actions to be carried out by the Management Team in response to these issues. Heads of Service

were working to be clear where savings would be made between 2014 and 2017.

RESOLVED that

the review of Financial Resilience by the Council's External Auditors and the actions agreed to be undertaken by the Council be noted.

94. QUARTERLY BUDGET MONITORING - 2ND QUARTER 2013/14

Members noted that work was being carried out to identify the savings which contributed to the unidentified sum of £550k in the revenue budget for 2013-14.

In response to a query from Councillor Brandon Clayton about the Housing capital programme, the Financial Services Manager undertook to clarify details around the delay in letting the contract for solid wall insulation.

RESOLVED that

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

RECOMMENDED that

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

95. COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Customer Access and Financial Support, which set out options for further technical amendments to Council Tax discounts.

Seven options were set out for consideration, including reducing the period of 50% empty homes discount from 6 months to 3, 2 or 1 month, removal of various discounts and implementation of a long term empty homes premium.

The Committee noted the representation attached to the report from the National Landlords Association and specifically the proposal that the Council offer Council Tax relief to landlords for a maximum

of 21 days if the landlords were accredited. Officers advised that if the approach suggested was adopted it could be perceived as unfair to other sections of society.

Overall the Committee considered that the proposal to reduce the period of 50% empty homes discount to three months was reasonable in the current circumstances. Members also supported the ability to create a hardship fund to help those most affected by the changes to Council Tax support.

RESOLVED that

the period of 50% Empty Homes Discount be reduced to three months.

96. OPTIONS FOR THREADNEEDLE HOUSE

The Committee considered a report which proposed to declare Threadneedle House as a surplus asset, to enable the building to be marketed for sale.

During consideration of the report it was noted that the Post Office would remain on site as a continuing tenant. Retention of the property involved significant expenditure and an ongoing void cost of £72k per year. Members also noted the opportunity to revitalise this area of the town centre with the disposal of the property.

RESOLVED 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.**

97. MATCHBOROUGH EAST COMMUNITY CENTRE - EXTENSION OF LEASE

The Committee supported the proposal to extend the lease of the Centre so that the tenant could apply for additional funding grant from external organisations and undertake improvements.

RESOLVED that

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

98. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 4th November 2013.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4th November 2013 be received and noted.

99. WORCESTERSHIRE SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee held on 26th September 2013 were considered by the Committee.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee held on 26th September 2013 be received and noted.

100. SHARED SERVICES BOARD

The minutes of the meeting of the Shared Services Board held on 17th October 2013 were received by the Committee.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Shared Services Board held on 17th October 2013 be received and noted.

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

There were no minutes or referral under this item.

102. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

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

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

103. ACTION MONITORING

The Committee's Action Monitoring report was considered by Members. In response to a query it was noted that information on the costs of the additional meeting of the Executive Committee on 26th November had not yet been supplied to Councillor Brunner.

RESOLVED that

the Committee's Action Monitoring report be noted.

104. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED 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 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act, as amended:

Minute 105 – Property A – Options for Disposal

105. PROPERTY A - OPTIONS FOR DISPOSAL

The Committee received an update report following the compulsory purchase of the property as previously agreed.

Officers advised that the disposal of the property on the open market offered the quickest option to bring the property back into use.

RESOLVED that

- 1) On the vesting of the property into Council ownership, authority is delegated to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services and Housing Strategy Manager to deal with the contents left in the property;**
- 2) On the vesting of the property into Council ownership, authority be delegated to the Head of Customer Access and Financial Support to instruct agents for it to be sold on the open market and should no sale be agreed sold at auction, to include covenants that the house be improved to a decent homes standard or the plot redeveloped for housing within a specified time and agree any appropriate offer and complete the sale; and**

- 3) Authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Finance and Resources to use Regional Housing Capital pot funding to cover any shortfall between the sale price and Council's purchase cost.**

[During consideration of this item Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed which would relate to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information).]

106. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES / REFERRALS (IF ANY)

There were no confidential minutes or referrals.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.26 pm

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

14th January 2014

COUNCIL TAX BASE 2014/15

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr. John Fisher, Corporate Management Portfolio Holder
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Jayne Pickering, Director of Finance & Resources
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	Not Applicable
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

To enable Members to set the Council Tax Base for 2014/15.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Committee is asked to RECOMMEND that

- 1) the calculation of the Council's Tax Base for the whole and parts of the area for 2014/15, as detailed in Appendix A to the report, be approved; and**
- 2) in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the figures calculated by the Redditch Borough Council as its tax base for the whole area for the year 2014/15 be 24,656.96 and for the parts of the area listed below be:**

Parish of Feckenham	364.78
Rest of Redditch	<u>24,292.18</u>
	<u>24,656.96</u>

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1** With the introduction of the Council Tax Support Scheme, the base has been calculated and adjusted by the estimated amount of Council Tax Support discounts awardable.
- 3.2** The Council Tax support is estimated using data as at 30th November 2013. Any changes to the amount payable will have a direct impact on the chargeable amount of Council Tax. The authority will receive a grant for the financial year for an estimated 90% of Council Tax

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

14th January 2014

Support payable; this will be set and not varied with changes in the number of discounts awarded under the Council Tax Support.

Legal Implications

- 3.3 The Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992 require a billing authority to notify its major precepting bodies (and its Parishes, if required) of the Tax Base, for the whole or part of the area for the following financial year. The precepting bodies - Worcestershire County Council, West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner and Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue Authority - need this information in order to calculate and notify the Borough Council of their precept requirements for 2014/15. This will enable tax setting resolutions to be finalised and bills to be produced early in March 2014.
- 3.4 The legislation also requires a billing authority to calculate the tax base for any "special areas" within its boundary. There are no such areas in the Redditch Borough.
- 3.5 It is necessary to outline the method by which these calculations have been carried out so that the Council can formally adopt them for the purposes of the 1992 Regulations.

Service/Operational Implications

- 3.6 In October 2013, form CTB1 was submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government. This analyses the draft Valuation List of properties into the various bands and then provides further details of those properties which are subject to the full charge, those entitled to discounts and those which are exempt.
- 3.7 This report is a summary of that return updated to include any known changes since November. It also makes provision for anticipated changes which could arise for a variety of reasons such as appeals, new properties or properties falling off the list. An allowance of 1.00% has been made for non-collection of the tax.
- 3.8 The Council is required to set a Council Tax Base each year, this forms part of the process of setting the following year budget. Failure to do so will result in the Council not being a Well Managed Organisation.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

14th January 2014

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.9 The Tax Base for 2014/15 has been calculated to be **24,656.96**. Once this has been agreed, the County Council, Police & Crime Commissioner and Fire Authority will be notified and the figures will be used in the setting of the Council Tax to be presented to the Executive Committee and approved by the Council on 24th February 2014.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

There is no identified risk associated with the proposal contained in this report.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix A - Council Tax Base 2014/15

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

CTB1 (October 2013) Return.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Sam Morgan
E Mail: sam.morgan@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel: (01527) 64252 ext. 3790

Appendix A - Council Tax Base 2014/15

		Changes in base	1% Non- collection	Tax base
Number of Band D equivalent dwellings:	30,849.44	-5,943.42	-249.06	24,656.96
Feckenham	403.67	-35.21	-3.68	364.78
Rest of the Borough	30,445.77	-5,908.21	-245.38	24,292.18

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

14th January 2014

LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2014/15

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
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision	Non-Key Decision

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 Government changes to the benefits scheme in relation to Council Tax required the Council to introduce an annual Council Tax Support Scheme, from April 2013. This report summarises the results of the statutory public consultation on Redditch Borough Council's draft Council Tax Support Scheme ("the Scheme") 2014.
- 1.2 The report presents proposals to implement the Council Tax Support Scheme along with proposals for the implementation of a Hardship Fund to help support those most badly affected by the changes to support.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is asked to RECOMMEND to Council that

- 1) the Scheme, as amended, be implemented, 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; and**
- 2) the implementation of the proposed Hardship Scheme be agreed.**

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 From April 2013 the national scheme of Council Tax Benefit was replaced by locally agreed Council Tax Support schemes. Pensionable age claimants are protected but local billing authorities are tasked with determining the extent of support for working age claimants. As this is a discount rather than a benefit, the impact of the change to Council Tax Support was to reduce the tax base for the Council by the amount of any support given. This affected all organisations that raise a precept, including the Borough Council, major preceptors and the parish council. Compensation for the loss of council tax is 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.

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- 3.2 The cost of council tax benefits in Redditch was around £6.5m per year. The changes resulted in a 10% shortfall of around £650k which is split between the Borough Council (including the parish council) and our major preceptors, broadly in line with the proportion of council tax levied. As a result the County Council will take the largest share of the shortfall. The cost to the Borough was in the region of £91k (14%).
- 3.3 Also from April 2013, more discretion was given to billing authorities regarding discounts and exemptions for second and empty homes. The Borough Council reduced discounts on second homes from 10% to nil and reduced short term empty property exemptions from 100% to 50%. These changes are estimated to claw back in the region of £257k (£26k for RBC) of the overall funding gap.
- 3.4 The results of an initial round of consultation on proposals for changes to the Local Council Tax Support scheme were reported to Executive Committee on 12th November 2013
- 3.5 Executive Committee endorsed the proposal to cap entitlement to Council Tax Support at 80% of liability and resolved that a further period of consultation be entered in into.
- 3.6 The Council has received 46 responses to the latest consultation, which closed on 20th December 2013. Respondents were asked whether or not they supported the proposals.
- 3.7 A total of 37% of the respondents were in favour of changes to the scheme and 6.5% offered no opinion. 56.5% of responders did not support the proposed change.
- 3.8 The adoption of the draft scheme would meet the remainder of the funding gap in Council Tax Support. It would also ensure that for households with the same Council Tax liability there will be an equal cut to Council Tax Support in cash terms.
- 3.9 The impact of the changes, particularly on residents who are of low income and have not previously paid Council Tax will need to be assessed and those individuals offered support and advice on managing their finances. It is hoped that with the framework of personal support that is in place as part of the transformation of the service this will mitigate the impact on residents and reduce any potential shortfalls in income recovery.
- 3.10 There is also the potential to introduce a small discretionary hardship fund for a two year period if we introduce a scheme which meets the full funding gap.. Individual comments received in relation to both statutory consultations evidence a need to consider specific support for those most in need.

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**14th January 2014

- 3.11 As this is required to be a discretionary scheme, and in order to ensure that the fund can be used to help those in the most need, the scheme needs to be as flexible as possible within certain parameters. A copy of the proposed Council Tax Hardship Fund is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.12 As part of the process for determining a person's application for support through the Hardship Fund officers would take into account the applicant's financial situation, and the impact that the shortfall is likely to have on them. Eligibility to apply for other local grants and benefits will also be considered.
- 3.13 The Council Tax Hardship Fund will be used for discretionary stand-alone payments, subject to an annual cash limit, in cases where the local authority considers that extra help with Council Tax liability is needed as a result of the Council Tax Discount scheme introduced from April 2014.
- 3.14 Only people who are working age and already in receipt of council tax discount will be permitted to make an application. The duration and level of the award will be determined individually for each application and when an award period comes to an end the claimant will be required to reapply at which time their circumstances will be reviewed. The award will only be used towards payment of Council Tax.
- 3.15 A simple application process is proposed, with claimants making a declaration that information they have provided is correct. When an application is approved the applicant will be issued with a revised Council Tax Bill and a covering letter to confirm the period and amount of award. If an application is not approved this will be advised by letter and the applicant given the opportunity to ask us to reconsider the decision.

Legal Implications

- 3.16 On 1 April 2013 Council Tax Benefit was abolished and replaced by a new scheme of Council Tax support called "Council Tax Support Schemes". Under s13A and Schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (inserted by s10 Local Government Act 2012); each local authority was required to make a Council Tax Support Scheme specifying the reductions which are to apply to the amounts of council tax payable.
- 3.17 Statutory Instrument 2012/2885, "The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012" ensured that certain requirements prescribed by the Government were included in each Scheme (subsequently amended by S.I. 2012/3085)
- 3.18 The Authority must make any revisions to the Scheme no later than 31 January in the financial year preceding the one when it will take effect, so that it will be necessary for the Council's 2014/15 scheme to be in place by 31st January 2014.

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- 3.19 Failure to agree a new scheme would result in the current scheme continuing to apply and a subsequent funding gap would emerge for both the Borough Council and other preceptors, which could result in challenge from those organisations.
- 3.20 The Hardship Fund Policy will be published on the Council's website to ensure openness and transparency.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.21 Income recovery and financial support officers will work to ensure that residents are supported through any changes to mitigate the impact on their own finances together with those of the Borough. Additional training will be provided to staff in budget management to support our residents in managing their finances.
- 3.22 There may be a requirement to make changes to software however this will be dependent on the revisions to the scheme that are finally approved.
- 3.23 Staff will be provided with training and guidance in relation to the Council Tax Hardship Fund and dealing with applications.
- 3.24 The provision of support through the Council Tax Hardship Fund is line with our purpose to help people to be financially independent. Staff will also consider other avenues of support to help the applicant back to financial independence.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.25 The changes will not disproportionately impact on those with special protected characteristics under the equality duty and the discretionary hardship fund will minimise any adverse impact caused.

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.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Council Tax Hardship Fund – Draft Scheme.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Held in Revenues Service

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AUTHOR OF REPORT

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COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

Council Tax Hardship Fund Policy

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1. BACKGROUND

The Council Tax Hardship Fund has been set up by Redditch Borough Council to cover the shortfall between Council Tax liability and payments of Council Tax Support, in cases of exceptional hardship.

Every customer who is entitled to Council Tax Support and who has a shortfall is entitled to make a claim for help from the Fund.

The main features of the Fund are that:

- Hardship Fund awards are discretionary.
- Customers do not have a statutory right to an award.
- The Hardship Fund Policy is held within the main Council Tax Support scheme.
- Hardship Fund awards are not a payment of the main Council Tax Support scheme.
- It is a cash limited fund.
- Only working age customers can make an application.
- Only those already in receipt of Council Tax Support can make an application.
- Redditch Borough Council may decide that a backdated award is appropriate; which could then settle council tax arrears. This would be the only circumstance where the Hardship Fund could be used to facilitate payment of Council Tax arrears accrued as a result of changes to Council Tax Support.

In addition to this fund there is a Discretionary Housing Payments scheme which covers the shortfall between rent and Housing Benefit.

2. COUNCIL TAX HARDSHIP FUND AND EQUALITIES

The creation of a Council Tax Hardship Fund facility meets Redditch Borough Council's obligations under the Equalities Act.

The Government has been clear that, in developing a local Council Tax Support scheme, vulnerable groups should be protected. Other than statutory protection for pensioners, the Government has not prescribed the other groups that local Councils should support. Redditch Borough Council has designed their Council Tax Support scheme to take account of the various statutes that currently protect vulnerable people.

We recognise the importance of protecting our most vulnerable customers and also the impact these changes have. We have created the Hardship Fund to ensure that we protect and support those most in need. The Hardship Fund is intended to help in cases of extreme financial hardship rather than support a lifestyle.

3. PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to specify how Redditch Borough Council will operate the scheme, and to indicate some of the factors which will be considered when deciding if a Hardship Fund payment can be made.

Each case will be treated on its own merits and all customers will be treated fairly and equally in the accessibility to the Fund and also the decisions made with applications.

Where a customer is not claiming a Council Tax discount to which they may be entitled or a welfare benefit or additional financial assistance, they will be advised, and assisted in making a claim to maximise their income, before their claim for Hardship Funds will be decided.

4. STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

Redditch Borough Council will, through the operation of this policy, aim to:

- Allow a short period of time for someone to adjust to unforeseen short-term circumstances and to enable them to “bridge the gap” during this time.
- Support people in managing their finances.
- Help customers through personal crisis and difficult events that affect their finances.
- Aim to help prevent exceptional hardship.
- Support vulnerable young people in the transition to adult life.
- Help those who are trying to help themselves financially.
- Alleviate poverty.
- Sustain tenancies and prevention of homelessness.
- Keep families together.
- Encourage and support people to obtain and sustain employment.
- Give support to those who are financially vulnerable.

The Hardship Fund is a short-term emergency fund, awarded whilst the customer seeks alternative solutions.

It cannot be awarded for the following circumstances:

- Where full Council Tax liability is being met by Council Tax Support.
- For any other reason, other than to reduce Council Tax liability.
- Where the Council considers that there are unnecessary expenses or/debts which the customer has not taken reasonable steps to reduce.
- To reduce any Council Tax Support recoverable overpayment.
- To cover previous years Council Tax arrears.
- Where there is a shortfall caused by a Department for Work and Pensions sanction or suspension being applied because the customer has turned down work/interview/training opportunities.
- When Council Tax Support is suspended.

5. AWARDING AN EXCEPTIONAL HARDSHIP FUND PAYMENT

The Redditch Borough Council will decide whether or not to make a Hardship Fund award, and how much any award might be.

When making this decision the Redditch Borough Council will consider:

- The shortfall between Council Tax Support and Council Tax Liability.
- The steps taken by the customer to reduce their Council Tax Liability.

- Changing payment methods, re-profiling Council Tax instalments or setting alternative payment arrangements in order to make them affordable.
- To ensure that all discounts are granted.
- Steps taken by the customer to establish whether they are entitled to other welfare benefits.
- If a Discretionary Housing Payment has already been awarded to meet a shortfall in rent.
- The personal circumstances, age and medical circumstances (including ill health and disabilities) of the customer, their partner and any dependants and any other occupants of the customer's home.
- The difficulty experienced by the customer which prohibits them from being able to meet their Council Tax Liability, and the length of time this difficulty will exist.
- Shortfalls due to non-dependant deductions.
- The income and expenditure of the customer, their partner and any dependants or other occupants of the customer's home.
- How deemed reasonable expenditure exceeds income.
- That all income may be taken into account, including those which are disregarded when awarding Council Tax Support.
- Any savings or capital that might be held by the customer or their partner.
- Other debts outstanding for the customer and their partner.
- Whether the customer has already accessed or is engaging for assistance with budgeting and financial/debt management advice. A Hardship Fund award may not be made until the customer has accepted assistance either from the Council or third party, to enable them to manage their finances more effectively, including the termination of non-essential expenditure.
- The exceptional nature of the customer and/or their family's circumstances that impact on finances.
- The length of time they have lived in the property.
- The amount available in the Hardship Fund at the time of the application.
- The list is not exhaustive and other relevant factors and special circumstances will be considered.

An award from the Hardship Fund does not guarantee that a further award will be made at a later date, even if the customer's circumstances have not changed.

A Hardship Fund award may be less than the difference between the Council Tax Liability and the amount of Council Tax Support paid.

6. PUBLICITY

Redditch Borough Council will publicise the Fund and will work with interested parties to achieve this. A copy of this policy will be made available for inspection and will be published on the Council's website.

7. MAKING A CLAIM

A customer must make a claim for a Hardship Fund award by submitting an application to Redditch Borough Council. The application form can be obtained via the telephone, in person at one of the Council offices and/or the internet. Customers can get assistance with the completion of the form from the Revenues and Benefits Service, Customer Services or Housing Locality Teams at the Council.

The application form must be fully completed and supporting information or evidence provided, as reasonably requested by the Council.

In most cases the person who claims the Hardship Fund award will be the person entitled to Council Tax Support. However, a claim can be accepted from someone acting on another's behalf, such as an appointee, if it is considered reasonable.

8. CHANGE IN CIRCUMSTANCES

Redditch Borough Council may revise an award from the Hardship Fund where the customer's circumstances have changed which either increases or reduces their Council Tax Support entitlement.

9. DUTIES OF CUSTOMER

A person claiming an Hardship Fund Payment is required to:

- Give the Council such information as it may require to make a decision.
- Tell the Council of any changes in circumstances that may be relevant to their on-going claim.
- Give the Council such other information as it may require in connection with their claim.

10. AMOUNT AND DURATION OF AWARD

Both the amount and the duration of the award are determined at the discretion of the Council and will be done on the basis of the evidence supplied and the circumstances of the claim.

- The start date will determined on individual circumstances of each case.
- The Hardship Fund will normally be awarded for a minimum of one week.
- The maximum length of the award will not exceed the end of the financial year in which the award is given.

11. PAYMENT OF AWARD

A Hardship Fund award will be made directly into the customer's Council Tax account, thus reducing the amount of Council Tax payable.

12. OVERPAYMENTS

Overpaid Hardship Fund awards will generally be recovered directly from the customers Council Tax account, thus increasing the amount of Council Tax due and payable.

13. NOTIFICATION OF AN AWARD

When an application is approved the applicant will be issued with a revised Council Tax Bill and a covering letter to confirm the period and amount of award

14. RECONSIDERING DECISIONS

If the customer disagrees with a decision in respect of an application for a Hardship Fund they will be given one calendar month to ask us to reconsider.

When we are asked to reconsider a decision the case will be passed to a Manager, who will review the reasons for the original decision and take into account any new information supplied. The customer will be informed in writing of the reviewed decision, and associated reasons for that decision.

There are no further appeal rights against a decision made on a Hardship Fund application.

15. FRAUD

Redditch Borough Council is committed to protecting public funds and ensure funds are awarded to the people who are rightfully eligible to them.

A customer who tries to fraudulently claim a Hardship Fund award by falsely declaring their circumstances, providing a false statement or evidence in support of their application, may have committed an offence under The Fraud Act 2006.

Where the Council suspects that such a fraud may have been committed, this matter will be investigated as appropriate and may lead to criminal proceedings being instigated.

16. LEGISLATION

The Local Government Finance Act 2012 amends Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and sets out the requirement for Councils to develop and adopt a localised Council Tax Support Scheme. This Hardship Fund Policy forms part of this Scheme.

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PUBLIC SERVICES NETWORK COMPLIANCE AT RBC

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr John Fisher
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Deb Poole
Ward(s) Affected	N/A
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	N/A
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision	Non-Key Decision

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update the Executive Committee on the requirement to achieve compliance with the Public Services Network (formerly known as the Government Secure eXtranet) and to seek approval for the release of funds for year 2013/14 to start achieving compliance in the current financial year. The Cabinet Office has made it clear that they expect to see the authority moving towards a position of compliance with immediate effect.
- 1.2 This is the first stage of the work required and further funding will be needed to achieve full compliance in 2014 and 2015. These additional financial implications will be included in the budget setting process for 2014/15.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is requested to RECOMMEND that

- 1) **an increase to the 2013/14 capital programme of £90k, to be funded from borrowing, be approved;**
- 2) **the borrowing costs be released from balances in 2013/14 and be included as unavoidable pressures in the 2014/15 medium term financial plan; and**
- 3) **the release of £39k from balances in 2013/14 to fund the associated revenue costs be approved.**

2 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council is in the process of migrating its connection from the Government Secure eXtranet (GSX) to a new, secure, UK Government network, the Public Services Network (PSN). The same services it currently accesses through the GSX will be available through the PSN. The Cabinet Office 'own' and manage the PSN.
- 3.2 The Cabinet Office has issued a new set of conditions which all local authorities must adhere to in order to have continued access to the GSX whilst fully

migrating to the PSN. Unlike previous GSX compliance regimes, the Cabinet Office has taken a zero-tolerance approach to compliance, and is advising local authorities that they will lose their connection to the GSX and any future connection to the PSN should they not fully adhere to all PSN requirements.

- 3.3 The Council have been receiving electronic files from the Government Connect Secure Network (GCSX) for a number of years without any major problems or security breaches e.g.: DWP data relating to Benefits. During this time the Government became increasingly concerned about security holes and possible network breaches.
- 3.4 As previously mentioned the Cabinet Office have moved to a 'zero tolerance' position on compliance. This means that unless the Council can demonstrate that it has addressed the Government's concerns, they will cease our connection to the Public Services Network.
- 3.5 If the Council were to be disconnected this would prevent RBC from managing citizens benefits, transferring secure information with our partners such as the Police and the NHS, managing secure emails and access to secure government web sites. In addition it would prevent future plans to implement Individual Electoral Registration (IER) from June 2014.
- 3.6 However, the Cabinet Office announced a further shift in its PSN compliance regime on 4th October 2013. PSN compliance has proved challenging for many public sector organisations and the Cabinet Office has struggled to provide feedback on submissions within prescribed time limits. The latest announcement removes the immediate suspension risk for organisations whom the Cabinet Office considers are demonstrating a genuine appetite to achieve compliance.
- 3.7 It has been made clear that this is not a weakening of the stance taken by the Cabinet Office; all organisations will still need to move towards 100% compliance with PSN requirements, and the Cabinet Office has not removed the option of disconnecting from the PSN those organisations which are not compliant and do not demonstrate a clear willingness to become so. For this reason and following discussion with the Portfolio Holder, a release of funds in this financial year is required to continue to achieve PSN compliance.
- 3.8 The PSN requires that staff no longer use their own IT equipment to access PSN business systems or data from home. This means the council will now have to provide a PC or similar device for staff to use at home. A 'two factor' authentication device similar to those used by some banks will also be required.
- 3.9 The Cabinet Office have also confirmed that all staff using PSN applications must meet the Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) which will be covered by a Basic Disclosure Check (previously a CRB check).

4. KEY ISSUES**Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The schedule at Appendix 1 details the costs for 2013/14 associated with achieving compliance with the PSN. The analysis shows £90k capital funding required together with revenue costs of £39k. Whilst this report concentrates on the immediate requirement to demonstrate our commitment to achieving compliance it is important to note that the long term solution has further cost implications. These costs are based on **current PSN** requirements as determined by Central Government. However, these requirements change constantly so the financial implications may increase in future as the Cabinet Office continues to change the specification.
- 4.2 Several business applications and their servers are required to be upgraded to enable compliance. The costs for these are as yet unknown but will be included in the budget setting process for 2014/15. A number of systems will require upgrading or replacing to include; Haven (Leisure), IBS (Revenues and Benefits) and M3 (Environmental Services)

Legal Implications

- 4.3 There are implications regarding the Data Protection Act should staff not use the PSN to exchange private, confidential or sensitive information with our partners.

Service / Operational Implications

- 4.4 The longer term solution will require several changes to the way we operate including:
- PSN requires that all servers are updated to the latest security patches which in some cases are not compatible with current versions of business systems. Some of the business systems have not been upgraded for some years as there may not have been a business need to do so. However, the environment has changed as a result of PSN and this will have major cost implications
 - All Business Application servers will be required to have Microsoft Patches applied on a regular basis. Initially, this is a considerable piece of work for ICT and for departments while testing the patches. There will also be considerable amounts of 'down time' for the services whilst the work is completed. An on-going procedure for regular upgrading, testing and downtime will need to be put in place to ensure continued compliance.
 - Two factor authentication for any remote access to our network including Citrix, Secure Global Desktop and Ipads will be required.
 - All passwords will need to be a minimum of twelve characters in length.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 4.5 During the work to patch and upgrade the servers and applications there will be breaks in the availability of the technical systems which may impact on service delivery to the customer. Details of the scheduled works have been discussed with system administrators and Heads of Service. Regular communication briefs have been sent out to staff and placed on the ORB (intranet) and where possible, works are being carried out after hours or during weekends to minimise the impact on services. However, given the quantity of patches to be applied and the tight timescales, some work will have to be done during core hours.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 The PSN compliance criteria change on a regular basis, depending on which representative from the Cabinet Office is involved. Consequently there is a risk that even if the Authority commits to the spend and business changes mentioned in this report, that it could still fail future compliance audits and require additional spend and further business changes to ensure PSN access.
- 5.2 There are significant risks to business if we do not achieve compliance particularly in relation to the Benefits Service and the Elections Service. Loss of our connection would also have a detrimental effect on data sharing between the Council and other public bodies e.g.: the Police, NHS etc.
- 5.3 The Council has been working with Cabinet Office Representatives for some months on an 'air-gap' solution that would have removed the need to apply security patches to all of the corporate servers. Only the servers contained within the 'air-gap' would have needed patches applying to them. A discussion on 11th September with a different person at the Cabinet Office made it clear that the only way the new Individual Electoral Registration (IER) information would be sent to Councils was via the PSN, effective from June 2014. This ended the 'air-gap' as a solution as Elections rely on data from several other servers which would need to be moved into the 'air-gap'. This would effectively bring large parts of our existing network in to the 'air-gap'. The need to patch all corporate servers has now become critical as a result. This work is now underway but will cause disruption to many of our services.
- 5.4 Assurances have been sought from the Cabinet Office that if we carry out the work as stated that we will achieve compliance, but, at the time of writing this report, no assurances have been received.
- 5.5 In order to help with the management of these risks the PSN Code of Connection compliance is being added to the Corporate Risk Register.

6. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – PSN Budget Pressures RBC (this appendix is exempt)

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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Document is Restricted

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POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES – REVIEW 2013/14

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor J Fisher, Portfolio Holder - Corporate Management
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillors consulted	Yes
Not a Key Decision	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The report sets out the findings of the formal review of Polling Districts and Polling Places, as required under the Representation of the People Act 1983 and Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, and as based on Electoral Commission Guidance. The Review has to be conducted before 2015 to cover a 5-year period.
- 1.2 The recommendations below, and in the attached Appendix 1, set out Officers' proposals arising from the Review. If approved by the Council on 27 January, any amendments required to be made in respect of Polling Place arrangements for Elections, Referendums, Polls, and associated Electoral Registration arrangements, will have effect from the date of publication of the revised Register of Electors on 14 February 2014.
- 1.3 To meet statutory deadlines for publication of the new Register of Electors, for use in all elections to be held in the following 12 month period, decision of the full Council will be required by 27 January 2013 latest.

2. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to RECOMMEND that

- 1) a) the Polling District changes indicated on the Plan attached to this report at Appendix 4A be made to Brockhill Polling District (BYB) in the Batchley and Brockhill Ward, to generate a new Polling District (BYD), with effect from the date of publication of the next revised Register of Electors (14 February 2014);
- b) subject to a) above, the new Polling District (BYD) be named EITHER 'Lowans', OR 'Brockhill East';

(Note: selection of 'Lowans' would leave 'Brockhill East' free for later use further East, if necessary.)

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- c) in the case of 'Brockhill East' being selected at b) above, the current 'Brockhill' Polling District (BYB) be redesignated 'Brockhill West';
- 2) the Council designate the entire new Polling District 'BYD' as the Polling Place for the Polling District, until such time as planned new community facilities/school are built and available for this purpose and that, thereafter, they be the designated Polling Place;
- 3) further to 2) above, in the interim, authority be delegated to the (Acting) Returning Officer, in consultation with Leaders, Portfolio Holder and Ward Members, to confirm the precise location of the new portable unit(s) to provide Polling Places within the new 'BYD' Polling District;
- 4) In respect of Appendix 1 to the report ('Review Final Recommendations',)
- a) there be no change to existing arrangements, where indicated;
- b) *further recommendations to be determined in relation to options detailed in the Appendix in relation to:*
- Church Hill North Polling District (CHB) Church Hill Ward, St Peters Polling District (CCA) Crabbs Cross Ward, and Highfields Polling District (HOB) Headless Cross and Oakenshaw Ward); and*
- c) any decisions under b) above take effect from 14 February 2014;
- 5) a proposed new voluntary contract in respect of the use of private premises as Polling Places, as illustrated at Appendix 3 to the report, be endorsed and implemented with immediate effect.

3. KEY ISSUES**Financial Implications**

- 3.1 Subject to the Council's final decisions (programmed for January), there may be some minor financial implications for the Council which arise directly from this report, at this time, but which can be contained within existing budgets.

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- 3.2 Apart from the many other disadvantages of using portable buildings as Polling Station venues, significant financial savings can be made if permanent buildings are used, as detailed elsewhere in the report (paragraph 3.10/3.11 refers).

Legal Implications

- 3.3 The subject Review has been undertaken as required under the Representation of the People Act 1983 and Electoral Administration Act 2013, and in accordance with relevant Electoral Commission Guidance.
- 3.4 a) Authority to set Polling District boundaries and to designate Polling Places rests with the full Council (Statutory elements of the Council's Constitution under the Local Government Act 2000).
- b) Decisions about the situation of Polling Stations within designated Polling Places are for the (Acting) Returning Officer. Arrangements must comply with relevant provisions of the Representation of the People Acts and Regulations and the Equality Act 2010.
- 3.5 "Relevant authorities" (such as Redditch BC) must
- "a) seek to ensure that all the electors in the Constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances"; and
- "b) seek to ensure that, so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled, and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons. If it is necessary to use a place where the access is not ideal, then every reasonable adjustment must be undertaken to provide access for all electors."

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.6 Officers continue to attempt to identify polling station locations which improve both general accessibility and access for people with disabilities, but regret that this is not always possible to achieve, mainly because:
- a) available buildings are not in the ownership or under the control of the Council; and/or
- b) there are no suitable alternative premises available within the Polling District or Ward.

'Starting Points' for selection of Polling Places/ Stations

- 3.7 Polling Stations located within publicly funded premises (such as schools and local authority meeting rooms) are generally preferred as their availability can be relied upon and costs are low (the (Acting) Returning Officer has statutory powers to requisition such premises, which are generally well located and accessible). However, the schools themselves and pupils' parents are often understandably reluctant to accept their use as Polling Stations because of the impact of closures on their activities or on childcare.

If schools are designated, First Schools are normally selected because of reduced impact on important examination processes for older pupils.

- 3.8 Second choice for Polling Stations would be private venues. However these have the disadvantage of being more costly, as more commercial fees may be charged. The Returning Officer cannot guarantee their availability, as owners/managers of premises have the right to refuse hire at any time, without explanation.

For this reason Officers recommend the introduction of a new voluntary 'Contract' to endeavour to secure such premises more reliably and, in particular, to better secure 'succession' when/if management changes.

- 3.9 When there are no other appropriate alternatives, portable buildings may be used for Polling Stations. However, these are significantly more expensive than other premises and may often provide inadequate accommodation and accessibility for voters with disabilities.

- 3.10 As a rough guide, an average Portable Polling Station costs around £1,500 to hire, heat & light (installation of Portable Unit plus portable toilet / provision of power/generator, but costs would increase dramatically if a supplier other than the current one had to be used.) The equivalent average cost of private premises would be around £300 and premises provided via public funding charge only for additional heat, light and caretaking and therefore only around £100 each time.

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Key Issues

- A. Batchley & Brockhill Ward - Brockhill East Developments (proposed 'BYD' Polling District) (Appendix Plan 4A refers)
- 3.11 The considerable new developments (both current and projected) in the area of Brockhill East indicate a need for a further Polling Station. Although a school is eventually planned within the area, until such time as this is available a site for a new portable unit will need to be identified and Polling District boundaries reset between the current existing BYB (Brockhill) area and proposed new BYD (suggested name - 'Lowans' or 'Brockhill East') Polling District.
- 3.12 'BYD' Polling Station(s) would serve residents of both sides of Brockhill Lane and all current phases of development to the East of Brockhill Lane. Negotiations are taking place with the developers, Persimmon Homes, over suitable sites for Portable Units and outcomes will be reported to the Committee or full Council, dependent upon when initial agreement is reached on the location. In the interim, Officers recommend exceptional designation of the entire Polling District as 'Polling Place' which will enable later decisions to be readily taken, in consultation with Members, as to precise location of the temporary portable unit(s). (Recommendations 1), 2) and 3) above refer.)
- B. Central Ward – Smallwood Polling District (CEB) (Appendix Plan 4B refers)
- 3.13 Members noted last year that, as a result of a County Council review, Ipsley Youth House would no longer be available for use as a Polling Station for the Smallwood Polling District (CEB).
- 3.14 No suitable alternatives could be identified, so the Council agreed to use a Portable Building to be located on the Car Park adjacent to Youth House and Black Horse Public House.
- 3.15 Recent Council reports have indicated that former Council-owned premises in South Street may possibly become available once again for use, so Officers will maintain a watching brief and will report to Members further if this option becomes viable. In the interim there is no choice other than the continued use of the portable building.
- C. Church Hill Ward – Church Hill North Polling District (CHB) (Appendix Plan 4C refers)
- 3.16 Consultation with the current contacts at Abbeywood First School triggered a request that the Council cease use of the school as a Polling Place.

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- 3.17 If Members are minded to consider this request, Officers consider St Andrew's Church to offer suitable alternative premises (as indicated on the Plan attached to the report at Appendix 4C and included in the Display in the Town Hall Foyer). Minor savings could be made here, as the Church is already used as a Polling Place for Church Hill 'Marfield' Polling District (CHD). St Andrew's Church is located fairly close to the School and offers sufficient space and separate rooms to comfortably accommodate further polling stations.
- D. Church Hill Ward – Church Hill West Polling District (CHC)
(Appendix Plan 4D refers)
- 3.18 Officers have from time to time reported concerns with the current Polling Station at Marfield Barn premises, as they are hard to signpost and find for new voters, uncomfortable for Polling Station staff (cold, draughty and windows boarded up), and occasionally in the past in need of repair for the Health and Safety of those attending the Polling Station.
- 3.19 However, the premises are well located within the Polling District and substantially better options have yet to be identified. Officers have recently visited the site and report that, from the outside at least, the premises appeared to be in a better state of repair than when last inspected. No change is therefore proposed here.
- E. Crabbs Cross Ward – St Peters Polling District (CCA)
(Appendix Plan 4E refers)
- 3.20 Consultation with current premises' contacts triggered a request that the Council cease use of Crabbs Cross Academy (former Harry Taylor First School) as a Polling Place.
- 3.21 Entirely coincidentally an approach has been made by representatives of the Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints to offer their church premises as a Polling Place. Officers have visited the premises and find them eminently suitable.
- F. Crabbs Cross Ward – Callow Hill Polling District (CCC)
(Appendix Plan 4F refers)
- 3.22 Representations have been made by one resident of Milford Close, that electors from her area should be able to vote at the Gazebo, Foxholes Lane, rather than at the Windmill Community Centre, Ryegrass Lane, on the basis that it is easier to access the Gazebo on foot.
- 3.23 Officers have looked into this further and find that the two Polling Stations are almost exactly equidistant for anyone walking from the entrance to Milford Close (via an underpass under Windmill Drive

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near to the Bramley Cottage Public House) and, in the absence of any further representations from other residents, or local elected representatives, propose to make no change to present arrangements.

- 3.24 A prime consideration is that the Gazebo offers very limited and 'special' accommodation in terms of its use as a Polling Station, so unfortunately is not suited to serve any material increase in numbers. No change to Polling District Boundaries is therefore proposed.
- G. Headless Cross & Oakenshaw Ward - Highfields Polling District (HOB) (Appendix Plan 4B refers)
- 3.25 Members may recall that Methodist Church representatives gave notice that their Schoolroom would no longer be available for use as a Polling Station for the Highfields Polling District (HOB) after 2013.
- 3.26 In view of this, the Council agreed to locate a portable building on the Headless Cross shoppers' Car Park at 'the Green'.
- 3.27 As part of the current Review, Officers have investigated the possible use of the Rocklands Social Club Function Room and found it to be more than suitable for Polling Station use, more centrally located within the Polling District it would serve, and preferable in almost every respect to the proposed portable unit. The Club Secretary has confirmed his interest in making his premises available for this purpose.
- 3.28 In view of the east-west focus of the Polling District since last year's review, it is suggested that 'Birchfield' might now be a more descriptive name than the existing 'Highfields'.
- H. Lodge Park Ward – Holloway Polling District (LPB) (Appendix Plan 4H refers)
- 3.29 Some comments have been received about a degree of conflict of use of the communal room at Harry Taylor House with residents' needs. However no other viable Polling Place has been identified within this electoral area.
- 3.30 Comments have also been received about the possibility of improving the Polling Station entrance / exit arrangements for persons with disabilities by the Council providing a handrail. This matter is outside the strict remit of the review, but is being pursued separately with Housing Officers.

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- I. Lodge Park, Ward – St Georges Polling District (LPC)
(Appendix Plan 4I refers)
- 3.31 The Polling Station currently located at the Communal Room in Beoley Road serves a relatively small number of electors and Officers sometimes query its financial cost-benefit.
- However, local Members have requested that the Polling Station arrangements remain unchanged here in view of the age and disability profile of many electors which this station serves and its particular location within the Redditch Road network.
- J. Winyates Ward – Winyates West Polling District (WIB)
(Appendix Plan 4J refers)
- 3.32 Consultation with current premises' contacts at Roman Way First School has triggered a request that the Council cease use of the school as a Polling Place.
- 3.33 Officers have investigated the suitability of Winyates Barn in Fownhope Close/Winyates Centre as an alternative to the School and, although it could potentially serve as a Polling Place, it does have a range of disadvantages, particularly for persons arriving by car to vote, such as limited parking and less satisfactory access for persons with disabilities. It is also considerably less central to the Polling District which it serves than the School.
- K. Abbey Ward – Riverside and Papermill Polling Districts (ABA/ABB)
(Plan 4A shows the area below 'Bordesley Bridge' adj A441.)
- 3.34 Following the close of consultation at the end of November, it has been brought to the Election Team's notice that a development of some 200 dwellings has received Outline Consent for the site delineated by Birmingham Road, the Railway Line and Weights Lane in Bordesley.
- Once completed, this would trigger a need for review of the boundaries of two existing Polling Districts - Riverside and Papermill (ABA/ABB).
- 3.35 However, at this early stage, and without better knowledge of realistic timescales for the development, Officers recommend that this merely be noted and that further report be brought forward at an appropriate time – if and when necessary.

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Consultation

- 3.36 A very broad consultation exercise has taken place as required as part of this formal review. This included direct contact with local Political Party representatives and elected representatives – MP/MEP's; Borough Council and County Council Members, relevant Borough and County Council Officers and the local Police.
- 3.37 The consultation drew only limited interest and most responses were for no change to current arrangements. But all resultant comments have been reflected in the report, or else in the Summary of Responses at Appendix 1 to the report, as appropriate.
- 3.38 The (Acting) Returning Officer has a statutory obligation to respond to the consultation and her comments are incorporated in the Summary of Responses attached to the report at Appendix 1.
- 3.39 The consultation was a full open public exercise, but particularly targeted representatives of relevant interest groups, such as disability access and other disadvantaged minority groups. No responses have been received from any of these groups or their individual members to date.
- 3.40 A formal Public Notice at the beginning of the Review and subsequent press releases have been issued to local media organisations, triggering local newspaper and internet coverage.
- 3.41 Some responses raised matters beyond the scope of the review and therefore, although reflected in the Summary list, did not lead to further consideration within this report, or formal recommendations. However the points have been noted and may influence later processes as appropriate.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.42 The Council's Customer Care / Equalities policies directly cross-relate, particularly in relation to Access issues. Accessibility for members of minority or disadvantaged groups is a key issue in the selection of suitable Polling Stations.
- 3.43 Where possible Polling Station selection should also have due regard to increasing turnout.

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4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 Any changes agreed must be likely to be sustainable for a reasonable number of years, as frequent changes of Polling Station are not helpful for electors and undermine their knowledge of, and confidence in, electoral systems.
- 4.2 Choice of Polling Place / Polling Station should not give rise to significant grounds of complaint which might put election results at risk of challenge.
- 4.3 In terms of Environmental risks, it is of course preferable that choice of Polling Station location can help minimise unnecessary additional journeys by car / motorised vehicles.
- 4.4 In terms of Human Resources risks, the (Acting) Returning Officer must provide adequate levels and standards of staffing to secure proper polling arrangements.

The (A)RO must also, of course, have regard to the duty of care to election employees, given the exceptional hours they are required to work (normally beyond European Working Time Directive limits) and sometimes intense pressures triggered by turnouts at Parliamentary ('General') Elections.

In this respect some Polling Stations fall below generally acceptable standards – Portable Polling Stations in particular. This provides a further incentive to seek to identify improved Polling Station premises whenever possible.

5. APPENDICES

1. Schedule of (Acting) Returning Officer responses, with options / recommendations for change / no change
2. Brockhill East - New Polling District justifications.
3. Proposed voluntary agreement for Polling Station Premises
4. Plans – Polling Districts / Polling Stations featured in report *(not attached - all displayed at the meeting)*
 - A. Brockhill East Developments / new BYD Polling District
 - B. Central Ward – Smallwood – Portable Building
 - C. Church Hill – Abbeywood First School / St Andrew's Church
 - D. Church Hill - Church Hill Meeting Rooms / Marlfield Barn
 - E. Crabbs Cross - Church of Jesus Christ & Latter Day Saints

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- F. Crabbs Cross / Callow Hill – The Gazebo
- G. Headless Cross - Rocklands Social Club
- H. Lodge Park – Harry Taylor House Communal Room
- I. Lodge Park - Beoley Road Communal Room
- J. Winyates Ward - Roman Way First School / Winyates Barn.

Note: Photographs and plans will be available/displayed at the meeting.

6. **Background Papers**

- Boundary Committee for England – Final recommendations on future Electoral Arrangements for Redditch, Worcestershire – dated July 2002
- Previously published Polling Stations Review reports / Minutes.
- Relevant Statutory provisions.
- Relevant correspondence on public file from consultees.

7. **Terms Used in report**

'(Acting) Returning Officer'

Redditch Returning Officer, Mrs Sue Hanley, is designated (Acting) Returning Officer for Parliamentary Elections.

This is because the actual Returning Officer for a County Constituency, such as Redditch, is the High Sheriff for that County, which is a purely honorific title/role.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name : Susan Mould, Electoral Services Manager
E.mail : elections@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk .

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REVIEW OF REDDITCH POLLING DISTRICTS / POLLING PLACES – FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Ward	Polling Dist.	Polling Station.	Name	No Change	From *	Change	From *	(ACTING) RETURNING OFFICER'S / ELECTORAL OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATIONS
Abbey	Ward					Potential impact of planned new development off Weights Lane / Birmingham Road.	Planning Officers	No change at present time, but Officers to report further on possible revisions to Polling Districts ABA/ABB at a later stage if necessary.
	ABA	Abbeydale Club	Riverside					No change.
	ABB	Portable Unit Rush Lane, Church Hill.	Papermill					No change.
	ABC	Baptist Schoolroom	St Stephens					No change.
AB & Feck	Ward			None		None		
	AFA	Church Hall, Ch Rd.	Ast Bank					No change.
	AFB	Portable Unit, Banners Lane	Hunt End					No change.
	AFC	Feckenham Village Hall	St Johns					No change.
B & Brock	Ward			No change	1 Ward Cllr	Portakabins are unsuitable / inadequate	1 Resident	<i>(See below)</i>
	BYA	Batchley O S Shop	Birchensale					No change.
	BYB	Portable Unit Carthorse Lane	Brockhill / ** 'Brockhill West'?			Review boundaries on Eastern side, as part of creation of new Polling District, per below.	Officers RBC	No change of Polling Place, but review Polling District boundaries and naming, per BYD proposals below.

REVIEW OF REDDITCH POLLING DISTRICTS / POLLING PLACES – FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Ward	Polling Dist.	Polling Station.	Name	No Change	From *	Change	From *	(ACTING) RETURNING OFFICER'S / ELECTORAL OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATIONS
<i>(B & Brock cont...)</i>	BYC	Community Centre, Batchley	Foxlydiate					No change.
	'BYD'	NEW Portable Unit	'Lowans'? / ** 'Brockhill East'?	NEW		New Polling District Boundaries to be set.	Officers RBC	The Polling Place be a new portable unit(s) to be located at an appropriate site to serve the new developments *, within a new BYD Polling District, with boundaries as indicated on plan Appendix 4A (displayed at the meeting). Separate recommendations (in main report) refer.
Central	Ward							
	CEA	Bentley Close Communal Room	Musketts	No change	1 Resident			No change.
	CEB	Portable Unit Ipsley Street	Smallwood			Potential for move back to former Council-owned premises at 54 South Street (subject to separate Council decisions)	Officer proposal RBC/WCC	The present portable unit continue to be used as the Polling Place pending consideration of the possible availability of premises at 54 South Street.
	CEC	Southcrest Evangelical Chapel	Southcrest					No change.

REVIEW OF REDDITCH POLLING DISTRICTS / POLLING PLACES – FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Ward	Polling Dist.	Polling Station.	Name	No Change	From *	Change	From *	(ACTING) RETURNING OFFICER'S / ELECTORAL OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATIONS
Church Hill	Ward			No change	1 Co Councillor			
				No change	2x Ward Councillors			
	CHA	Church Hill Community Centre	Church Hill South					No change .
	CHB	Abbeywood 1 st School	Church Hill North			Request to cease use of school	School Governors	Consider relocation of Polling Station to St Andrew's Church.
	CHC	Marlfield Barn	Church Hill West			Concern re condition of premises	Officers RBC	No change, but maintain watching brief .
	CHD	St Andrew's Church	Marlfield					No change.
Crabbs X	Ward							
	CCA	Crabbs Cross Academy (former Harry Taylor 1st School)	St Peters			Request to cease use of school / Offer of alternative premises	Head Teacher Church of JC&LDS's	Consider relocating Polling Station to Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints, 321 Evesham Road, Crabbs Cross.
	CCB	Windmill Community Centre	Walkwood			Review Polling District boundaries / allocation of Polling Stations	1 Resident	No change.
	CCC	The Gazebo, Foxholes Lane	Callow Hill			Ditto - as above.	1 Resident	No change.

REVIEW OF REDDITCH POLLING DISTRICTS / POLLING PLACES – FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Ward	Polling Dist.	Polling Station.	Name	No Change	From *	Change	From *	(ACTING) RETURNING OFFICER'S / ELECTORAL OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATIONS
Greenlands	Ward			No change	1 Ward Councillor			
	GRA	St John's Church	Throckmorton					No change.
	GRB	Woodrow Community Centre	Woodrow	No change	Centre Contact			No change.
H C & O	Ward							
	HOA	Vaynor 1 st School	Vaynor					No change .
	HOB	Portable Unit, HX Car Park (Prev. Methodist Schoolroom,	Highfields / (Rename ? 'Birchfield'?)			Review use of Portable Building	Electoral Officers	Consider relocation to Rocklands Social Club Function Room, off Birchfield Road, Headless Cross and rename the Polling District 'Birchfield' (previously 'Highfields')
	HOC	Oakenshaw Community Centre	Oakenshaw N					No change.
	HOD	Portable Unit Grangers Lane	Oakenshaw S					No change.

REVIEW OF REDDITCH POLLING DISTRICTS / POLLING PLACES – FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Ward	Polling Dist.	Polling Station.	Name	No Change	From *	Change	From *	(ACTING) RETURNING OFFICER'S / ELECTORAL OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATIONS
Lodge Park	Ward			No change	2x Ward Councillors			
	LPA	Oak Hill 1 st School	Arrowcrest					No change.
	LPB	Communal Room, Harry Taylor House, Lakeside	Holloway	No change subject to comment	Local Resident, with disability.	Premises not ideal – impact on Residents / use of Fire exit - but no alternative?	Officer comment	No change. <i>(But seek improvements for voters with disabilities, by provision of handrail at Polling Station entrance / exit. Review practical arrangements, cleaning etc.)</i>
	LPC	Communal Room, Beoley Road West	St Georges	N/c subject to comment	2x. Ward Councillors			No change.
Matchboro'	Ward			No change	1 County Councillor			
	MBA	Matchborough Day Services, Clifton Close	Matchborough West					No change .
	MBB	Matchborough East Meeting Rooms	Matchborough East					No change.

REVIEW OF REDDITCH POLLING DISTRICTS / POLLING PLACES – FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Ward	Polling Dist.	Polling Station.	Name	No Change	From *	Change	From *	(ACTING) RETURNING OFFICER'S / ELECTORAL OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATIONS
West	Ward			None		None		
	WEA	Webheath Village Hall	Webheath					No change .
	WEB	Webheath Village Hall	Windmill					No change.
Winyates	Ward			No change	2x Ward Councillors			
				No change	1 County Councillor			
	WIA	Tenacres M Room	Winyates East					No change.
	WIB	Roman Way 1 st Sch	Winyates West			Request to cease use of school	Head Teacher	No change. (Explanation within report refers – Section 3J)
	WIC	Winyates Green Meeting Room	Winyates Green	No change	1 Resident			No change.

NOTES:

1. This table represents the situation at the close of consultation on the review and constitutes Officers' final comments/recommendations to the Council (via the Executive Committee).
2. A copy of background documentation and all relevant correspondence is available on deposit to view by request to the Electoral Services Manager:

email democracy@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk / tel: (015327) 881421

(Polling Districts/ Polling Places Review Final Summary 2013/14/sms/140102)

**Brockhill East Developments -
New Polling District 'justifications'**

A. Existing BYB Brockhill	Properties *	Electors *	Projected Electors
59 streets	1,511	2,374	(subject to B. below)
Totals:	1,511	2,374	2,700 + over 5 years

Notes: 1.* Details are as at October 2013 (pre-canvass) unless otherwise stated. Some new properties are unoccupied.

2. Current Polling Station(s): 1 or 2 Portable units - subject to projected turnout at particular elections - . located in Carhorse Lane

3. 1,500 – 1,800 electors are taken as general maximum working number per polling station (subject to other relevant considerations).

B. New BYD Polling District	Properties *	Electors *	Projected Electors
Almondsbury Close	14	17	
Brockhill Lane	17	30	
Burrington Close	44	1	
Cookridge Close	25	6	
Dovecote Close	41	0	
Elrington Close	24	0	
Fairweather Close	12	0	
Gretton Close	25	8	
Oversley Close	10	17	
Pink Green Lane	7	15	
Plumstead Close	11	21	
Robins Lane	13	29	
Wheelers Lane	59	113	
Further new developments	N/K	N/K	544+
Totals: 13 + streets	302	257	544 + in 2014

- Notes:**
1. Polling Station(s) proposed: 1 Portable unit initially, on a site to be determined, increasing as necessary, pro-rata to population growth; pending construction of planned new Community facilities.
 2. Provisions in the current report aim to provide ample scope for growth over a 5-year period - the statutory period for the present review.
 3. Substantial further new developments are understood to be anticipated further East of the present new developments.

C. Future BYB Brockhill (if BYD proposals are agreed)	Properties *	Electors *	No anticipated expansion, over 5-year period of review
46 streets	1,209	2,117	
Totals:	1,209	2,117	

Electoral Shared Services

Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council

Town Hall
Walter Stranz Square
Redditch, Worcestershire, B98 8AH

Electoral Office Tel: 01527 881421
Fax: 01527 65216
Email: democracy@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

APPENDIX 3

EXAMPLE

Contact / PersonResponsible#

#Polling StationVenue#

AGREEMENT

FOR THE PROVISION OF POLLING STATION PREMISES

I/We, the undersigned, hereby undertake

to make the agreed premises (as described below * and defined in the attached schedule) available for use as a Polling Station, as and when required for the statutory purposes of facilitating voting in respect of all Elections and Polls/Referenda which apply to the electoral area for which the premises are designated by Redditch Borough Council to serve.

[The (Acting) Returning Officer for his/her part hereby undertakes to provide, so far as circumstances permit, as much advance notice as possible of any required use of the premises, whilst emphasising that some Elections, etc. may sometimes unavoidably occur at very short notice, for example 'By-Elections', etc.]

In such circumstances as detailed above, I/we undertake to make the premises reliably available and cancel any conflicting uses.

These terms will be honoured until such time as I/we give notice of our intention to withdraw from the agreement, or unless affected by some 'force majeure' beyond my/our normal sphere of control. The normal period of notice shall be a minimum of six months, to allow a reasonable period for alternative arrangements to be made.

I/we also undertake to notify any person or body which succeeds me/us in the management or control of the subject premises in order to secure the ongoing availability of the premises.

For the <u>Premises Manager</u> / Contact:	<i>For the <u>Council</u>:</i>
Dated:	<i>Dated:</i>
Signed: (Name in capitals) Title / Representing * For	<i>Signed:</i> (Name in capitals) Title <i>For REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL</i>

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL
IMPACT OF COUNTY FUNDING POSITION – 2014/15 – 2016/17
REDUCTIONS TO BUDGET

SCHEDULE 1

Service	Budget 13/14	Reduction 14/15	Reduction 15/16	Reduction 16/17	Total Reduction (includes 13/14 cuts)	Impact on Borough Service Delivery Include link to Strategic Purpose & Potential Impact on Measures
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Adult Services and Health (ASH)						
Future Lives:						
- Assistive Technology	1287	500	500		1000	COMMUNITY SERVICES This budget contributes significantly to the council's Lifeline service through our Supporting People grant . The reduction would result in the loss of £202,000 to RBC. Lifeline delivers against 'Help me live my life independently' strategic purpose and withdrawal of the funding would impact on 'adult social care referrals' measure. Loss of this funding would impact on the most vulnerable Lifeline users who are currently funded via Supporting People
- Ageing Well	15042	8112	658		8770	BENEFITS SERVICE Reductions in supporting people budgets are likely to result in costs being passed on through rents. Higher rents may reduce the incentive to work, thus reducing capacity to become more financial independent. The LA has a duty to apply 'fair rent' legislation and failure to do so properly may impact on benefits subsidy therefore there is a financial risk to the authorities. Work is taking place to ensure a consistent approach across North Worcs
- Recovery	4939	1000	2500		3500	
- New Models of Care	126632	3590	5750	9190	18530	

					<p>LEISURE SERVICES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Ageing Well</i> No direct impact based on information provided but likely to be reduction in commissioned service that will impact on sections of the community that do not meet the set programme. Although prevention is mentioned this is likely to be increasingly targeted and based on enhanced referral pathways and preferred evidence bases that may not reflect local priorities. This may impact on some generic programmes offered through the Council such as exercise classes and flu prevention - <i>Recovery</i> No direct impact on the Councils service but may lead to a need to change service design and operational delivery/programmes to reflect changes in personalisation agenda & recovery needs/pathways. This will lead to the need to create increasing focused programmes and reduce the number of generic or specific session provide that do not reflect local priorities as resident usage pattern and needs change, with a potential focus on off peak usage for older people and disability based programmes. <p>COMMUNITY SERVICES</p> <p><i>Ageing Well</i> Whilst there is no direct loss of funding to RBC, reductions in domestic abuse, substance and offender support will impact on 'Keep my place safe and looking good' strategic purpose. It will also have a negative effect on all four community Safety Partnership priorities, these being: Antisocial Behaviour; Violence and Abuse; Burglary; and Re-offending.</p> <p>HOUSING Potential impact on the St David's House Contract from the reduction in Supporting People and County Social Care funding. Officers in discussions with County to assess exact implications</p>
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						and to identify how service can be delivered. Current contract extended to June 2014. Impact on home support contract (ends March 2015) unclear. County has requested data and a consultation event has been planned. Officers will continue to discuss with County to assess impact on residents and costs.
Business, Environment and Community (BEC)						
The Open Road	22200	1850	830	250	2950	COMMUNITY SERVICES Whilst there is no direct loss of funding to RBC, the proposal to switch off 66% (two out of every three) of the County's less efficient (low and high pressure) sodium lighting between midnight and 6.00am will impact on 'keep my place safe and looking good' strategic purpose. The Community Safety Partnership are seeking further information on this proposal in order to assess the impact on safety and crime.
Social and Community Transport	4600	2000	220	3603	4600	COMMUNITY SERVICES Reductions in local bus subsidised bus services and transport for social care customers will impact on 'Help me live my life independently' strategic purpose. Whilst there is no direct loss of funding to RBC, we are likely to see an increase in demand for our Dial A Ride community transport scheme. Residents rely heavily on CT schemes for medical appointments and assisted travel. CT helps to maintain independence for those with poor mobility and disabilities. If there is more demand for our service, then the health of our residents could be affected by not being able to make appointments or clinics.
Moving towards self-financing discretionary	3750	306	350	50	1136	CULTURAL SERVICES Full impact will not be understood in these areas until actual areas from reductions are documented but likely to reduce

services						funding to Arts service reduce partnership workings in the short term and create an increased reliance on local partnership and infrastructure
BEC - Other savings	36700	2623	863	945	6654	ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES This will mean the loss of the waste performance grant which would have had a value of £57k in 2014/15
Children's Services (ChS)						
Transforming Early Help	10090	1670	1445	975	4090	COMMUNITY SERVICES There is a direct impact on the Council as the contracted provider to deliver Early Help in Redditch. The reduction in funding is proposed at £369,791 over 3 years and will impact on the delivery of Children's Centre, Family support and Parenting programmes to families with children 0 – 19 years. It is likely to push the focus to reactive support services and reduce the delivery of preventative services. This will impact on the 'help me live my life independently' strategic purpose
Other						
Digital Strategy and Customer Access	6375	597	879	1946		The impact to the LA will be a reduction in customer service funding of £80K This will be mitigated through a structure review of the service. Customers appear to be responding well to the requirement to use self service channels, with no reported drop in applications for Blue Badges and Bus Passes.
Better use of property						The move to a commissioning model for Property Services will potentially result in costs to the authority in the short term as arrangements are made, going forward there is potential for significant savings. There is likely to be an impact on the responsiveness of the service which will be monitored using performance measures on a regular basis.

SCHEDULE 2**Impact on Housing**

Despite the potential of using the ring fenced health grants, the funding reduction is still likely to have a significant effect upon the lives of vulnerable people across Redditch, and on the organisations who work with them.

Likely impact of reductions on Supporting People providers:

- The funding above underpins various accommodation projects, so any reduction is almost certain to see a contraction in the number of units available to these client groups, locally, and across the county, together with a reduction in the amount of support provided within the units to help vulnerable people to continue to live within them.
- The funding also underpins what's known as 'floating support' – this is support provided to vulnerable people living in other types of accommodation across the county – for example, older adults in Council tenancies, or young people in the private rented sector.

Likely impact on vulnerable people, Councils and their partners:

- The reduction in units could lead to the relatively immediate loss of a home and the support that was provided to help maintain it, leading to a spike in pressure on various services across both Councils and their partners.
- The reduction in floating support could also lead to increased homelessness, albeit over a longer time period, across both areas, together with the potential to disrupt existing income, education, health, training and leisure arrangements for the households concerned. Again, these impacts could well be felt by various service areas across both Councils, and their partner agencies.
- If the proposed funding reductions are implemented, it is likely that the number of the agencies currently working with vulnerable people will reduce, or that they will reduce the number of services they provide, which could well create considerable issues across Bromsgrove and Redditch. The impact of these changes could also be felt in the Councils' strategic purposes, and accompanying measures, notably:
 - help me find somewhere to live
 - keep my place safe and looking good
 - help me be financially independent
 - help me live my life independently
 - provide good things for me to do, see and visit

Unfortunately, there is no detail available yet from the County as to how any potential financial reductions might impact on specific services across Worcestershire, or specifically, in Redditch.

It is not easy to know exactly the number of households being supported in Redditch. However, County-wide, providers estimate the number of households currently being housed or supported by the 59 services as a whole is in the region of 4600.

Of these regional services 12 focus on our geographical areas in particular with 3 across Bromsgrove and Redditch

The 12 Redditch specific services by client group

- 7 older adults
- 2 generic
- 1 teenage parents
- 2 young people

The 3 Bromsgrove and Redditch specific services by client group

- 1 young people
- 1 offenders
- 1 homeless families

The number of units of supported accommodation provided in RBC

Provider	Client group	Number in RBC
St Basils – 3 foyers and 13 supported lodgings	Young people	8 + 6
RBC YMCA	Young people	40
Redditch Night stop	Young people	Varies

Comments

- The risks are very clear around the number of accommodation units that may be jeopardised by funding issues. Currently, there are a minimum of 54 units being provided per year, excluding the ongoing work of Nightstop to provide short term options for young people.
- Across RBC, a large number of older people could be affected by reductions in funding , a number of services focus on helping them live independently.

- Young people would look to be at most risk - homeless households could also be so.

The county-wide picture and potential implications for Redditch

Although a number of the 59 services potentially affected by the funding proposals are catering for local needs, the remainder work county-wide, and they also support vulnerable residents in Redditch on a yearly basis – it would be unwise to under-estimate the impact losing these may have here.

The 34 county-wide services by client group:

- 6 domestic abuse
- 5 generic
- 4 single homelessness
- 3 older people
- 3 young people
- 3 learning disability
- 3 physical and sensory impairment
- 2 mental health
- 2 offenders
- 2 substance abuse
- 1 homeless families

Comments

- At this stage, it is difficult to predict the likely impact of reducing these services without having more data on the number of RBC residents benefiting from them.

Summary grid 1- potential impact on RBC

Service area	Number of county wide services	Number specific in RBC
Older adults	15	7
Generic	9	2
Young people	7	2
Domestic abuse	6	0
Single homelessness	5	0
Learning disability	3	0
Mental health	3	0
Offenders	3	0
Physical and sensory	3	0
Substance	2	0

abuse		
Homeless families	2	0
Teenage parents	1	1
Total	59	12

Preliminary conclusions

- Housing related support services currently play an important role in helping vulnerable people live independently in RBC
- Reductions in funding could reduce the number of accommodation units available across the area and create homelessness for those households currently occupying the units
- Reductions in funding could also lead to the loss of housing options more broadly, with households failing to maintain their existing arrangements in the absence of ongoing support
- Services could see an increase in demand as a result of these changes, and the Council's strategic purposes and measures may also come under pressure as a result
- RBC are very reliant on housing related support to enable older adults to remain in their homes – funding reductions could impact on this group particularly
- Young people are also well-served by existing support arrangements and changes could impact especially hard on this group of customers
- A relatively small group of providers currently provide a large proportion of the existing contracts, but single contract holders, especially the accommodation providers, are equally vulnerable, and the impact of them closing their services could lead to significant issues for the Council.

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WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES – REMOVAL OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING FROM STATEMENT OF PARTNER REQUIREMENTS

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Rebecca Blake
Portfolio Holder Consulted	-
Relevant Head of Service	Steve Jordan, Head of Regulatory Services
Ward(s) Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	N/A
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

This report seeks agreement to the modification of the statement of partner service requirements for Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) by removing the requirements in relation to health and wellbeing / health promotion.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is requested to RESOLVE that:

- 1) the statement of partner service requirements for Worcestershire Regulatory Services be modified by removing the requirements in relation to health and wellbeing / health promotion; and
- 2) delegated authority be given to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, following consultation with the relevant portfolio holders, to make the relevant amendments to the legal agreement with the other partners.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 The savings to the Council from the removal of this requirement will be £22,486 per annum.

Legal Implications

- 3.2 The necessary amendments to the legal agreement with the other partners in Worcestershire Regulatory Services removing the requirements in relation to health and wellbeing / health promotion are required.

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Service / Operational Implications

- 3.3 When Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) was established in 2010 the statement of partner service requirements for all partners included a number of activities relating to health and wellbeing / health promotion (see Appendix 1). These requirements reflected the services provided at that time by the district councils and the County Council and their relationships with other bodies responsible for public health, etc. They also reflected deliverables within the now defunct Local Area Agreements.
- 3.4 Since the creation of WRS, there have been significant changes in the public health landscape. Public health responsibility transferred from the NHS to county councils in two tier areas in 2013, under the national leadership of Public Health England. This change places primary responsibility for health and wellbeing matters locally with Worcestershire County Council which now funds the health and wellbeing coordinators based within the six district councils.
- 3.5 The WRS Management Board has recently reviewed the current statement of partner requirements in respect of health and wellbeing / health promotion and concluded that, as much of the work is now undertaken by other bodies, these requirements should be removed with a contingent reduction in the overall WRS budget of £157,000. This change was recommended to the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee when it met on 26 September. The Joint Committee agreed to ask participating partner councils to formally request the removal of these requirements.
- 3.6 Removal of this requirement from the agreement for WRS will have very little impact within the Borough. As explained below, much of the work involved is now undertaken by the County Council in its lead public health role. Some of the other work such as food hygiene training is non-statutory and is provided commercially for those businesses that need it. It is not expected that the removal of these requirements from WRS will result in any significant adverse health and wellbeing implications within the Borough.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.7 No adverse equalities impacts have been identified

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 No particular risks have been identified.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Health and Wellbeing Statement of Partner Requirements

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6. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

WRS - Statement of Partner Requirements

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Clare Flanagan, Principal Solicitor
email: clare.flanagan@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel.: (01527) 64252 (Extn. 3173)

Function: Health & Wellbeing/ Health Promotion

Participating partners

Bromsgrove District Council
Malvern hills District Council
Redditch Borough Council
Worcester City Council
Wycharon District Council
Wyre Forest District Council
Worcestershire County Council

Requirements applicable to all participating partners

Activity	Outcomes/ critical success factors	Performance measures/ key performance indicators and targets	Applicable polices, strategies, service standards, statutory codes or guidance
Provision of advice, information and education on food safety	Improve food safety in all settings where people consume food include work, leisure venues and the home.	Reduction in the number of food poisoning cases and outbreaks.	National strategies and campaigns including those promoted by the Food Standards Agency
Provision of advice, information and education on health and safety at work.	Improve management of health and safety in all Local Authority enforced settings. Well attended and positively received safety awareness days.	Reduction in the number of accidents and cases of work related ill-health.	National strategies and campaigns including those promoted by the Health and Safety Executive.
Provision of a wide variety of	Affordable training available to businesses and voluntary	Compliance with CIEH requirements as a training centre.	

<p>food hygiene training and awareness courses and events including CIEH level 1 and 2 food hygiene courses and refresher training and/or signposting to training providers.</p>	<p>organisations. Food handlers trained in food safety commensurate with their role. Reduction in food poisoning cases.</p>		
<p>Provision of nutrition training and advice to caterers.</p>	<p>Availability of healthier food options in a variety of settings.</p>	<p>In compliance with national strategies and guidance issued by the Food Standards Agency.</p>	<p>National strategies and guidance issued by the Food Standards Agency.</p>
<p>Healthy Eating project work</p>	<p>Enable consumers to use labelling information to make healthy food choices. Improve public understanding of what is in the food they eat.</p>	<p>NI121 Mortality rate from circulatory diseases at ages under 75 NI 56 Obesity among primary school age children in Year 6 NB: Report activity to Worcestershire Partnership theme group on completion of actions against the Action Plan</p>	<p>Food Standards Agency guidance, Health Challenge England (DOH,) Service plan projects</p>
<p>Provision of a wide variety of certificated health and safety training and awareness</p>	<p>Affordable training available to businesses and voluntary organisations. Employees and managers trained in health and safety commensurate with their role. Reduction in accidents and</p>	<p>Compliance with CIEH requirements as a training centre.</p>	

courses and events.	cases of work related ill health.		
Membership of the Worcestershire Tobacco Control Alliance.	Contribution to county wide initiatives on tobacco control		
Provision of smoking cessation advice and signposting to smoking cessation support services.	Contribution to county wide LAA targets on reducing tobacco use.		
Promoting awareness of and providing work experience of Environmental health and Trading Standards as professions and career choices.	Awareness of the range of activities and functions of the service and awareness of potential career opportunities within the two professions.		
Participation in national health and safety awareness campaigns such as those relating to asbestos.	Reduction in accidents and incidents of ill health.		

<p>Work within schools to promote healthy eating and food hygiene, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lunch box advice - hand washing promotion - 5 a day 			
<p>Contribute to the work of LSP's, CDRP's and LAA theme groups (health & wellbeing, WPEG and Crime & Disorder)</p>	<p>Achievement of LAA and other county-wide targets.</p>	<p>As detailed in LAA, Community Strategy documents etc.</p>	

Additional requirements applicable to Wychavon District Council

Activity	Outcomes/ critical success factors	Performance measures/ key performance indicators and targets	Applicable policies, strategies, service standards, statutory codes or guidance
Consultations	<p>Considered response to national consultations on health and well-being initiatives etc</p>		
Work with pre-	<p>Contribution to county wide LAA</p>		

school children and their families to promote health eating and active lifestyles (WHAT programme)	targets on reducing obesity.		
MEND programme (7-13 year olds). Provision of 'theory lead' input	Contribution to county wide LAA targets on reducing obesity		
Provision of 'Mission Possible' materials and support to KS2 school groups.	Promotion of food safety and healthy eating messages.		In accordance with Mission Possible guidance.



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MINUTES

Present:

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

Also Present:

Mr Chris Swann (Chairman Redditch United Football Club)

Mr Otto DeWeizer and Mr Jim Ralphs (Dutch Architects and Design Ltd).

Councillor Roger Bennett, Juliet Brunner, Greg Chance, Brandon Clayton, Bill Hartnett, Phil Mould and Debbie Taylor

Officers:

J Godwin, S Hanley and S Morgan

Democratic Services Officer:

J Bayley and A Scarce

77. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Gay Hopkins. Councillor Roger Hill attended the meeting in place of Councillor Hopkins.

The Chairman confirmed that he had spoken to Councillor Hopkins and she had requested that it be noted that she had been advised not to attend the meeting due to the perception of a personal interest in respect of item 4 of the agenda.

78. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

.....
Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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79. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4th November 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

80. REDDITCH UNITED

The Chair introduced Mr Chris Swann, Chairman of Redditch United Football Club (RUFC), and invited him to give his presentation. Mr Swan was accompanied by Mr Jim Ralphs and Mr Otto DeWeizer from Dutch Architects and Design Ltd.

Mr Swann explained that the aim of the presentation was to show the work that the Club had undertaken in conjunction with Council Officers and the Football Association (FA) during recent years to ensure the long term viability of the Club. The Committee was informed that a formal presentation, detailing the Club's future plans, had been received by Members of the Council in June 2013. Following consideration of those plans, Mr Swan had received a formal letter from the Council rejecting those plans.

Members were advised that RUFC had two aims; to be a financially sustainable community football club, which did not rely upon public funds and to have appropriate facilities for the current 20 teams. The five year plan which RUFC had compiled with the FA, anticipated that this would grow to in excess of 50 teams, which would accommodate approximately 1,000 young people and their families.

Currently the Club operated from the Valley Stadium which, Mr Swann informed Members, was a dilapidated facility owned by the Council and leased to the Club. RUFC also had access to Terry's Field which had a significant drop from one corner to another and a number of potholes.

Mr Swann provided background information on how he had taken over RUFC. At that time the Club was about to go into liquidation and Mr Swan's first action had been to bring the Club's finances under control and to look at improving the facilities in order to ensure that the Club could cater for the young people and disabled users and visitors to the Club. Mr Swann had injected a substantial amount of money into the Club and ensured that the rent and rates payments were up to date. Repairs had also been undertaken to

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the fabric of the building to limit further deterioration where possible and provide access to the first floor function room.

After a time it had become apparent that more fundamental action was required and the Club appointed consultants who had football experience to investigate how best to improve the current facilities. Mr Swann showed Members two slides, the first of which showed the layout of the existing facilities which restricted the Club from fulfilling some of its community obligations and the second slide showed an initial re-modelling of those facilities. Mr Swann had worked closely with Council Officers to produce a proposal to provide an artificial pitch (on Terry's Field) and a re-design of the internal layout of the main stand in order to provide a better, upgraded facility. These proposals had been discussed in detail with Council Officers on 6th December 2011.

Following that meeting, the Council had prepared a scheme for the improvements required to Terry's Field in order to move the proposal forward. This included proper drainage and re-grading the levels. An issue then arose in respect of covenants which were attached to Terry's Field. Legal opinion had been sought by the Club, but Mr Swann believed that the Council had not made any effort to speak to the Terry family's successors to resolve the matter.

Mr Swann informed Members that during January to June 2012 the Club had met with representatives of the FA, the Football Foundation (FF) and the County Property Officer to discuss the re-modelling and to identify funding streams from the FA and other bodies in order to support the work needed to make the improvements. In July 2012 all parties involved had agreed that, due to planning issues, putting an artificial pitch on Terry's Field together with prohibitive costs (and limited financial support from the FA) it would be more appropriate for the Club to relocate. Council Officers had also suggested that a relocation of the Club would be more appropriate and a possible site at Washford Mill was identified. Such relocation would attract funding from the FA of up to £650k as the proposal was much more sustainable and it was suggested it would have greater benefit to the community.

A formal Football Development Plan was then prepared which identified in detail the mix of playing pitches that would be required from a new facility, which required the Club to accommodate 52 teams by 2017. This would include teams for boys, girls and those with a disability. Mr Swan highlighted his concern that at the Executive Committee meeting held on 26th November 2013 Members had asked for "a proper assessment of the community

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needs in relation to football within the Borough” when this was exactly what he and his team had been working on in order to reach the current position.

The Club had produced a layout scheme based on relocating to the Washford site suggested by Council Officers. However, following consultation it was agreed that the proposed site would be situated too close to existing residential properties and there were also concerns around access. Officers had therefore suggested a second alternative site to the south of the original one. Mr Swann highlighted an email which had been sent from Officers which suggested that this site was the Council’s preferred option. The Council had also undertaken its own internal consultation and prepared layout options for discussion.

The layouts were discussed with all parties involved. The design replicated the existing stadium facilities with the emphasis being on changing rooms, playing and 3G facilities. Mr Swann provided a slide which showed the final layout which had been agreed as the most suitable for the site and provided the Club with the facilities it needed to support the youngsters who wanted to play sport. This site layout had been part of the presentation to Members in June 2013. Mr Swann informed Members that Council Officers had sought advice from Senior Planning Officers to ensure that there were no planning issues which could arise from the proposed development.

Mr Swann informed Members that he was aware of the financial constraints of the Council and that he wished the proposal to be self-funding. With this in mind and from his contacts in the property world he had sought financial interest for housing on the Club’s current site. Three proposals from national builders had been received and these were reported to Council Officers for consideration. The offers made were for £5.05m and £5.025m for the site and £9,750 per acre. Legal opinion had also been sought from the Council’s Legal Team in respect of the covenant restrictions.

The Club had been requested by Council Officers to formalise its proposals and had produced the following reports; Football Development Plan, Five Year Business Plan, full scheme design, full cost plan, risk assessment and financial summary. It was then proposed by Senior Council Officers that these be provided in a full presentation from Mr Swann, Club officials, consultants and an FA representative, to a number of Members of the Council. This presentation took place on 26th June 2013 and provided details of the Club’s proposals and demonstrated that relocation would offer

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the Club modern facilities and had the potential to offer the Council revenue of over £600k. The Council would also retain the freehold of the new ground and receive a rental income from the Club.

Following the presentation the Club received a formal letter from Council Officers dated 26th September 2013, rejecting the proposal and detailing the reasons why this decision had been made and highlighting a number of concerns that Members had raised. These are detailed below:

- Designation of the land as a primarily green space or public open space.
- The restrictive covenant.
- The Council would have to fund substantial up-front costs.
- The Council would take all the risks and would fund the preliminary work.
- Planning issues and the size of the proposed scheme.
- The development being over ambitious.
- The lack of inclusion of maintenance costs.
- The value of the land.

Mr Swann provided a response to these concerns by advising that the Council's Planning department had been consulted and agreed in principle to the proposed development and location. Similarly, the Council's Legal department had concluded that the covenant was not enforceable.

Dutch Architects responded in respect of the Council funding and risk element together with the size and ambition of the project. Mr Ralphs and Mr Deweizer explained that Dutch Architects had been involved in football, both as Architects and Grant Consultants since 1993. This included involvement in designing, project managing and grant work at both Premier League Club level and grass root lower league club level, such as Redditch United. This work has led them to having a good working relationship with both the FA and FF.

Based on Dutch Architect's detailed analysis they had concluded that the Redditch United proposed development was both sustainable and driven by the right motivation to provide facilities for the community. The relocation was similar to other projects they had been involved in and which had culminated in monies being provided in order for the existing site to pay for new up to date facilities to accommodate an increased number of youngsters. They had assisted the Club in the formulation of the Five Year Football Plan, Five Year Business Plan and informed Members that Walker Cotter Chartered Quantity Surveyors had produced detailed

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cost plans based on the drawings provided. A risk register had also been produced and they had assisted the Club in producing the financial summary. The scheme had been developed in close liaison with representatives from the FA and FF.

As with all projects the reports were working documents and constantly reviewed and developed as the project progressed. The Risk Register would be updated each month as the design development proceeded and more information was made available with the culmination being applications put forward for grants and planning. Dutch Architects confirmed that from the information received so far the project was wholly realistic and that the risks encountered and identified were less onerous than many other schemes they had been involved in and which had resulted in a successful conclusion. They had also been informed that the developers interested in the existing site were prepared to pay for the pre contact project costs, thus removing the substantial upfront costs to the Council.

It was confirmed that the size of the development had been designed to accommodate the teams identified within the Five Year Football Development Plan, and in accordance with the requirements set by the FF. Dutch Architects did not believe the proposed development to be overly ambitious and had been impressed with the Club Officials and the "offer" that they wished to make to the junior football players of Redditch and the development of ladies and girls football together with providing facilities for those disabled people who wished to take an active part in football.

Mr Swann continued by informing Members that the detailed business plan summary showed additional facility employees, machinery, maintenance and 3G sinking fund replacement, they had built in approximately £67k a year for maintenance and replacement costs. Mr Swann suggested there were no cash flow risks to the Council or any up front costs. A developer had already confirmed to Mr Swan that they would pay for the planning and professional costs of both development proposals, subject to various conditions.

To conclude Mr Swan informed Members that doing nothing was not an option as this would mean the loss of sporting opportunities for youngsters in Redditch and as such both the Club and the Council had a responsibility to find a solution. Mr Swan highlighted again the potential income to the Council which could further benefit the people of Redditch. The Club had a proud history which went back 140 years and was the hub of the local community and he suggested that the relocation of it offered a once in a lifetime

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opportunity for all involved to create a top class sporting venue for the community. Members were informed that this was supported by a petition which had been handed in the previous week which had received over 2,200 signatures.

Finally, Mr Swann requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee “call in” the decision made by the Executive and recommend to Council that:

- Engagement be held with the developers themselves by the Council (and which would involve the Club).
- The Executive Committee speak with the Terry family about the existing covenant.
- That a consultation event within the town include consideration of the relocation of Redditch United Football Club.
- That the Executive Committee show a will to support the football club and its many stakeholders and 1,000 youngsters who wanted to play football in Redditch.

The Chair thanked Mr Swann and his colleagues for their detailed presentation and invited Officers to respond. As part of this response the following points were highlighted in respect of some of the points which had been included in the presentation:

- the Executive Committee’s decision on 26th November superseded any earlier discussions at previous meetings.
- In respect of the legal advice and view from Counsel, liability would still remain with the Council.
- There was still no guarantee of the level of funding from the FA.
- Officers had supported the Club and provided advice and guidance and at the request of Members in respect of the Business Plan.
- The marketing of the site was not in the gift of the Club but needed to be done by the Council in accordance with a strict procurement protocol.
- Whilst the support of the Business Plan proposal was done with the best intentions, Officers needed to provide the Council with the best advice in respect of the business case.

The Committee discussed the full market value of the site taking into consideration the 40% social housing requirement and information provided by County Highways in respect of access and limitation on the number of plots, which would in turn reduce the value of the site. It was confirmed that further information was also needed in respect of access to the Washford site from County Highways and the need for the inclusion of a traffic island. Mr

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Swann raised concerns that these issues had been discussed in June 2013 but was not aware of any approach being made to clarify the points raised in order to take the matter forward.

During consideration of this item the following points were raised by Members and discussed in detail:

- How the Council could support the Club moving forward.
- What the alternative sites could be made available for the Club should the Council be able to support its re-location.
- “Up front” costs which included for example flooding issue, traffic surveys and design fees (with an estimated total cost of £300-400k) and whether a developer would be prepared to pay for these.
- The inconsistencies within the Business Case
- The pre contract costs being paid by any developer and whether the Council would be happy with such an arrangement.
- The need for a traffic analysis.

Officers confirmed to Members that they had only been made aware of one offer being made by a developer and that from the information provided it was not clear as to whether S106 money had been taken into account or consideration being given to the cost of Highways work. Members were also reminded that planning permission was not guaranteed and neither was the funding from the FA or FF. The value of the site provided by the District Valuer was significantly lower than that detailed in the letters provided by RUFC. It was also stressed to the Board that Officers did support the Club, but did not believe that the Business Case as it stood was achievable and that the risks involved for the Council could not be taken.

Members were keen for the Council to continue dialogue with RUFC in order to resolve all the issues raised and to bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion for all involved, although it was acknowledged that there were financial constraints for the Council and any Business Case would therefore need to be self-funding.

The Committee agreed that a further, more detailed investigation was necessary in order for it to understand the position from both RUFC's and the Council's viewpoint and in order for this to take place it was

RESOLVED that:

- (a) a Task Group be set up**

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- (b) Councillor David Bush be appointed Chair of the Task Group: and
- (c) Councillor Bush, in consultation with Officers, prepare a scoping document for presentation at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 9th January 2014.

81. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

The Chair informed Members that following the presentation should they have any particular areas of concern which warranted further investigation these should be raised as soon as possible in order for the appropriate Heads of Services to be given the opportunity to attend the meeting on 9th January 2014 when the budget would be discussed in more detail.

Officers delivered a short presentation which provided Members with an overview of the budget position 2014/15. This included an overview of the cost of all staff included within those shared services which were broken down into three categories; those which created value (for example bin men), those that added value (for example those in a supervisory role) and those that enabled, (for example a manager). Members were informed that there was an initial shortfall of £1.6m due to a reduction in government grant, business rate reduction, reserves being used and unavoidable pressures. A number of issues had been taken into consideration when calculating the position including a 1% pay award, the impact of a reduction in the new homes bonus, the cost of borrowing, potential capital receipts and the impact of cuts at a county council level. Members discussed the following areas in more detail:

- The “top slicing” of the New Homes Bonus – it was understood that this would be allocated to the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and as the Council was a member of both the Worcestershire and Solihull LEP Members requested clarification as to how this would be dealt with.
- It was confirmed that Capital receipts referred to Threadneedle House and any funds arising from this could be used for future capital expenditure.
- Members were informed that a presentation was due to be delivered by Deloitte on 4th December in respect of fees and charges which would include any recommendations where there was potential for improvements to be made.

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It was confirmed that there was currently an actuarial pension review being undertaken which could lead to increased costs and that the Council anticipated that it would receive the final settlement figure in late December. Heads of Service had been asked to identify additional costs and income and given an allocation of the amount of savings each area needed to make, without a reduction in frontline services.

The Finance team were also looking at the figures for 2015/16 and 2016/17 with Heads of Service in respect of the cost of services together with the strategic purposes of the Council. Heads of Service would be taking into consideration the impact of the Worcestershire County Council cuts, which would have a knock on effect on Borough Council services.

RESOLVED that

Members inform Officers of any areas of concern in order for the relevant Head of Service to be given the opportunity to attend the meeting to be held on 9th January 2014.

82. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY QUARTERLY RECOMMENDATION TRACKER

Officers provided a brief update on the tracker which detailed action taken to implement recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee together with details of those recommendations where action remained outstanding. Members raised concerns that in some instances recommendations had taken an unacceptable amount of time to be implemented, particularly in respect of Dial a Ride service which might have led to income being lost. Officers agreed to provide further information to Members in respect of this item.

The Chair asked Members to look at this report in more detail and inform officers of any areas of concern in order for the relevant departments to be asked to provide feedback at the meeting to be held on 9th January 2014.

RESOLVED that

Members provide officers with details of any areas of concern in order that further information be provided at a future meeting.

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

The Chair drew Members' attention to resolved item 2 of the additional papers where the Executive Committee had requested 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 consultation event to engage with residents and clubs to help to inform this exercise." Members expressed concerns that such work would be a repeat of that which had already been carried out by Redditch Utd (as detailed in the presentation received at item 4).

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism, Councillor Phil Mould, informed Members that the Executive Committee was asking for assistance in liaising between those involved with this matter. He welcomed the Task Group exercise, though suggested that it should cover football throughout the town and not just activities provided by Redditch Utd. However, he acknowledged that it remained within the Committee's discretion to consider this proposal and how to respond.

RESOLVED that

the Portfolio Holder be consulted in the completion of a scoping document for the Redditch Utd Task Group.

84. WORK PROGRAMME

Officers confirmed that the meeting to be held on 9th January 2014 would concentrate on providing further information in respect of the budget.

RESOLVED that

the Committee's Work Programme be noted.

85. TASK GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

The following updates in respect of current Task Group reviews were provided:

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

Councillor Gandy informed Members that, due to Members being on annual leave, no meetings had taken place since the

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last report. However a meeting was due to be held on 5th December when senior officers would be interviewed. A site visit to Evesham Leisure Centre was also planned for 12th December.

b) Landscaping Task Group - Chair, Councillor Gay Hopkins

Officers informed Members that the Task Group Members had visited the Crossgates' team, the Trees team and Winyates Place team. A meeting would take place on 3rd December which would include further interviews with officers with a further meeting taking place the following week.

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

Councillor Witherspoon informed Members that several meetings had taken place, the most recent having been an interview with the Chair of the Grants Panel. The Task Group already had some ideas about potential recommendations and had received a great deal of useful information from various sources.

It was confirmed that, following receipt of legal advice, Councillor Baker had stood down from the review due to the potential for conflicts of interest to arise if he continued to participate in the exercise. Although he had not yet been replaced the group were working well together. It was suggested that it might not now be appropriate to seek a replacement at this stage in the investigation.

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

As Councillor Mason had been unable to attend the previous two meetings of the Task Group officers drew Members' attention to the summaries provided in the agenda. The Members had attended a meeting of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee followed by an interview with the Chair and Vice Chair of that Committee. The following meeting of the Task Group would take place on 4th December when a recap of work carried out so far would take place together with the setting of questions for future witnesses, which included a further interview with the Head of Regulatory Services on 18th December.

RESOLVED that the update reports be noted.

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86. HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Witherspoon provided a brief verbal update on the latest meeting of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) which had taken place on 6th November. The main topics of discussion had been the concern over timings of ambulances and the reintroduction of the 111 service, which would go live across Worcestershire and replace the current GP service.

Information about the workload of paramedics was raised by Members and Councillor Witherspoon asked for any concerns to be referred to her in order for her to feed this information back to the HOSC.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.56 pm

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**14th January 2014**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

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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 – 14 th January 2014

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 – 20 th 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.

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9.	Independent Remuneration Panel	Chair: Mr R Key / Sheena Jones	Last meeting – 27 th November 2013
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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**14th January 2014**ACTION MONITORING**

Portfolio Holder(s) / Responsible Officer	Action requested	Status
26th November 2013		
Cllr Mould / Cllr Fisher S Jones / C Felton	Redditch United Football Club – Ground Relocation Councillor Brunner requested information on the cost of holding the meeting to consider the proposal for ground relocation by Redditch United Football Club.	Information relating to the cost of the meeting compiled by Officers.
10th December 2013		
Cllr Chance / R Bamford / C Flanagan	Webheath Planning Appeal Members were invited to consider proposals for dealing with the forthcoming planning appeal concerning development at Pumphouse Lane, Redditch. It was agreed that an urgent decision be taken in this regard.	Urgent decision taken.
Cllr Fisher / S Morgan	Quarterly Budget Monitoring - 2nd Quarter 2013/14 In response to a query from Councillor Brandon Clayton about the Housing capital programme, Officers undertook to clarify details around the delay in letting the contract for solid wall insulation.	Officers are in the process of compiling a response to Cllr Clayton.
<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: 26/11/13 to present

