

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wed 20 Aug
2008
7.00 pm

Committee Room Two
Town Hall
Redditch



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Access to Information - Your Rights

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

Your main rights are set out below:-

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

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

**Jess Bayley and Helen Saunders
Overview and Scrutiny Support Officers**

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

Tel: 01527 64252 (Ext. 3268 / 3267) Fax: (01527) 65216

e.mail: jess.bayley@redditchbc.gov.uk / helen.saunders@redditchbc.gov.uk

Minicom: 595528

آپ انگریزی میں مدد چاہتے ہیں— نسلیاتی رسائی [Ethnic Access] سے رابطہ کریں ٹیلیفون: 01905 25121

ইংরেজি ভাষার বিষয়ে সাহায্য চান – এথনিক অ্যাকসেস [Ethnic Access] এর সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করুন,
টেলিফোন: 01905 25121

‘Potrzebujesz pomocy z Angielskim – skontaktuj się z Ethnic Access Tel: 01905 25121’

Welcome to today's meeting.

Guidance for the Public

Agenda Papers

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

Chair

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

Running Order

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

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

Decisions

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

Members of the Public

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

Special Arrangements

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

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

Further Information

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

Fire/ Emergency instructions

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

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

Do Not stop to collect personal belongings.

Do Not use lifts.

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

The emergency Assembly Area is on the Ringway Car Park.

Declaration of Interests: Guidance for Councillors

DO I HAVE A "PERSONAL INTEREST" ?

- Where the item relates or is likely to affect your **registered interests** (what you have declared on the formal Register of Interests)

OR

- Where a decision in relation to the item might reasonably be regarded as affecting **your own** well-being or financial position, or that of your **family**, or your **close associates** more than most other people affected by the issue,

you have a personal interest.

WHAT MUST I DO? **Declare the existence, and nature, of your interest and stay**

- The declaration must relate to specific business being decided - a general scattergun approach is not needed
- **Exception** - where interest arises only because of your membership of another **public body**, there is no need to declare unless you **speak** on the matter.
- You **can vote** on the matter.

IS IT A "PREJUDICIAL INTEREST" ?

In general only if:-

- It is a personal interest **and**
 - The item affects your **financial position** (or conveys other benefits), or the position of your **family, close associates** or bodies through which you have a **registered interest** (or relates to the exercise of **regulatory functions** in relation to these groups)
- and**
- A member of public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably believe the interest was likely to **prejudice** your judgement of the public interest.

WHAT MUST I DO? **Declare and Withdraw**

BUT you may make representations to the meeting before withdrawing, **if** the public have similar rights (such as the right to speak at Planning Committee).



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 20th August, 2008

7.00 pm

Committee Room 2 Town Hall

Agenda

Membership:

Cllrs: P Mould (Chair) W Hartnett
D Smith (Vice- Chair) W Norton
K Banks D Taylor
M Chalk D Thomas

1. Apologies and named substitutes	To receive apologies for absence and details of any Councillor (or co-optee substitute) nominated to attend this meeting in place of a member of this Committee. (No Specific Ward Relevance)
2. Declarations of interest and of Party Whip	To invite Councillors to declare any interest they may have in items on the Agenda and any Party Whip. (No Specific Ward Relevance)
3. Minutes (Pages 1 - 14)	To confirm the minutes of the most recent meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a correct record. (Minutes attached) (No Specific Ward Relevance)
4. Actions List (Pages 15 - 20)	To note the contents of the Overview and Scrutiny Actions List. (Report attached) (No Specific Ward Relevance)
5. Call-in and Pre-Scrutiny	To consider whether any Key Decisions of the Executive Committee's most recent meeting(s) should be subject to call-in and also to consider whether any items on the Forward Plan require pre-scrutiny. (No separate report). (No Specific Ward Relevance)

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<p>6. Task & Finish Reviews - Draft Scoping Documents</p>	<p>To consider any scoping documents provided for possible Overview and Scrutiny review.</p> <p>(No reports attached)</p> <p>(No Specific Ward Relevance)</p>
<p>7. Task and Finish Groups - Progress Reports</p>	<p>To consider progress to date on the current reviews against the terms set by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The current reviews in progress are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Role of the Mayor Task and Finish Group – Chair – Councillor M Chalk; and2. Third Sector Funding Task and Finish Group – Chair – Councillor D Thomas. <p>(Oral reports)</p> <p>(No Specific Ward Relevance)</p>
<p>8. Joint Scrutiny Exercise on Flooding</p>	<p>To consider further developments in the joint scrutiny exercise on flooding.</p> <p>(Oral report)</p> <p>(No Specific Ward Relevance)</p>
<p>9. Jobs, Employment and Economy – review of scrutiny report</p> <p>(Pages 21 - 72)</p>	<p>To consider the Jobs, Employment and Economy Scrutiny Review and to determine whether any further work needs to be undertaken.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>(No Specific Ward Relevance)</p>
<p>10. Quarterly Performance Monitoring April - June 2008</p> <p>(Pages 73 - 82)</p>	<p>To consider the Council's performance report data for the first quarter of the year.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>(No Specific Ward Relevance)</p>

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11. Quarterly Budget Monitoring April - June 2008	<p>To consider the Council's budget report data for the first quarter of the year.</p> <p>(Report to follow)</p> <p>(No Specific Ward Relevance)</p>
12. Referrals	<p>To consider any referrals to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee direct, or arising from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Executive Committee or full Council• Other sources. <p>(No separate report).</p> <p>(No Specific Ward Relevance)</p>
13. Work Programme (Pages 83 - 88)	<p>To consider the Committee's current Work Programme, and potential items for addition to the list arising from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Forward Plan / Committee agendas• External publications• Other sources. <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>(No Specific Ward Relevance)</p>
14. Exclusion of the Press and Public	<p>Should it be necessary, in the opinion of the Borough Director, during the course of the meeting to consider excluding the public from the meeting on the grounds that exempt information is likely to be divulged, it may be necessary to move the following resolution:</p> <p>"That, under S.100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following matter(s) on the grounds that it/they involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs (to be specified) of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act".</p>

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MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Phil Mould (Chair), Councillor David Smith (Vice-Chair) and Councillors M Chalk, A Fry, W Hartnett, B Quinney and D Thomas

Also Present:

R King

Officers:

A Heighway, E Hopkins and L Tompkin

Committee Officers:

J Bayley and H Saunders

35. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Banks, Norton and Taylor.

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or of any party whip.

37. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday the 9th of July be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

38. ACTIONS LIST

RESOLVED that

the contents of the Actions List be noted.

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Chair

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39. CALL-IN AND PRE-SCRUTINY

Members discussed the Upper Norgrove House Initial Options Appraisal item considered at the meeting of the Executive Committee on Wednesday the 23rd of July. They expressed interest in the Council's procedures for disposing of assets and requested further information about this process for the purposes of clarification.

There were no call-ins and no proposed items for pre-scrutiny.

RESOLVED that

Officers attend a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to explain the Council's procedures with regards to disposal of assets.

40. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

A draft scoping document focusing on Housing Mutual Exchange, submitted by Councillor Smith, was considered by the Committee.

Officers explained that Housing Mutual Exchange had been proposed as a potential topic for scrutiny during the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme Planning Afternoon in June 2008. Councillor Smith had become interested in the issue, following an incident in his ward concerning Housing Mutual Exchange.

The draft Scoping Document contained proposals that Members should scrutinise the Council's policy and procedures in relation to Housing Mutual Exchange, should investigate the relevant policies and procedures utilised at other local authorities and consider whether any improvements could be made at Redditch Borough Council.

Officers explained that the Housing Mutual Exchange policy was contained within the Council's overarching Allocations Policy. Members were provided with a relevant extract from the Allocations Policy for consideration (attached to the report at Appendix A).

Members were informed that the Council had recently incorporated Housing Mutual Exchange into the Choice Based Lettings system. Furthermore, Officers would be undertaking a review of the Choice Based Lettings system in the following months which would have implications for the Council's approach to Housing Mutual Exchange. Officers therefore suggested that it might be appropriate

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for Members to postpone the Housing Mutual Exchange review until the Officers' review had been completed and the system had had some time to become established practice within the Choice Based Lettings process.

Councillor Smith noted that the Council also provided Home Swaps to Council house tenants and requested clarification of the differences between Home Swap and Housing Mutual Exchange. Officers explained that Home Swap was a national arrangement whilst Housing Mutual Exchange operated at the local level.

RESOLVED that

- 1. the proposed review of Housing Mutual Exchange be approved; and**
- 2. the launch of the Housing Mutual Exchange review be postponed until November / December 2008.**

41. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

The Committee considered update reports in relation to current and pending reviews.

The following oral reports were given:

- a) The Role of the Mayor Task and Finish Group
– Chair Councillor M Chalk

Councillor Chalk reported that the group had convened its first meeting on Monday the 28th of July. The Group had produced a Work Programme and had reduced the expected timescales for the completion of the exercise to thirteen hours.

Councillor Thomas expressed concerns about the review and suggested that the topic was not suitable for a scrutiny exercise. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reminded Cllr Thomas that the Role of the Mayor Task and Finish Review had been proposed, considered and approved at the previous meeting of the Committee. He therefore considered that the review should be allowed to take place in accordance with the terms and conditions contained within the scoping document for the exercise.

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b) The Third Sector Task and Finish Group – Chair Councillor D Thomas

Councillor Thomas also reported that a bespoke Web Page, explaining the terms of reference for the review, had been added to the Council's website. Furthermore an online feedback form had been linked to the Web Page and would provide representatives of the Third Sector with an opportunity to request further information or register interest in the exercise directly. The Group had also issued a press release to inform third sector organisations that it was undertaking the review.

Councillor Thomas reported that the Group had held its second meeting, where Members had received a report from Officers concerning current arrangements for awarding grants and donations to third sector organisations. The Group would be considering the implications of the Worcestershire Compact and Funding and Procurement Protocol for the Council's funding relations with third sector organisations.

Councillor Thomas reported that the Group needed to address a number of points including: clarifying the Council's purpose for providing grants and donations to third sector organisations; and determining whether the allocation of grants and donations should be linked to the Council's priorities. She explained that the Group was due to interview the Group Leaders at a following meeting to address these issues.

Members discussed the process for appointing the membership of Task and Finish Groups and the need to consult Group Leaders during the appointment of Members to Task and Finish Groups was noted. Members asked Officers to determine the constitutionality of the existing Task and Finish Groups in the absence of Group Leader consultation. The Committee also agreed to observe due process when appointing Members to any Task and Finish Groups established at following meetings.

RESOLVED that

the Task and Finish Group progress reports be noted.

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42. JOINT SCRUTINY EXERCISE ON FLOODING

Officers explained that, following the previous meeting, the arrangements for considering the final report from the Joint Scrutiny on Flooding Group had been discussed further with Officers at Worcestershire County Council. County Officers had suggested that the arrangements for the final report had yet to be finalised. They also explained that an alternative arrangement might be put in place, whereby the Chair of the Joint Scrutiny Group would report the final recommendations at a meeting to be attended by the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the District and County Council Overview and Scrutiny Committees. County Officers advised that the final arrangements would be approved by the Joint Scrutiny Group at its following meeting on the 6th of August 2008.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

43. HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS APPEALS REPORT - OFFICER UPDATE

The Housing and Homelessness Appeals Review had been undertaken by Members of the Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2006 / 2007. The Group had been tasked with scrutinising the Council's two stage housing appeals process and the suitability of continuing Member involvement in that process. The first stage of the housing appeals process was review by Officers. The second stage of the Housing appeals process was review by Members at meetings of the Housing Appeals Committee. Appellants could also appeal to Redditch Crown Court as part of the Housing and Homelessness Appeals process. However, Members noted that this had rarely occurred at Redditch Borough Council.

The Housing and Homelessness Appeals Task and Finish Group had produced two recommendations: firstly, that the two-stage appeals process be retained, subject to further review concerning the impact of the choice-based lettings system upon the Housing and Homelessness appeals process at the end of 2007; and secondly, that all new Members be given training in the conduct of quasi-judicial meetings.

Officers explained that the Housing and Homelessness Appeals review had not been reviewed at the end of 2007 mainly because no housing or homelessness appeals had been considered by the

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Housing Appeals Committee in 2007. Two Homelessness Appeals had subsequently been considered by the Housing Appeals Committee in June 2008. Prior to that date the Housing Appeals Committee had not been convened to consider any homelessness appeals since September 2006 and had not considered any housing appeals since August 2006.

Officers explained that all new Members were offered training in the conduct of quasi-judicial training as the need arose. In addition, Members received specific further training for working on specific quasi-judicial Committees. External training was provided for members of the Licensing and Planning Committees.

The item had been added to the agenda for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide Members with an opportunity to reflect on the impact of the Choice-Based Lettings system on the Housing and Homelessness Appeals process. Officers reported that the Housing and Homelessness Appeals item had also been added to the Committee agenda as part of the Council's process for monitoring the impact of scrutiny reviews.

Officers reported that the introduction of the Choice Based Lettings system had impacted on the number of cases going through the housing and homelessness appeals process. The majority of cases were being resolved by Officers either prior to or at the first stage appeals process. The Council had also appointed a Special Needs Tenancy Officer and was therefore addressing a number of housing and homelessness needs before they reached the appeals stage. Officers reported that the majority of customers had reported that they were satisfied with the service they had been provided.

Members discussed the Housing Appeals process that had been in place when the Council had had a Housing Management Sub-Committee (HMSC). Members had represented constituents' appeals cases before the Committee. Under this system forty - fifty cases had frequently appeared before the Committee each year. Members noted that a reduction from fifty cases per annum one or two a year represented a significant alteration.

Some concern was expressed that the two-stage process required individuals to present their own appeals before the Housing Appeals Committee. Members noted that this might have deterred some people from utilising the second stage of the appeals process as they might have found the prospect of representing themselves at a Committee intimidating.

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Members expressed agreement that there remained a need for a housing appeals process. The Committee agreed that on balance the two stage system was working well.

RESOLVED that

the update report be noted; and

RECOMMENDED that

no alterations be made to the two stage Housing and Homelessness Appeals process.

44. PERFORMANCE MONITORING OUTTURN REPORT APRIL 2007- MARCH 2008

The Committee received the Performance Outturn Report for 2007/08 for consideration.

The Chair noted that the Council's performance in relation to Best Value Performance Indicator BV109a, the percentage of major planning applications determined within thirteen weeks, had fallen. Further clarification about the reasons for this change in performance was requested.

Members also noted that the Council's performance in relation to ET05, the number of public reports of fly tipping, had also fallen. Officers explained that this had been recognised by senior Officers and would be considered by the Corporate Management Team. Members requested an explanation for this reduction as well as information about the types of items classified as fly tipping; the type of land which tended to be targeted by fly tippers; and the locations within the Borough where fly tipping more commonly occurred.

Members noted that the Council's performance in relation to BVPI79b(i), the amount of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered as a percentage of all Housing Benefit overpayments, had also fallen. Members requested an explanation for this change in performance.

Members discussed the third footnote attached to the report: "due to a large number of tenancies (having been) returned in a poor state mainly due to abandonment, the length of time to turn these properties around (had) been increased as more work (was) required to return them back into a lettable state. Action (was)

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being taken to address this by reviewing the role of the tenancy Officer and the tenancy management role and the voids team (were) working more closely with the capital team where larger works (were) required". Members requested further information about the number of properties affected by being left in a poor state of repair as well as the number of properties so badly affected that they could not be repaired.

Members noted that a few years previously the Council had introduced a reward scheme for tenants who returned their properties in a good condition. They suggested that the application of this policy could have enabled the Council to address incidents of properties having been left by tenants in a poor state of repair. Officers were asked to clarify whether this policy had been retained by the Council.

Officers explained that the Council was exceeding its targets for indicator CS2, the number of British Crime Survey Comparator crimes reported. The Government Office for the West Midlands had commended that Council for their performance in relation to this performance indicator.

The Council had also experienced improved performance in relation to indicator BV082a, the percentage of household waste arisings which have been sent by the authority for recycling. Members requested further information about the number of incidents that had occurred in relation to this performance indicator during 2007/08.

RESOLVED that

- 1. the information requested be circulated for Members' consideration by email prior to the next meeting of the Committee; and**
- 2. the Performance Outturn Report be noted.**

45. REFERRALS

There were no referrals.

46. WORK PROGRAMME

Officers advised Members that the dates for the Portfolio Holder Annual Reports had been finalised. These dates had been selected at the convenience of the Portfolio Holders and would be recorded

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on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for the following meeting.

Members were informed that there had been a request for Portfolio Holders to be provided with at least four weeks' advance notice about what they should expect to address during the course of their Annual Reports. Members agreed that they would state the nature of the item on which the Portfolio Holders would be required to provide an account by informing them of the themes that they would be questioned about in advance of the meeting they were scheduled to attend.

RESOLVED that

Subject to the updates recorded on the preamble above, the Committee Work Programme be noted and approved.

The Meeting commenced at 7.05 pm
and closed at 8.10 pm

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APPENDIX A

Task 12. Mutual Exchange Inspections

On receipt of completed application form, check that the names of the parties to the exchange are the same as those on the Rent System and the Tenancy Agreement; send a mutual exchange acknowledgement letter (T41). The applications should be dealt with alphabetically; the Officer with the address that comes first should be the lead Officer.

If the exchange includes a tenant from outside the area, or with a Housing Association tenant, the Tenancy Officer designated to the Council property will deal with the exchange and liaise with the other party.

Check the rent account, if there are any arrears and a NOPP, referral to court for possession or a suspended Possession Order has been obtained then the exchange can be refused on one of the grounds contained in Schedule 3, Housing Act 1985. In this situation send letter refusal (T42) to the tenant(s) whose circumstances make the exchange inappropriate. Send refusal letter not connected to tenancy (T43) to the other tenant.

The Council can grant consent for a mutual exchange which is conditional (T44). Therefore, where any tenant has an outstanding obligation to repair their property arising out of a failure to use the property in a tenant like manner, the Tenancy Officer would agree to the mutual exchange proceeding but on condition that any repair is rectified by the tenant before the properties change hands. Write to the tenant clearly setting out the grounds on which the exchange has been refused. The property must be inspected again before the exchange can take place.

Check to ensure that the property is suitable for the needs of the applicant, no overcrowding or disabled adaptations in a property that are not needed for the new occupier. If under occupied one bedroom more than requirements is allowed, e.g. a couple with no children would be allowed to exchange into a 2 bedroom property.

Applicants may exchange to sheltered accommodation as long as they are the required age, e.g. over 60 years of age for a bungalow.

Contact must be made with both parties as soon as possible to arrange an inspection (T45). Both parties should attend both inspections.

If both parties are not at the inspection, then a further inspection date should be made. No exchanges will be permitted if both parties do not attend. In exceptional circumstances an exchange will be agreed when all reports have been exchanged and agreed with the Tenancy Manager

Tenants agree to accept the properties in the decorative state they are in, the main purpose of the inspection is to ensure that no unauthorised alterations have been made or any rechargeable works need to be done. Tenants both sign the exchange form and one of the parties agrees to replace or pay the recharge or to accept any alterations. A checklist form is used at this time and a copy should be given to both parties (mutual exchange carbon copy checklist form).

If the other party to the exchange lives out of the area, then a reference giving brief details of our tenant should be sent to their Authority (T46).

In the event of a tenant refusing to complete repairs to their property, the Tenancy Officer will in normal circumstances, continue to insist the repairs are carried out before the mutual exchange is permitted. In a situation where the repairs are of an urgent nature the Tenancy Officer will arrange for the repairs to be carried out and for the cost of the repairs to be recharged. The Tenancy Officer could arrange for a NOPP to be served on the tenant for the failure to maintain the property in a tenant like manner. The Tenancy Officer will formally refuse the mutual exchange and inform the tenant in writing (T47).

Once both inspection reports have been received and are satisfactory, then an electrical test for both RBC properties should be logged onto the Saffron system.

1. The procedure for logging on the job ticket is as follows;
 - a. Repairs & Maintenance
 - b. Responsive Repairs
 - c. Tenant Enquiry Processing (outstanding work)
2. Type in address and press 1 to go into the address. Press 0 out of the main screen.
 - d. Quick job order entry (No 14)
 - e. Request Type - O for Officer
 - f. Details – Type in electrical test for mutual exchange
 - g. Access - Time/Date or telephone number
 - h. Schedule code – D.W
 - i. Trade Code – 07
 - j. Work Description – electrical test for mutual exchange
3. Type in Y for Yes
 - k. Job Source – Type in M
 - l. Contractor Code – 242
 - m. Priority – (C)
 - n. Finance Code – 4501 6532

The different codes may change depending on which Contractors are being used at the time. Please check with Repairs and Maintenance if unsure of current codes.

Once the electrical test has been completed the electrical contractor will fax through confirmation that the test has been completed successfully. A letter approving the exchange should be sent to both tenants (T48).

If the electrical test fails the contractor will need to complete the work before the exchange can continue. The tenant may receive a recharge for works if they have caused the damage.

Both parties will need to attend an appointment to sign the new Tenancy Agreements. If they are RBC tenants a Notice to Vacate form must be completed (V1 or V1a) as appropriate. Relevant sign up information concerning rent, repairs, anti social behaviour and housing benefit should be thoroughly explained at this time.

Mutual exchanges should bear no cost to Redditch Borough Council. Belongings or rubbish will not be removed by RBC unless it is considered to be a Health and Safety issue. It is a statutory requirement that all mutual exchanges should be completed within 6 weeks of receiving the application.

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Actions requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date Action Requested	Action to be Taken	Response
19/12/07 1	Members discussed the proposed new format for presenting performance information to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Officers were asked to provide an explanation of the traffic light system. Members did not specify a date by which this information should be made available.	The format was used to present the performance data for this meeting. (DONE).
27/02/08 2	Officers were asked to present community safety performance data to Members using both of the templates that had been provided for the consideration of Members at that meeting. Officers were asked to present this information to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee alongside the quarterly performance reports.	The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officers have informed the relevant lead Officer of this request. (TO BE DONE). Lead Officer, Head of Strategy and Partnerships, estimated introduction date, August 2008.
27/03/08 3	<p>Members agreed that a series of actions should be undertaken as preparatory work for carrying out scrutiny of economic development at the Council. Members requested several actions as detailed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Jobs, Employment and Economy scrutiny report be circulated amongst all Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members; • the Economic Development Manger job specification be reviewed in line with the three key themes contained in the Regional Economic Strategy: business; place; and people; 	<p>Members agreed to review Economic Development on a stage by stage basis. The Jobs, Employment and Economy report is scheduled to be reconsidered during this meeting (DONE).</p> <p>The order for consideration of the other proposed actions will be agreed following this meeting (TO BE DONE).</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relevant Officers from Worcestershire County Council be invited to the Committee to discuss their roles and responsibilities for economic development in Redditch; • further information be provided on roles and responsibilities for other bodies / agencies contributing to economic development in Redditch; • the latest secondary school attainment figures be obtained and distributed to Committee Members; and • representatives of Education Services from Worcestershire County Council be invited to a future meeting to educational attainment levels in Redditch schools. 	
<p>28/05/08</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p>	<p>Members agreed to organise for members of the Committee to attend a Select Committee meeting in Westminster to observe national best practice in scrutiny. No date was specified.</p>	<p>Officers discussed arrangements for this visit with the Chair. It was noted that there few opportunities to undertake this trip before the summer recess in Parliament and therefore the trip to Westminster would take place in Autumn 2008. (TO BE DONE). Lead Officers OSSOs, estimated completion date Autumn 2008.</p>
<p>09/07/08</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5</p>	<p>Members asked Officers to maintain a detailed record of unauthorised encampments in the Borough. Officers were asked to present this record before the Committee in Autumn 2008. The record would be used to assess the effectiveness of the revised version of the Worcestershire Joint Policy on Unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller Encampments.</p>	<p>Officers to report before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Autumn 2008. (TO BE DONE). Lead Officer, Senior Environmental Health Officer, completion date, Autumn 2008.</p>

09/07/08 6	Members recommended that the issues raised during the Work Programme Planning Afternoon (WPPA) on the subject of relations between the Overview and Scrutiny and Executive Committees be considered by the Executive Committee.	This information will have been considered at a meeting of the Executive Committee on Wednesday the 13th August. (DONE).
09/07/08 7	Members agreed that Councillor Banks should propose the scrutiny topic she had suggested during the WPPA at a meeting of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Banks was asked to report back before the Committee in the Autumn of 2008 if she feels that further action is required.	Lead Member, Councillor Banks. (A resolution to this item is subject to Councillor Banks' views about the response of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee).
09/07/08 8	Members agreed to postpone further consideration of a potential review of the Borough's fishing tackle heritage, proposed during the WPPA, until the Role of the Mayor and Housing Mutual Exchange reviews had been completed.	The proposer for the item, Councillor Hunt, was informed of this decision on 14/07/08. The Committee's Work Programme has also been adjusted accordingly. (TO BE DONE). Lead Officers, OSSOs, estimated completion date March 2009.
09/07/08 9	Councillor Taylor was asked to complete a scoping document relating to reviews of public transport proposed during the WPPA. Councillor Taylor agreed to do so, though asked to postpone the submission of a scoping document until September 2008.	A scoping meeting for this review is scheduled to take place on 28/08/08. The scoping document should be submitted for the Committee's consideration in September 2008. (TO BE DONE). Lead Member, Councillor Taylor, estimated completion date, September 2008.

<p>30/07/08</p> <p>10</p>	<p>Members requested an explanation of the Council's procedures for the disposal of assets.</p>	<p>A report on this subject is due to be delivered for the consideration of Members on Wednesday the 10th September 2008. (WILL BE DONE SOON). Lead Officer, Property Services Manager.</p>
<p>30/07/08</p> <p>11</p>	<p>Members agreed to defer the launch of the Housing Mutual Exchange review until November 2008.</p>	<p>The review is due to be launched by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 26th November 2008. (TO BE DONE). Lead Officers, OSSOs.</p>
<p>30/07/08</p> <p>12</p>	<p>Officers were asked to clarify the constitutionality of the existing Task and Finish Groups.</p>	<p>The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has consulted with the Group Leaders over the Membership of the existing Task and Finish Groups. The Groups can therefore be confirmed as being constitutional. (DONE).</p>
<p>30/07/08</p> <p>13</p>	<p>Members requested further information in relation to a number of figures contained within the performance outturn report. The following actions were requested:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Members requested an explanation for the Council's fall in performance in relation to BV109a: the percentage of major planning applications determined within three weeks; 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the Acting Director of Environment and Planning provided a response to this request, which was circulated amongst Members of the Committee, on Tuesday the 5th August 2008 (DONE);

<p>13</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Members requested an explanation for the change in performance in relation to ET05, the number of public reports of fly tipping; 3. Members requested more detailed information about the types of items classified as fly tipping, the type of land subject to fly tipping and the locations where fly tipping frequently occurred; 4. Members requested information about the Council's performance in relation to BVPI79B(i); the amount of housing benefit overpayments recovered as a percentage of all housing benefit overpayments 5. Members requested further information with regards to the number of Council properties that were left in a poor state of repair when tenants vacated the building and the number of properties that were left in such a bad condition that they could not be repaired; 6. Members asked Officers to clarify whether the reward scheme for tenants who returned their properties to the Council in good condition remained in operation; and 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Officers are due to circulate a response to this request for information on Tuesday the 12th August 2008 (WILL BE DONE SOON), Lead Officer Head of Environment (HE); 3. Officers are due to circulate a response to this request for information on Tuesday the 12th August 2008 (WILL BE DONE SOON), Lead Officer, HE; 4. this information has yet to be provided, (TO BE DONE), Lead Officer, Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits; 5. Officers circulated a response to this request on Friday the 8th August (DONE); 6. Officers circulated a response to this request on Friday the 8th August (DONE); and
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<p>13</p>	<p>7. Members requested further information about the number of incidents that had occurred in relation to BV082a, the percentage of household waste arisings which have been sent by the authority for recycling.</p>	<p>7. Officers circulated a response to this request on Friday the 8th August (DONE).</p>
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Glossary

- HES - Head of Environment
- OSSO - Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer
- WPPA - Work Programme Planning Afternoon

This report is the product of the Leisure, Tourism & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee's investigation into Jobs, Employment and the Economy in the Redditch area.

November 2005



Executive Report

What we did We set out to articulate the challenges and priorities in the Redditch economy as they affect employers, the people working here, and those who will be seeking jobs in Redditch in the future.

We called in expert witnesses to challenge / validate our findings.

We identified priority needs and practical steps to tackle them; these steps are detailed in our recommendation.



Executive Report

What we found

Education, work experience and careers choice

Young people in Redditch do not have access to enough careers advice.

Pressures on schools create a climate where exam results are seen as the key outcome rather than training for jobs, except in the case of students who are expected to get low exam grades.

Links between schools and businesses are poor.

The majority of young people in Redditch perceive that there are no good jobs here so aspire to leave.

Local employers cannot attract bright students to train for progressive careers. The skills base for the local economy is inadequate and is under threat from the “vicious circle” described above.



Executive Report

What we found Employers' Needs

Business support and advice is accessible from a multitude of agencies, none of which are located in Redditch.

Employers need a “gateway” or single point of contact for ongoing advice on business support, grants etc.

Employers need better public transport and local amenities and they look to the Council for support.

Employers cannot solve the skills gap without our help.



Executive Report

Conclusion Our findings confirm that issues previously identified by the Economic Development Service (EDS) are still relevant. If nothing is done, employers will continue to suffer from an exodus of talent and the local economy will be weaker than it is now. We feel that a modest additional resource in the EDS would be invaluable in addressing the key issues highlighted in a new way.



Executive Report

Recommendation The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that

One additional full-time post (suggested grade SO1/SO2) is established in the Economic Development Service immediately, with the following key responsibilities:

To work with partners to achieve better / more effective work placements for young people in Redditch businesses throughout the academic year.

To work with Head Teachers and school governors to extend the provision of careers guidance from Year 7; to address the cultural bias against non-academic training / education and to improve teachers' understanding of the local economy.

To champion and develop links between Redditch Schools and local employers so that businesses have a greater stake in our community.

To investigate organising a Redditch "Jobs Fair", bringing together local school leavers and local businesses.

To revive and implement the Economic Development Services marketing strategy to promote Redditch as a business location (abandoned in October 2004).

To act as a signpost for support for local businesses.

To work, via our Local Strategic Partnership, to ensure educational / training services are delivered effectively to our young people in a way which reflects and promotes training and career opportunities in the Redditch area.



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Appendix 1 Context

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Appendix 1 Context

Setting the Scene

The connection between skills and economic success has been acknowledged for some time; we are now in an economic climate where people are aware of the threat posed by rapidly growing economic powers such as China and India. Economists have long established that European manufacturing companies are ill equipped to compete with the East on cost alone, and with this realisation looked to Europe's strengths; that is, its skills and its knowledge base.

Recently, increasing the skills base of the nation has been at the forefront of the Government agenda; in March 2005, the Prime Minister along with the Secretaries of State for Education and Skills, Trade and Industry, Work and Pensions and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, signed up to the "Skills: Getting on in business, getting on at work" White Paper. In this paper the Government stated that:

"Skills are fundamental to achieving social justice and economic success, which are at the heart of the Government's vision for the future...we are investing heavily to equip young people and adults to succeed."

In December 2004, the former Secretary of State for Education and Skills commissioned a report entitled "Where are the Gaps" which looked at the UK's Skills and Education Strategy and provided an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the UK's education and training provision compared to the rest of Europe. In this report ***the English system was singled out in Europe for its inequality and low status of vocational training***. The report suggested that there needed to be a parity of esteem between academic and vocational routes.

Of course it is not just the national system that is at fault; the national mindset also needs to be addressed. Vocational training is seen as the "poor relation" of its academic sibling; the general



Appendix 1 Context

consensus is that apprenticeships are only available to people who have failed or are likely to fail their exams. Young people today are bombarded by the media in every aspect of their lives and so it is hardly surprising that they are opting for the “glamorous jobs” such as a Lawyer (think Ally McBeal), Doctor (ER) or Journalist.

The former Secretary of State for Work and Pensions stated at the Learning and Skills Council Summit in July 2005, that the Government should:

“take on the challenge of inspiring young people to want to be engaged in vocational education”

In the paper “A Modern Social Dimension for Europe: Principles for reform” by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the former Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, it states:

“Education and training policies must deliver the skills needed by business”.

Legislation

To give these aspirations a legislative context, the Local Government Act 2000 introduced a new power on all Councils

“to promote the economic, environmental and social well-being of their area”.

To make a distinction between a duty and a power: a duty is a statutory requirement and leads to enforcement action if it is not undertaken; a power provides legal authorisation for a particular action.



Appendix 1 Context

How this affects Redditch

In the 2005 Corporate and Performance Plan Redditch Borough Council states that:

“The Council expects itself to be at the heart of developing the local economy, environment and community”.

This plan also details that:

“The Authority seeks to represent the people of Redditch on all issues including those which are not its direct responsibility. The Council will continue to work with its partners to deliver improvements in the...local environment, transport and economy.”

In Redditch the proportion of employment in the manufacturing sector is **twice the national average**. We should therefore be promoting the manufacturing industry as a viable career to the youth of Redditch, as by doing this we will be securing our future.

We should try to match the education and training policies in the region to the skills required in local businesses; we should encourage relationships between the education and business sector; we should encourage schools and careers advisors to promote **local** careers; and we should strive to redress the balance between vocational and academic training.

This is nothing new; in 20:20 Vision, Redditch’s Community Strategy 2003; the Council’s aim was:

“To encourage a thriving sustainable economy within the borough...we want businesses to be embedded in the area with a skilled local workforce that can readily meet their needs”



Appendix 1 Context

In this strategy, the Council also pledged:

“To increase engagement with schools on business related projects”

We have the vision; we now need to do something about it.



Appendix 2 Procedure

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Business Support Forum : Witness Questions	page 18
Education, Training & Skills Forum : Witness Questions	page 19



Appendix 2 Procedure

Brief Synopsis

In order to find more out about jobs, employment and the local economy, the former Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee decided to carry out a series of interviews with local manufacturing companies, and attended a meeting of the Redditch Student Council to hear about the aspirations of young people in relation to their economic future. Through its investigation the Committee made a number of stark findings relating to business support and the education, training and skills of the residents of Redditch as have been detailed in the report.

The Committee (now part of the Leisure, Tourism & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee) decided to call in key organisations and partners to questions them with regards to these findings; the Committee hosted a Business Support Forum and an Education, Training & Skills Forum, at which the Committee co-opted two members of the Redditch Student Council to see their concerns raised first hand.

Following the Forums, the Committee discussed its findings and formulated its recommendation; the Committee then contacted each of the key organisations who had contributed to the Forum, to seek their comments and support for the recommendation.

The key organisations have been very supportive of the Committee's recommendation and are very keen to engage with the Council on how best this matter can be brought forward.



Appendix 2 Procedure

Manufacturing Sector

Company Visit Questions

1. What are the key issues facing your sector over the next five to ten years?
2. Is Redditch likely to lose a significant number of jobs in your sector over the next five to ten years?
3. Do you have difficulties recruiting?
 - a) Do any of these difficulties relate to potential employees not wishing to relocate to Redditch?
 - b) Do any of these difficulties relate to a lack of affordable housing in the area?
4. What proportion of your employees live in Redditch?
5. Is Redditch perceived as an attractive location for businesses and their potential workforce? If not, what could the Council do about this?
6. Do you find it difficult to find suitably qualified and experienced workers?
7. Does a lack of suitable public transport in the area have any impact on your workforce?
8. What could the Council do to help your business grow?



Appendix 2 Procedure

Business Support Forum

Witness Questions

1. What support is available to companies in Redditch that need to compete on cost with businesses from the Far East and Eastern Europe?
2. Local companies have reported that not enough funding or grants have been made available to manufacturing firms to aid with diversification. We are aware that some funding and support is available so can you explain what this support is, how it can be accessed and why you think some local companies might have this opinion?
3. How do you communicate access to your services?
4. How many companies from Redditch have you helped in the last twelve months?
5. How well do you think your existing policies meet the needs of the businesses in Redditch?
6. What role do you think the Council should play in improving support to businesses in Redditch?



Appendix 2 Procedure

Education, Training & Skills Forum

Witness Questions

1. Following a discussion with Redditch Student Council it transpired that none of them had received advice regarding the types of careers available locally; why do you think this is?
2. The Student Council indicated that careers advice was variable across schools in Redditch; what is your experience of this and why do you think this may be the case?
3. The organisation of work experience programmes for students does not appear to meet the needs of young people; they are generally expected to organise placements themselves. What do you think can be done to improve this?
4. What steps are local schools taking to form links with local businesses?
5. What steps do you believe are being taken to attract people to careers in the manufacturing industry?
6. What information do you have on what young people do when they leave school or college?
7. How many graduates do you think return to Redditch after University?
8. Do you consider there are skills shortages in Redditch? If so, what are they?
9. Do you feel that the people you interview for current vacancies have a high enough level of literacy and numeracy?
10. What role do you feel the Council could play in improving education, training and skills in Redditch?



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Appendix 3 Evidence

Expert Witnesses Manufacturing Sector

The manufacturing sector companies who were interviewed by Members as part of their initial information gathering exercise were as follows:

BSA Precision Castings

Cirrus Technologies

Compair Hydravane

Intier Automotives

Johnson Controls

Pre-Met (incorporates the former Lewis Springs)

Machined Component Systems

Protex Fasteners

Terry of Redditch

Business Support Forum

The expert witnesses who contributed to the Business Support Forum were as follows:

Janice Barton, Business Relationships Manager, Advantage West Midlands (AWM)

Wayne Langford, Partnerships Manager, Skills and Sustainable Development, AWM

Christopher Harvey, Policy and Representation Manager, Chamber of Commerce & Business Link Herefordshire & Worcestershire

David Wright, Chief Executive, West Midlands Manufacturing Advisory Service



Appendix 3 Evidence

Education, Training & Skills Forum

The expert witnesses who contributed to the Education, Training & Skills Forum were as follows:

Alison Stanton, Commercial Consultant, ASC Connections

Roger Little, Chief Executive, Connexions, Herefordshire & Worcestershire

Dave Waldron, Director of Performance & Standards, Learning & Skills Council Herefordshire & Worcestershire

Neil Bromley, Principal, North East Worcestershire College

Ray Westwood, Principal Inspector, Education Services, Worcestershire County Council

Redditch Student Council

Redditch Student Council was consulted as part of the Economy Task & Finish Group's initial information gathering, the following Student Councillors were then co-opted onto the Group for Education, Training & Skills Forum:

Student Councillor Claire Robinson

Student Councillor Ben White

Expression of thanks

We would like to thank all of the people who contributed to this review.



Appendix 3 Evidence

Minute Extract Interviewing Local Companies

The following is an extract of the Minutes of the Economic Overview & Scrutiny Committee (now the Leisure, Tourism & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee) that was held on the 16th February 2005.

Key Issues

Members of the Committee gave individual feedback on the visits they had undertaken to local manufacturing companies. The general points that arose from the feedback are detailed below.

Members reported that the majority of companies interviewed felt that they were losing business contracts to the Far East and Eastern Europe. The companies believed that this was mostly down to the problems they had in competing on cost. Most of the companies felt that the only way they would be able to stay in business long-term would be to diversify their market. Members reported that many of these businesses felt that not enough funding or grants had been made available to manufacturing firms to aid with diversification.

Job Losses

A Member reported that one of the companies he had interviewed would be losing a large number of jobs in the near future as the manufacturing section of the company would be relocating to Sweden and Holland. However, in general, the Committee felt that the jobs in this sector were fairly secure but that some companies may be vulnerable to a significant change in market forces.

Recruitment

Members reported that the majority of companies interviewed felt they did not have a recruitment problem; there had recently been a number of redundancies in the sector and so there were plenty of possible applicants in the area to choose from. The companies did feel, however, that they had great difficulties in enticing new recruits to the sector which they believed posed a greater long-term threat to the industry. It was felt that young people were not keen on working in



Appendix 3 Evidence

“dirty” jobs, instead favouring jobs in IT and Commerce. Many of the companies interviewed felt that schools in the area were preparing pupils poorly for a manufacturing vocation.

Proportion of workers living in Redditch

The Committee heard different trends emerge from Members’ feedback on this subject. The majority of companies reported that their employees mainly lived in Redditch or within easy commuting distance in Bromsgrove and Birmingham. In other companies, the trend was to bus in workers from Birmingham and to employ foreign workers, particularly from Poland.

Is Redditch an attractive location for Businesses?

The general consensus from the feedback was that there were not many amenities in Redditch to attract new workers and businesses to the area. The feedback from one of the companies was very favourable towards the proposed Abbey Stadium development; they thought it would prove to be very good for the morale of the Borough, providing better leisure opportunities in the town. It was also felt that better bus services and housing choices would help overcome the negative image of the Town as a place to live.

Public Transport

The general consensus from the discussion on this topic was that none of the companies’ employees relied on public transport to get them to work. The reasons cited were that there were no regular bus services to and from the Town, or, in the cases where a bus service was available, the buses were not running at suitable times. The Committee felt that manufacturers as a group were not making a strong enough case to the bus companies to remedy this matter.

What can the Council do?

It was felt that the Council could take on a role of lobbying for more effective funding and support from government agencies. The Council could then ensure any grants were well spent and were making a difference.



Appendix 3 Evidence

Redditch Student Council Visit

As part of the ongoing review, the Chair and the Head of Economic Development reported back on their recent visit to the Redditch Student Council as detailed below.

When asked what they saw themselves doing in ten years time all of the Student Councillors cited professional occupations such as a barrister, pilot or forensic scientist. Only one Student Councillor wanted to work in Redditch, with one other saying that they would not mind working in Redditch; the rest of the Student Council definitely did not want to live or work in Redditch. Various reasons were given for this including wanting to experience living elsewhere, lack of entertainment facilities and lack of career opportunities.

The amount of careers advice received was variable across the high schools in Redditch, with some students receiving detailed and ongoing advice from Year 9 and others only receiving one guidance session in Year 10. It was commented that in other parts of Worcestershire where there was a two tier education system, students were receiving careers advice from as early as Year 7. It was felt that careers advice should start in middle schools. All careers advice given was general in nature, with no advice given as to the type of industry and opportunities available locally. There was a general lack of knowledge regarding employment opportunities generally in Redditch. The Committee expressed concern at the lack of information seemingly provided by the schools in the area regarding job opportunities in Redditch.

On the whole students found work experience in Year 10 to be very rushed and not always useful. The onus was on students to find their own work experience placements, which they found very difficult to do. Many students found placements outside Redditch, often through family contacts. Students commented on the additional difficulty that all schools' work experience took place at around the same time, which made it even harder to find placements. Only one school reported having any real links with businesses and then only with a couple of companies.



Appendix 3 Evidence

Business Support Forum : Notes

The following is an extract of the Notes of the Economic Task & Finish Group (a sub-group of the Leisure, Tourism & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee) Business Support Forum that was held on the 27th September 2005.

Following a brief set of introductions, the Chair asked each Expert Witness to make a short presentation to introduce themselves and their work.

Mr D Wright Manufacturing Advisory Service

Mr Wright presented the Group with some additional papers in support of his presentation. Members heard that the Manufacturing Advisory Service (MAS) was part of a national Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) initiative, with 10 branches in the UK and one soon to open in Scotland; each of the regional MAS were funded by the relevant Regional Development Agency (RDA); the West Midlands branch of MAS (MAS-WM), of which Mr Wright was the Chief Executive, was jointly funded by Advantage West Midlands, who provided more than 50% of the overall funding.

Mr Wright explained that MAS was a unique advisory service in that it was specialised and dealt exclusively with manufacturers; most of which were from small to medium enterprises (SME's).

Members were informed that MAS-WM offered five levels of activity to its customers:

Level 1: Inquiries; businesses were given free access to information regardless of their location.

Level 2: Manufacturing Reviews; informal meetings were available to carry out further investigations and provide advice and support.

Level 3: Workshops and Seminars; focussed on best practice for manufacturing, international marketing and purchasing.

Level 4: Project Interventions; specialist advisors offered up to five days of high level support.

Level 5: Referrals; advisors would gauge the most appropriate partner in either the technology or industry sectors who would then offer specialist advice.



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It was highlighted that MAS's Level 4 activities provided support in the most important area for businesses; through this, MAS provided solution delivery support, helped businesses apply for funding and acted as a broker to identify the most appropriate associate to solve the businesses' problems, whether they were regional Universities, Technology locations, or specialist institutes. MAS would offer funding for the application of that expertise for up to five full days.

Mr W Langford and Ms J Barton Advantage West Midlands

Mr Langford introduced himself and explained that the aim of Advantage West Midlands (AWM) was to develop and deliver the West Midlands Economic Strategy in relation with others; AWM was committed to promoting and encouraging organisations to source regional services where ever possible.

As an agency, AWM targeted its resources where it was identified that they were most needed and would have the most impact; it had specified 6 Regeneration Zones, 10 Business Clusters and 3 High-tech Corridors; the nearest of which to Redditch was the A38 Corridor running from Aston University to Malvern Business Park.

It was explained that AWM supported businesses by financing various support agencies such as Business Link, providing some 85% of their total funding. Members heard that AWM also had a Capital Grant Scheme, the Selective Finance for Investment (SFI), and provided grants for Research & Development to encourage people to be dynamic and innovative in their business.

Mr Langford introduced his colleague, Ms Barton, who, as a member of AWM's Business Relationship Team, encouraged and assisted businesses to tap into the knowledge base of the region.

The Committee heard how AWM had assisted in setting up a number of industrial estate



Appendix 3 Evidence

learning zones, one of which was in Redditch, as part of its Skills 4 Adults scheme.

Mr Langford informed the Group that the West Midlands Economic Strategy would be up for review in the coming year and strongly urged Members to have an input in the process.

Economy Task & Finish Group Presentation

Councillor Smithers addressed the Forum on behalf of the Economy Task & Finish Group, and outlined the Group's findings from its review into Jobs, Employment and the Economy.

The Forum heard that in the course of its investigation, the Economy Task & Finish Group had conducted a series of interviews with local companies and, attended a meeting of the Redditch Student Council to find out about the aspirations of young people in the Redditch area in relation to their economic future.

Members had found that the majority of companies they had interviewed felt that they were losing business contracts to the Far East and Eastern Europe. The companies had believed that this was mostly down to the problems they had in competing on cost; with most of them feeling that the only way they would be able to stay in business long-term would be to diversify. Members informed the Forum that many of these businesses felt that not enough funding or grants had been made available to manufacturing firms in the area to aid with their diversification.

Councillor Smithers told the Forum, that through its enquiries, the Group had found that the majority of companies interviewed felt they did not have a recruitment problem. As had been widely reported, there had recently been a number of redundancies in the manufacturing sector and so there were plenty of possible applicants in the area to choose from. However, Councillor Smithers stressed that one of the Group's major concerns was that these companies had great



Appendix 3 Evidence

difficulties in enticing new recruits to the sector, which Members believed posed a greater long-term threat to the industry. It was suggested that young people were not keen on working in “dirty” jobs; instead they favoured jobs in IT and Commerce. The Forum heard that many of the companies interviewed by the Group felt that schools in the area were preparing pupils poorly for a manufacturing vocation.

When the Group had asked the local companies how attractive a location they thought Redditch was for new businesses, the general consensus had been that it was not; citing a lack of amenities and a lack of incentives to attract new businesses, workers and their families to the area.

Councillor Smithers informed the Forum that many of the Companies who had been interviewed felt that the Council could take on a role of lobbying for more effective funding and support from government agencies; and that this had been the Group’s motivation for inviting the Expert Witnesses to the Business Support Forum.

Witness Questions Question 1

What support is available to companies in Redditch that need to compete on cost with businesses from the Far East and Eastern Europe?

Mr Wright responded to this question by informing the Group that it would be very difficult for a Western company to compete with the East on cost alone and strongly urged businesses not to attempt this; instead it was suggested that local businesses take a broader view of competition and enhance their product, by improving its value, quality or recognition. It was suggested that there were a number of organisations who could provide both advice and support to local businesses who wished to improve their business in this way.



Appendix 3 Evidence

Mr Langford informed the Group that AWM as an agency worked at a strategic level and so provided support via agencies such as Business Link and via Major Development Grants for Research and Development. This support encouraged a development in the West Midlands knowledge base, and encouraged businesses not to compete on cost alone.

Members queried how these grants could be accessed; Mr Langford responded that AWM had finite resources and so had targeted them in the areas where it felt they would have the most benefit. Large amounts of funding was targeted at specific areas and challenges in the region; although, this practice had recently changed and funds such as Accelerate and the Strategic Finance for Investment were available.

Members voiced the concerns of the companies that had previously been interviewed by the Group by saying that it was generally felt that Business Link was inaccessible and not very proactive. Mr Langford informed Members of impending changes in business support funding; a Business Support Transformation Review had been undertaken at the request of the Regional Enterprise Board. Members then asked for an assurance that the Council and the businesses in Redditch would be made aware of any changes to business funding and how it could be accessed regionally.

Mr Wright asked if the businesses had expressed a preference for how they could be kept informed of any changes. Members felt that there should be just one point of contact, where businesses could be informed of what help was available.

Question 2 Local companies have reported that not enough funding or grants have been made available to manufacturing firms to aid with diversification. We are aware that some funding and support is available so can you explain what this support is, how it can be



Appendix 3 Evidence

accessed and why you think some local companies might have this opinion?

Mr Langford informed the Group that support around diversification was an activity that originated at the time of the original Rover Taskforce; the diversification programme had since expanded and funds had been made available across the region to assist SME's with up to 250 employees; with sub-regional funding accessed via Business Link. Mr Langford felt that some of the onus for communicating the different funding programmes lay with Business Link.

Mr Wright agreed with Members earlier comments stating that manufacturers needed a clear and obvious access point. 60% of the companies MAS-WM had assisted had never previously engaged in business support. Mr Wright felt that MAS was an ideal first point of contact for manufacturing firms as they specialised in manufacturing and could act as a broker to help businesses access other support agencies, act as a guide for diversification schemes, and help companies decide what else was available.

Members felt that some businesses talked about "Diversification", when what they meant was "Business Improvement". Mr Wright agreed that diversification was only part of the picture, adding that the transformation process involved a huge amount of choice. In order to address this matter, target their responses and advise businesses accordingly, MAS first asked businesses what it was that they wanted to do, and which direction they wished to take to improve their business.

Members stated that many of the businesses in Redditch felt that they were not entitled to funding from AWM as they were located outside of the A38 corridor; Mr Langford stated that AWM was committed to economically drive and develop the whole West Midlands region and even though Redditch lay on the periphery of the corridor, any scheme that was in line with AWM



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objectives would be considered. Members felt that this had not been effectively communicated to local businesses; Mr Langford and Ms Barton said that they would take back Members' comments to Business Link and the dedicated Business Link Client Account Manager for Redditch.

Question 3 How do you communicate access to your services?

Members of the Forum discussed the difficulties in communicating access to business support as many of the businesses who would benefit from the funding and support were too busy to actively seek it.

It was acknowledged that it was often difficult to access companies by a phone call, and that paper based notifications were often ignored.

Question 4 How many companies from Redditch have you helped in the last twelve months?

Ms Barton informed the Group that as part of the Rover Taskforce, any business that had had contact with Rover was targeted for help; North Worcestershire had set up an MG Rover Response Group to monitor and organise some of the support provided in terms of training and job opportunities and support to affected companies. It was found that former Rover employees in North Worcestershire had fared far better in terms of the support provided than those in other heavily affected areas.

Members queried how many companies had been assisted prior to the Rover collapse; Members were informed that AWM, through Business Link had been in contact with 864 businesses in the Redditch area, had assisted in starting up 16 new business, and of 9 regional Inward Investment



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Enquiries, had presented Redditch as a preferred location to 5.

Question 5 How well do you think your existing policies meet the needs of the businesses in Redditch?

Mr Wright informed the Group that MAS-WM did not and would not focus its priorities sub-regionally; stating that he felt that MAS's strength was that it had chosen not to be sub-regionally focussed as manufacturing was a nationwide issue.

The Head of Economic Development confirmed this and highlighted how impressed she had been with MAS-WM, who despite not being sub-regionally focussed had been very amenable to getting involved with the Redditch Manufacturers Association and the Council.

The Forum heard that MAS-WM would be happy to engage and create network opportunities for businesses who shared a similar focus.

Mr Langford highlighted that AWM used its influence to promote and encourage organisations to source regional services where ever possible; future opportunities to do this were via Local Area Agreements and by trying to influence local supply chains and procurement.

Question 6 What role do you think the Council should play in improving support to businesses in Redditch?

In his answer to the above question, Mr Wright felt that the Council had two options; one was to stimulate engagement and help local businesses to know what help was available; the second option was to provide funding, not to try an independent scheme but to apply the funding



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to support services where there was already an infrastructure in place rather than to create new business support schemes.

Members wanted to ensure that any approach adopted would be Redditch focussed, Officers suggested that if the Council informed the businesses in Redditch what was available, then the businesses in Redditch would be the ones accessing and benefiting from the services.

Mr Langford felt that the Council could take a lead role to promote links between manufacturing businesses and local schools. Each of the witnesses recommended Inside Manufacturing Enterprise (IME) as an organisation who would visit schools and promote manufacturing as a career. It was suggested by Mr Langford that the Council could also get involved in shaping new policies by having input into the Local Strategic Partnership and the Worcestershire Partnership.

Expression of thanks

The Chair thanked each of the Expert Witnesses for attending the Economy Task & Finish Group Business Support Forum and stated that he had found the discussions very useful.



Appendix 3 Evidence

Education, Training & Skills Forum : Notes

The following is an extract of the Notes of the Economic Task & Finish Group (a sub-group of the Leisure, Tourism & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee) Education, Training & Skills Forum that was held on the 28th September 2005.

Following a brief set of introductions, the Chair asked each Expert Witness to make a short presentation to introduce themselves and their work.

Mr D Waldron Learning & Skills Council

Mr Waldron explained that the Learning & Skills Council (LSC) had been created in 2001, as an amalgamation of the Further Education Funding Council and a multitude of private sector Training and Enterprise Councils; to plan, fund and seek quality improvement of the post-16 learner sector.

The LSC in Herefordshire & Worcestershire was mainly funded by Central Government and had a budget of £110 circa million annually. With its budget, the LSC funded organisations such as NEW College; passed money for school sixth forms across the Local Education Authority (LEA); and funded a network of providers to run the modern apprenticeship programme. Mr Waldron explained that as an agent of the government, the LSC operated within defined parameters, and had a clear set of priorities. The current priority of the LSC was to get as many 16-18 year olds to continue in education and/or training following their Year 11 of school. The LSC was working with a wide range of partners and providers to achieve its priorities; some of these partners included Advantage West Midlands (AWM) and the Government Office of the West Midlands (GOWM); especially through the European Social Fund (ESF).

The Forum heard that the LSC would be undergoing significant changes in the next few months; that is, it would be shedding 20-25% of its workforce by next summer. The LSC would then be moving to a more strategic role, planning education for post-16 year olds.



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Mr N Bromley NEW College

Mr Bromley informed the Forum that North East Worcestershire College (NEW College) had campuses in both Redditch and Bromsgrove, and currently recruited 9000 residents of Redditch to be students, out of a possible 18,000/19,000. Mr Bromley added that the Redditch Campus was the larger of the two sites housing 65% of the college.

The NEW College had a clear priority, similar to that of the LSC to recruit more post-16 year olds. This year, NEW College had recruited more than 50% of all sixth formers in Redditch.

Mr Bromley explained that one of the objectives of NEW College had been to be a viable source and destination for learners in North East Worcestershire. At the Redditch campus, NEW College offered a wide range of courses from A-levels to their vocational equivalent; Child Care, Sports and Catering for example, and also had a large provision for groups with learning difficulties. The NEW College Business School was located at the Bromsgrove campus, along with a number of adult training courses, engineering, and a school of Art & Design. The Forum heard that students were able to travel between the two campuses on the College's free bus service.

Mr Bromley informed the Forum that the joint venture between the NEW College and the Council to create the new ConstructIT Training Centre had been very successful; 160 people had enrolled in this, its first year; the centre was also full every day of the week.

In addition, the NEW College was also involved in teaching in community venues, offering a wide range of courses from recreational up to Honours Degrees.

Mr Bromley was keen to highlight the economic benefit of the NEW College in addition to its educational expertise. Mr Bromley informed the Forum that NEW College took its role as a



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Mr R Westwood Educational Services, Worcestershire County Council

community player seriously; it had been awarded a Charter Mark in the summer mainly for the role it played in community provision. The NEW College brought 10,000 people every week to Redditch Town Centre, employed over 700 people, and spent £20 million a year, mostly in Redditch.

Mr Westwood informed the Forum that the Local Education Authority (LEA) at Worcestershire County Council and those across the Country would soon be restructured and would be known as Local Authorities (LA) from October when Educational Services would be amalgamated into the Children's Services Directorate. This was part of a national movement as it was felt that schools should play a more central part in young people's development; the department would include other aspects of children's lives, such as health and social care rather than just their education.

Mr Westwood told the Forum that his current role was principally to improve schools and their functions; ensuring that there was an adequate supply of school places to match local needs.

The Forum heard that the responsibility of the LEA was to secure school improvement; each school had an inspection every 4-5 years, via Ofsted. Mr Westwood explained that although schools were seen as freestanding organisations; if the Ofsted inspection highlighted issues that the school itself could not address, the LEA had a statutory requirement to assist. The LEA monitored each school for early warning signs; monitoring school performance data such as exam results, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and directing schools to good practice in neighbouring schools if it was deemed appropriate.

Mr Westwood told the Group that within the Worcestershire LEA there were 20 Inspectors supporting the 300 schools in the area.



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The Forum heard that the LEA worked closely with the LSC to achieve the government improvement strategies to offer a broader provision for academic and vocational study from Key Stage 4 (14 years old onwards). It had been acknowledged within the LEA that in order to offer a depth and breadth of options, partnerships needed to be accessed.

It was highlighted that the LEA had supported 944 Redditch students in their work experience placements in the last school year via the Education Business Partnership (EBP); this work linked in with each school's responsibility to provide PSHE, Personal, Social and Health Education. The LEA managed a database and logged all providers of work experience and ensured that a Health & Safety check had been carried out on the premises.

One of the Members queried the LEA's decision to charge post-16 year olds for transport to and from schools when these services had previously been subsidised; it was suggested that more post-16 year olds would be encouraged to stay on at school if funding for transport was provided.

Mr Westwood explained that prior to the review, the LEA had spent £14 million of its £200 million total budget on travel costs; the LEA had felt that it would be more beneficial to spend the money on education.

Members queried the recent decision to have extended schools, and suggested that this may have been detrimental to the running of the school if staff spent a percentage of their time on community work. Mr Westwood informed the Forum that schools were responding to wider social issues; they now had a responsibility to engage with young people on many levels.

Ms A Stanton ASC Connections

Ms Stanton told the Forum that ASC Connections (ASC) was a REC (Recruitment and Employment Confederation) accredited Recruitment Agency, and was the only employment



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agency in Redditch that had achieved this standard.

The Forum heard that ASC offered a free service; recruiting for companies and securing full and part-time contracts for individuals. Ms Stanton informed the Group that she had secured some contracts for young people in Redditch at businesses where there was a training induction programme.

Ms Stanton informed the Forum that the main problem she had locally was the lack of provision for transport and said it proved very difficult to find people placements that could be accessed via public transport.

The Forum heard that ASC provided career advice and directed young people to the local Connexions service if it was felt appropriate.

It was explained that applicants had to pass a skills test with ASC Connections before being put forward for a placement; the Forum heard that ASC struggled to find work for 10% of applicants due to an insufficient skills base, in these cases Ms Stanton would direct the person to the Quadrant Training Centre for computer skills, the NEW College or the Job Centre Plus. Ms Stanton informed the Forum that recently she had been unable to fill a position for an Office Junior as there had been no applicants with sufficient skills.

Ms Stanton told the Forum that from a community point of view; this year had been the worst summer to find placements for students returning home from university; she felt that this was due to the influx of Polish Workers in the area.

Ms Stanton stressed that ASC was keen to help and that it wished to build up contacts across



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the different sectors.

Economy Task & Finish Group Presentation

Councillor Smithers addressed the Forum on behalf of the Economy Task & Finish Group, and outlined the Group's findings from its review into Jobs, Employment and the Economy.

The Forum heard that in the course of its investigation, the Economy Task & Finish Group conducted a series of interviews with local companies and attended a meeting of the Redditch Student Council to find out about the aspirations of young people in the Redditch area in relation to their economic future. Councillor Smithers explained that two Members of Redditch Student Council had been invited to be co-opted Members of the Group for the evening so that they were given the opportunity to see their concerns raised first hand.

Councillor Smithers told the Forum, that through its enquiries, the Group had found that the majority of companies interviewed felt they did not have a recruitment problem. As had been widely reported, there had recently been a number of redundancies in the manufacturing sector and so there were plenty of possible applicants in the area to choose from. However, Councillor Smithers stressed that one of the Group's major concerns was that these companies had great difficulties in enticing new recruits to the sector, which Members believed posed a greater long-term threat to the industry. It was suggested that young people were not keen on working in "dirty" jobs; instead they favoured jobs in IT and Commerce. The Forum heard that many of the companies interviewed by the Group felt that schools in the area were preparing pupils poorly for a manufacturing vocation.

When the Group had asked the local companies how attractive a location they thought Redditch was for new businesses, the general consensus had been that it was not; citing a lack of amenities and a lack of incentives to attract new businesses, workers and their families to the



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area.

It was explained that the findings from the Group's visit to Redditch Student Council compounded those that have been mentioned above; when asked what they saw themselves doing in ten years time, each of the Student Councillors had cited professional occupations such as a barrister, pilot or forensic scientist. The Group had found that only one of the Student Councillors had wanted to work in Redditch, one other had said that they did not mind working in Redditch, the remaining Student Councillors definitely did not want to live or work in Redditch. Councillors explained that the Student Councillors had cited various reasons for this, the main one of which had been a lack of career opportunities.

Councillor Smithers informed the Forum that the Student Councillors had felt that the amount of careers advice received was variable across the High Schools in Redditch; the general consensus had been that careers advice should begin in Middle Schools. It was found that all careers advice was general in nature, and that no advice had been given as to the types of industry and opportunities that were available locally.

When the Group had asked the Student Councillors about work experience placements; many of them had thought that they had been rushed and not always useful; the onus had been on the students to find their own work placements, which they had found very difficult to do. It had been commented on that there had been an additional difficulty as each of the schools' work experience took place at around the same time, which had made it even harder to find placements. Only one of the Student Councillors had reported to the Group that their school had any real links with businesses, and then it was only with a couple of companies.

In conclusion, Councillor Smithers informed the Forum that the Group was very keen to address



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the long term effects these matters would have on the Redditch economy; and that this had been the Group's motivation for inviting the Expert Witnesses to the Education, Training & Skills Forum.

Witness Questions Advice for local careers?

The Group told the forum that following a discussion with the Student Council it had transpired that none of the Members had received advice regarding the types of careers available locally; the Group asked the Expert Witnesses if they could suggest why this may have been the case.

Mr Waldron informed the Forum that eighteen months ago the LSC undertook a Strategic Area Review (StAR) and that local Officers had been involved in the consultative process. One of the issues that arose from the review was that there was no picture of a consistent delivery of careers advice to young people; as a result a partnership approach was adopted by the LEA, LSC and a network of providers from both private and public sectors. Through this collaborative approach, standards were emerging around content and consistency of delivery. Mr Waldron added that this development would be rolled out across the county, to be delivered at the "appropriate time". It had been acknowledged that the curriculum for 14 year olds onwards needed to combine both academic and vocational routes, and that consistent, constructive and accurate advice needed to be available in both of these areas.

The Forum was told that Connexions was the responsible body in conjunction with schools to address careers advice, but Mr Waldron felt that the inconsistency was partly due to a lack of focused resources.

Mr Westwood acknowledged that schools were becoming autonomous management entities and that that career advice had fallen through a hole in the system. Mr Westwood informed the Forum that all schools were under pressure from Ofsted and exam figure league tables; career



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advice was barely on the agenda.

Mr Westwood stated that Connexions was a targeted service, it now had a responsibility to target the post-16 year olds who wished to join the labour market.

Although everyone was entitled to this support, young people who decided to stay on at school rarely benefited from the service.

One Member stated that 28% of the labour market in Redditch was based in manufacturing, which was twice the national average; Members were concerned that there was a great need to encourage and sustain those businesses in the future.

Mr Westwood responded that as a nation we needed to readdress the educational priorities; at the moment the overriding target was the amount of students who achieved over 5 A-Cs at GCSE; the pressure was all educational, with seemingly no acknowledgement for achievement in vocational areas.

Members recounted that there was a culture for only the students with low predicted grades to receive advice on vocational training; for this reason there was a stigma attached to apprenticeships, people did not realise that they could be accessed by students with higher grades. It was suggested that because the majority of students were not receiving much careers advice, they tended to opt for the more glamorous jobs rather than more realistic local jobs.

The Forum felt that there needed to be a national recognition that a vocational route was equal to an academic route.



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Variable careers advice The Group reported that its findings from its visit to the Student Council suggested that careers advice was variable across the schools in Redditch; the Group asked each Expert Witness what experience they had had of this and why they thought this may have been the case.

Mr Waldron confirmed that this was indeed the case and recounted that a recent County-wide careers evening had highlighted that only 1 out of approximately 140 young people and their parents knew anything about apprenticeships.

It was generally felt across the Forum that many young people were staying in school sixth forms because they did not know what their other options were; it was felt that it needed to be clearly communicated that choosing a vocational route could still result in qualifications.

Ms Stanton informed the Forum that the hardest area to recruit for was engineering as it did not seem to exist in people's perceptions; ASC had adopted bringing in people from abroad to fill engineering vacancies. It was suggested that people were under the misconception that engineering was a "dirty" profession, when in reality some engineering firms were cleaner than most offices.

It was felt that Connexions, as the only impartial service should promote the many different areas available to young people so that informed decisions could be made about their future career. Mr Bromley told the Forum that as the principal of the NEW College he was unable to promote the college and its courses in local schools as there was a guarded attitude from educational institutions who were trying to run their schools as businesses.

The Group felt that the starting point for careers advice needed to be what was best for the learner and that this advice needed to be provided at an earlier stage in the process.



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Mr Westwood informed the Forum that there was now a requirement on schools for career advice to be done earlier. However, Mr Westwood suggested that teachers were often not in the best position to provide careers advice, having left school, to go to university, to go back to school, often without any experience of the wider labour market. The Forum heard that the LEA and the LSC were developing a Teacher Placement Programme, to widen the horizons of teachers by offering them placements in different sectors.

Outflow of young talent

Members were concerned that not enough was being done to encourage graduates to return to Redditch. Mr Waldron stated that this was a general characteristic of Herefordshire and Worcestershire; there was an outflow of young talent.

It was suggested that there was no real pull to entice people back to Redditch; there was a lack of amenities; poor levels of public transport; and it lacked glamour having been branded as an industrial new town. Ms Stanton felt that another factor attributing to the outflow of young talent was that Redditch was one of the lowest payers of salaries in the region; citing that a particular job in Redditch had a salary of £13,000 per annum, where as the same job in Droitwich paid £5,000 more.

The Group asked each of the Expert Witnesses what they felt the Council could do to improve the level of education, training and skills in Redditch.

It was suggested that the Council could further links between schools and the businesses in Redditch to encourage economic development. One Member felt that there should be a Redditch based careers fair and that local firms should be encouraged to attend rather than just a range of national companies.



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Members commented that the findings from the discussions echoed the findings from the Group's Business Support Forum on the 27th September 2005; there was generally considered to be a communication gap between the providers of the services and the receivers of the service; the consumers needed to know what was available. It was felt that the Council could investigate bringing the two sides together.

Mr Bromley suggested that the Council utilise the fact that High Schools had their own specialism, and had a sufficient injection of funds for their specialist area. Mr Bromley also commented that following the MG Rover collapse, there was a vast amalgamation of effort concentrating on providing careers advice and training for the redundant workers; Mr Bromley lamented the fact that the same joined up approach was not available to younger people who were facing the same issues but at the start of their career.

Expression of thanks

The Chair thanked each of the Expert Witnesses for attending the Economy Task & Finish Group Education, Training & Skills Forum and stated that he had found the discussions very useful.



Appendix 4 Implications

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Appendix 4 Implications

Financial The financial implications for this recommendation will be in the region of £33690 for a full-time SO2 Economic Development Support Officer; the cost for reviving the Economic Development Marketing Strategy will be a further £10,000.

Policy There are no current policies within the Council with regards to Economic Development.
The development of the Council's Economic Development Service links directly with the Council's wish to "be at the heart of developing the local economy, environment and community" as laid out in the 2005 Redditch Borough Council Corporate and Performance Plan.

Legal The Local Government Act 2000 gave all Councils the power to "promote the economic, environmental and social well-being of their area".

Risk There is a risk that without sufficient resources being allocated to Redditch's Economic Development Service, the links between local businesses and local schools will decline; employers will continue to suffer from an exodus of talent and the local economy will be weakened.



Overview & Scrutiny

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

Elizabeth Rattlidge, Overview & Scrutiny Support Officer
elizabeth.rattlidge@redditchbc.gov.uk 01527 64252 (3268)

or

Ivor Westmore, Overview & Scrutiny Support Officer
ivor.westmore@redditchbc.gov.uk 01527 64252 (3269)

Overview & Scrutiny
Committee Services
Redditch Borough Council
Town Hall
Alcester Street
Redditch
B98 8 AH

Overview & Scrutiny

No Direct Ward Relevance

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10. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING – APRIL-JUNE 2008

(Report of Director of Environment and Planning)

1. Purpose of Report

To report on aspects of the Council's overall performance.

2. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that

the update on key performance indicators for the period April–June 2008 be noted and commented upon.

3. Financial, Policy and Legal Implications

Financial

3.1 There are no financial implications for the Council.

Policy

3.2 The Council's Corporate and performance plan makes a clear commitment to improve the way in which priority actions are planned and to improve the way in which performance is managed, including setting Service Standards.

Legal

3.3 Under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, a set of 198 new National Indicators was introduced to replace the previous Best Value Performance Indicators. These cover all public authorities and are not all applicable to Redditch Borough Council. They are the only indicators which are now required to be reported to central Government.

Risk

3.4 Without adequate performance management the Council cannot review its performance at a corporate or service level adequately.

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4. Background

- 4.1 The new National Indicator set has been introduced with effect from the 1st of April 2008 and these are the only indicators that public authorities will be required to report on to central Government. Figures collected for 2008/09 will form the baseline for future reporting. 33 national indicators are included in the Local Area Agreement for Worcestershire.
- 4.2 Although Redditch Borough Council will no longer need to report on Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs), it is considered that until the National Indicators have been fully embedded it would be useful to continue to collect information on them and on some local indicators. Where there is a direct overlap with a National Indicator collection of the BVPIs and local indicators will cease.
- 4.3 The Council uses the TEN Performance Management System to show our current and historic performance against Best Value and local performance indicators. It also shows comparisons with other District Councils as provided by the Audit Commission. This is accessible through the Council's intranet and enables Members and Officers to have access to regular information in a more visual format. The new national indicators will be added to the TEN system during the current year.
- 4.4 Members of the Chairs' Steering Committee considered the current, reporting/monitoring arrangements for the first time in August 2005 and approved a selected basket of indicators to be reported to the Committee.
- 4.5 Due to the introduction of the national indicators, the basket of indicators has been revised.
- 4.6 Quarterly reporting is intended to drive improvement based on organisational need and local priorities.

5. Key Issues

Basis of Quarterly Reporting

- 5.1 In moving the agenda forward, the Council looked to address the following:-
- a) Retaining a tighter focus at a corporate level – with a clearly defined number of indicators reported and monitored.

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- b) Developing capacity for Directorates to strengthen performance management by focusing on service plan commitments.
- c) Creating opportunities to automate the reporting of performance information using TEN software.
- d) Continuing to monitor all National Indicators and selected BVPIs and local indicators at a Member level at least annually.
- e) The development of links to how the Council is performing in its key delivery projects.

Member Role

- 5.2 Member involvement in monitoring performance for the remainder of the year will involve:

Quarter	Period	Member Group	Purpose of reporting.
2	July – Sept	November Overview and Scrutiny Committee	<i>Receive half year Statistics Analyse corporate basket</i>
3	Oct – Dec	February Overview and Scrutiny Committee and/or Portfolio holder	<i>Analyse Corporate Basket</i>
4	Jan - Mar	May Overview and Scrutiny Committee	<i>Receive annual outturn statistics Analyse Corporate Basket</i>

The Corporate basket.

- 5.3 The Corporate basket comprises indicators covering a wide range of Council activity.
- 5.4 They will be the focus of corporate level performance management and will be received by CMT and Members on a quarterly basis.

6. Conclusion

The report provides Members with an opportunity to review the Council's performance for the first quarter of 2008/09.

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7. **Background Papers**

The details to support the information provided within this report are held by Corporate Strategy.

8. **Consultation**

There has been no consultation other than with relevant Borough Council Officers.

9. **Author of Report**

The author of this report is Angela Heighway (Head of Strategy and Partnerships), who can be contacted on extension 3122 (e-mail angie.heighway@redditchbc.gov.uk) for more information.

10. **Appendix**

CMT Basket - Quarterly Performance Monitoring – April – June 2008

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INDICATOR DESCRIPTION	INDICATOR REFERENCE	2008/09			1 year change	BEST QUARTILE 2006/07	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	Notes
		1st April to 30th June 2008	Equivalent Quarter 2007/08	Target						
Community Safety										
Perceptions of anti-social behaviour	NI 17			To be set 2009						1, 2
Assault with injury crime rate (per 1,000 population)	NI 20	2.32	2.68	LAA 7.12	▲					1
Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and police	NI 21			To be set 2009						1,2
Criminal Damage - recorded offences	LPSA/A.4.a	379	398	1,495	▲		1,738	1,678	1,505	
Theft of a motor vehicle - recorded offences	LPSA/A.4.b	54	54	222	◀▶		235	187	204	
Burglary - recorded offences	LPSA/A.4.d	46	109	342	▲		332	313	349	
Environment										
Net additional homes provided	NI 154	Annual		LAA 1830						1
Processing of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks	NI 157(a)	100%	50.00%	60%	▲					
Processing of minor planning applications determined within 8 weeks	NI 157(b)	85.71%	88.89%	65%	▼					
Processing of other planning applications determined within 8 wks	NI 157(c)	100%	86.32%	80%	▲					3
CO2 reduction from local authority operations	NI 185	Annual		To be set 2009						
Adapting to climate change	NI 188	Annual		Level 1						1
Residual household waste per household	NI 191	147.43		585						
% of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	NI 192	31.09	30.93	33%	▲					
Air quality - % reduction in NOx and primary PM10 emissions through local authority's estate and operations	NI 194			To be set 09						
Improved street and environmental cleanliness (levels of graffiti, litter, detritus and fly posting)	NI 195	4 monthly		6% (LAA 10% - a, levels of litter)						

INDICATOR DESCRIPTION	INDICATOR REFERENCE	2008/09			1 year change	BEST QUARTILE 2006/07	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	Notes
		1st April to 30th June 2008	Equivalent Quarter 2007/08	Target						
Improved street and environmental cleanliness - fly tipping	NI 196	Annual		Score 2						8
Kilogrammes of household waste collected per head	BV084a	94	94	355	◀▶	380.8	415	409	374	
Housing										
Local authority tenants' satisfaction with landlord services	NI 160	Annual		78%						4
Energy Efficiency - the average SAP rating of local authority owned dwellings	BVPI 63	Annual		73						
Rent collected by the local authority as a proportion of rents owed on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) dwellings	BVPI 66a	Annual		98.60%						
The average time (days) to re-let Local Authority Housing	BVPI 212	30.5 days	37.24 days	34 days	▲					
Percentage of urgent repairs completed within Government time limits (categories A, B and C)	HIP 001	75.70%	78.30%	83%	▼					7
Average time taken to complete non-urgent responsive repairs (categories D and E)	HIP 002	25.4 days	30 days	28%	▲					
Leisure										
Adult participation in sport	NI 8	Annual Survey		LAA 4% increase to 10/11						1
Well Managed Organisation										
Value for money - total net value of ongoing cash-releasing value for money gains that have impacted since the start of the 2008/09 financial year	NI 179			3% national target						5

INDICATOR DESCRIPTION	INDICATOR REFERENCE	2008/09			1 year change	BEST QUARTILE 2006/07	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	Notes
		1st April to 30th June 2008	Equivalent Quarter 2007/08	Target						
The level of the Equality Standard for local government to which the Council conforms in respect of gender, race and disability	BVPI 2a			To be set						
The number of working days/shifts lost to the local authority due to sickness absence per FTE staff member	BVPI 12	2.26	2.00	9.77 tbc	▼					
Other										
Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	NI 155	0	26	LAA 345	▼					1, 9
Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events	NI 181			To be set						6
Percentage of invoices for commercial goods and services that were paid by the Council within 30 days of receipt or within the agreed payment terms	BVPI 8	90.36%	89.24%	To be set	▲					
The percentage of Council Tax collected by the Authority in the year	BVPI 9	29.92%	29.23%	To be set	▲					

Notes:

1. Local Area Agreement (LAA) indicator
2. Place Survey indicator
3. Equivalent to BVPI 109(a), (b) and (c)
4. Survey carried out every 2 years
5. Annual efficiency statement is now reported as an indicator. Release 2008/09 but forecast due October 2008 and retrospective report due July 2009
6. Awaiting IBS System fix
7. Figures affected by tenants being offered appointments for Priority C jobs outside the 5 day target. Contact Centre staff now trained to cancel the original job ticket and raise a new ticket on Priority D (25 day target). 92% of Priority B jobs (24 hours target) are completed within target - those that fail are usually as a result of the tenant being out when the Operative calls.
8. Weighted scores of 1 - 4 automatically calculated by DeFRA from RBC's Flycapture Return, where 1 is Very Effective and 4 is Poor
9. RBC are expecting 10 units to come on-line in September 2008. However, the Windsor Road site where RBC was expecting to receive 43 units, has been mothballed by the Developer due to the housing market situation.

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Overview & Scrutiny

No Direct Ward Relevance

Committee

20th August 2008

13. WORK PROGRAMME

(Report of the Borough Director)

Date of Meeting	Subject Matter	Officer(s) Responsible for report
ALL MEETINGS	REGULAR ITEMS	(LEAD DIRECTOR - SUE HANLEY)
	Minutes of previous meeting Consideration of the Forward Plan Consideration of Executive Committee key decisions Call-ins (if any) Pre-scrutiny (if any) Consideration of Overview and Scrutiny Actions List Referrals from Council or Executive Committee, etc. (if any) Task & Finish Groups - feedback Committee Work Programme	Acting Borough Director Acting Borough Director Acting Borough Director Acting Borough Director Acting Borough Director Acting Borough Director Relevant Lead Director Acting Borough Director Acting Borough Director
	REGULAR ITEMS Quarterly Performance Report Quarterly Budget Monitoring Report Review of Service Plans 2009 / 12	Acting Borough Director Borough Director Relevant Lead Director

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Committee

20th August 2008

	<p>REGULAR ITEMS</p> <p>Oral updates on the progress of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the Joint Scrutiny Exercise into Flooding 2. the Role of the Mayor Task and Finish Group; and 3. the Third Sector Task and Finish Group. 	<p>Relevant Lead Directors</p> <p>Relevant Lead Directors</p> <p>Relevant Lead Directors</p>
20th August 2008	<p>REGULAR ITEMS</p> <p>Quarterly Performance Report</p>	Relevant Lead Directors
20th August 2008	<p>REGULAR ITEMS</p> <p>Quarterly Budget Report</p>	Relevant Lead Directors
26th November 2008	<p>REGULAR ITEMS</p> <p>Quarterly Performance Report</p>	Relevant Lead Directors
26th November 2008	<p>REGULAR ITEMS</p> <p>Quarterly Budget Report</p>	Relevant Lead Directors
25th February 2008	<p>REGULAR ITEMS</p> <p>Quarterly Performance Report</p>	Relevant Lead Directors

Overview & Scrutiny

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25th February 2008	REGULAR ITEMS Quarterly Budget Report	Relevant Lead Directors
29th April 2009	REGULAR ITEMS Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report 2008/09	Acting Borough Director
OTHER ITEMS - DATE FIXED		
20th August 2008	Jobs, Employment and Economy – review of scrutiny report	Relevant Lead Directors
10th September 2008	Public Transport – Scoping Document	Relevant Lead Directors
10th September 2008	Report on the Disposal of Assets	Relevant Lead Directors
10th September 2008	Cleaning of Communal Areas - Scoping Document	Relevant Lead Director
24th September 2008	Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health – Annual Report	Relevant Lead Directors
15th October 2008	Civil Parking Enforcement – Update Report on Responses to Recommendations	Relevant Lead Directors
15th October 2008	Portfolio Holder for Environment, Planning and Transport – Annual Report	Relevant Lead Directors

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5th November 2008	Joint Policy for Unauthorised Encampments of Gypsies and Travellers - Update	Relevant Lead Director
5th November 2008	Proposed Business Centres Scrutiny Exercise – Member Discussion	Relevant Lead Director
5th November 2008	Fees and Charges Task and Finish Group – Update Report on Responses to Recommendations	Relevant Lead Directors
5th November 2008	Role of the Mayor Task and Finish Group – Reporting Recommendations.	Relevant Lead Directors
26th November 2008	Housing Mutual Exchange – Scrutiny Launch	Relevant Lead Directors
26th November 2008	Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management – Annual Report	Relevant Lead Directors
17th December 2008	Third Sector Task and Finish Group – Reporting Recommendations	Relevant Lead Directors
14th January 2009	District Centres Task and Finish Group – Update Report on Response to Recommendations	Relevant Lead Directors
14th January 2009	Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism – Annual Report	Relevant Lead Directors
25th February 2009	Portfolio Holder for Community Safety – Annual Report	Relevant Lead Directors
18th March 2009	Fishing Tackle Heritage – Scoping Document	Relevant Lead Directors

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18th March 2009	Portfolio Holder for Community Leadership and Partnership – Annual Report	Relevant Lead Directors
8th April 2009	Communications Task and Finish Group – Update report on response to recommendations	Relevant Lead Directors
OTHER ITEMS – DATE NOT FIXED		
	Select Committee – Overview and Scrutiny visit	Relevant Lead Directors
	Community Calls for Action – Discussion	Relevant Lead Director
	Economic Development – Discussion	Relevant Lead Director
	Education attainment levels - Discussion	Relevant Lead Director
	Review of ditches –discussion	Relevant Lead Director

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