

Executive Committee

Tuesday 24th June
2014
7.00 pm

Committee Room 2
Town Hall
Redditch



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

Running Order

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

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

Decisions

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

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

The emergency Assembly Area is on Walter Stranz Square.

Executive

24th June 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">To give notice of any items for future meetings or for the Executive Committee Work Programme, including any scheduled for this meeting, but now carried forward or deleted; andany other relevant announcements. <p>(Oral report)</p>
4. Minutes (Pages 1 - 8) Kevin Dicks, Chief Executive	To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 8 th April 2014. (Minutes attached)
5. Abbey Stadium Task Group - Final Report (Pages 9 - 36) Abbey Stadium Task Group	To consider the final report of the Abbey Stadium Task Group. (Task Group report attached – the report is to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 th June)

<p>6. Local Development Scheme 2014 and Community Infrastructure Levy</p> <p>(Pages 37 - 50)</p> <p>Head of Planning and Regeneration</p>	<p>To consider authorising Officers to commence the collection of evidence and collation of a draft charging schedule for a Community Infrastructure Levy for the Borough of Redditch.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>All Wards</p>
<p>7. Non-Domestic Rates - Discretionary Rate Relief Policy</p> <p>(Pages 51 - 76)</p> <p>Head of Customer Access and Financial Support</p>	<p>To consider changes to the Council's existing Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>All Wards</p>
<p>8. Land to the rear of Middle House Lane</p> <p>(Pages 77 - 84)</p> <p>Head of Customer Access and Financial Support</p>	<p>To consider revision of a condition relating to the disposal of land to the rear of Middle House Lane, Enfield.</p> <p>(An appendix to this report contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended. For this reason it has been circulated to members and relevant Officers only.)</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>(Abbey Ward)</p>
<p>9. Review of Town Hall Concessionary Use</p> <p>(Pages 85 - 90)</p> <p>Head of Leisure and Cultural Services</p>	<p>To review the current concessionary scheme for the use of Committee Rooms within the Town Hall and consider a proposed new matrix.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>(Abbey Ward); (No Specific Ward Relevance)</p>
<p>10. Making Experiences Count - Customer Services Monitoring Report - Quarter 4, 2013/14</p> <p>(Pages 91 - 106)</p> <p>Head of Customer Access and Financial Support</p>	<p>To consider details of customer feedback data for the final quarter of 2013/14, along with transactional data relating to the Customer Service Centre.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>All Wards</p>

<p>11. Quarterly Monitoring of Write-Offs - Quarter 4 2013/14</p> <p>(Pages 107 - 116)</p> <p>Head of Customer Access and Financial Support</p>	<p>To consider the action taken by Officers with respect to the write off of debts during the Financial Year 2013/14 and the profile and/or level of outstanding debt.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>All Wards</p>
<p>12. Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>(Pages 117 - 128)</p> <p>Chief Executive</p>	<p>To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1st April 2014.</p> <p>There are no outstanding recommendations to consider.</p> <p>(Minutes attached)</p>
<p>13. 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>14. Advisory Panels - update report</p> <p>(Pages 129 - 130)</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>15. Action Monitoring</p> <p>(Pages 131 - 132)</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>

16. Exclusion of the Public

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:

“that, under S.100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following matter(s) on the grounds that it/they involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs (*to be specified*) of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act, as amended.”

These paragraphs are as follows:

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

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

may need to be considered as ‘exempt’.

17. Confidential Minutes / Referrals (if any)

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



Executive Committee

8th April 2014

MINUTES

Present:

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

Also Present:

Councillors David Bush, Carole Gandy and Gay Hopkins

Officers:

Emma Baker, Jess Bayley, Clare Flanagan, Stacey Green, Sue Hanley and Jayne Pickering

Committee Services Officer:

Ivor Westmore

160. APOLOGIES

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

161. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Jayne Pickering, Executive Director of Finance and Resources, declared an other disclosable interest in Item 6 (Football Task Group – Interim Report) as detailed separately at Minute 165 below.

162. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised that the minutes from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1st April relating to several items on the Executive Committee agenda had been circulated subsequent to the main agenda pack for this meeting.

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Chair

Executive Committee

8th April 2014

163. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

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

164. LANDSCAPING TASK GROUP FINAL REPORT

The Committee considered the final report and received a presentation from Councillor Gay Hopkins, Chair of the Landscaping Task Group, on behalf of her Group. She and her fellow Councillors had taken the decision to scrutinise landscaping because it was a key issue for the Council and the residents of the town given the green nature of the Borough and one which prompted many enquiries of elected Members.

The landscaping service was undergoing transformation during the course of the review and Members had the benefit of observing the adoption of new processes being introduced. It was apparent to Members engaged in the review that the introduction of multi-operative working by staff on the ground was having benefits for both the areas in which they were operating and for the staff themselves in that they were achieving a greater level of job satisfaction. The positive effects on the landscape in the Winyates area, where the new way of working was being undertaken, was demonstrated through the presentation. Customer satisfaction and community engagement were both reported to be increasing overall as a result.

The Task Group wished to ensure that Members were made aware of the work of the landscaping service generally and of particular landscaping issues within their local areas through regular updates and annual reporting. A suggestion was also made that the Council should consider the potential to generate revenue to fund the service through bulk planting and the sale of logs.

The Executive Committee welcomed the report and commended the enthusiasm of the Members who had been engaged in the review. The Committee broadly supported the recommendations although there was a degree of concern expressed at staff capacity. This concern was expressed in terms of the provision of updates to local Members and also around the carrying out of a feasibility study into bulk planting. It was explained that information for particular areas could be provided from the existing software relatively easily, although there was a cost implication for providing the same information on a Ward by Ward basis. Members were keen to see the provision of such information carried out on a trial

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basis initially to establish take-up rates. The proposal to investigate bulk planting was stated to have been supported by Officers although it was conceded that this would be a limited feasibility study given that it was not a core Council activity.

RESOLVED that

- 1) new Members should be invited to visit teams responsible for tree maintenance, landscaping and cleansing services as part of the Member Induction process to provide them with an opportunity to learn about the work of these teams;**
 - a) a short briefing outlining the work of the place intervention, tree intervention and landscaping teams should be provided prior to a Council meeting early in the municipal year to provide those Members who are unable to participate in the member induction visit with an opportunity to learn about the work of these teams;**
- 2) a contact list of key senior and operational Officers, containing the telephone and email details together with the basic information about the Officers' responsibilities, should be provided for the consideration of Members;**
- 3) Members should be provided with updates on progress made addressing landscaping issues that they have referred to Officers at the request of residents including at the point of resolution;**
- 4) data relating to landscaping cases reported for each area be provided for Members' consideration on an annual basis. Every Member should receive data for the areas they cover on a trial basis initially to gauge levels of take-up across the Council and with the option to receive or not according to Members' wishes;**
- 5) one of the Environmental Services Teams' performance measures should be to monitor the number of landscape cases that take longer than six months to resolve. The information obtained through this monitoring process should be reported in the strategic measures for consideration of Senior Officers and elected Members;**

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- 6) **Officers should undertake a feasibility study, risk assessment and cost benefit analysis to assess the potential for the Council to bulk plant trees in Council open spaces and other appropriate locations. This feasibility study should take into account the following matters:**
- a) **the legal implications, if any, of this action;**
 - b) **the financial costs involved in planting and maintaining these plants;**
 - c) **the availability of grants from the government and other sources to help pay for bulk planting in the Borough;**
 - d) **demand within the market;**
 - e) **where bulk planting would take place in the Borough;**
 - f) **the size of the plots available for bulk planting;**
 - g) **the implications for the Council's Planning Department in relation to the Local Plan;**
 - h) **the potential revenue that could be accrued by the Council; and**
- 7) **Officers should investigate how to dispose of logs in a way that would maximise income for the Council. Part of this investigation should involve a risk assessment. Any revenue from these sales should be reinvested in landscaping services.**

165. FOOTBALL TASK GROUP - INTERIM REPORT

The Committee received an Interim Report from the Football Task Group. The Interim Report outlined the conclusion of the Group's deliberations on just one of the Group's three objectives, that of investigating the sustainability of Redditch United FC for the future. This had been prioritised given the potential financial impact of the outcome on the Football Club.

Councillor David Bush, Chair of the Group, and Carole Gandy, Group Member, outlined the findings of the Review to date. They stated that the Task Group approach had allowed Members to speak to a range of specialist Officers from across a range of Council services which had provided them with a comprehensive picture of the issues to be faced in a possible relocation of the Football Club. These included having to factor in potentially costly flood risk analysis and attenuation measures at the new site, the effect of the Council's policies on affordable housing provision on the viability of the proposed housing development, the constraints on housing development resulting from limited road access to the existing football ground and the potential impact on any relocation

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proposal of contravention of EU laws on State Aid. The outcome of the initial stage of the review was that the Task Group could not support the proposal to relocate Redditch United Football Club to a new site at Washford. Councillors Bush and Gandy explained that the benefit of the Group's review was in being able to bring such matters to the fore over a period of time and avoid any perception that decisions were being taken in this regard behind the scenes.

A number of Members commented that the outcome of the deliberations of the Task Group vindicated the position taken in November by the Executive Committee. The fact that a considerable portion of the information which had come out during the course of the Task Group's work had not been in the public domain at the time of the Executive Committee meeting was attributed to an unwillingness on the part of the Football Club to allow disclosure at that time. In addition, there was some dispute as to how much information had been provided in support of the previous decision to not support the relocation proposal, although this was tempered by a demonstrable lack of financial viability which rendered other considerations secondary. The convening of the special Executive Committee meeting in November was also discussed and it was suggested that the Council had been pushed in the direction of an early decision by the actions of the Football Club. There was a suggestion that the Club had felt there to be a breakdown in communications with the Council but it was stressed that the Council continued to work with the Club to explore options for the future.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the interim report of the Football Task Group be received and noted: and**
- 2) Redditch United Football Club be encouraged to discuss with Officers how to make the best use of the current football club site and to look at more local options to accommodate its expansion.**

(Prior to consideration of this item Jayne Pickering, Executive Director of Finance and Resources, declared an other disclosable interest, in view of her close relationship to a user of the club's facilities, and withdrew from the meeting.)

166. PLANNING RESPONSE TO STRATFORD-ON-AVON DISTRICT CORE STRATEGY - FOCUSED CONSULTATION: 2011 - 2031 HOUSING REQUIREMENT AND STRATEGIC SITES OPTIONS

The Committee considered a request for retrospective approval of a consultation response from Officers to the Stratford on Avon Draft

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Focused Consultation – 2011-2031 Housing Requirements and Strategic Site Options. It was noted that the response, which had previously been considered by the Planning Advisory Panel, reiterated the Council's position on the avoidance of coalescence between Redditch, Studley and Mappleborough Green.

RECOMMENDED that

the Redditch Borough Council Officer response (attached at Appendix 1 to the report) to the SOADC Focused Consultation be approved.

167. WORCESTERSHIRE SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee held on 20th February 2014.

It had been recommended that the Council consider introducing a pilot methodology for dealing with planning consultations and noise nuisance complaints which had been trialled in Worcester City. Members were concerned that the methodology might not translate easily to a Redditch context, urged caution and therefore

RESOLVED that

- 1) Officers pilot the changes to planning referrals and report back to Executive Committee after 6 months; and**
- 2) Officers be requested to present a report to the July meeting of the Executive Committee in relation to the proposed changes to the management of noise complaints.**

168. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4th March 2014 and a recommendation arising from an item considered at the subsequent meeting on 1st April 2014.

In respect of the minutes of the meeting held on 4th March, Members discussed the recommendations in respect of Threadneedle House but confirmed that, as the Executive Committee had previously determined the course of action it wished to pursue, it could not agree those recommendations.

Executive Committee

8th April 2014**RESOLVED that**4th March 2014

- 1) **the recommendations 1) and 2) from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of Threadneedle House not be approved as the Executive Committee had previously determined its position in this regard; and**

1st April 2014

- 2) **the Member Development Steering Group be asked to extend participation in the annual disability awareness session to all members rather than to confine it to new members in the Member Induction process.**

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

There were no minutes or referrals under this item.

170. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

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

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

171. ACTION MONITORING

The Committee's Action Monitoring report was considered by Members. Officers undertook to report back to Councillor Brunner on the cost of holding the November Executive Committee meeting by the next meeting of this Committee. It was noted that Members had been provided with an update on the likely impact of County Council funding decisions on the Lifeline service at the most recent meeting of the Council.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.31 pm

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Chair



Overview & Scrutiny

Abbey Stadium Task Group

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Membership of the Task Group

Councillors Gandy (Chair), Fry, Mason and former Councillor Derek Taylor.

Support Officers

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Completed

June 2014

Contact

Further copies of this report are available on request from:

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FOREWORD

I was delighted to be asked to Chair this Task and Finish Group whose scope included looking at ways to increase the Council's income from the Abbey Stadium but also more importantly improve the offer provided by the Stadium to local residents.

As many of you will know Redditch waited many years for a new Leisure Centre and pool and I was determined when Leader to achieve this during my term of office. Many of you will also know that this project took place during a particularly severe recession and therefore whilst Councillors were keen to see as many facilities as possible at the new centre, finance was limited.

As Members will be aware the Sports Centre has been a fantastic success for the town with over 500,000 visits in the first year, 2012. The biggest success has been the increase in people wanting to access health and fitness facilities with over 2000 members enjoying the facilities on a regular basis and much of this is down to the hard work of the staff at the Abbey Stadium.

We visited the Abbey Stadium at the start of the process, firstly to look in detail at what was being provided but also to chat to users of the service. The general feedback was very positive and there is no doubt that for many the Stadium is not just somewhere to exercise but is part of their social life.

Two years on, it became clear to us that due to competition from other fitness centres, in order for the Abbey Stadium to continue to grow, but more importantly retain its existing members, the offer needed to continually improve. The fitness industry is very competitive and the Abbey Stadium is now having to compete against some 'big boys'.

I believe that this report and the recommendations, have addressed the issues confronting the Abbey Stadium going forward. I would like to thank all those officers whose brains we picked during this process as well as staff at both Evesham Leisure Centre and Stratford Leisure Centre who gave up their time to assist us. I would particularly like to thank Jess Bayley and Amanda Scarce for their guidance and also their hard work in the background. I know that I am not always easy to control!

Finally I must thank the rest of the team, Andy Fry, Alan Mason and Derek Taylor. I believe we worked well together and throughout the process they continually demonstrated their commitment to ensuring that the Abbey Stadium goes from strength to strength.

**Councillor Carole Gandy,
Chair of the Abbey Stadium
Task Group**



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**CHAPTER 1: LEISURE TRUST****Recommendation 1**

The Council should explore the option for the Abbey Stadium to be managed by a leisure trust.

Financial Implications: There is the potential for significant financial savings to be made through the management of the Abbey Stadium by an external trust. However, the group is only suggesting that this option should be explored further and is not identifying a specific trust model for the future management of the stadium. It is therefore not possible at this stage for the group to outline the exact level of savings that could be secured for the Council if a trust was to manage the stadium.

Legal implications: The selection of a leisure trust partner to manage the Abbey Stadium on behalf of the Council would be subject to a procurement process. The Council would also need to specify requirements in a legal contract to be agreed by the successful leisure trust.

Recommendation 2

Subject to the Executive Committee agreeing to investigate the trust management option further the Overview and Scrutiny Committee arrange to pre-scrutinise any final business case relating to the future operation of the Abbey Stadium.

Financial Implications: There are no financial implications to this recommendation.

Legal implications: There are no legal implications to this recommendation. Members are asked to note, however, that as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the power to agree the content of the scrutiny Work Programme this pre-scrutiny can be resolved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

CHAPTER 2: SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS**Recommendation 3**

The provision of therapeutic services should be considered under any new trust arrangements put in place in future at the Abbey Stadium.

(The following is based on the group presupposing that recommendation 1 would be approved).

Financial Implications: There are no direct financial implications for the Council. If a leisure trust opted to provide therapeutic services at the stadium in the future this could have financial implications for the trust, though the figures involved would vary according to whether the trust provided the services directly or through a franchise arrangement.

Legal implications: This suggestion would need to be incorporated into a contract with an external trust in order to ensure that the introduction of therapeutic services is investigated as part of future arrangements for managing the stadium.

Recommendation 4

The provision of a sauna/steam room should be considered under any new trust arrangements put in place in future at the Abbey Stadium.

(The following is based on the group presupposing that recommendation 1 would be approved).

Financial Implications: There are no direct financial implications for the Council. The group has been advised that a new sauna / steam room could cost approximately £64,500 to install and a further £8,000 for on going maintenance costs, though the costs would be subject to the outcome of a procurement process. The group is anticipating that these costs would be met by a leisure trust.

Legal implications: This suggestion would need to be incorporated into a contract with an external trust in order to ensure that the introduction of a sauna / steam room is investigated as part of future arrangements for managing the stadium.

CHAPTER 3: MARKETING**Recommendation 5**

Officers should identify appropriate marketing measures to promote membership of the Abbey Stadium to people aged 55 years or over.

Financial Implications: More proactive use of particular marketing tools may require some financial investment, though this is likely to be minimal if the Council continues to use existing resources. The group is not specifying which marketing measures should be adopted to achieve this objective and it is therefore not possible to clarify the exact expenditure required.

Legal implications: There are no legal implications to this recommendation.

Recommendation 6

There should be expansion of the offer and additional marketing (including displays) of retail provision at the Abbey Stadium.

Financial Implications: The group believes there is the potential for retail sales to make a larger contribution to revenue at the Abbey Stadium through secondary spend. However, it is difficult to determine the exact figures involved. If a leisure trust manages the stadium on behalf of the Council this revenue would benefit the trust.

Legal Implications: There are no legal implications to this recommendation as the Council already sell some products via a contractual arrangement at the Abbey Stadium.

CHAPTER 4: ITEMS TO NOTE

Car Wash Members wished to highlight that early in the review they identified the potential for a car wash facility to be introduced at the Abbey Stadium. This idea was welcomed by Officers who have already started the process to introduce a car wash.

Apprentice Opportunities Members explored the opportunities available for apprenticeships at the Abbey Stadium and have reached some conclusions which are highlighted in the report.

Café Members visited the café at the Abbey Stadium and wanted to promote this facility. Full details are highlighted in the report.

Bus Services The group investigated the potential for bus links to be extended between the Abbey Stadium and other sites in the Borough. However, conclusions were limited as this coincided with a countywide review of bus services.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The suggestion that the expansion of the Abbey Stadium be considered as a topic for scrutiny was raised by Councillor Derek Taylor during the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme Planning Event in June 2013. Further consideration was given to this idea by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and it was agreed that a Task Group should be launched to investigate the matter. Members considered that this review would be particularly timely following the redevelopment of the Abbey Stadium in 2012 as it would provide an opportunity to test the effectiveness of the redevelopment and any need for further improvement.

There were a number of key objectives to this review, as detailed in the scoping document. At the start this included consideration of the gym and dance facilities at the stadium. However, as the investigation progressed Members were advised that Officers were separately carrying out an investigation into actions that could be taken to revamp the gym and dance facilities at the venue. In part this was in response to the recent opening of a branch of Pure Gym in the town centre as Officers recognised that this could create significant competition in the leisure service field. Therefore Members altered their scope to include reviewing the Officers' business case (Please view Appendix 1).

The main objectives for the review were:

- 1) To review the business case for the revamped Abbey Stadium.
- 2) To investigate the potential to expand the facilities at the Abbey Stadium.
- 3) To assess the potential to provide more employment and apprenticeship opportunities for young people at the Abbey Stadium.
- 4) To investigate the potential for Hopper Bus service links to be expanded between the Abbey Stadium and other sites in the Borough.
- 5) To review the financial costs involved in delivering any actions that could be taken to expand the Abbey Stadium.

The review consisted of a variety of approaches to gathering evidence including a number of site visits. At an early stage in the review Members visited the Abbey Stadium to view existing facilities and to provide them with an opportunity to identify options for improvement. Following this visit Members concluded that it would be useful to visit other leisure centres for comparison purposes in order to view the services and activities provided at those venues and how they were managed. The group therefore visited Evesham Leisure Centre and Stratford Leisure Centre. Full details about the findings from these visits are detailed in the body of the report.

The group also interviewed a number of Officers with professional expertise in relation to leisure services. This included interviews with the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, Human Resources Officers, the Democratic Services Apprentice and Finance Officers. Evidence was also obtained from the Portfolio

Holder for Leisure and Tourism, Councillor Phil Mould, and the Leader of the Council, Councillor Bill Hartnett.

The group finalised their recommendations in April 2014. One member was not present when the recommendations were agreed and will not be present when the group presents their report. However, he has confirmed that he is supportive of the group's recommendations.

CHAPTER 1: LEISURE TRUST

Recommendation 1	The Council should explore the option for the Abbey Stadium to be managed by a leisure trust.
Financial Implications	There is the potential for significant financial savings to be made through the management of the Abbey Stadium by an external trust. However, the group is only suggesting that this option should be explored further and is not identifying a specific trust model for the future management of the stadium. It is therefore not possible at this stage for the group to outline the exact level of savings that could be secured for the Council if a trust was to manage the stadium.
Legal Implications	The selection of a leisure trust partner to manage the Abbey Stadium on behalf of the Council would be subject to a procurement process. The Council would also need to specify requirements in a legal contract to be agreed by the successful leisure trust.

The review took place in a context of continuing financial constraints for the Council and with this in mind the group was keen to explore any options that might lead to a reduction in costs whilst maintaining quality services at the Abbey Stadium. It became clear from data provided about numerous other leisure venues in the region that leisure facilities were often managed by external trusts on behalf of local authorities. With this in mind the group concluded that it would be useful to visit some leisure facilities run by trusts to learn about this model of management. This led to the group's visits to Evesham Leisure Centre and Stratford Leisure Centre.

Evesham Leisure Centre

The Evesham Leisure Centre was managed by Wychavon Leisure (Community Association Limited) on behalf of Wychavon District Council. Wychavon Leisure had first been awarded the contract to manage the centre in the 1990s in the year in which the trust was established to manage leisure facilities on a not for profit basis. The remit of Wychavon Leisure had since expanded so that the trust was managing leisure centres in a variety of locations and for a number of clients, including local schools, Malvern Hills District Council and Bromsgrove District Council.

The group conducted a detailed interview with senior representatives of Wychavon Leisure and a senior Officer from Wychavon District Council during their visit in December 2013. This included discussions around the operating model, the relationship that the trust had with the local Council, including

Councillors, details of membership packages and information about franchising arrangements. The group also undertook a tour of the facilities which included; two swimming pools, gym facilities, dance studios, badminton courts, sauna/steam room and Jacuzzi, café, beauty therapy treatments and a climbing wall.

Stratford Leisure Centre

The Stratford Leisure Centre was managed by Sports and Leisure Management Limited (SLM) on behalf of Stratford-on-Avon District Council. SLM, which was established in 1987, worked with approximately 25 local authorities in the country and operations were managed by the organisation on a regional basis with the West Region including Stratford and covering 100 leisure centres. The trust had had the contract to manage Stratford Leisure Centre for 20 years and Members were impressed to observe that all marketing materials were provided with dual branding (for both the trust and the Council)..

At the time of the group's visit SLM was in the fourth year of their third contract with Stratford-on-Avon District Council and managed four sites on behalf of the local authority. The Council set performance targets which the trust needed to meet. They have now reached a stage where the trust is in a position to return money to the Council as part of an on going arrangement, though this was only possible after the contract had been in place for a number of years.

As with their visit to Evesham the group conducted an extensive interview with senior representatives of SLM during their visit in February 2014. This interview focused on a variety of issues including; SLM's operating model, aims and objectives; and the group was interested to note that SLM was widening their business portfolio to include museums, theatres and golf courses. The group also was provided with a guided tour of the venue, which was built in the 1970s. Facilities included: two swimming pools, three dance studios, a main hall that could be used for sports such as badminton and five-a-side football, gym facilities, a separate spin room, crèche and nursery, café and extensive retail facilities.

Trust Model Summary

The group identified a number of key advantages to management of a leisure facility by an external trust on behalf of a Council. These included:

- The potential to make financial savings as the trust would be employing the staff and covering overhead costs. However the group is not able to state what savings could be achieved for Redditch Borough Council as they are not specifying which model should be adopted and they recognise that the costs would be subject to the outcome of a procurement exercise.
- There is the possibility to receive an income in the long term, which could be reinvested in the services dependent on the model of trust chosen.
- Trusts have greater flexibility to borrow as well as to bid for external sources of funding than local authorities.

- At each of the venues visited the trusts had helped to invest in the centre, either via the infrastructure or an expansion of the services available.
- Trusts have greater flexibility than the Council to negotiate costs with potential contractors in any procurement process (creating opportunities to expand the venue).
- Staff would potentially be more dedicated to a specific site rather than having to cover various responsibilities as they do at the Council.
- Trusts, particularly those that are well established, often have the expertise and investment in professional marketing techniques which would help to promote the stadium.

The group recognises that if a trust was to manage the Abbey Stadium on behalf of the Council a number of key considerations would need to be addressed for example:

- The content of the contract would need to specify clearly the requirements for managing and maintaining the stadium as well as the governance links between the trust and the Council. Performance monitoring arrangements would also need to be agreed and a break clause would need to be negotiated in the event the working relationship could not continue.
- If a trust was to manage the Stadium on behalf of the Council there is the potential that this could lead to a reduction in income from business rates.
- The position of staff currently employed at the Stadium would need to be considered carefully with options for TUPE transfer to be included in the contract and staff to be consulted alongside trade unions throughout the process.
- Senior Members and Officers may wish to consider whether a contract should be offered to manage the Abbey Stadium alone or alongside other leisure venues in the Borough. The group did not feel they could explore this option further as consideration of other leisure facilities was not within their remit.

Members are therefore proposing that the option for a trust to manage the Abbey Stadium on behalf of the Council should be explored further. However they recognise that there are many different trust models and options available to the Council and they have only investigated two of these arrangements. Members therefore do not feel that at this stage they should specify which model should be adopted.

Recommendation 2	Subject to the Executive Committee agreeing to investigate the trust management option further the Overview and Scrutiny Committee arrange to pre-scrutinise any final business case relating to the future operation of the Abbey Stadium.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications to this recommendation.
Legal Implications	There are no legal implications to this recommendation. Members are asked to note, however, that as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the power to agree the content of the scrutiny Work Programme this pre-scrutiny can be resolved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members understand that if Recommendation 1 is approved Officers will need to produce a business case exploring the various options which could be adopted for the management of the stadium by a leisure trust. This business case would need to be reported back to the Executive Committee.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee in recent years has increasingly made a valuable contribution to the decision making process by pre-scrutinising a number of items. It was felt that this business case would be suitable for pre-scrutiny due to the expert knowledge that non-executive Members have gained during this investigation.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the power to agree the content of its own Work Programme. This recommendation can therefore be resolved upon by the Committee and the Executive Committee will simply be asked to note this decision.

CHAPTER 2: SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

Recommendation 3	The provision of therapeutic services should be considered under any new trust arrangements put in place in future at the Abbey Stadium.
Financial Implications	<p>(The following is based on the group presupposing that recommendation 1 would be approved).</p> <p>There are no direct financial implications for the Council. If a leisure trust opted to provide therapeutic services at the stadium in the future this could have financial implications for the trust, though the figures involved would vary according to whether the trust provided the services directly or through a franchise arrangement.</p>
Legal Implications	<p>This suggestion would need to be incorporated into a contract with an external trust in order to ensure that the introduction of therapeutic services is investigated as part of future arrangements for managing the stadium.</p>

During the visits to other leisure facilities in the region, and from the data provided in respect of other venues, Members became aware of a number of additional services which could enhance the experience available to their customers. This included:

- Therapeutic services such as massage and other beauty related facilities.
- Sauna and steam rooms.
- Jacuzzi.
- Creche and nursery.

There is increasing competition within the leisure sector locally, following a growth in the number of leisure venues that have been opened in the Borough. Members feel that the offer at the Abbey Stadium needs to be continually updated to ensure that the venue remains an attractive proposition in the face of this competition. Whilst these additional services could help the Council to secure a small amount of income the group believes that the main benefits of these additional services are that they would be extra attractions that would help the stadium both to retain long standing members as well as new customers.

After further investigation the group agreed that the introduction of therapeutic services in particular should be explored further. Therapeutic services could be provided at the stadium in two different ways:

- 1) Delivered directly by a trust managing the Abbey Stadium. This might be more likely to occur if a large trust wins the contract to manage the stadium on behalf of the Council.
- 2) Provided through a franchise arrangement with an external company. This could apply whether the Council or an external trust is managing the Abbey Stadium in the future and would be a useful source of additional revenue as a regular income could be provided through the rent of the premises.

The group believes that it might be more appropriate to explore the potential to introduce therapeutic services at the Abbey Stadium once a decision has been reached in respect of the operational arrangements at the venue.

Recommendation 4	The provision of a sauna/steam room should be considered under any new trust arrangements put in place in future at the Abbey Stadium.
Financial Implications	(The following is based on the group presupposing that Recommendation 1 would be approved). There are no direct financial implications for the Council. The group has been advised that a new sauna / steam room could cost approximately £64,500 to install and a further £8,000 for on going maintenance costs, though the costs would be subject to the outcome of a procurement process. The group is anticipating that these costs would be met by a leisure trust.
Legal Implications	This suggestion would need to be incorporated into a contract with an external trust in order to ensure that the introduction of a sauna / steam room is investigated as part of future arrangements for managing the stadium.

Another of the additional facilities observed by the group during their visits and included in the list above, which Members felt would enhance the membership package available at the Abbey Stadium, was a sauna/steam room. This was a popular facility at both Evesham Leisure Centre and Stratford Leisure Centre and the staff at both venues concurred that whilst not generating significant profit this facility was a useful attraction.

The group discussed this idea in some detail with members of the Leisure Services team. Members were informed that external consultants had advised the Leisure Services team that saunas/steam rooms were being increasingly removed from leisure centres due to the high running costs and limited demand. However, the popularity of the services observed by Members during their visits seemed to contradict this advice.

Members acknowledge the significant financial implications involved in introducing a sauna/steam room at the stadium. Officers have advised that if the Council was to introduce a sauna/steam room the installation costs would be approximately £64,500 and there would be a further estimated £8,000 required to cover annual maintenance costs. Members understand that in the current economic circumstances the Council could not afford to meet these costs. However a trust would have greater flexibility to negotiate prices with potential contractors as part of the procurement process.

CHAPTER 3 - MARKETING

Recommendation 5	Officers should identify appropriate marketing measures to promote membership of the Abbey Stadium to people aged 55 years or over.
Financial Implications	More proactive use of particular marketing tools may require some financial investment, though this is likely to be minimal if the Council continues to use existing resources. The group is not specifying which marketing measures should be adopted to achieve this objective and it is therefore not possible to clarify the exact expenditure required.
Legal Implications	There are no legal implications to this recommendation.

During the investigation the group received a significant amount of data covering membership figures and usage of the facilities at the Abbey Stadium. Members were advised that there were around 2,500 members of the Abbey Stadium, with monthly membership costs set at £25 for off peak use and £32 for peak use. The group considered that membership of the Abbey Stadium was value for money when compared to the costs of other local leisure facilities. Whilst there was significant use of the facilities during peak times there was more limited use during non-peak hours.

Officers have already recognised the benefits of targeting particular groups through active marketing to increase use of facilities during non-peak hours. Existing groups that are being targeted include:

- Mother and baby groups / Water Babies.
- Particular groups of elderly citizens, including a local Alzheimers' Group
- The Inspire Me Project, a health and wellbeing group.

From the information provided by Officers the group concluded that it was clear that promotional work in respect of these specific groups was carried out effectively. However, after further discussions Members agreed that there was one niche market which had not been targeted but had the potential to make use of the facilities at the stadium during off peak hours. This was people aged 55 and over. The data had shown that membership levels in this age range were currently low.

People aged 55 and over would be ideally placed to take advantage of all aspects of the Abbey Stadium at these times because they are more likely to be retired and / or have more leisure time available during non-peak times. In many

cases people of this generation may have the disposal income to take up this opportunity. The group is aware that promoting these facilities to this age group would enable Officers to address some of the health inequalities, particularly obesity levels, affecting residents living in the local area in line with the Council's commitments under the Redditch Sustainable Community Strategy.

The group is not specifying the types of marketing tools that should be used by Officers to target this age range. Instead, they are encouraging Officers to use existing methods more effectively, in particular by concentrating on those tools which are known to appeal more to older residents.

Recommendation 6	There should be expansion of the offer and additional marketing (including displays) of retail provision at the Abbey Stadium.
Financial Implications	The group believes there is the potential for retail sales to make a larger contribution to revenue at the Abbey Stadium through secondary spend. However, it is difficult to determine the exact figures involved. If a leisure trust manages the stadium on behalf of the Council this revenue would benefit the trust.
Legal Implications	There are no legal implications to this recommendation as the Council already sell some products via a contractual arrangement at the Abbey Stadium.

Whilst it was accepted that currently there are some leisure products available for customers to purchase at the Abbey Stadium Members felt that this was an area which could be expanded further. This could be achieved at a minimal cost to the Council with the potential to generate additional revenue through secondary spend.

The idea that more could be done to promote retail sales was highlighted during the group's visit to Stratford Leisure Centre. In this centre, merchandise was displayed prominently in the reception area and produced a significant income for SLM. Members were also advised that in the opinion of experts within the industry, retail offers can also enhance the customer's experience, particularly in cases where key equipment has been forgotten or broken.

In the event that the Abbey Stadium develops a reputation for selling good quality leisure merchandise it is possible that these sales could help to attract new customers. The group therefore believes that investment in this area can only benefit the Abbey Stadium.

CHAPTER 4 – ITEMS TO NOTE

There were a number of issues that, whilst Members did not feel it was appropriate to use as the source for any recommendations, they wished to highlight in the report.

Car Wash

Early in the review Members identified the potential for a car wash facility to be introduced at the Abbey Stadium. The group felt that, given the close proximity of the stadium to local road networks and to a number of businesses, the introduction of a car wash on the site had the potential to attract significant business and therefore additional revenue for the Council.

Officers were keen from the start to explore this option further to the extent that after investigation it was concluded that a car wash could be introduced at the stadium on a trial basis. At the time of writing the Council was already undertaking a procurement process to identify a suitable company to manage this facility on behalf of the Council.

The group was advised that the permanent introduction of a car wash facility at the Abbey Stadium would be subject to receiving planning permission. In order to receive planning permission for this type of facility the stadium would need to be able to demonstrate that it was able to dispose of contaminated water satisfactorily which could require significant expenditure. Members have raised concerns as to whether these conditions are observed more generally by other car wash facilities in the Borough and feel that this should be investigated further.

Apprenticeship Opportunities

In line with the group's terms of reference Members did interview a representative of the Council's Human Resources team to find out more about employment and apprenticeship opportunities that could be made available at the Abbey Stadium. They were also delighted to have the opportunity to speak directly with the Democratic Services Apprentice, in order to obtain further information about the reasons why young people might apply for an apprenticeship and how opportunities were promoted as well as to hear about her personal experiences of the process.

During their visits to other leisure centres Members found that a large variety of apprenticeship opportunities were available at external trusts. In particular, at larger trusts there were greater employment and training opportunities available for both apprentices and other staff than would be available to staff employed by a local authority.

The group was advised that although in the past an apprentice employed at the stadium had not completed their placement the Leisure Service team was shortly due to employ two new apprentices. Members have been assured that one of these apprentices will be based in the Council's leisure centres. The group

therefore concluded that there was no need to make any recommendations on this subject.

Café

Members visited the café at the Abbey Stadium shortly after it opened in January 2014 and were delighted with the quality of the food and drink on offer. The group feels that this café should be promoted more actively wherever possible to customers as it will both help to enhance the experience of existing members and potentially attract new customers to the stadium.

Bus services

The group investigated the potential for bus links to be extended between the Abbey Stadium and other sites in the Borough. This included considering the potential for the Hopper Community Bus Service, which currently operates between Webheath and the Abbey Stadium, to cover additional routes that would enable residents living or working in various parts of the town to access the venue.

The Task Group review coincided with a review of bus services conducted by Worcestershire County Council. As part of this review the county Council was considering savings that could be achieved from reducing the subsidy the Council allocates to funding these services. Members acknowledged that it was therefore unlikely that Worcestershire County Council would consider funding any additional service for the Hopper Community bus which is provided by that Council.

Options for increasing use of the Dial a Ride service for Abbey Stadium customers were also considered during the review. However, the group was informed that the Dial a Ride service already transported some groups to the stadium. In addition, Members noted that, in line with a recommendation made by the Youth Services Provision Task Group in 2012 Dial a Ride vehicles are now available for groups to hire outside of normal working hours.

Lockers

During the group's visit to the Abbey Stadium Members were advised by female customers that they had concerns about the accessibility of lockers to keep their personal items secure. Following the visit the location of the lockers was changed. The group believes that this demonstrates the value of consultation with customers to the continuing improvement of the venue.

CONCLUSION

Members wish to highlight that despite the fact that the Council is currently experiencing difficult economic circumstance the Abbey Stadium is a well-run, well attended local leisure facility which is an asset to the Borough.

The recent redevelopment of the Abbey Stadium was largely successful. However, there is a danger, as indicated by the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, that the stadium could become a victim of its own success. The group felt it was important that the Council does not become complacent about the quality of services available and the ability of the venue not only to retain existing customers but also to attract new customers.

The group's recommendations are designed to contribute to the continuing improvement of the stadium so that it remains an asset for the people of Redditch for the foreseeable future.

APPENDIX 1
Scrutiny Proposal Form

(This form should be completed by sponsoring Member(s), Officers and / or members of the public when proposing an item for Scrutiny).

Note: The matters detailed below have not yet received any detailed consideration. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee reserves the right to reject suggestions for scrutiny that fall outside the Borough Council's remit.

Proposer's name and designation	Councillor Derek Taylor	Date of referral	23/07/13
Proposed topic title	Abbey Stadium Task Group		
Link to national, regional and local priorities and targets	<p>Redditch Borough Council draft strategic purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide good things for me to do, see and visit. <p>Local Strategic Partnership Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health inequalities – (tackling obesity). • Developing the economy of Redditch. 		
Background to the issue	<p>As Redditch Borough Council's former Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism I was the lead Member for the Abbey Stadium at the time of the reopening in 2012. As the Portfolio Holder I met regularly with Leisure Services Officers and participated in a number of tours of the site. Over the past year I have continued to maintain an interest in the site and continue to use services available at the stadium including the swimming pool and the gym.</p> <p>As anticipated the revamped Abbey Stadium is a very successful venture and reached the targets for membership soon after the opening. We have a substantial site which is well established, with extensive surrounding land, good access and parking. The basics of facility, staffing and management are already in place on land that the Council owns.</p>		

	<p>However, from my business and professional background I believe that we could expand this local, well used facility into something that would benefit the local economy, the Council and ultimately the residents.</p> <p>I believe there is the potential to work with the existing space available to offer more activities, facilities and services. This space needs to be managed in an innovative and flexible manner to ensure that we can meet the changing needs and expectations of visitors to the stadium.</p>
<p>Key Objectives Please keep to SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely)</p>	<p>1) To review the business cases for the revamped Abbey Stadium against current operation, taking into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) elements, if any, of the business case that were not delivered by the date of the reopening of the Abbey Stadium and the reasons why this occurred; and b) to review the business case for the gym and dance classes. <p><i>(This objective should enable all Members of the Task Group to clarify the current situation for the Abbey Stadium).</i></p> <p>2) To investigate the potential to expand the facilities and activities available at the Abbey Stadium.</p> <p>This could involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) interviewing Portfolio Holder and representatives of the Council's Leisure Services team; b) visiting the Abbey Stadium to view existing use of space, facilities and activities; and c) interviewing members of Redditch Town Centre Partnership to assess views on linking in with the potential day tourist economy in the Town Centre. <p>3) To assess the potential to provide more employment and apprenticeship opportunities for young people at the Abbey Stadium.</p>

	<p>This could involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) interviewing representatives of the Council's Leisure Services team; b) interviewing representatives of the Human Resources team; c) interviewing officers from the Department for Work and Pensions. (Jobcentre Plus); and d) investigating the Government Apprenticeship schemes. <p>4) To investigate the potential for Hopper bus services to be expanded between the Abbey Stadium and other sites in the Borough.</p> <p>This could include investigating the potential for subsidies to be provided by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the Redditch Town Centre Partnership; and b) businesses based in the town centre. <p>5) To review the financial costs involved in delivering any actions that could be taken to expand the Abbey Stadium, taking into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the capital costs; b) the revenue costs; c) potential borrowing costs; and d) the projected return of income from any proposed actions.
<p>How long do you think is needed to complete this exercise? (Where possible please estimate the number of weeks, months and meetings required)</p>	<p>I think that this review could be completed within six months by a dedicated Task Group.</p>

APPENDIX 2
Witnesses

The Abbey Stadium Task Group would like to thank the following people for providing evidence during the course of the review:

Scott Brinkworth (Operations Manager, Abbey Stadium)
Frances Collings (Democratic Services Apprentice)
Michael Craggs (Democratic Services Officer until 25th October 2013)
Tim Deakin (Development Manager, Wychavon District Council)
Toni Gaskins (Contract Manager, Stratford Leisure Centre – SLM)
John Godwin (Head of Leisure and Cultural Services)
Sarah Greenlowe (Motivator, SLM)
Councillor Bill Hartnett (Leader of the Council)
Iain Mackay (Senior Enforcement Officer – Planning)
Kay McBride (Evesham Leisure Centre Manager – Wychavon Leisure)
Sam Morgan (Financial Services Manager)
Councillor Phil Mould (Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism)
Jayne Pickering (Executive Director for Finance and Corporate Resources)
Dan Steed (Area Contracts Manager, SLM)
Becky Talbot (Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager)
Dave Wheeler (Leisure Services Manager)
Peter Williams (Business Development, SLM)
Peter Williams (Managing Director, Wychavon Leisure).

APPENDIX 3
Timeline of Activities

Date	Task Group Activity
2nd September 2013	Scoping discussion and interview with the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, John Godwin.
26th September	Visit to the Abbey Stadium.
16th October	Consideration of review progress and proposing amendments to the group's terms of reference.
29th October	Considering comparable data for various leisure centres in the country.
5th December	Interviews with the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, John Godwin, and the Operations Manager for the Abbey Stadium, Scott Brinkworth. Also initial scrutiny of the draft business case for the gym extension at the Abbey Stadium Sports Centre.
12th December	Visit to Evesham Leisure Centre and interview with representatives of Wychavon Leisure Community Association Ltd.
3rd January 2014	Reflections on progress with the review and initial brainstorm of potential recommendations.
24th January	Visit to the café in the Abbey Stadium.
27th January	Interviews with the Executive Director for Finance and Corporate Resources, Jayne Pickering, and the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, John Godwin.
12th February	Visit to Stratford Leisure Centre and interview with representatives of SLM.

25th February	Interview with Councillor Mould, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism.
27th February	Interviews with the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager, Becky Talbot, and the Democratic Services Apprentice, Frances Collings.
12th March	Consideration of review progress
3rd April	Interview with the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, John Godwin, and the Financial Services Manager, Sam Morgan.
16th April	Consideration of feedback received in writing from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Hartnett, and agreement of the group's recommendations.
3rd June	Finalisation of the group's report.

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

24th June 2014

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME 2014 AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE
LEVY**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Greg Chance
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Ruth Bamford
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	No
Key Decision	Yes

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

The proposed Local Development Scheme (LDS) at Appendix A is a revised and updated version of the Local Development Scheme adopted by Redditch Borough Council in Nov 2012.

This revised scheme is required to update the programme of preparing planning policy documents, reflecting the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework. The purpose of the Local Development Scheme is to provide a programme for the production of Local Planning Policy Documents to adoption. The most significant changes to this version are the introduction of Community Infrastructure levy (CIL) and inclusion of an Allocations Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is requested to **RESOLVE** that

- 1) **the contents of this report and the proposed amendments to the Local Development Scheme timetables be noted;**
- 2) **Officers be formally instructed to begin preparation of a Community Infrastructure Levy and Allocations Plan for Redditch Borough Council; and**

RECOMMEND that

- 3) **Appendix A to this report, which includes the Council's forthcoming programme for planning policy documents from July 2014, be approved by Members.**

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3. **KEY ISSUES**

Financial Implications

There are no further resource implications for the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4, subject to its successful adoption following examination during 2014.

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is essential in order to collect and pool funding for much needed wider infrastructure projects across the Borough which would otherwise be lost. It is therefore critical that there are adequate resources for the production of the CIL. While some resources required for the production of the CIL can be met through existing budgets, a comprehensive evidence base needs to be in place to justify the CIL before and during its examination. Budget bids will be required to fund the evidence base and examination. As part of the CIL a percentage (up to 5%) can be recouped as administration fees. Given the Council's financial position, whilst it is not yet known what proportion would be applicable to recoup and how much this could cover the budget bid costs of evidence and examination, it is anticipated that a significant proportion will come back to the Council.

For the Allocations Plan, some resource can be met from existing budgets. Additional work particularly on retail needs and site appraisal will have resource implications which will be subject to separate budget bids. Examination of the Allocations Plan will also be subject to budget bids.

Legal Implications

The LDS is produced under the Localism Act 2011, Part 6, Chapter 1, Paragraph 111. The legislation states that Councils must prepare and maintain a local development scheme specifying:

The documents which are to be development plan documents, The subject matter and geographical area of each document, Any matter or area in respect of which the authority have agreed; and, The timetable for preparing and revising the documents.

It is important for Councils to publish up to date information on their progress against the LDS timetable.

The primary legislation governing the making of and implementation of a CIL Charging schedule is the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended).

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Service / Operational Implications

Since LDS No.5 was produced, the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4 has progressed through consultation, publication and submission into examination. The initial hearings, set by the Planning Inspectorate will take place in June 2014 and it is expected that additional hearings will take place in September 2014.

As the production of the Local Plan is nearing the end of examination, staffing resources allow the Council to commence production of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This also allows production to commence on the Allocations Plan, which was discontinued in preference to the resource being put towards Local Plan production.

The Local Development Scheme sets out the key Development Planning Documents (DPDs) to be progressed by Redditch Borough Council. The LDS outlines that Redditch Borough Council are progressing with Local Plan No.4. The LDS now also contains an indicative timetable for the introduction of a CIL and Allocations Plan in Redditch.

LDS Timetable

The LDS timetable (see appendix A) indicates the schedule for the production of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan 4 along with the Redditch Borough CIL and Allocations Plan. The chart identifies the key dates.

Community Infrastructure Levy

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) represents a new system of collecting monies from developer contributions to fund infrastructure, which will benefit the development of an area.

CIL came into force on 6th April 2010 through the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended), the powers enabling Councils to introduce the planning charge having been introduced through the Planning Act 2008 (as amended). It will introduce a standard charge per square metre applied to all qualifying developments. The charge will be applied at the time planning permission is granted and normally be paid upon commencement of development.

CIL will provide a more transparent, fairer approach to securing funds from developer contributions for a broader range of developments than from the existing planning obligations system (Section 106 legal agreements). It will help to secure a funding stream for infrastructure, but should be regarded as complimentary to other sources of funding. The amount of CIL charged must be informed by and not adversely affect the viability of development in an area.

Section 106 and section 278 agreements will still be used for site-specific mitigation measures that are required to make a development acceptable,

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including affordable housing. From April 2014, no more than five Section 106 contributions can be 'pooled' towards one infrastructure project or type.

CIL monies can only be spent on the infrastructure identified by the Council as being needed to support the development of their area. This should focus on new infrastructure provision, but can be also be used to increase the capacity of existing infrastructure. It should not be used to remedy pre-existing infrastructure deficiencies unless they will be made more severe by new development.

There is a requirement that a proportion of CIL collected is passed directly onto the immediate area where the development takes place.

Where there is a Parish Council and Neighbourhood Plan 25% of all money collected must be passed onto the Parish Council. In un-parished areas where there is a Neighbourhood Plan 25% of the money collected must be spent in consultation with the local community. Where there is a Parish Council but no Neighbourhood Plan 15% must be passed on. Where there is no Parish Council the District Council is required to spend 15% the CIL receipts to "support the development" of the relevant area where the development is located.

Redditch has one Parish Council in Feckenham therefore 15% of all money collected for development that takes place in this area will need to be passed on to the Parish Council.

Allocations Plan

An allocations plan would provide the site specific allocations for retail. The allocations will need to be evidenced with more specific quantitative retail data because retail evidence can only ever provide a snapshot in time before the adoption of the Local Plan and can become out of date quickly.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

The publication of the LDS will allow residents and stakeholders of Redditch Borough to identify how they can become involved in the various stages of progressing the development planning documents. The CIL will allow for money generated from development to be spent in the communities where the development takes place.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

The most significant risk is that without an up to date and sufficient Local Development Scheme the Council would not be fulfilling its statutory obligations. In addition, a Local Development Scheme is essential to set the overall programme and identify how the documents will be managed and progressed.

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Without an up to date Local Development Scheme the Development Plan Document could be found unsound as the authority would have failed to respond to a statutory duty within the Localism Act 2011.

Without a CIL the opportunity to collect and pool funding for much needed wider infrastructure projects which are needed across the Borough will be lost.

5. APPENDICES

Local Development Scheme No. 6 July 2014

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

7. KEY

RBC - Redditch Borough Council
CIL – Community Infrastructure Levy
DPDs – Development Plan Documents
LDS – Local Development Scheme
NPPF – National Planning Policy Framework

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Introduction

The Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a three year project plan for the production and review of the planning policy documents that will make up the Development Plan for Redditch Borough. This is the sixth LDS for Redditch which covers the period from July 2014 to July 2017.

Redditch Borough Council is required to produce a LDS in order to comply with Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. It provides residents and stakeholders information on the documents that will make up the Development Plan, the timescales they can expect for the preparation of these documents and the opportunities for involvement. Local Planning Authorities may revise their LDS at a time they consider appropriate or when directed to do so by the Secretary of State.

Since LDS No.5 was produced, the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4 has progressed through consultation, publication and submission into examination. As the production of the Local Plan is nearing the end of examination, resources allow the Council to commence production of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This also allows production to commence on the Allocations Plan, which was discontinued in preference to the resource being put towards Local Plan production.

The timetable for the preparation of the Development Plan can be found on page 6.

Borough of Redditch Planning Policy Framework

Current Planning Policy Documents

The planning policy documents listed below make up the current planning policy framework for the Borough of Redditch.

Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3 (2001-2011)

The Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3 (2001-2011) was adopted 31st May 2006. The Local Plan is saved by the Secretary of State beyond May 2009. A list of the saved policies can be found [here](#). Since the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in March 2012, due weight can be given to the saved local plan policies according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF.

Adopted Local Development Documents

The Council has adopted a number of planning policy documents, which can be used as material considerations in the determination of planning applications, including:

- Affordable Housing Provision Supplementary Planning Document
- Church Hill District Centre Supplementary Planning Document
- Edward Street Supplementary Planning Document
- Auxerre Avenue Supplementary Planning Document
- Prospect Hill, Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document
- Land to the rear of Alexandra Hospital Supplementary Planning Document
- Church Road, Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document
- Open Space Provision Supplementary Planning Document
- Designing for Community Safety Supplementary Planning Document
- Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Guidance
- Planning Obligations for Education Contributions Supplementary Planning Document
- Encouraging Good Design Supplementary Planning Guidance
- Employment Land Monitoring Supplementary Planning Guidance

Emerging Planning Policy Documents

Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4

Local Plan No.4 will set out the Strategic Vision, objectives and policies for the Borough of Redditch up to 2030. The plan is currently at examination and progress on the examination can be seen at www.redditchbc.gov.uk/examination

Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4 Policies Map

The Council has prepared a Policies Map covering the geographical area of Redditch Borough alongside the Local Plan. When the Local Plan is adopted, the Policies Map will illustrate the core policies of Local Plan No.4 and when appropriate indicate proposed land use policies.

Waste Core Strategy for Worcestershire

The Worcestershire Waste Core Strategy Local Plan sets out how the County plans for waste management facilities in Worcestershire until 2027. The Waste Core Strategy Local Plan was adopted in November 2012 and is now part of the development plan.

Minerals Local Plan for Worcestershire

The emerging Minerals Local Plan will replace the existing Minerals Local Plan and minerals policies set out in the Structure Plan and will be used by the County Council to determine applications for minerals development. A second consultation on the emerging Minerals Local Plan ended in January 2014 and a draft policy framework is due in Spring/Summer 2014.

Delivering the Development Plan

This section details how the Council will produce its Development Plan.

Evidence Base

A range of technical studies and research will underpin the preparation of the Development Plan. Some of the key studies and research areas are listed below:

- Sustainability Appraisal
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)
- A Strategic Housing Market Assessment
- Employment Land Review
- Open Space Needs Assessment
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Retail Needs Assessment

Adoption of Planning Policy Documents

All planning policy documents are taken to Executive Committee and Full Council to obtain Member approval. In the case of the Development Plan and Community Infrastructure Levy, these are subsequently submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) for examination. PINS will report back to the Council after the examination to report on the documents legal compliance and soundness for adoption.

Monitoring

The Council will regularly monitor and review the progress of the Development Plan against the LDS timetable (set out on page 5). Monitoring will be set out in the Annual Monitoring Report.

Resources and Risk Assessment

There are no further resource implications for the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4, subject to its successful adoption following examination during 2014.

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is essential in order to collect and pool funding for much needed wider infrastructure projects across the Borough which would otherwise be lost. It is therefore critical that there are adequate resources for the production of the CIL. While some resources required for the production of the CIL can be met through existing budgets, a comprehensive evidence base needs to be in place to justify the CIL before and at its examination. Budget bids will be required to fund the evidence base and examination. As part of the CIL a percentage (up to 5%) can be recouped as administration fees. Given the Council's financial position, whilst it is not yet known what proportion would be applicable to recoup and how much this could cover the budget bid costs of evidence and examination, it is anticipated that a significant proportion will come back to the Council.

For the Allocations Plan, some resource can be met from existing budgets. Additional work particularly on retail needs and site appraisal will have resource implications which will be subject to separate budget bids. Examination of the Allocations Plan will also be subject to budget bids.

There may be a requirement to find transit sites for gypsies and travellers subject to the outcome of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA). As a consequence this could have resource implications which will be subject to separate budget bids.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME NO.6 – JULY 2014

Assumptions have been made about the ability of PINS to service the requirements from this LDS. If PINS cannot meet the requirements of this LDS, then there will be some slippage in the programme. The Development Plans Team will adhere strongly to the advice and schedules provided by PINS.

Another potential unforeseen implication for the timing of the production of the CIL and Allocations Plan is the potential for Plan wide issues resulting from the duty to cooperate requiring the Council to prepare for a Local Plan Review.

Additional unforeseen pressures on staff time can never be predicted in advance.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME NO.6 – JULY 2014

Timetable

The timetable for the production of the remainder of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4 is set out below. Any changes to the timetable will be advertised on the Council website.

Submission to Planning Inspectorate	12 th March 2014
Pre Examination Meeting	None scheduled
Commencement of Hearings	16 th – 17 th June 2014
Additional hearings	September 2014
Receipt of binding report	December 2014
Adoption	January 2015

The timetable for the production of the Community Infrastructure Levy is set out below. Preparation will be undertaken in line with the DCLG CIL Guidance (2014). Joint working with neighbouring Authorities will also be undertaken. Any changes to the timetable will be advertised on the Council website.

Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule Consultation	September 2014
Draft Charging Schedule	September 2015
Examination	January 2016
Approval	June 2016

The timetable for the production of the Allocations Plan is set out below. Any changes to the timetable will be advertised on the Council website.

Scoping	May 2015
Allocations Plan Issues and Options Consultation	December 2015
Allocations Plan Consultation	May 2016
Allocations Plan Proposed Submission Consultation	December 2016
Submission	March 2017
Adoption	October 2017

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NON DOMESTIC RATES – DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF POLICY

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	Key Decision

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 This policy applies to Non Domestic Rates discretionary relief awarded under the Local Government Finance Act 1988, and subsequent amending regulations.
- 1.2 The Policy aims to set out a fair and transparent approach to the award and review of discretionary relief in Redditch Borough Council, whilst also balancing the needs to protect the interests of local Council Tax and Rate payers.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is asked to RECOMMEND that

the Non Domestic Rates – Discretionary Rate Relief Policy and Guidance is adopted.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 Local Authorities have the power to grant discretionary rate relief to charitable and other non-profit making organisations which meet specific criteria, on top of the mandatory relief that is available.
- 3.2 Following the move to local retention of 50% of non-domestic rates, half of the costs of mandatory, discretionary and hardship relief are now borne by Redditch Borough Council (40%), Worcestershire County Council (9%) and the Fire Authority (1%).
- 3.3 The costs of relief under the Localism Act, excluding all small business rate reliefs which are funded by central Government through Section 31 grants are fully met by Redditch Borough Council.
- 3.4 It is therefore vital that we have a clear policy in place to ensure most appropriate use of funds.

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- 3.5 There is no set budget for relief as the cost of awards is based on number and type of applications but the cost to Redditch Borough Council in 2014/15 is estimated to be in the region of £36k.
- 3.6 The costs of mandatory relief and discretionary rate relief are broadly shared between central and local government. In order to manage the financial impact of increases in mandatory and discretionary rate relief we will seek to ensure that the overall costs of mandatory relief do not usually rise from year to year by more than inflation.
- 3.7 The Small Business Rate Relief multiplier is increase on an annual basis by the rate of inflation, the overall yield from Non-Domestic Rates in the council's area will broadly increase by this inflation rate. When the council carry out the annual review of discretionary relief we will profile the predicted costs of mandatory and discretionary rate relief in the forthcoming rates year –excluding any relief for part occupied premises or reliefs under the localism act.
- 3.8 Where the percentage increase in costs of relief is greater than the increase in the small business rate relief multiplier then we may make a proportional reduction to all organisations award of discretionary rate relief.

Legal Implications

- 3.9 The policy applies to Non-Domestic Rates discretionary relief awarded under the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and subsequent amending regulations. When making a decision on discretionary rate relief the Council is required under to have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 3.9 Mandatory Rate Relief can be awarded to Charitable Organisations or Community Amateur Sports Clubs if the property that they occupy is used wholly or mainly for charitable purposes. The relief is currently 80% of the rates payable. The Council has a discretionary power to top up this relief to 100% by awarding up to 20% discretionary relief.
- 3.11 The Council is also allowed to award up to 100% discretionary relief to any organisations which meet prescribed criteria.
- 3.12 The Council is prohibited from awarding discretionary rate relief to a precepting authority or to itself as a billing authority.
- 3.13 Premises that are partly occupied can receive discretionary relief.. This is a process whereby a request can be made to the Valuation Officer to apportion the rateable value of a property so that the occupier may benefit from any exemption for the unoccupied area.
- 3.14 There is relief available for certain rural premises to include; for the sole; post

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office, general store, public house, or petrol filling station within a rural settlement, or for any food store within a rural settlement.

- 3.15 European Competition rules prohibit Government subsidies to businesses and for this reason relief from taxes, including relief from Non-Domestic Rates, can constitute State Aid. Consideration as to whether the award of a relief constitutes State Aid must be made when any discretionary relief is awarded. Relief for charities and non-profit making bodies would not normally constitute state aid because the recipients are not normally in market competition with other businesses. However, if the charities or non-profit making bodies are engaged in commercial activities, or if they are displacing an economic operator, or if they have a commercial partner, then rate relief could constitute State Aid and European Union rules will apply.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.16 Councils are required to give at least 12 months' notice of any variation of a Discretionary Rate Relief award. As such all recipient organisations were advised In March 2013 that a review of all awards would be taking place in 2014/15, giving them the opportunity to re-apply.
- 3.17 Non Domestic Rates bills were issued excluding any potential award and advice provided that awards would be determined as soon as possible in the new financial year.
- 3.18 Delays in guidance resulted in a delay in producing the revised policy. However, transitional arrangements are proposed for 2014/15 where a reduction in relief occurs.
- 3.19 The Policy sets out clear criteria for relief and levels of relief to ensure transparency

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.20 No specific group is adversely affected by this policy.
- 3.21 There is likely to be some changes to the level of relief provided to some organisations and officers will provide advice and guidance to those effected to establish whether there are other options available.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 Failure to have a clear, equitable and transparent Discretionary rate relief Policy in relation to Non Domestic Rates increases the risk of challenge through Judicial Review.

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- 4.2 The policy aims to mitigate the financial risks and helps to ensure that funds available for the awards of relief are used in the most efficient manner and that organisations receiving relief support the Council's Strategic Purposes.
- 4.3 The Policy reduces the risk of inconsistencies in the awarding of relief.
- 4.4 Failure to have a clear policy risks reputational damage

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Non Domestic Rates – Discretionary Rate Relief Policy and Guidance

Appendix 2 - Comparison of Potential Levels of Relief Following Changes to Rate Relief Guidance

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Local Government Finance Act 1988

Local Government Finance Act 1997

Localism Act 2011

European Competition rules.

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Non-Domestic Rates - Discretionary Rate Relief Policy and Guidance



Summary of Document

The policy applies to Non-Domestic Rates discretionary relief awarded under the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and subsequent amending regulations.

The guidelines set out to achieve a fair and transparent approach to the award and review of discretionary relief in Redditch Borough Council.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Local Authorities have the power to grant discretionary rate relief to charitable organisations and other non-profit making organisations that meet certain criteria.
- 1.2 The power is discretionary and can therefore be limited by other factors such as budgets and funds available for the Council's strategic purposes.
- 1.3 The discretion to grant relief can be for part or the entire amount of the business rates payable.
- 1.4 The policy:
 - Sets out the guidelines that Redditch Borough Council will use when it determines the amount of discretionary relief that will be awarded to an organisation.
 - Summarises the delegated authority to award discretionary rate relief.
 - Establishes an appeals procedure for organisations that are unhappy with the Council's decision.
 - Protects the interests of local Council Tax payers by ensuring that the overall costs of discretionary relief do not increase beyond budgeted amounts.
 - Ensures that the funds available for the awards of relief are used in the most efficient manner and that organisations that receive relief are supporting the Council's strategic purposes.

2.0 Legislative Framework

- 2.1 Mandatory Rate Relief can be awarded under Section 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (LGFA '88) to organisations Charitable Organisations or Community Amateur Sports Clubs if the property that they occupy is used wholly or mainly for charitable purposes. The relief is currently 80% of the rates payable.
- 2.2 The Council has a discretionary power under section 47 of the LGFA '88 to top up this relief to 100% by awarding up to 20% discretionary relief.
- 2.3 Section 47 (5B) of the LGFA '88 also allows the Council to award up to 100% discretionary relief to any organisations which are not established or conducted for profit and whose objectives are philanthropic, religious, concerned with education, social welfare, science literature or the fine arts.
- 2.4 The Council can also award 100% discretionary rate relief where a property is used for the purposes of recreation and it is occupied for the purposes of a club, society or other organisation not established or conducted for profit.

- 2.5 The Council is prohibited from awarding discretionary rate relief to a precepting authority or to itself as a billing authority.
- 2.6 When making a decision on discretionary rate relief the Council is required under Section 47 (5C) to have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 2.7 Premises that are partly occupied can receive discretionary relief under Section 44A of the LGFA '88. This is a process whereby a request can be made to the Valuation Officer to apportion the rateable value of a hereditament so that the occupier may benefit from any exemption for the unoccupied area.
- 2.8 The Local Government Finance Act 1997 introduced amendments to the LGFA '88 to allow for mandatory and discretionary rate relief for certain rural businesses. The scope of the relief has been extended and relief is now available for the sole; post office, general store, public house, or petrol filling station within a rural settlement, or for any food store within a rural settlement.
- 2.9 Mandatory rate relief for qualifying rural properties is set at 50% and there a discretion to award a further relief of up to an additional 50%.
- 2.10 Section 49 of the LGFA '88 permits relief to be awarded on the basis of hardship, providing that the awarding of the relief will be in the interest of the local Council Taxpayers.
- 2.11 The Localism Act 2011 extended the scope of Section 47 and there is now a general power to award discretionary relief to any ratepayer providing that it would be reasonable to do so having regard to the interests of local Council Tax payers.
- 2.12 European Competition rules prohibit Government subsidies to businesses and for this reason relief from taxes, including relief from Non-Domestic Rates, can constitute State Aid. Consideration as to whether the award of a relief constitutes State Aid must be made when any discretionary relief is awarded.
- 2.13 Relief for charities and non-profit making bodies would not normally constitute state aid because the recipients are not normally in market competition with other businesses. However, if the charities or non-profit making bodies are engaged in commercial activities, or if they are displacing an economic operator, or if they have a commercial partner, then rate relief could constitute State Aid and European Union rules will apply.

3.0 Discretionary Rate Relief for Charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs

3.1 The Criteria for awarding rate relief and the factors taken into account are detailed below.

Criteria		Evidence
1	<p>Use of the property:</p> <p>The property must be used wholly or mainly for the purpose of the charity - Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC).</p>	Application form.
2	<p>Annual turnover:</p> <p>The annual turnover is less than £50,000.</p>	Audited accounts.
3	<p>Charitable status</p>	
4	<p>Membership:</p> <p>Membership and access is open to all sections of the community.</p>	<p>Levels of membership.</p> <p>Details of membership fees charged.</p> <p>Evidence of concessionary rate memberships - and details of numbers of concessionary memberships available.</p> <p>Details as to how members are approved.</p>
5	<p>Access to facilities:</p> <p>Facilities are made available to other sectors of the local community e.g. schools, clubs, support groups.</p>	<p>Details of the use of the facilities over the past 12 months.</p> <p>Details of the charges made for the use of the facilities.</p>
6	<p>Profits:</p> <p>Determine whether the organisation holds reserves or makes a profit and whether it requires discretionary relief to continue to operate.</p> <p>Establish whether the organisation runs commercial activities and profits, or has the capacity to profit from these (e.g. bar, function hire).</p>	Copies of income and expenditure for the last financial year.

7	Community links: Establish if the charity is a local organisation and who uses the organisation and its facilities.	Application form.
8	Proportionate use of the property: Consider how the property is used and whether the use is proportionate to the size of the assessment; are the charity under occupying or part occupying a large assessment.	Inspection. Application form.
9	Other sources of support: Establish whether there are other sources of support available to the charity and whether other sources of funding are available.	Details of other sources of funding or income.

3.2 The level of relief will be determined by the evidence provided and whilst each case is assessed on its own merits the level of relief will ordinarily be that set out in section 13.0 below.

4.0 Discretionary Rate Relief for Charity Shops

4.1 The Criteria for awarding rate relief and the factors taken into account are detailed below.

Criteria		Evidence
1	Use of the Property: The shop must be wholly or mainly used for the purposes of the charity.	Signed Application Form Inspection of the premises.
2	Sale of Goods: The shop must sell wholly or mainly donated goods and the sale of the goods must be applied to the purposes of the charity.	Signed application form. Information regarding the sale of items, accounts.
3	Local Benefits: The Charity must be able to demonstrate that the local community derives benefits from the services the charity provides.	Details of the type of services provided to the residents of Redditch Borough Council and the number of residents who benefit from the support.

4	The Market Principle: Where the Charity Shop is competing with businesses operating on an ordinary commercial basis - for example where the operations are wholly or mainly the sale of second hand furniture, or the sale of books - then discretionary relief will not normally be provided.	Signed application form. Inspection of premises.
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4.2 The level of relief will be determined by the evidence provided and whilst each case is assessed on its own merits the level of relief will ordinarily be that set out in section 13.0 below.

5.0 Discretionary Rate Relief for Non-Profit Making Organisations

5.1 The Criteria for awarding rate relief and the factors taken into account are detailed below.

	Criteria	Evidence
1	Use of the property: Main use of the premises for non-commercial activities for example a not for profit organisation that is primarily using the premises for activities that are provided by a commercial organisation such as health/gym facilities will not normally be eligible for relief.	Application form.
2	Annual turnover: The annual turnover is less than £50,000.	Audited accounts.
3	Membership: Membership and access is open to all section of the community.	Levels of membership. Details of membership fees charged. Evidence of concessionary rate memberships - and details of numbers of concessionary memberships available. Details as to how members are approved.

4	Access to facilities: Facilities are made available to other sectors of the local community e.g. schools, clubs, support groups.	Details of the use of the facilities over the past 12 months. Details of the charges made for the use of the facilities.
5	Profits: Determine whether the organisation holds reserves or makes a profit and whether it requires discretionary relief to continue to operate. Establish whether the organisation runs commercial activities and profits, or has the capacity to profit from these (e.g. bar, function hire).	Copies of income and expenditure for the last financial year.
6	Community links: Establish if the charity is a local organisation and who uses the organisation and its facilities.	Application form.
7	Proportionate use of the property: Consider how the property is used and whether the use is proportionate to the size of the assessment, are the charity under occupying or part occupying a large assessment.	Inspection. Application form.
8	Other sources of support: Establish whether there are other sources of support available to the charity and whether other sources of funding are available.	Details of other sources of funding or income.

5.2 The level of relief will be determined by the evidence provided and whilst each case is assessed on its own merits the level of relief will ordinarily be that set out in section 13.0 below.

6.0 Rural Rate Relief

6.1 The Criteria for awarding rural rate relief and the factors taken into account are detailed below.

Criteria		Evidence
1	<p>Local Value:</p> <p>The business is of importance to the local community - and the service is not provided by others business in the rural settlement.</p>	<p>Statement of the business type and the impact on the Redditch Borough Council if the business were to close.</p> <p>The use of and value of the business to the local community.</p> <p>Last 2 years audited accounts.</p>
2	<p>Sole premises:</p> <p>The applicant carries out their business from a single property within the rural settlement.</p> <p>The business is not part of a larger chain - for example it is not part of a number of shops operated by the applicant.</p>	<p>Application form - accounts.</p>

6.2 For all centrally funded discretionary relief Redditch Borough Council will award the Governments intended level of relief in full.

7.0 Hardship Relief

7.1 The Criteria for awarding hardship relief and the factors taken into account are detailed below.

Criteria		Evidence
1	<p>Local Value:</p> <p>The business is of importance to the local community and is suffering genuine hardship.</p>	<p>Statement of the business type and the impact on Redditch Borough Council if the business were to close.</p> <p>The use of and value of the business to the local community.</p> <p>Last 2 years audited accounts.</p> <p>Copies of the businesses order book.</p> <p>Copies of the personal accounts of the owners of the business.</p>

2	Local Jobs: The number of people employed by the business who reside in the Redditch Borough Council area.	Total number of employees who will be affected if the relief is refused.
3	Nature of hardship: Details of the hardship being experienced including: Cause; expected duration; measures already taken to remedy the situation; that the cause is not a result of poor business planning or activity; details of the help already requested from other sources; and amount of additional support already received or reasons why support was not provided.	Latest accounts. Bank Statements. Business Plan. Order Books. Any other documents to support the application.
4	State Aid Declaration: Awards of Localism Act relief would potentially be classed as State Aid - a declaration will be required to show that the level of all relief over the previous three financial years is below 200,000 euros.	State Aid Declaration.

7.2 Due to the nature of hardship relief there can be no general guidelines on the level of relief; each determination for hardship relief will be considered on an individual basis - the following criteria will be taken into account

8.0 Relief for Part Occupied Premises

8.1 The criteria for awarding rate relief and the factors to be taken into account are detailed below:

Criteria		Evidence
1	Part Occupation: The property is partly occupied	Detailed plans of the hereditament must be provided to outline the whole property and indicate the partly occupied section.
2	Length of time: The intended part occupation must be for a short period of time.	Details of: the planned period of time of the part occupation; the nature of the business and the businesses future intentions.

3	<p>Reason:</p> <p>The part occupation is not a result of maintenance, refurbishment, renewal or repairs, seasonal shutdowns, holidays or reduction in capacity due to normal business risks, reduction in capacity due to loss of trade or normal business fluctuations.</p> <p>Part occupation for phased occupation will be considered as a qualifying reason.</p> <p>Part occupation for phased vacations will only be considered where the business is relocating to new premises within the Redditch Borough Council area.</p> <p>Part occupation resulting from some event, such as fire or flood, which renders part of the premises unusable will be considered as a qualifying reason.</p>	<p>Statements of the cause of the part occupation.</p> <p>Photographic evidence of the part of the premises which is prevented from being occupied.</p> <p>Surveyors or other qualified professionals reports confirming that occupation of the part of the premises is prevented.</p>
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8.2 A short period of time is not defined in legislation; therefore the nature of the business activity will be taken into account along with the estimated planned period of time and future intentions.

8.3 Applications for retrospective periods will not be accepted.

9.0 Localism Act Discretionary Rate Relief

9.1 The Localism Act removed the restrictions on awards of discretionary rate relief and allowed local authorities to determine that awards of relief may be made where it is reasonable to do so having regard to the interests of the Local Council Tax Payers.

9.2 In the main decision to award relief under the extended powers of the localism act will be made by the Council's Executive and would be exercised in respect of all hereditaments within a defined area or of a defined type. There may be occasions where decisions are made on a case by case basis.

9.3 Decisions on a case by case basis would be made where there is the possibility of the loss of an amenity which is of importance to local Taxpayers or where a failure to award relief could lead to the loss of major employer within the Redditch Borough Council area.

- 9.4 Any award of discretionary relief under the Localism Act powers would be the exception rather than the rule.
- 9.5 The criteria for awarding relief and the factors that will be taken into account are detailed below:

Criteria		Evidence
1	<p>Local Value:</p> <p>The business is, or will be of importance and value to the local community.</p>	<p>Statement of the business type and the impact upon the local community if the business were to come into the area/move away from the area.</p> <p>The use of and value of the business to the local community. Evidence of local trade and support.</p>
2	<p>Local Jobs:</p> <p>The number of people who are/will be employed by the business and who reside in the Redditch Borough Council area.</p>	<p>Total number of employees.</p> <p>Number of employees who would be affected if relief were not awarded.</p>
3	<p>Reason for the discount</p> <p>Details to include: the reason for the discount; the period for which relief is sought; measures already taken to obtain support from other sources; amount of additional support already received; and (if applicable) reasons why support was not forthcoming.</p>	
4	<p>The business is the only example of its kind.</p> <p>Details of the unique nature of the business/amenity demonstrating why the failure to grant relief could lead to the loss of a unique amenity for the residents of the Redditch Borough Council area.</p>	<p>Statement provided by applicant /report from Officer of Redditch Borough Council detailing why the business/amenity is unique in its nature.</p>

5	State Aid Declaration Awards of Localism Act relief would potentially be classed as State Aid - a declaration will be required to show that the level of all relief over the previous three financial years is below 200,000 euros.	State Aid Declaration to be completed.
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10.0 Discretionary Rate Relief - Central Government Funded Reliefs

- 10.1 Central Government has directed local authorities to use the extended powers of the Localism Act to administer a number of national schemes of discretionary rate relief. These schemes include relief from empty property rates for new build properties, retail rate relief and reoccupation of empty premises relief. Funding for these reliefs is provided by central government in the form of a 'Section 31 grant'
- 10.2 For all centrally funded discretionary relief Redditch Borough Council will award the Governments intended level of relief in full.

11.0 Costs of Relief

- 11.1 The total amount of the relief granted is included in the annual statistical returns and the NNDR income taking account of losses in collection, amendments to rateable value etc. is then split into the following proportions:

50% paid to central government
40% retained by Redditch Borough Council
9% paid to the County Council
1% paid to the precepting Fire Authority

- 11.2 The costs of mandatory relief, discretionary relief for non-profit making bodies, Section 44a relief, and hardship relief are therefore borne jointly by central and local authorities as per their proportional share of the NNDR income.

12.0 Reduction in Relief - Transitional Arrangements

- 12.1 Where a decision of the council results in a reduction in the level of relief that an organisation will receive then the council may take steps to phase in the reduction over a period of two rates years.
- 12.2 A decision to phase in the reduction may be taken where notice of the level of relief is not provided prior to the commencement of the rates year, or where the organisation is unable to take budgeting decisions to account for the reduced level of relief.

13.0 Level of Relief and Budget Restrictions

13.1 As a general guide, and providing the criteria for relief as detailed are met, then the levels of relief shown in the table below will be awarded; where the organisation or type of organisation is not shown then relief will be made in accordance with the general guidelines of the policy.

Organisation	Narrative	% of relief
Housing Associations - housing providers		0%
Educational Establishments	Schools and colleges with charitable status and in receipt of mandatory relief	0%
Youth organisations	Scouts, guides, cadets	Up to 100%
Community Halls/Village Halls		Up to 100%
Sports and Social Clubs	Not registered as a charity or CASC	Up to 20%
Homelessness organisations		Up to 100%
Regional administrative or head offices of a charity		0%
Charity Shops	The charitable operations of the charity are on a national or international level	0%
Charity Shops	Where the operations of the charity are on a regional level within Worcestershire and surrounding areas only - subject to the market principle outlined above	10%
Charity Shops	Where the operations of the charity are wholly within the Redditch Borough Council area - subject to the market principle outlined above	20%
Central Government Funded Discretionary Reliefs	Awards of discretionary relief for which Section 31 grants are payable	Relief at the level determined by Central Government.

13.2 If on annual review the overall costs of Mandatory and Discretionary relief – excluding Section 44a relief and Localism Act Reliefs - that will be granted in the new rates years would increase by more than the % increase in the Small Business Rates Relief Multiplier then the awards of relief to each organisation will be reduced proportionally to ensure that the costs of relief remain within budget.

13.3 Any reduction in relief to an organisation made as a result of the overall increase in Mandatory and Discretionary relief will be subject to the internal appeals process and the rules on variation or revocation of relief.

14.0 Period of Relief

14.1 An award of discretionary rate relief can remain valid indefinitely unless the end date is specified, the liability to pay Non-Domestic Rates ends, or until notice is given of the intention to revoke or alter the level of relief.

14.2 If notice is given to vary or revoke the determination of the award of relief then one year's notice of the variation or revocation must be provided. The variation or revocation can only then take effect from the end of the financial year. For example a decision made on 6 June 2014 to revoke relief will not take effect until 1 April 2016.

14.3 Awards of discretionary rate relief will usually be made for one rate year only and will be reviewed annually.

15.0 Appeals

15.1 Appeals against the decision to refuse relief or against the level of the relief may be made by the ratepayer.

15.2 The appeal should be made in writing and should state the reasons why the ratepayer is aggrieved with the decision of the council. New information may be submitted at this stage to support the ratepayer's appeal.

15.3 Appeals will in the first instance be considered by the Head of Customer Access and Financial Support. At this stage the decision may either be confirmed or revised so as to increase the level of the relief.

15.4 A decision to reduce or remove the relief cannot be made as the requirements to give one year's notice would make such a decision ineffective.

15.5 Where the decision is revised the ratepayer will be notified of the increased level of relief awarded, if applicable.

15.6 If the original decision is confirmed the ratepayer will be advised of the reasons why, of the further right of appeal to the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources who will consider the appeal in conjunction with the relevant Portfolio Holder.

15.7 Appeals to the Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources must be made in writing and must give the reasons why it is believed that the decision should be amended. New or additional information may be included.

15.8 The ratepayer will be advised of the date that their appeal will be considered.

- 15.9 The ratepayer does not have a right to appear in person but may make a request to present evidence in person.
- 15.10 The appeal will be considered individually on its own merit and the ratepayer will be advised of the decision in writing.
- 15.11 The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources will be able to confirm the original decision of the council or increase the level of relief awarded. A decision to revoke relief or to reduce the level of relief cannot be made as the requirements to provide one year's notice such a decision would be ineffective.
- 15.12 The submission of an appeal by a ratepayer does not affect the individual's rights to challenge a decision made by the council by way of Judicial Review.

16.0 Delegated Powers to Determine Awards of Relief

- 16.1 The decision to determine the awards of relief will be delegated as to:

Relief	Delegated Authority
Mandatory Rate Relief	Revenue Services Manager Revenues Team Leader
Discretionary Rate Relief for Charities, Community Amateur Sports Clubs and Charity Shops - "Top-Up Relief"	Revenue Services Manager Revenues Team Leader
Discretionary Rate Relief for Non-Profit Making Organisations	Revenue Services Manager Revenues Team Leader
Relief for Part Occupied Premises	Revenue Services Manager Revenues Team Leader
Hardship Relief	Revenue Services Manager Head of Customer Access and Financial Support
Central Government Funded Reliefs	Revenue Services Manager Revenues Team Leader
Individual Awards of Relief under the Localism Act - Awards made on a case by case basis.	Head of Customer Access and Financial Support. Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources following consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder and Leader of the Council.

17.0 Interest of Officers and Members

- 17.1 Officers and Members who have an interest in any organisation which has either applied for relief or may indirectly benefit from the award of the relief (for example the owners of premises occupied by organisations making an application) must not participate in the decision making process.
- 17.2 Examples of interests include, but are not restricted to the following:

- a) Membership of the organisation making an application.
- b) A close relative who is a member of the organisation.
- c) Are employed by or working in a voluntary capacity for the organisation.
- d) Are trustees for the charity or organisation making the application.
- e) Membership of a similar/rival organisation.
- f) An interest in the property for which relief is being sought.

Comparison of Potential Levels of Relief Following Changes to Rate Relief Guidance

An illustration of the potential revised levels of relief should the new guidance be adopted has been tabulated below.

The revised levels of relief assume that all qualifying criteria are met and are shown so as to illustrate how the revised guidance will provide consistency in the Council’s decision making. The information is based on the organisation’s most recent application form, the form may have been submitted as long as 3 years ago, therefore the levels of relief may change when new information is provided.

Charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs

All organisations listed are in receipt of 80% Mandatory Relief – any award of discretionary relief is a “top-up” awarded in addition to the mandatory relief.

Organisation	Existing Relief	Revised Relief	Comments
Example 1	20% Discretionary Rate Relief	0% Discretionary Rate Relief	Income above threshold; Surplus of £238,000 Cash reserves of £185,000. Removal of relief will result in liability of £3,229.40
Example 2	20% Discretionary Rate Relief	0% Discretionary Rate Relief	Income in excess of £6m per annum; significant reserves. Removal of relief will result in liability of £2,554.60
Example 3	20% Discretionary Rate Relief	20% Discretionary Rate Relief	Income of £5,000; expenditure in excess of income by £20,000 Reserves of £15,000. Reserves and Income of insufficient level to operate without support

Example 4	20% Discretionary Rate Relief	20% Discretionary Rate Relief	Income above threshold – expenditure in excess of Income. Limited reserves of £400 Relief to continue at existing levels.
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Charity Shops

All organisations listed are in receipt of 80% Mandatory Relief – any award of discretionary relief is a “top-up” awarded in addition to the mandatory relief.

Organisation	Existing Relief	Revised Relief	Comments
Example 1	20% Discretionary Relief	10% Discretionary Relief	Level of relief may reduce to 10% as the organisation operates on a regional basis within North Worcestershire and is not wholly for the benefit of residents of Redditch.
Example 2	20% Discretionary Relief	0% Discretionary Relief	Removal of relief determined by market principles. Second Hand furniture store
Example 3	0% Discretionary Relief	0% Discretionary Relief	No Change to award – charity operates on a national level
Example 4	20% Discretionary Relief	0% Discretionary Relief	Removal of relief - charity operates on a national level. Income of £77,000 Removal of relief will result in liability of £1,229.10 for 2014/15 rates year. This may be reduced to £229.10 by award of government funded retail relief.
Example 5	0% Discretionary Relief	0% Discretionary Relief	No Change to award – charity operates on a national level

Other Organisations in Receipt of Mandatory Relief

All organisations listed are in receipt of 80% Mandatory Relief – any award of discretionary relief is a “top-up” awarded in addition to the mandatory relief.

Organisation	Existing Relief	Revised Relief	Comments
Example	20% Discretionary Rate Relief	0% Discretionary Rate Relief	Operating surplus of £55,000 Reserves of £848,000 Removal of relief would result in liability of £233.77
Example 2	20% Discretionary Rate Relief	0% Discretionary Rate Relief	Operating Surplus of £18m in most recent accounts (2004) Removal of relief would result in liability of £154.24
Example 3	20% Discretionary Rate Relief	20% Discretionary Rate Relief	No Change to existing award of relief

Organisations not Eligible for Mandatory Relief

These organisations are not eligible for mandatory relief but can apply for discretionary relief under the existing and proposed policy.

Organisation	Existing Relief	Revised Relief	Comments
Example 1	100% Discretionary Rate Relief	100% Discretionary Rate Relief	Income below thresholds full relief will be awarded No funds held in reserves

Example 2	20% Discretionary Rate Relief	0% Discretionary Rate Relief	Income below thresholds; Profit of £7,000 in previous 12 months. Reserves of £14,500 Removal of relief will leave liability of £453.08
Example 3	20% Discretionary Rate Relief	0% Discretionary Rate Relief	Income below thresholds; Profit of £2000 in previous 12 months Reserves of £20,000 Removal of relief will leave liability of £607.32
Example 5	37% Discretionary Rate Relief	20% Discretionary Rate Relief	Reduction in relief in line with revised guidance. Results in liability of £1,547.20
Example 6	50% Discretionary Rate Relief	20% Discretionary Rate Relief	Reduction in relief in line with revised guidance. Results in liability of £12,399.60

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

24th June 2014

LAND TO THE REAR OF MIDDLE HOUSE LANE

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor John Fisher
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Amanda De Warr, Head of Customer Access and Financial Support
Wards Affected	Abbey Ward
Ward Councillor Consulted	Yes
Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

This report seeks approval to amend a recommendation in relation to the disposal of land to the rear of Middle House Lane, Redditch.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is asked to RECOMMEND that

the land to the rear of Middle House Lane, Redditch be disposed of at market value.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 In June 2005 Redditch Borough Council agreed to declare this land as surplus and dispose of it in conjunction with a Worcestershire County Council's site, which sits adjacent and provides access to it.
- 3.2 At that time the Redditch Borough Council specified that the land should be disposed of to a Social Landlord of the Council's choosing for the development of social housing.
- 3.3 There is no record that agreement to a joint disposal had been reached and Worcestershire County Council subsequently entered into lengthy discussions with other parties regarding possible use of the land.
- 3.6 Due to lack of funding and changing priorities these discussions came to nothing and Worcestershire County Council are now keen to sell their parcel of the land.
- 3.7 Should Redditch Borough Council not intend to openly market its site, Worcestershire County Council will seek to dispose of its site separately or achieve a full market value receipt from any Social Housing provider which may successfully bid for the Borough Council's land.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

24th June 2014

- 3.8 Access from the Highway can only be achieved through Worcestershire County Council's land and as such Redditch Borough Council may be required to pay a premium or ransom for this right.

Financial Implications

- 3.9 Information relating to the financial implications can be found at Appendix 2 and is exempt from publication under s.100 1 of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of information relating to financial affairs which could adversely affect the two Councils' negotiating positions with potential purchasers.
- 3.10 The sale of this land will generate a capital receipt to the General Fund. It is worth noting that there have been a number of changes to the use of capital receipts which may enable a proportion of the receipt received to be used for revenue purposes

Legal Implications

- 3.11 Both the County Council and the Borough Council are required to dispose of any interest in land at Best Value in accordance with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972. To achieve this requirement, it is the County Council's intention to market the site for sale to achieve the highest capital receipt possible.

Service/Operational Implications

- 3.12 This site falls under two ownerships (see attached plan). The land fronting Middle House Lane is owned by Worcestershire County Council with the back land bordered by the Birmingham Road owned by Redditch Borough Council.

The site areas are:

RBC site area:	1.78 acres
WCC site area:	0.73 acres
Total Site Area:	2.51 acres

- 3.13 Under existing Local Plan 3 the Worcestershire County Council land is designated for Housing with the Redditch Borough Council land designated as "Reserved Land for Housing". However under the proposed Local Plan 4, both sites are designated for Housing with an expectation that the site will sustain 30 new dwellings. There is no specific planning requirement for the site to be used solely for affordable housing.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

24th June 2014

- 3.14 If agreement is reached to dispose of the land at market value officers will instruct the District Valuer to provide an independent ransom valuation, as is the norm in such circumstances where both Council's are party to a transaction.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.15 None

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

Failure to agree to joint disposal of the land risks Redditch Borough Council being left with a parcel of land that cannot be easily marketed or which includes having to pay a ransom for access.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Site plan

Appendix 2 – Financial implications – EXEMPT FROM PUBLICATION

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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Tel: (01527) 881241



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 Ordnance Survey 100024230.

Indicative Scale: 1:1,800

Date Printed:2/5/2014

0 5 25 50 metres

Middlehouse Lane
 RBC Land Hatched Brown
 WCC Land Hatched Red



worcestershire
 county council

Worcestershire County Council
 County Hall
 Spetchley Road
 Worcester
 WR5 2NP

Document is Restricted

Executive Committee

24th June 2014

REVIEW OF TOWN HALL CONCESSIONARY USE

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Phil Mould
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Head of Leisure & Culture Services
Wards Affected	N/A
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

The report outlines the proposed revisions to the Concessionary Scheme for the use of Committee Room Bookings within the Town Hall.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is requested to RESOLVE that

- 1) the proposed booking and administration procedure (Appendix 1) for Civic Suite Concessionary Room Bookings be approved and adopted; and**
- 2) Officers be directed to commence with the new procedure from Monday 30th June 2014.**

3. BACKGROUND

The current Concessionary Policy has been used for over 20 years and is provided 'Free of Charge' to the user as long as there is no additional cost to the Council and that the use does not conflict with Council business.

However, the current policy has recently come under scrutiny and it has become apparent that current custom and practice do not fully reflect the policy.

In order to bring consistency and clarity to the booking administration officers have reviewed and revised the process (see appendix 1).

The revised procedure includes a matrix which outlines the criteria required to allow any new user requesting concessionary use to receive one, and gives clear guidance to officers to allow this to happen.

Executive Committee

24th June 2014

It is proposed that in the event of a dispute that the final decision will be made by the Leader of the Council.

4. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 4.1 Income targets are set against room bookings and although income has increased additional concessionary users could result in increased pressure to achieve the required income levels as included in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Performance for 2013/14:

Income Target £15k = £15,090
Income Achieved (Actual) £14k
Number of Concessionary Bookings given: 156

Performance for 2012/13:

Income Target £16k
Income Achieved (Actual) = £13k
Number of Concessionary Bookings given: 131

Legal Implications

- 4.2. There are no direct legal implications contained within this report.

Service / Operational Implications

- 4.3 There are no direct service/operational implications in this report but the improved procedure including its matrix (appendix 1) will give clear guidance and a process to follow for officers and potential users.

It will also give the clarity required to ensure the system is administered in line with the Council value and allow officers to make decisions that support our Strategic Purposes.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 4.4 There are no direct equality or diversity implications contained within this report, however it is acknowledged that the Committee Rooms within the Town Hall play a vital role in supporting local community groups to fulfil their objectives.

Executive Committee

24th June 2014

5. RISK MANAGEMENT

Should the number of bookings under the Concessions Policy grow there is a possibility this will limit the availability of space for paying customers which will impact upon the service's ability to maintain current income levels and achieve the targets within the MTFP.

6 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Proposed Procedure

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Civic Suite Hire Agreement

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Julie Heyes
E Mail: j.heyas@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel: 01527 881377

Appendix 1

Proposed Concessionary Scheme for use of the Civic Suite

All Concessionary Use is Free of Charge and must be confirmed through the Leisure and Cultural Service Room booking service.

- Concessionary use is only offered if **all** of the following criteria apply:

Concessionary Room Booking Matrix	
1. The Organisation/Group/Charity is either Redditch Based or provides a Service to Residents in Redditch	Yes/No
2. The Organisation/Group/Charity is a constituted body	Yes/No
3. The Organisation/Group/Charity can clearly demonstrate where they support the Council's Strategic Purpose	Yes/No
4. The Organisation/Group/Charity work in partnership with the Council	Yes/No
Or	
1. Are the Meetings/events covered by the Mayor's Policy this is for free of use for 4 occasions throughout the year	Yes/No
2. Is it a MP Surgery	Yes/No

- Any organisation requesting free use of the Civic Suite must agree to the Terms and Conditions of use
- Concessionary bookings can only use the rooms Monday to Thursday between 9.00am-9.30pm or Friday 9.00am-5.00pm, should any meeting overrun these times the user will be charged at the commercial rate (pro rata per hour), with the exception of MP Surgery which runs 5pm – 7pm in room 6 only
- A Concessionary bookings may be declined if a formal Committee meeting is being held in the Civic Suite
- Priority will be given to core Council Business, Commercial Bookings and Concessionary Bookings in that order
- If there is a special request to use the Civic suite at the weekend, then a charge will be made to cover the Council's operating costs for that event. (ie: weekend caretaking cover/refreshments etc...)
Exceptions will be made for Civic Memorial Events such as Holocaust, and Remembrance Sunday

- Refreshments will be charged at the current rate according to the Fees and Charges and will be invoiced following the event.
- Concessionary bookings may be cancelled at short notice should the room be required for Council business
- In the event of a dispute the final decision will be made by the Leader of the Council

PLEASE NOTE

- Concession is **FREE USE** unless otherwise specified
- **Normally Monday to Thursday** as rooms permit/weekend bookings to be charged
- **Council Party Group Meetings** are to be treated as any other internal council meeting
- **Political Party Meetings** are external, commercial lets and therefore chargeable
- Wherever possible **regular** concessionary bookings should be made in advance and programmed into the room booking system
- **MP Surgery use and Political Party Meetings** are suspended during any formal election/referendum period

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Date: 24th June 2014

MAKING EXPERIENCES COUNT – QUARTERLY CUSTOMER SERVICE REPORT – QUARTER 4, 2013/14

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor John Fisher
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Amanda de Warr – Head of Customer Access and Financial Services
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

This report provides Members with details of customer feedback data for the fourth quarter of 2013/14, along with some transactional data relating to the Customer Service Centre.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that

- 1) the contents of the report be noted; and**
- 2) whether the information contained could now be provided via the Members Newsletter.**

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The report, attached as Appendix 1, sets out details of customer feedback, including complaints and outcomes, compliments, Local Ombudsman complaints and other customer satisfaction. It gives information on how well we have handled complaints against our agreed timescales.
- 3.2 It also provides some transactional data for the Customer Service Centre and One Stop Shops.

Financial Implications

- 3.3 There are no direct financial implications, although failure to deal appropriately with complaints can lead to financial recompense being necessary.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Date: 24th June 2014

Legal Implications

- 3.4 There are no legal issues arising from this report. Any legal issues arising from complaints are dealt with on a case by case basis.

Service/Operational Implications

- 3.5 The Every Customer Every Time, Customer Service Strategy was launched in March 2011 and sets out our vision for excellent for excellent customer service provision and improving the customer experience when having contact with the council.
- 3.6 As an authority committed to improving customer care customer feedback and demand data is used to measure what is happening in our systems, and to inform improvements
- 3.7 Quarterly reporting is intended to ensure Members of the Council and customers are updated in respect of customer feedback, especially complaints made in respect of service provision.
- 3.8 Improvements to the way we handle complaints has resulted in less officer time spent chasing responses and re-investigating and is having a positive impact on outcomes for customers. Complaint trends are picked up within the services. Complaint numbers are relatively low and there are generally no strong trends.
- 3.9 The information provided is for information and is also published on the Council's website. Whilst it is important that there continues to be an overarching view of customer feedback, and this would continue through monitoring and review, Members are asked to consider whether this data now needs to be presented at Executive or could be effectively distributed via the Members Newsletter.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.10 It is important to monitor aspects of customer service to ensure that we are improving and developing. Customers need to know that we respond properly to complaints and act on the issues raised to reduce the possibility of them happening again.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 It is important to use the Council's complaints or compliments to measure how well the system is meeting its purpose and to act on those complaints to fix the system where it is failing

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

Date:24th June 2014

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Quarterly Customer Feedback Report Quarter 4
2013/2014

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The details to support the information provided within this report are held by Head of Customer Services.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Lynn Jones
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**EVERY CUSTOMER, EVERY TIME -
“Everybody Matters”**

Making Experiences Count

Quarterly Customer Service Report

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

1st January – 31 March 2014



1. Introduction

This report provides some of the key customer service information for the organisation, including:-

- Analysis of the complaints and compliments received during this quarter and any other relevant feedback, and
- Customer Service Centre management information, including transactional statistics for information.

2. Customer Feedback Analysis

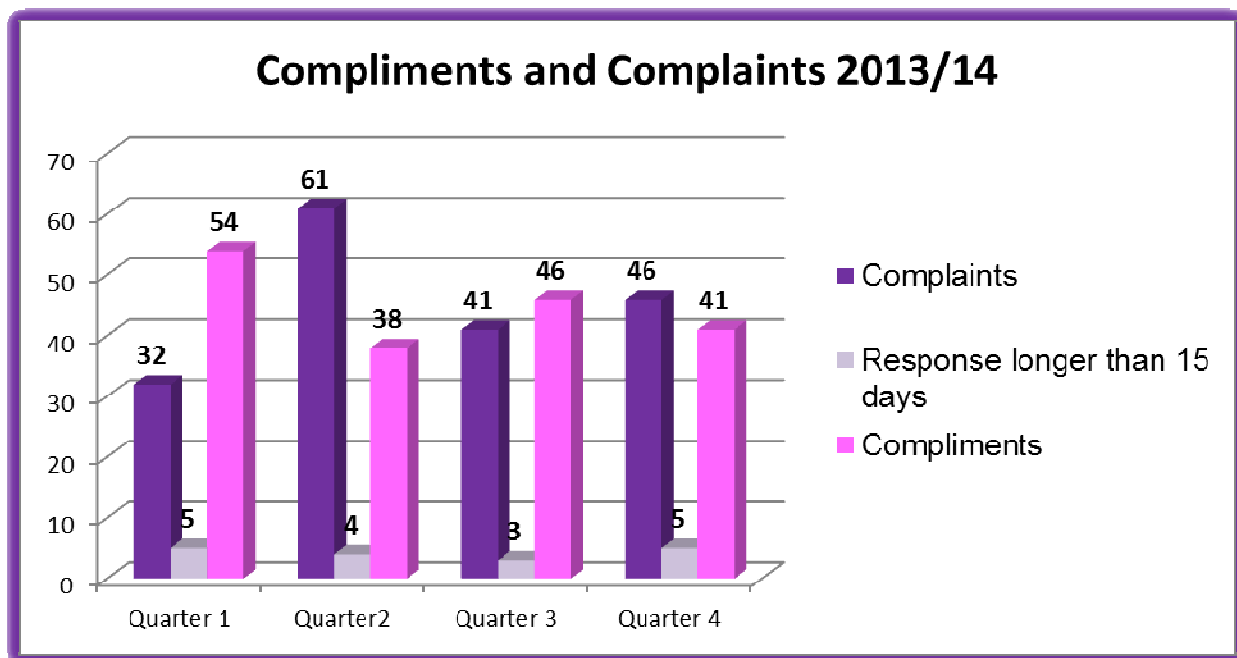
46 complaints were received during this quarter because we did not meet the customer's expectations, or failed to meet our own standards, or the customer was unhappy with an outcome.

41 complaints (89%) were answered in 15 working days or less.

5 complaints took longer than 15 working days to respond to and details of these complaints are listed below.

We also received **41 compliments**.

This chart shows number of complaints and compliments for 2013 -14.



The total figures for last year compared with 2013/14 are as follows:

	Total compliments	Total complaints	Dealt with in target time
2013/14	179	180	163 (90%)
2012/13	316	219	162 (74%)

There has been an **18 % drop** in the number of complaints since last year *and* a **24% increase** in the number of complaints handled within a 15 day period

Over the last year, we have been trialling a system thinking driven process to handle complaints differently. This has involved Managers talking directly to the customer in an attempt to resolve the problem. The trial included all services within the Housing Department with Environmental Services taking part during the last quarter of the year. The results have shown us that we can resolve the majority of complaints more quickly by taking a personal approach. It also gives us a greater understanding of what the real problems are. Managers are using this information to improve their systems and services and this has had a knock on effect of reducing the number of repeat calls for complaints.

We have now rolled out this new way of handling complaints to all departments across the Council and will continue to monitor and develop the process.

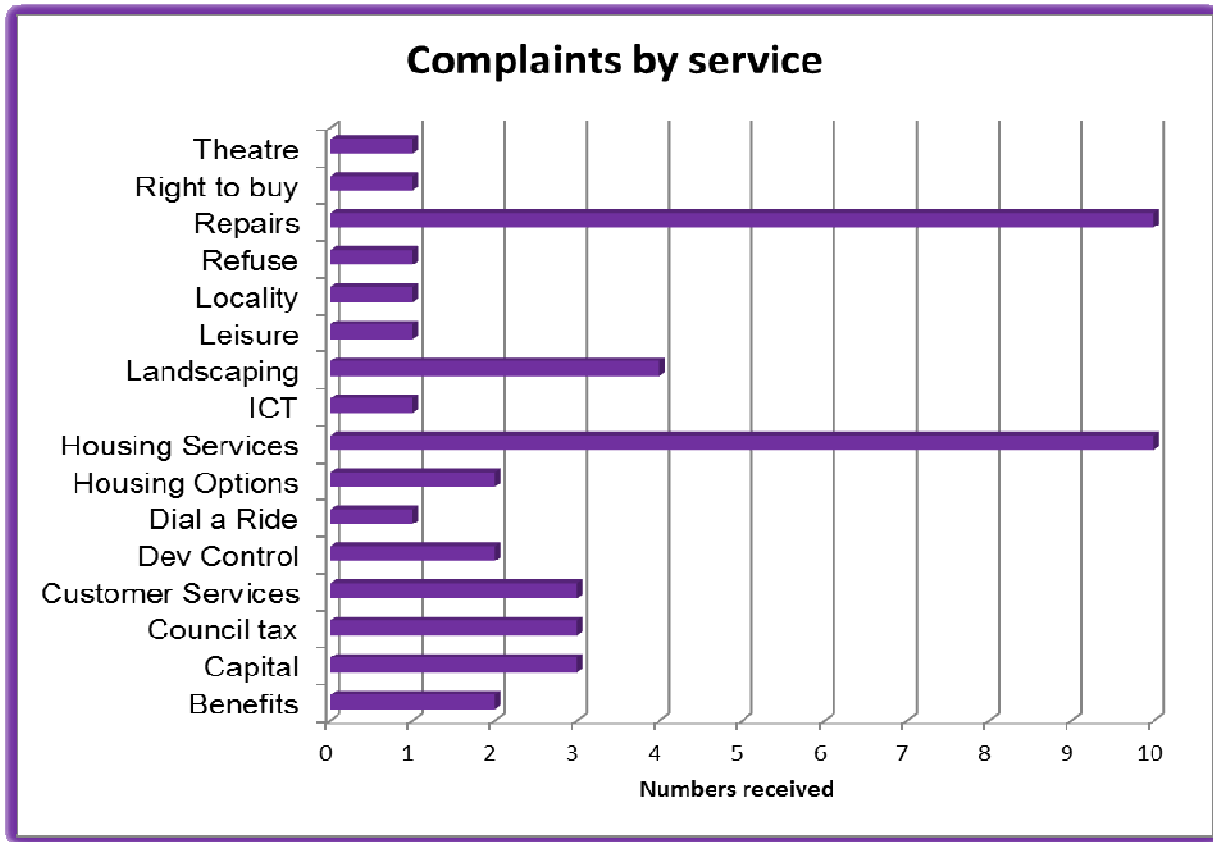
There has also been a very marked decrease in complaints about waste collections this year. This is due in part to the way the Business Support team within Environmental Services is working. They have set up a dedicated call centre and are able to deal with customer queries before they escalate to become complaints. Our Refuse Crews have also introduced new processes to make the new collection service work and it seems that customers are appreciating this

The common themes in the complaints received this quarter were:

- New payment process doesn't give a balance of monies owing to the customer
- Not contacting customers when we had promised to do so
- Staff being unhelpful and not understanding customers needs
- Not explaining fully our processes and what we require from customers.
- Unacceptable delays in taking action.
- Not keeping customers informed of scheduled repairs.

Number of complaints by service (detailed)

The following chart provides a breakdown of complaints by service.



Time taken to respond to complaints

We aim to respond to customer complaints within *15 working days* and **89%** of complaints received during this quarter were dealt with within that timeframe. Where it has taken us longer to respond than expected, (5 cases) customers have been kept informed of the progress of their complaint.

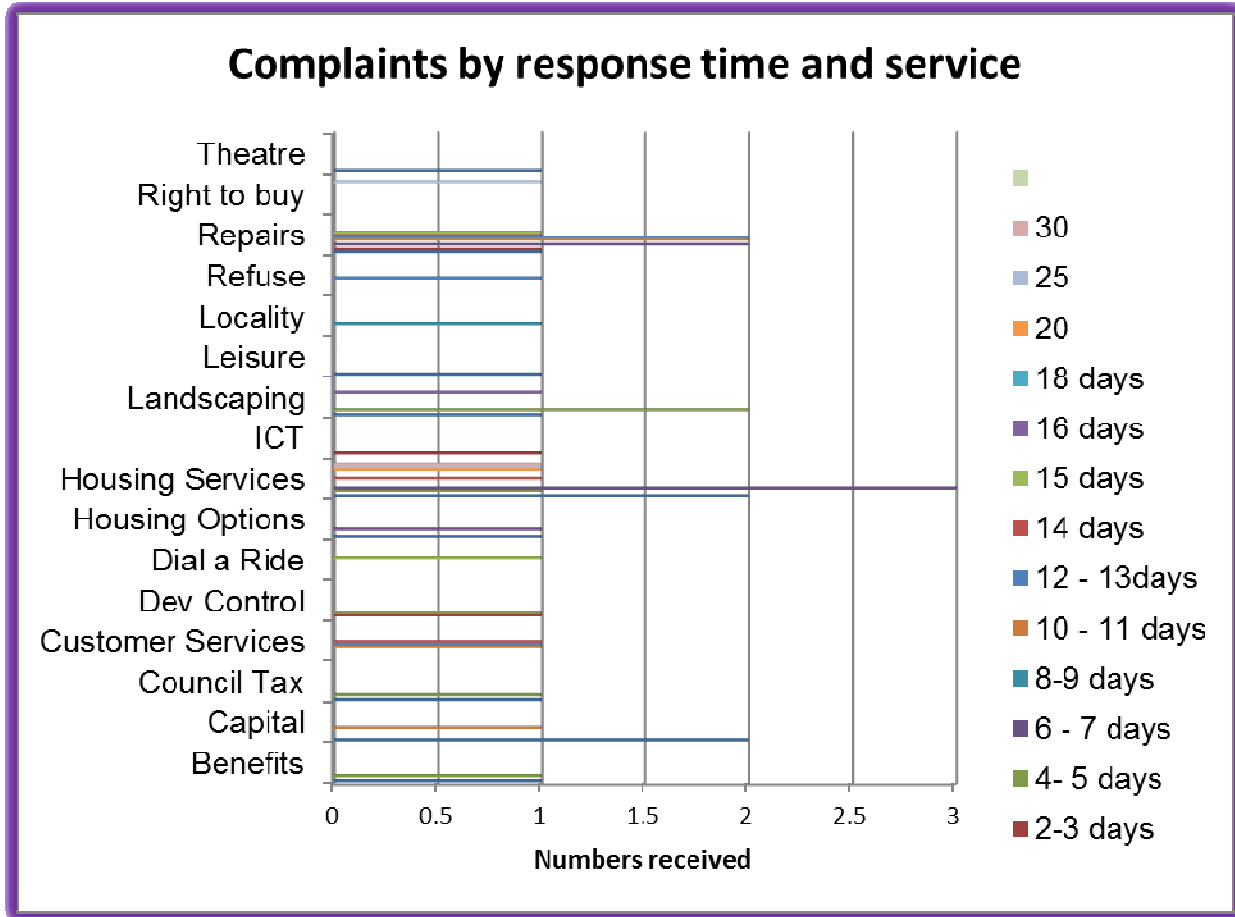
The following table details the complaints which took longer than 15 working days to deal with and why.

Complaint details	Days taken to respond	Action taken	Outcome update from Head of Service
Housing			
Customer sent in a very short note with no details about his downstairs neighbour causing trouble.	30	After trying several times to contact the customer, our anti social behaviour officer arranged a home visit accompanied by a police constable. Customer was not there but in hospital.	Customer's life is very chaotic and the police advise that he probably won't remember writing the letter. Complaint was closed.
Customer alleges she was	25	Apologies given although	Customer has

treated discourteously by staff.		there is no evidence of this. Rent information given to customer in writing.	been offered a home visit to help her with her rent arrears.
Repairs			
Customer unhappy about receiving threatening letters about rent. There were outstanding repairs to the property when new tenancy commenced. Rent charged when the property was not fit to be inhabited.	20	Apologies given.	Credit refund given for the 3 weeks the property wasn't up to standard. We are doing different interventions during the void team transformation to look at an improved standard of property.
Right to buy			
Lady has asbestos in her home and she was not informed of this when she bought the property from the Council.	25	Further asbestos report has been commissioned to find out exactly the amount of asbestos in the property. We have also offered to skim and paint the lounge ceiling. We will discuss the situation further with customer. when the report is received.	The asbestos should have been disclosed when customer bought the property
Landscaping			
Customer unhappy about the maintenance of privately owned trees that have blocked his light and may cause flooding	16 days	Our Tree Officer met with the owner of the Trees and an agreement was made to keep them trimmed to an acceptable level. The flooding issue has been passed to the North Worcestershire Management Team to action	No further action.

Time taken to respond to complaints by service.

This chart shows the breakdown of all complaints by response time. Data suggests that the end to end time for responding to complaints is generally based on the nature of the service and complexity of the complaint rather than any one service dealing with complaints in an unsatisfactory way.



“You said – we listened” – what did we change as a result of complaints?

Some of the changes made as a result of complaints include:-

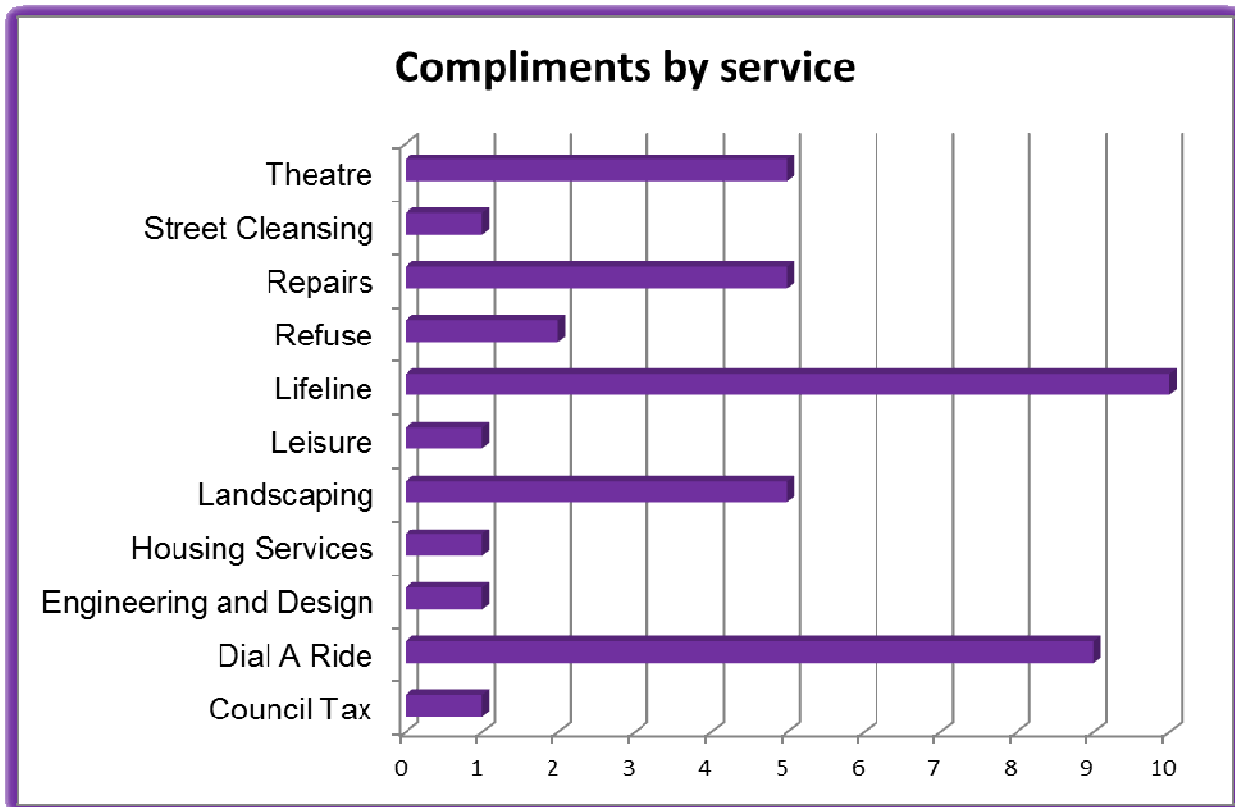
- Customers have been personally assisted through the new online payments system and a payment card is available for those customers who wish to record their balance every time they make cash payments.
- Refresher training in equality and diversity for housing officers and some contractors
- A change has been made to the way we book repairs in after inspections. Previously they were ‘pending’ until a slot became available but now they are booked in straightaway.
- Changes have been made to the voids team working processes during transformation to improve the standard of property for the new tenant.
- Work is ongoing to improve communication between tenants, contractors and Council staff.

Number of complaints escalated to Head of Customer Services

There were no complaints escalated to the Head of Customer Services for further investigation or action.

Happy Customers!

From the 41 compliments received we can see that customers appreciate the range of services the Council provides, especially when we deal with their requests in a timely and professional manner.



Here are details of some of the compliments we have received for information.

Team	Compliment Detail
Lifeline	Very impressed with the Lifeline equipment and service they received.
Lifeline	Very pleased with the Lifeline Service, in particular the good, fast service they received from Operator Dawn Withers when customer fell recently
Dial a Ride	Customer wishes to express her gratitude towards two relief Dial-a-Ride drivers, who she does not see very often (due to them being relief drivers). The two drivers: Michael Pilkington & Robert Holland have been so helpful and courteous towards her, especially when she had to travel in a wheelchair after an illness, which knocked her confidence
Dial a Ride	Customer would like to say a big thank you for all the help she receives from all the staff. She would like to especially thank Chris Stewart for his help recently when he picked her up she had just fallen in the garden and he took her to hospital. Also to Julie Latham for her

	help in phoning her daughter informing her we were taking her to hospital so she could meet her at the hospital.
Landscaping	Customer would like to pass on his thanks to the landscaping team for the work that was carried out in Pembridge Close. The work was done at the front and side of property and a tree was planted which he says was a very nice touch. He is extremely pleased with the work that was done and would like to say a very big thank you
Landscaping	Customer rang to say what a great job the tree team had done on site and how helpful and polite they had been. Especially the lad with the ginger beard.
Refuse	Well done bulky collection was booked at 2pm yesterday - all gone by 8.15 , helpful quick tidy and courteous service
Housing Services	Compliments for Diana Brown I can't thank you enough for all the support, both practical and emotional over the last 12 months. There have been times when you have gone above and beyond the call of duty, when you've done your job - and so much more - and managed to put up with me with a smile and stoic professionalism. Thank you so much!
Repairs	Customer would like to say that operative Michael Conway did an excellent job repairing her floor and she would like to say a big thank you to him.
Repairs	Customer phoned to thank plumber Gary Harris for the excellent work he did today and to inform us how efficient and polite he is.
Theatre	Well done everyone for the production of Cinderella...and to you Mr Tim Mackrill for bringing it all together
Council Tax	Customer telephoned to ask to pass on her thanks to revenue officer Cheryl Flemming as she was very helpful and understanding at a time when very distressed and tearful Cheryl has started a process which will help her resolve her concerns regarding money owed to the council

3. Local Government Ombudsman Complaints

There were no complaints referred to the Ombudsman this quarter:

4. Customer Service Centre Information

This section provides some statistical information in respect of the amount of customer demand received via the telephones, face to face and through our payment channels.

The operational purpose of the Customer Services Team is “Help me get the support I need with my issue or problem”. Most customer demand is now passed to expert teams and the customer service staff act as a filter to ensure that the customer gets to see or speak to the right expert.

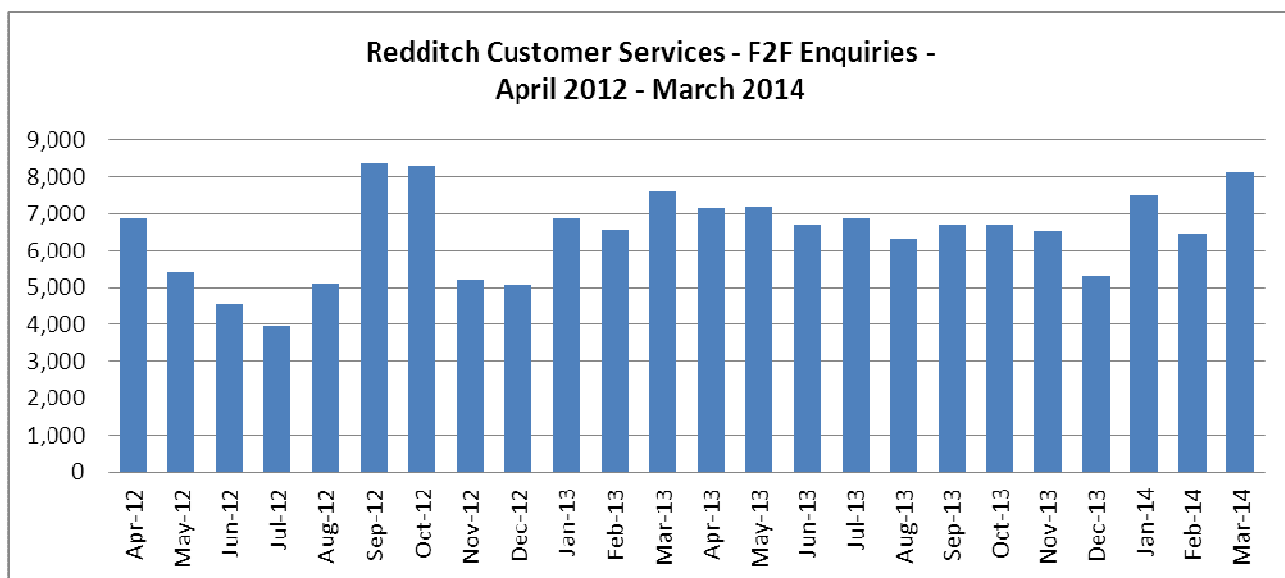
We use this information to help us understand the demand on all council services.

The following tables and charts show the number of customer transactions recorded and trends over time.

Face to face demand at the Customer Service Centre

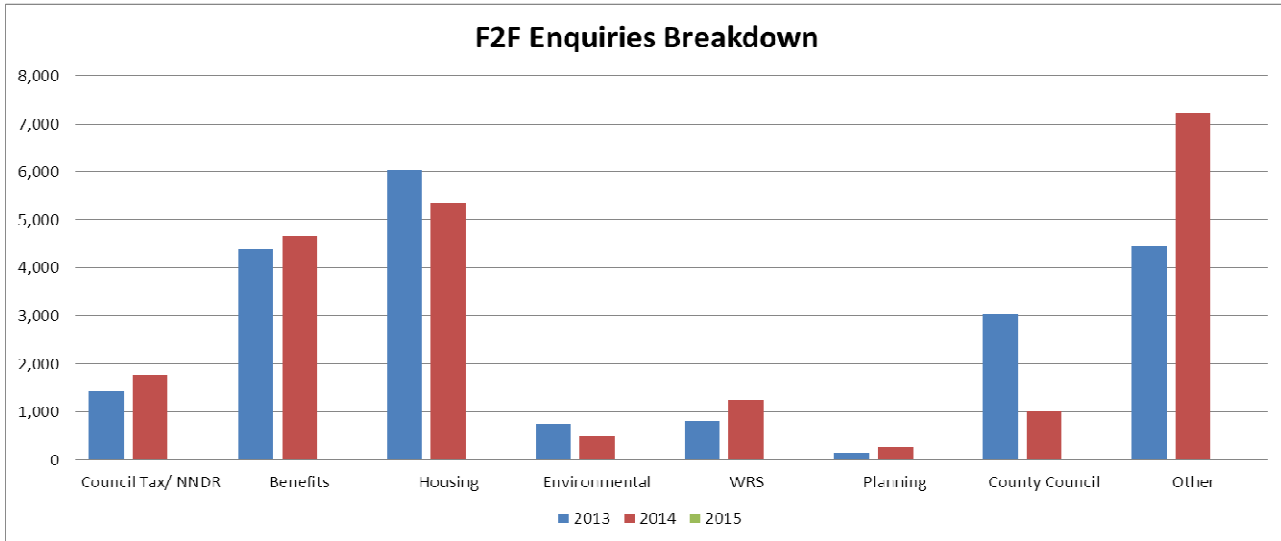
The following chart shows the total face to face enquiries being dealt with at the customer service centre and One Stop Shops on a month by month basis from April 2012 to March 2014. It informs of patterns that occur and the data is then used to plan for busy times and to check the reasons for the peak, this may identify waste in systems which can then be addressed.

Redditch Town Hall has seen an increase of 1'933 enquiries into the customer service centre compared to Qtr. 4 2013. Comparison shows the number of enquiries has reduced in the one stop shops. Locality working sees officers visiting customers so in the future we will see further reduction to the number of enquiries through the One Stop Shops.



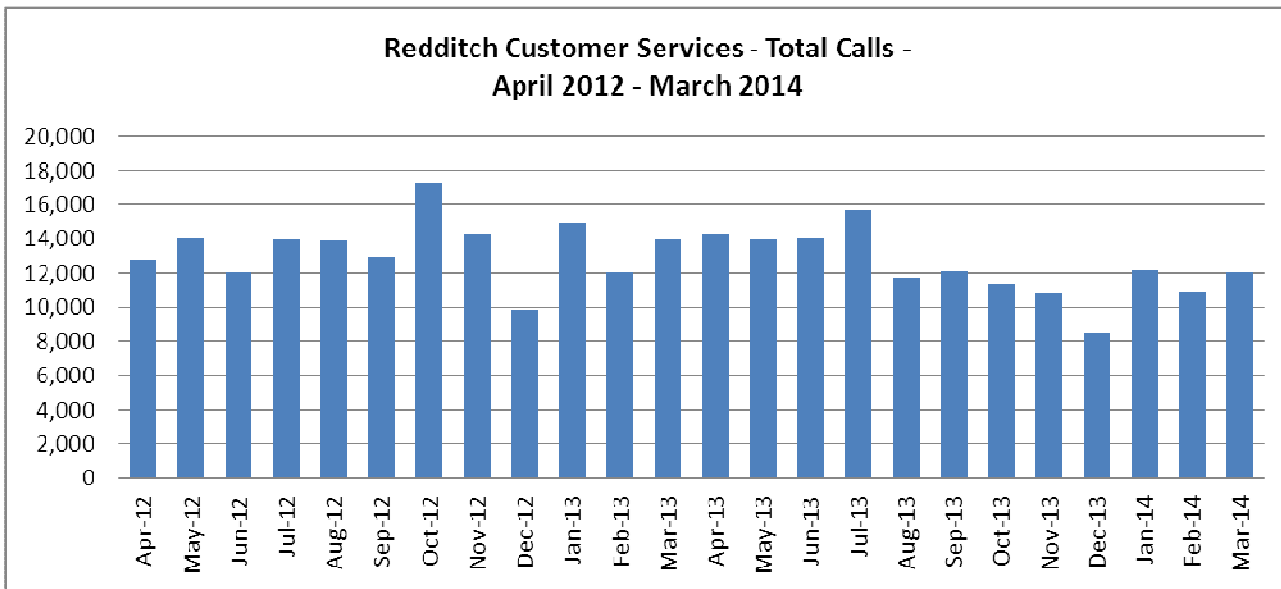
The following chart shows the breakdown of face to face enquiries received during Qtr. 4 2014, compared with the same period last year. The data for April 2013 to March 2014 is collected consistently; therefore now provides us with comparative data.

During quarter 4 we have identified “other” includes the following enquiries HMRC 1,166 enquiries, customer service enquiries 3,824 which includes visitors, deliveries, signposting and general enquiries Staff are now able to use the staff finder to identify the service calls relate to; which will improve the accuracy of data; therefore reducing the number of “other” enquiries.

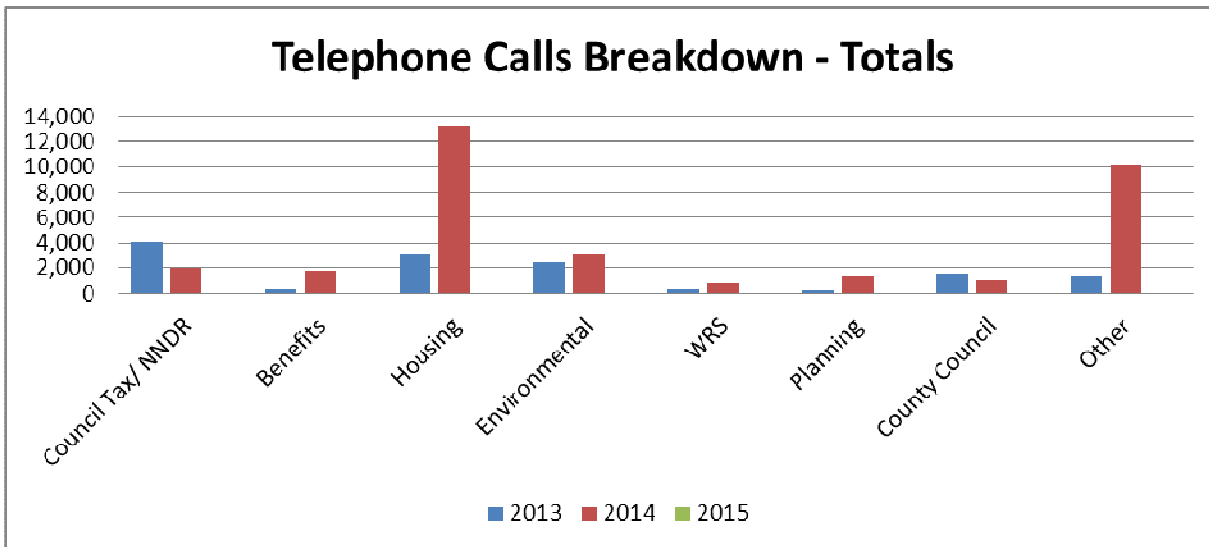


Telephone Demand Received

The following chart shows the total telephone calls recorded on the customer service systems from April 2012 until the end of March 2014.



The following chart shows the breakdown of calls received via the switchboard and customer service centre phone lines by department during the quarter. (Calls made to direct dial lines are not recorded and therefore not included.) The 2012 data does not include switchboard calls which accounts for the significant difference when comparing years.



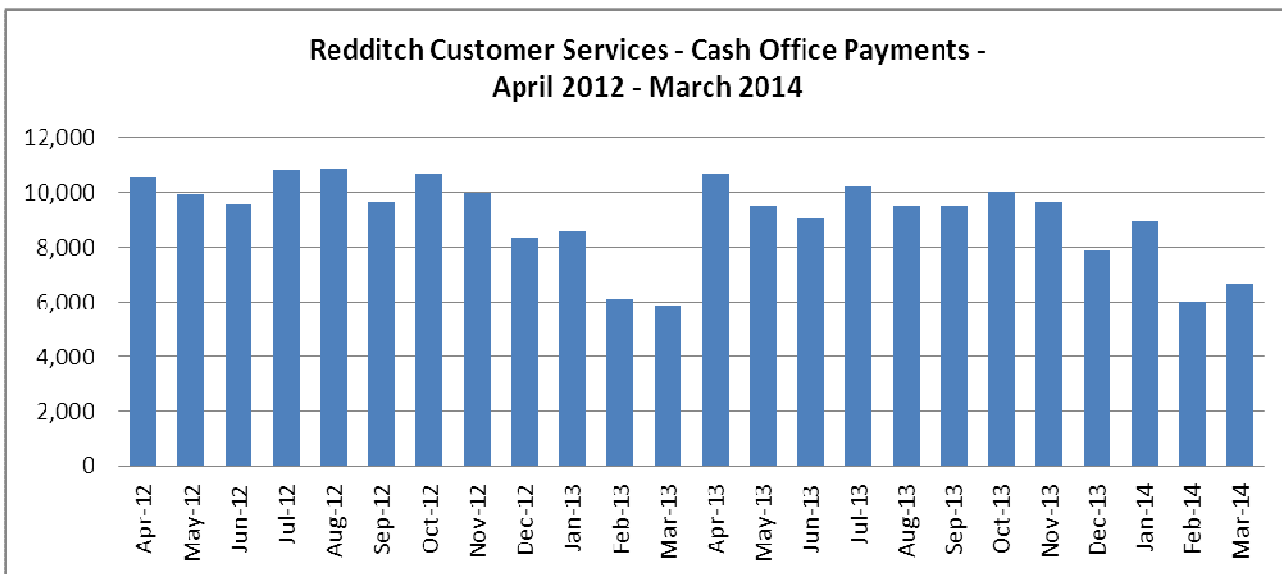
The increase in housing calls relates to calls for locality offices.

From January 2014 a telephone trial to route calls into locality offices commenced and Housing tenancy, rents anti-social behavior calls all were answered by switchboard first so they could identify which locality office the customer required. Switchboard identified this by asking the caller their address and then putting the customer through to the right locality office. This trial proved successful and the customer reached the right place for their enquiry to be dealt with first time; this system will now continue as the norm. These are quick calls to deal with on switchboard and the additional calls have not had an impact on answering times.

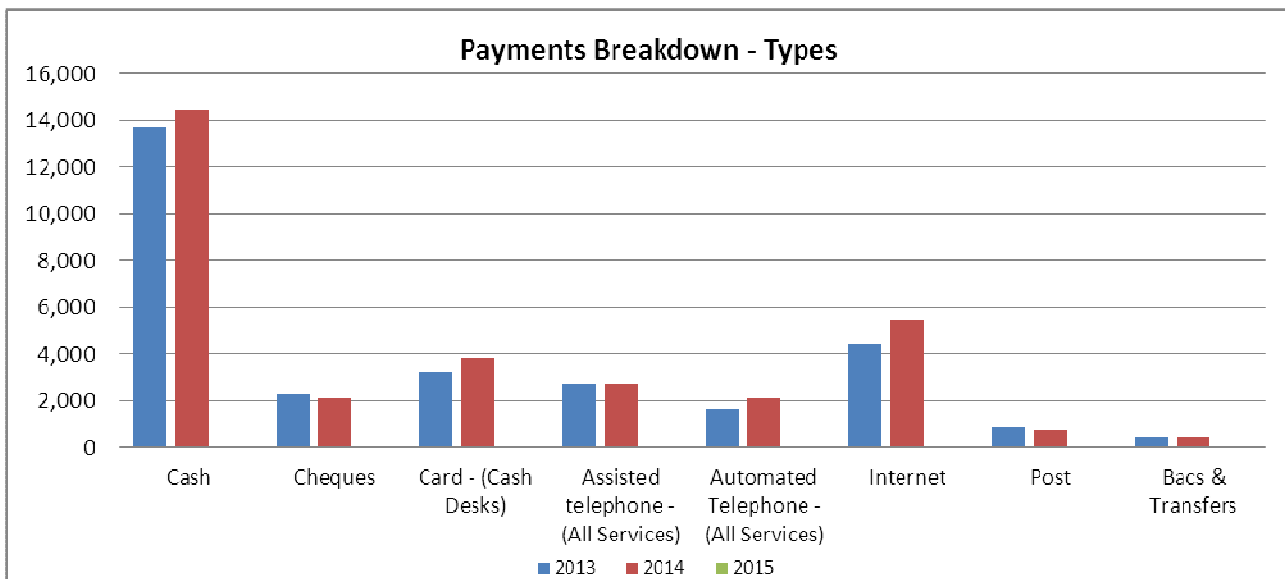
Payments

The following chart shows a month on month comparison of payments received by the cash offices and customer services staff during the period April 2012 to end of March 2014.

On 12th March 2014 a new payments system including cash receipting, on line and telephone payments was introduced, this is a completely new system for Redditch.



This chart shows the breakdown of payments across all payment channels in Qtr. 4 2014 and evidences a small increase in cash and card payments to the cash offices compared with the same period 2013. The data shows a steady increase in the use of automated payments channels.



Lynn Jones
 Customer Services Manager
 September 2014

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

24th June 2014

QUARTERLY MONITORING OF WRITE OFFS – QUARTER 4 2013/14

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor John Fisher
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Amanda de Warr, Head of Customer Access & Financial Support
Wards Affected	All

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

Members are requested to consider the action taken by Officers with respect to the write off of debts during the Financial Year 2013/14 and to note the profile and/or level of outstanding debt.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive is requested to RESOLVE that

- 1) **subject to any comments, the contents of the report be noted; and**
- 2) **the debt owing in relation to the three cases detailed at Appendix 1 be written off as irrecoverable under the Executive Committee's discretionary powers.**

3. KEY ISSUES

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

3.2. The current bad debts provisions are as follows:

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

3.3 The Executive Committee has discretionary powers to write of any debt deemed as irrecoverable where the policy does not delegate authorisation to Officers. Three such cases are detailed in Appendix 1.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Financial Implications

- 3.4 Details of written off debts during the period for Council Tax, Non Domestic Rates, Sundry Debts, Former Tenant Arrears and Overpaid Housing Benefit are attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.5 A total of £425,386.03 of unrecoverable debt was written off during 2013/14, which is well within the bad debt provision.
- 3.6 An age profile of the outstanding sundry debts and former tenant arrears is attached at Appendix 3.
- 3.7 An analysis of Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates areas is attached at Appendix 4.

Legal Implications

- 3.9 There are no legal implications.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.10 No direct implications.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.11 No direct implications.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

There are no risks identified.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Discretionary Write off requests

Appendix 2 - Write offs April – March 2014

Appendix 3 - Aged Debt Profile for Sundry Debts and Former Tenant Arrears

Appendix 4 - Council Tax Arrears and Business Rates Arrears as at 31st March 2014.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are no background papers with this report.

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

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AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Amanda de Warr , Head of Customer Access and Financial Support
E Mail: a.dewarr@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel: (01527) 64252 ext 1241

**EXECUTIVE
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Appendix 1

Discretionary Write off of Irrecoverable Debts

Case A – Mr A, former tenant

Mr A was a former tenant of Redditch Borough Council; on termination of the tenancy rent on 1st October 2012 arrears were £712.30 outstanding. Mr A became a resident of a Care Centre in Birmingham in May 2012 while his son remained in the property until the tenancy ended. Mr A was diagnosed with a terminal illness in May 2012 and lost his mental capacity to maintain his general affairs. The debt accrued as this information was not given to Redditch Borough Council by Mr A's son so the tenancy could not be terminated.

Mr A incurred considerable debt and suffered severe hardship.

There are no viable options for the recovery of the outstanding sum and it is recommended that the Executive exercise their discretion to write off the outstanding balance of £712.30 as irrecoverable

Case B – Mr B, former tenant

Mr B terminated his tenancy on 5th September 2011. Mr B left Redditch prior to this date to live with his son as he was suffering from prostate cancer, osteoporosis, osteoarthritis and depression and felt that living with his son would help his situation. Mr B was not intending the move to be permanent when he first left Redditch which is why the debt accrued.

Age UK in another part of the country were acting on behalf of Mr B to provide support to him. Although he was living with family due to other family commitments they could not provide the support needed. Mr B was in receipt of high rate mobility DLA and low rate care. Mr B had applied to Home Choice in the area his family lived but was unable to bid for property as he still had outstanding rent debt with Redditch Borough Council.

The Housing Manager has investigated the cases and has requested that the matter be written off and there are no viable options for the recovery of the outstanding sum.

It is recommended that the Executive exercise their discretion to write off the outstanding balance of £1811.31 as irrecoverable.

Case C – Mrs C, tenant

Mrs C was and continues to be a Redditch Borough Council tenant on full Housing Benefit.

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Mrs C signed for a tenancy of St David's House on 17th September 2012 and the tenancy was ended on 29th October 2012. Worcestershire NHS were asked to look at Mrs C moving to St David's in October 2012 but were unaware that Mrs C had already signed a tenancy.

Upon investigate it was found the tenancy process was not halted while a formal assessment and best interest decision in line with the Mental Capacity Act 2005 was carried out. At this point it was unclear whether a change of accommodation was the right decision for Mrs C and in fact Mrs C has remained at the original property.

Worcestershire NHS has requested the debt be considered for write off due to the oversight of not halting the tenancy as Mrs C has no capacity in relation to her accommodation needs.

There are no viable options for the recovery of the outstanding sum and it is recommended that the Executive exercise their discretion to write off the outstanding balance of £543.24 as irrecoverable.

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Appendix 2

**Write Offs of Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates
 April 2013 – March 2014**

Council Tax	01/04/13 - 31/03/14
Gone away	45,466.96
Deceased no funds in estate	2,325.75
Bankruptcy	36,629.92
Uneconomical to pursue	1,435.14
Admin Order/IVA	-40.57
Balance under £5.00	34.57
Other	2,414.24
Credits - unable to refund	-16,930.98
Total	71,334.03

NDR	01/04/13 - 31/03/14
Gone away	28,325.60
Encon	4,265.07
Liquidation/Winding up	155,866.98
Uneconomical to pursue	-1,413.53
Automatic W/O +1p/-1p	-0.01
Credits - unable to refund	-17,911.80
Total	169,132.31

Write Offs of Sundry Debts April – March 2014

Reason	01/04/13 – 31/03/14 £
Gone away	13,935.46
Imprisonment	49.85
Liquidation/Bankrupt	3,973.00
Statute Barred	2,107.39
Uneconomical to pursue	33,053.01
Debtor deceased	476.60
Total	53,595.31

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Former Tenant Arrears (HRA) April – March 2014

Reason	01/04/13 - 31/03/14 £
Gone away	37,249.50
Bankrupt	3,218.46
Statute Barred	5,114.08
Uneconomical to pursue	68,741.34
Tenant deceased	17,001.00
Total	131,324.38

Write off of Overpaid Housing Benefit – April to March 2014

Reason	Amount £	Number of cases
Not reasonable to pursue	24,449.88	59
No prospect of recovering	33,016.66	37
Uneconomical to pursue	962.43	27
Compassionate grounds	7,760.81	2
Bankrupt	1,583.93	4
Debt Relief Order	7,809.66	16
Individual Voluntary Arrangement	609.99	1
Deceased	3,090.08	5
Possible Write Back	3,361.52	7
Total	82,644.96	158

**EXECUTIVE
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Appendix 3

**Aged Debt profiles for Sundry Debts and Former Tenant
 Arrears – as at 31st March 2014**

Sundry Debts

Age	Arrears as at 31/08/2013	Arrears as at 31/12/2013	Arrears as at 31/03/2014
	£	£	£
0 - 3 months	786,257	618,070	1,007,476.07
3 - 6 months	191,632	116,544	108,826.57
6 - 12 months	134,740	218,004	215,211.12
12 - 24 months	232,022	219,702	188,204.13
24 months and over	640,277	619,273	651,185.37

Former Tenants

Age	Arrears as at 31/08/2013	Arrears as at 31/12/2013	Arrears as at 31/03/2014
	£	£	£
0 - 3 months	37,741	31,845	23,475.72
3 - 6 months	37,060	40,506	29,005.59
6 - 12 months	51,521	67,241	56,990.29
12 - 24 months	58,740	47,186	65,045.34
24 months and over	156,027	149,016	133,081.79

**EXECUTIVE
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Appendix 4

Council Tax Arrears

Year	Arrears Total as at 31/03/2013	Arrears Total as at 31/12/2013	Arrears Total as at 31/03/2014
1993/94	0	-2	-98
1994/95	0	0	-422
1995/96	0	0	-359
1996/97	583	382	103
1997/98	1,052	1,052	760
1998/99	2,243	2,017	1,632
1999/00	4,972	4,350	3,997
2000/01	9,523	8,397	7,910
2001/02	16,311	13,349	12,515
2002/03	20,924	18,002	17,281
2003/04	33,471	29,969	28,718
2004/05	51,373	45,417	43,045
2005/06	71,654	60,491	59,785
2006/07	115,180	98,279	93,677
2007/08	146,041	128,437	122,513
2008/09	176,534	154,918	149,272
2009/10	206,990	176,806	169,558
2010/11	278,183	234,111	221,028
2011/12	380,751	283,884	263,920
2012/13	832,499	486,716	433,424

Business Rates Arrears

Year	Arrears Total as at 31/03/2013	Arrears Total as at 31/12/2013	Arrears Total as at 31/03/2014
2000/01	0	1,000	0
2001/02	125	36	0
2002/03	8,990	8,989	8,990
2003/04	12,449	12,449	12,449
2004/05	18,273	14,417	14,289
2005/06	19,934	18,081	18,081
2006/07	29,643	25,473	20,835
2007/08	75,459	67,721	57,019
2008/09	72,892	64,133	44,765
2009/10	38,599	39,644	23,894
2010/11	108,928	84,736	107,432
2011/12	174,919	117,763	146,073
2012/13	484,696	322,091	322,941



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 1st April, 2014

MINUTES

Present:

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

Also Present:

Councillor Michael Braley

Officers:

S Hanley, M Hanwell, S Jones and C Walker

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and A Scarce

118. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Alan Mason.

119. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

120. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4th March 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

121. MEMBERS' IT - PRESENTATION

Officers delivered a presentation, attached at Appendix 1, which covered the following areas:

.....
Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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- Background information in respect of the Public Services Network (PSN) and steps which the Council had taken in order to achieve compliance.
- Ongoing inspections/audits of the IT systems by representatives of the Cabinet office.
- The introduction of managed devices, which are owned and secured and can only be used for Council business.
- The continued updating of the Council's systems and the upgrading of the Microsoft software programmes.
- The impact of PSN on Members' use of IT, including the introduction of iPads.
- The costs incurred by the Council and the decision to introduce iPads.

Officers also responded to queries which had been received from a number of Councillors in respect of problems with the IT system which they had encountered over recent months. It was anticipated that these would be largely resolved with the introduction of the new iPads. It was acknowledged that printing could be an issue, as following the introduction of iPads and under the PSN compliance it was not possible for Members to have a printing facility at home. There would, however, be a print facility made available in each political party Group Room at the Town Hall.

Following the presentation, Members raised and discussed the following:

- The accessibility of social networks. These were used regularly by Members in order to communicate with their constituents.
- The use of modern.gov to access meeting minutes and agendas electronically.
- The use of the iPad for other areas of Members' work, for example as a County Councillor, a Magistrate and a School Governor.
- The continuous changes in technology and the ability to upgrade the iPads after a two year period.

RESOLVED that

the presentation be noted.

122. FOOTBALL TASK GROUP - INTERIM REPORT

Councillor Bush, as Chair of the Football Task Group, informed Members that the Interim Report had been prepared in order to clarify the position with regard to Redditch United Football Club (FC).

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The Task Group had reviewed the business case put forward in more detail and raised the following points:

- The Council was bound by EU law which prohibited the use of public funds to support a private entity and required it to put any development of a new stadium out to tender.
- The Council was in a difficult position as it was both the landowner and the planning authority for any future development of the land concerned.
- Issues with the current site going forward and the number and type of properties which could be situated on it.
- The flooding issues at the Washford site.
- No allowance being made for Section 106 monies and contingency being put in place in respect of abnormalities at the site.

The Committee discussed how the working relationship between the Council and Redditch United FC had broken down since the decision in November 2013 not to pursue the relocation proposals. It was suggested that the Club and officers should consider together how facilities at the current site could be improved, especially to support community use. Although there was a covenant on the land the option to investigate what might be reasonable to add to the site had not been considered and the group was suggesting that it should therefore be further investigated.

The Task Group Members confirmed that from the information provided it was clear that Redditch United FC was being run in a much more appropriate manner than in previous years. They had been particularly impressed with the presentation delivered in respect of the youth teams and the work carried out with a wide age range of young people. The group was suggesting that the Council should take any action possible to support this work.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the interim report of the Football Task Group be received and noted: and**
- 2) **Redditch United Football Club be encouraged to discuss with Officers how to make the best use of the current football club site and to look at more local options to accommodate its expansion.**

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RESOLVED that

- 1) the second objective of the Task Group, namely “to investigate the sustainability of Redditch United FC for the future with particular focus on the current relationship with the Borough Council and how this has been affected by recent events” be signed off as having been achieved; and
- 2) the final report deadline for the remainder of the Task Group’s objectives be postponed and reviewed at the first meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2014.

123. LANDSCAPING TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT

Councillor Gay Hopkins, as Chair of the Landscaping Task Group, delivered a presentation which highlighted the areas which had been investigated by the Task Group and which had led to it making seven recommendations for the Executive Committee’s consideration.

Detailed information was provided in respect of the following areas:

- The traditional way of working and the role of operatives within the team including litter pickers and tree surgeons.
- The transformation work which had taken place and how the team was now working, including taking ownership of workloads.
- Improvements that had been made in communicating with residents, which include direct face to face contact made by tree surgeons and place operatives.
- Details of the site visits which Members had carried out together with the interview with the staff based at the depot.
- The ability for staff to use and develop new skills.
- Information about the trees intervention programme and the fact that professional tree surgeons employed by the Council had greater discretion in the trees intervention trial to carry out work required on trees.
- Details about the Place project, a new holistic approach to managing the environment in an area, and how this was being rolled out to other areas from the initial trial location in Winyates.
- The involvement of residents in the place intervention trial which involved encouraging them to liaise with the operatives on site and to take ownership and to have pride in their particular areas when the work had been carried out.

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- The fact that as part of the intervention trials place operatives and tree surgeons were working on cases that might not previously have been addressed by Council staff in order to both meet the needs of the customer and improve the condition of the local environment.

Following the presentation Members discussed the Place project in further detail and officers confirmed that the aim was for less work schedules to be produced and for the operatives to be pro-active rather than reactive in the work that they carried out. Members agreed that allowing the operatives to discuss a particular situation directly with the resident would help in cases where the work being requested was not always possible. This communication was often appreciated by the customer and helped to clarify the reasons why the operatives were delivering work in a particular way.

The Committee thanked Councillor Hopkins and the Task Group Members for the detailed report.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) new Members should be invited to visit teams responsible for tree maintenance, landscaping and cleansing services as part of the Member Induction process to provide them with an opportunity to learn about the work of these teams;**
 - a) a short briefing outlining the work of the place intervention, tree intervention and landscaping teams should be provided prior to a Council meeting early in the municipal year to provide those Members who are unable to participate in the member induction visit with an opportunity to learn about the work of these teams;**
- 2) a contact list of key senior and operational Officers, containing the telephone and email details together with the basic information about the Officers' responsibilities, should be provided for the consideration of Members;**
- 3) Members should be provided with updates on progress made addressing landscaping issues that they have referred to Officers at the request of residents including at the point of resolution;**
- 4) data relating to landscaping cases reported for each area be provided for Members' consideration on an annual**

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basis. Every Member should receive data for the areas they cover;

- 5) one of the Environmental Services Teams' performance measures should be to monitor the number of landscape cases that take longer than six months to resolve. The information obtained through this monitoring process should be reported in the strategic measures for consideration of Senior Officers and elected Members;
- 6) Officers should undertake a feasibility study, risk assessment and cost benefit analysis to assess the potential for the Council to bulk plant trees in Council open spaces and other appropriate locations. This feasibility study should take into account the following matters:
 - (a) the legal implications, if any, of this action;
 - (b) the financial costs involved in planting and maintaining these plants;
 - (c) the availability of grants from the government and other sources to help pay for bulk planting in the Borough;
 - (d) demand within the market;
 - (e) where bulk planting would take place in the Borough;
 - (f) the size of the plots available for bulk planting;
 - (g) the implications for the Council's Planning Department in relation to the Local Plan;
 - (h) the potential revenue that could be accrued by the Council; and
- 7) Officers should investigate how to dispose of logs in a way that would maximise income for the Council. Part of this investigation should involve a risk assessment. Any revenue from these sales should be reinvested in landscaping services.

124. TASK GROUP REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

The Committee had received a topic proposal form from Worcestershire County Council, containing the terms of reference for a review of whether there should be a shared waste collection service in Worcestershire. The county Council had contacted every district Council to find out whether there was any interest in doing this jointly. There had been a mixed response from the districts, though Bromsgrove District Council had agreed to participate.

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Members were advised that as this review had been proposed by the county Council it would be facilitated by county Council Officers. If Members chose to participate in this review it would not be treated as one of the quota for Task Groups in 2014/15. The county Council was intending to start evidence gathering in April 2014 with a view to complete the review in October 2014.

The Committee was advised that senior Officers had strong views on this long standing issue. It was suggested that there were other areas where time could be better spent, including through a scrutiny exercise focusing on the relevant PFI (Public Finance Initiative) contract.

Members discussed the council's current waste and recycling service, which it was agreed was efficiently run. This service had secured cost savings through the transformation process and the route optimisation programme. The extent to which a shared service with the rest of the local authorities in the county would make any useful contribution to efficiencies savings within Redditch Borough was therefore considered questionable.

RESOLVED that

Redditch Borough Council should not participate in the Joint Scrutiny of Integrated Waste Collection and Disposal Service.

125. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY QUARTERLY RECOMMENDATION TRACKER

Officers informed Members that this report contained the latest quarterly update on the action that had been taken to implement scrutiny recommendations.

The updates had been provided in three appendices:

- Appendix 1 – which contained further information about recommendations which had been implemented since the last update was received.
- Appendix 2 – Detailing recommendations that had not yet been implemented. Members noted that wherever possible Officers had been asked to provide an estimate of the date by which these recommendations would be implemented.
- Appendix 3 – Further information about the recommendation from the Promoting Sport Task Group regarding provision of

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outdoor games. This information had been recorded separately due to the amount of detail provided.

The Committee discussed the current poor state of the market area and raised concerns in respect of the lack of progress in response to the proposals that had been made by the Redditch Market Review in March 2013. Members requested that relevant senior Officers be asked to provide a further more detailed update at a future meeting of the Committee in order to clarify the current situation for the market and future intentions for implementing the group's proposals.

In respect of the Sickness Policy Short, Sharp Review it was noted that Officers had been unable to produce an A5 laminated guide to the Council's Sickness Absence Policy. Members stressed that this should only contain a small number of bullet points covering the key areas such as reporting absence and the requirement for a return to work interview to take place. It was suggested that one side could cover the employees responsibility and the other that of the employer. Following discussion it was agreed that this would be revisited and brought to a future meeting of the Committee for Members' consideration.

Members discussed the Access for Disabled People Task Group's recommendations and highlighted the importance of the proposal for a disability awareness session to be provided. At present it was intended this would be delivered as part of the Member Induction Programme. However, it was suggested that all Members, not just new Members, would benefit from this training. The committee agreed that whilst this should not be part of the mandatory training programme, the importance of this subject needed to be stressed and all Members needed to be encouraged to attend by Group Leaders.

RECOMMENDED that

the Member Development Steering Group be asked to extend participation in the annual disability awareness session to all Members rather than to confine to new Members in the Member Induction process; and

RESOLVED that

- 1) a detailed report be delivered, in respect of the implementation of the Market Review's recommendations, for consideration at a future meeting of the committee; and**

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2) a draft bullet point summary of the key points of the **Sickness Absence Policy** be provided for consideration of **Members at a future meeting, as detailed in the preamble above.**

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

The Committee received the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 11th March together with the most recent edition of the Executive Committee's Work Programme.

Councillor Brazier reported that he had been contacted by a number of voluntary sector organisations who had raised concerns that they had not been formally contacted in respect of the outcomes of the most recent rounds of the Council's grants programme. Officers explained that they understood that all relevant voluntary sector organisations had been contacted but assured Members that further clarification would be sought from relevant Officers as soon as possible.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Executive Committee held on 11th March and the latest edition of the Executive Committee Work Programme be noted.

127. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the latest version of the Committee's Work Programme. Officers highlighted the Overview and Scrutiny Training Session which was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 10th June 2014. All Members were urged to attend this session. The committee was assured that any newly elected Members would also be invited.

RESOLVED that

the Work Programme be noted.

128. TASK GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

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

Councillor Gandy informed Members that the group had interviewed the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism and discussed a number of issues including his view about leisure

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trusts. The group were due to meet again on Thursday 3rd April with the relevant Head of Service and the Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources. The group had arranged to meet with the Leader of the Council on 11th April to seek his views on the subject. A further meeting was due to take place on 16th April when the group would be finalising their recommendations with a view to presenting their final report to the Committee's June meeting.

b) Joint Worcestershire Regulatory Services Scrutiny Task Group – Redditch Member, Councillor Alan Mason

Councillor Hopkins, substitute Member on the group, informed Members that she had attended the last meeting of the Joint WRS Scrutiny Task Group in Councillor Mason's absence. It had been a most informative meeting and she explained that the members had split into two groups and interviewed a number of Members of the Joint Committee. These discussions covered what they saw as being their role within the partnership and from this it was apparent that they continued to be "localised" and did not give sufficient consideration to the partnership as a whole. The Committee was also informed that the Task Group had begun to formulate its final recommendations and continued to be on track to bring its draft report to the June Committee meeting.

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

Councillor Witherspoon informed Members that the group had made several visits to the Voluntary Sector including BARN where they had been provided with a wealth of information which they had been happy to share with Members. The group had also visited the Sandycroft Centre and heard about the various groups which it worked with and toured the building. Councillor Witherspoon confirmed the Task Group was on track to complete its investigations and final report in time for presentation at the July Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

Members also held a general discussion on the role of the Council and the support it provided together with the structure of the Grant Panel.

RESOLVED that

the update reports be noted.

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(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 relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). However, there is nothing exempt in this record of the proceedings.)

129. HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Witherspoon informed Members that the most recent meeting of Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) had been cancelled due to the setting up of new health groups. She therefore had nothing to report on this occasion.

130. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that

Under S.100 1 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 the relevant paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the said Act, as amended, in respect of the Voluntary Sector Task Group Progress Report (as detailed in Minute 128 above).

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 9.03 pm

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**24th June 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.	Economic Advisory Panel	Chair: <u>Cllr Greg Chance</u> / Vice-Chair: <u>Cllr John Fisher</u> Georgina Harris	Last meeting – 4 th December 2013
2.	Planning Advisory Panel	Chair: <u>Cllr Greg Chance</u> / Vice-Chair: <u>Cllr Rebecca Blake</u> John Staniland / Ruth Bamford	Next meeting – 24 th June 2014

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**24th June 2014

3.	Housing Advisory Panel	Chair: <u>Cllr Mark Shurmer</u> / Vice-Chair: <u>Cllr Greg Chance</u> Liz Tompkin	Next meeting – Date to be established.
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B. OTHER MEETINGS

4.	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.
5.	Member Support Steering Group	Chair: <u>Cllr John Fisher</u> / Vice-Chair: <u>Cllr Phil Mould</u> Sheena Jones	Last meeting – 11 th March 2014.
6.	Grants Assessment Panel	Chair: Cllr David Bush / Vice-Chair: <u>Cllr Greg Chance</u> Donna Hancox	Last meeting – 3 rd March 2014
7.	Independent Remuneration Panel	Chair: Mr R Key / Sheena Jones	Last meeting – 27 th November 2013

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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**24th June 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.	Officers are carrying out work around the cost of democracy.
11th March 2014		
Cllr Fisher / S Hanley	Finance Monitoring Report 2013/14 - April - December (Quarter 3) It was noted that there was still a small amount of ongoing expenditure in respect of Hewell Road Pool Works. Officers reported that a position statement was expected within the current week and this statement would be forwarded on to all Executive Committee members.	
Note:	<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

